

The Great (?) Uncials

The Dean Burgon Society's 2000 Annual Meeting

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A Review

Manuscript Copies of the New Testament

Text Streams or Text Families

A REVIEW

By way of review, I remind you that the Old Testament was originally written primarily in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Further, it must be remember that there are no original autographs of either the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament. Yet, the Old and New Testaments have been preserved in apographs (exemplars or copies) of the originals. Since the focus in this paper is the New Testament it is important to know that there are at least 5309 surviving Greek manuscripts that contain all or parts of the New Testament. In addition there are more than 19,000 ancient New Testament manuscripts in Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and other language versions. The oldest copies of the New Testament know to exist are NOT Greek copies but the Syriac and the Old Latin versions (pre-Jerome's Latin Vulgate). The Old Syriac "is a good translation from the Greek, and exists practically complete in about 46 manuscripts." (*General Biblical Introduction* by Herbert Miller, 1937; 240-41). The oldest of those manuscripts is from the 4th or 5th century but the form of text they preserved dates from the close of the second or the beginning of the third century. "The Old Latin version was likely translated from the Greek in roughly 157 AD." (*A Plain Introduction to New Testament Criticism*, II, 1894; Scrivner; pp.42-42). Finally, there are more than 24,000 handwritten copies of the New Testament have survived.

MANUSCRIPT COPIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

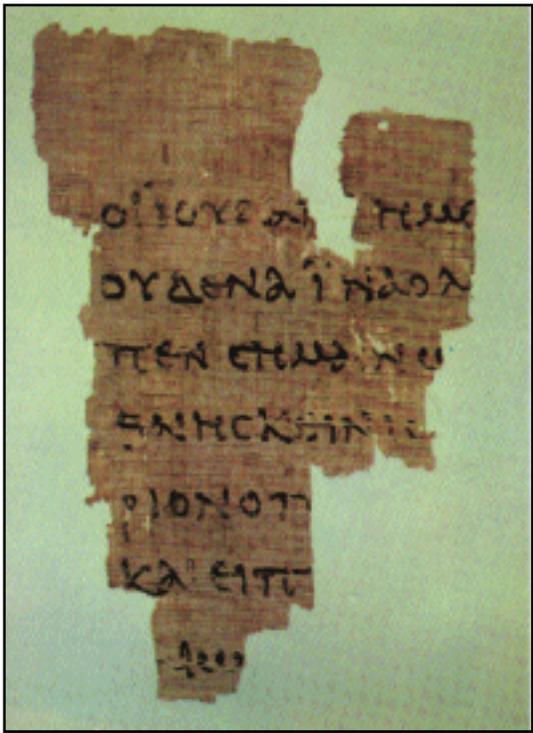
There are some important facts that relating to the 5309 manuscripts that need to be considered at this point.

The Four Kinds of Greek Manuscripts

There are **four kinds of Greek manuscripts** that we have in our possession today: **1) papyri, 2) uncials, 3) cursives, and 4) lectionaries.** (*Defending The King James Bible* by D. A. Waite; p.

53). "The Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, so far as known, were written on papyrus, parchment, or paper. The autographs, both of the historical and epistolary writers, are supposed to have been written on papyrus. The great uncials copies and the most valued of the minuscules and lectionaries were written on parchment, while paper was employed largely in the making of the later lectionaries and the printed texts of the New Testament." (*Praxis In Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament* by Rev. Charles F. Sitterly; 1898; p.15).

