

Codex Vaticanus

Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209 is one of the oldest manuscripts to contain both the Old and New Testament. The order of the New Testament books is as follows: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Hebrews.

The manuscript breaks off at Heb 9,14 in the middle of καθάρει (p1518 according to the page numbers which were later added to the manuscript). The rest of Hebrews and the Apocalypse were added in a cursive hand of the fifteenth century, from a model and in circumstances which are hard to determine.

Whether Codex Vaticanus originally contained the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) or not is still an open question.

(from the Codex Vaticanus guide, p27)

Codex Sinaiticus

Codex Sinaiticus, a manuscript of the Christian Bible written in the middle of the fourth century, contains the earliest complete copy of the New Testament. The hand-written text is in Greek. The New Testament appears in the original vernacular language (*koine*) and the Old Testament in the version known as the Septuagint that was adopted by early Greek-speaking Christians. In the Codex, the text of both the Septuagint and the New Testament has been heavily annotated by a series of early correctors. The significance of Codex Sinaiticus for the reconstruction of the Christian Bible's original text, the history of the Bible and the history of Western book-making is immense.

The name 'Codex Sinaiticus' literally means 'the Sinai Book'. It reflects two important aspects of the manuscript: its form and a very special place in its history.

'Codex' means 'book'. By the time Codex Sinaiticus was written, works of literature were increasingly written on sheets that were folded and bound together in a format that we still use to this day. This book format was steadily replacing the roll format which was more widespread just a century before when texts were written on one side of a series of sheets glued together to make a roll. These rolls were made of animal skin (like most of the Dead Sea Scrolls) or the papyrus plant (commonly used for Greek and Latin literature).

Using the papyrus codex was a distinctive feature of early Christian culture. The pages of Codex Sinaiticus however are of prepared animal skin called parchment. This marks it out as standing at an important transition in book history. Before it we see many examples of Greek and Latin texts on papyrus roll or papyrus codex, but almost no traces of parchment codices. After it, the parchment codex becomes normative.

Codex Sinaiticus is named after St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, where it had been preserved until the middle of the nineteenth century. The surviving parts of the Codex are now held by four libraries: 347 leaves are held by the British Library, a further 43 leaves are kept at the University Library in Leipzig, parts of four leaves are held at the National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg and further portions remain at Saint Catherine's Monastery.

Date

Codex Sinaiticus is generally dated to the fourth century, and sometimes more precisely to the middle of that century. This is based on the study of the handwriting, known as palaeographical analysis. Only one other nearly complete manuscript of the Christian Bible – Codex Vaticanus (kept in the Vatican Library in Rome) – is of a similarly early date. The only manuscripts of Christian scripture that are definitely of an earlier date than Codex Sinaiticus contain small portions of the text of the Bible.

Content

As it survives today, Codex Sinaiticus comprises just over 400 large leaves of prepared animal skin, each of which measures approximately 380mm (15 ins) high by 345mm (13½ins) wide. On these parchment leaves is written around half of the Old Testament and Apocrypha (the Septuagint), the whole of the New Testament, and two early Christian texts not found in modern Bibles. Most of the first part of the manuscript (containing most of the so-called historical books, from Genesis to 1 Chronicles) is now missing and presumed lost.

The number of books in the New Testament in Codex Sinaiticus is the same as that in modern Bibles in the West, but the order is different. The Letter to the Hebrews is placed after Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians, and the Acts of the Apostles between the Pastoral and Catholic Epistles.

Production

Codex Sinaiticus was copied by more than one scribe. Constantine Tischendorf identified four in the nineteenth century. Subsequent research decided that there were three, but it is possible that a fourth (different from Tischendorf's fourth scribe) can be identified. Each of the three undisputed scribes has a distinctive way of writing which can be identified with practice. Each also had a distinctive way of spelling many sounds, particularly vowels which scribes often wrote phonetically. One of them may have been a senior copyist.

(from the Codex Sinaiticus Reference Guide, pp3-4)