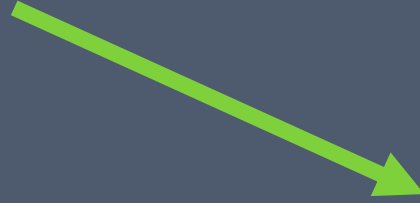


HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

Dan Leiphart

FROM GOD TO US

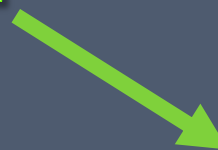
INSPIRATION



CANONIZATION



TRANSMISSION



TRANSLATION

Transmission of the Bible

Writing Materials & Practices

Papyrus

- First manufactured in 4th millennium BC
- Most inventive use was a writing surface
- The inner pith of the stem was cut in narrow slices. Vertical and horizontal slices were beaten together to form a sheet, then smoothed and cut to 9x15" max
- A number of sheets could be pasted together to form a roll; max length of about 35 feet (Luke and Acts were about 31-32 feet)
- Original NT writings were on Papyrus rolls
- Continued in use in NT codices until around 8th century

Papyrus growing on the banks of the Nile
(image from Wikipedia)



Parchment

- A writing material made from untanned skins of animals (primarily sheep, calves and goats)
- Vellum is a finer material made from younger animals (lambs and young calves)
- Parchment was first promoted in Pergamum (Asia Minor) in late 2nd century BC
- General usage in bookmaking around 4th century AD when it overtook papyrus because it is tougher and longer lasting, and it's easier to write on both sides
- Important 4th century Greek NT codices are on parchment

Parchment made from goatskin
(image from Wikipedia)



the Codex

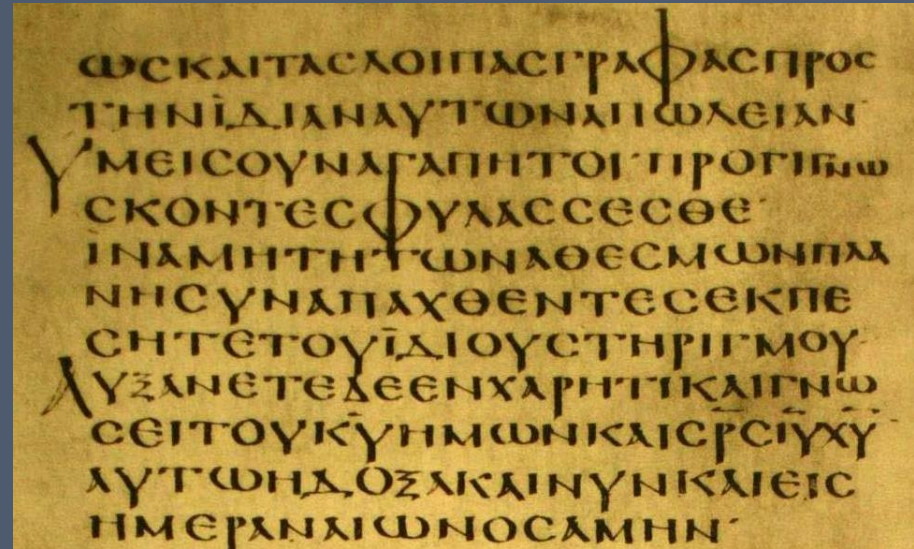
- Original NT writings made on papyrus rolls; were bulky and inconvenient for finding specific passages
- Early 2nd century, the codex, or leaf form of book, came into use in the church
- Codices were formed by folding one or more papyrus (and later parchment) sheets in half and sewing them together
- It was the Christians who early-adopted the codex as format of choice for their sacred books
- About a 44% cost savings for a codex over a scroll
- All four gospels, or all Paul's works could now be bound together
- Better for receiving text on both sides

Codex Gigas [13th century Latin ms]
(image from Wikipedia)

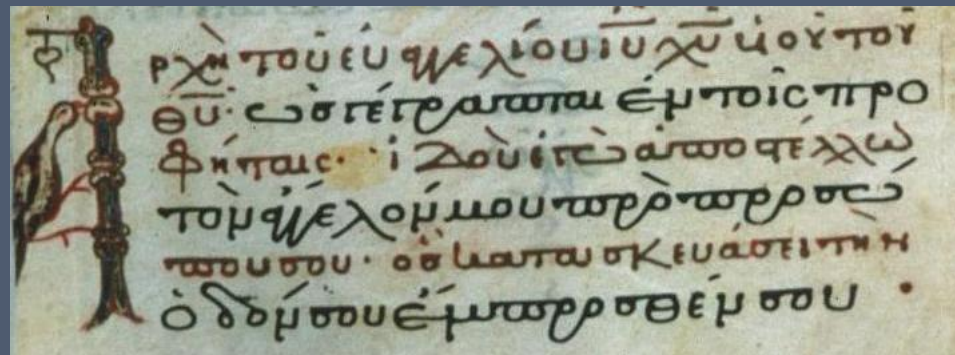


Scripts

- Would use horizontal papyrus fibers or guide lines on parchment
- Used book-hand and cursive styles
- Literary works were written in a more formal book-hand
- Hands are divided into **majuscules** (capital letters) and **minuscules** (lower case)
- The beautiful Greek handwriting of 3rd - 6th centuries deteriorated
- Reform in the 9th century led to smaller letters in cursive hand
- Minuscule script was quicker and cheaper
- As Christianity spread, sometimes speed outran accuracy in copying
- A **palimpsest** is a ms that was scraped and reused to save money



Majuscule Codex Alexandrinus [5th century]
(image from Wikipedia)



Minuscule 113 [11th century] (image from Wikipedia)

Scribes

- As Christianity received official sanction from the state, *scriptoria* produced more copies of the NT
- Each scribe (Christian or not) would sit for hours and copy a NT book as the reader slowly read the exemplar (original)
- Many copies would be made simultaneously, but mistakes could and did occur, work checked by corrector
- Scribes paid by number of lines (*stichoi*)
- Later, in Byzantine period, books copied by monks in monasteries by reading aloud, memorizing, dictating to oneself & writing

“The end of the book; thanks be to God!”

- Found in at least one manuscript



Egyptian scribe (image from Wikipedia)

Scribes

“By reading the divine Scriptures [the scribe] wholesomely instructs his own mind, and by copying the precepts of the Lord he spreads them far and wide. What happy application, what praiseworthy industry, to preach unto people by means of the hand, to untie the tongue by means of the fingers, to bring quiet salvation to mortals, and to fight the Devil’s insidious wiles with pen and ink! For every word of the Lord written by the scribe is a wound inflicted on Satan. And so seated in one spot, the scribe traverses diverse lands through the dissemination of what he has written... Man multiplies the heavenly words, and in a certain metaphorical sense, if I may dare so to speak, three fingers are made to express the utterances of the Holy Trinity. O sight glorious to those who contemplate it carefully! The fast-travelling reed-pen writes down the holy words and thus avenges the malice of the Wicked One, who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Lord during His Passion.”

(Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, pp. 29-30)
quoting Cassiodorus of Italy c. 485-585 AD

Transmission Practice Summary