Papyri Manuscripts



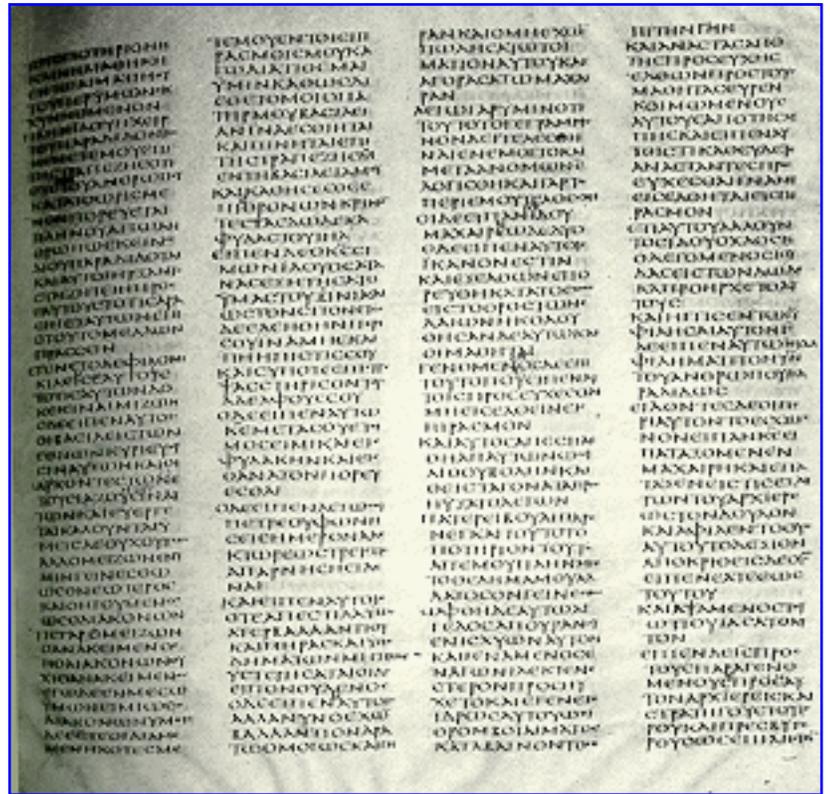
Papyrus is a brittle kind of paper made out of the papyrus plant, which grows in Egypt. To my knowledge there are about 97 papyrus fragment manuscripts of the New Testament. Most of those surviving early texts only have a few verses on them. The most ancient example is the John Ryland papyrus fragment p52, seen at the left, which includes portions of **John 18:31-33 & 37-38**. It is housed in John Rylands Library, Manchester, England. The fragment is believed to have been written some time between 98 and 138 AD. (*The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts*; Philip W. Comfort & David P. Barrett; 1999 Baker Books; p.17-18).

There are six papyri that I am aware of, which record large portions of the New Testament. P45, dated around 200 AD, contains portions of all four Gospels and Acts. P46, from the second century, has almost all the Paul's epistles and Hebrews.

P47, also from the second century, contains **Revelation 9-17**. These are from what is called the Beatty Papyri housed in Dublin Castle in Dublin Ireland. Then there are three lengthy papyri from the Bodmer Papyri. P66 is a second century papyrus that contains almost all of John. P72, a third or fourth century papyrus, contains all of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. Finally, P75, dated between 175-200 AD, contains the most of **Luke through John 15**.

The Uncials or Majuscules

Uncial comes from the Latin word *uncialis*, which means inch-high. It is used to delineate a type of Greek and Latin writing which features capital letters. There are few, if any, divisions between words in uncial manuscripts and no punctuation to speak of. The word majuscule, meaning large or capital letter, is a synonym for uncial. There are some 267 uncials. Three of the most famous uncial New Testament manuscripts are the fourth century manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vatican-us and the fifth century Codex Alexandrius. As an example of an uncial I have included a picture of Codex Sinaiticus



Cursives or Minuscules

Cursives or minuscules are Greek manuscripts written in lower case letters, more like handwriting. The letters flow together, much like writing of today. There are spaces between words and some degree of punctuation. There are at least 2,764 cursive New Testament manuscripts known today. On the left is a cursive manuscript of John 1 from about 1022 AD.



Lectionary Manuscripts

The word *lection* comes from a Latin root word meaning "to read." Lectionaries are portions of Scriptures in Greek (or Latin) Bibles that were read in the church services during the year. There are at least 2,143 known lectionaries in existence. New discoveries are regularly coming to light and so it is difficult to have exact, up to date figures.

TEXT STREAMS OR TEXT FAMILIES

J. J. Griesbach identified three New Testament text-types calling them the **Alexandrian, Western and Byzantine**. He first published his findings in 1775. H. B. Swete writes that there are basically three types of manuscripts, the Constantinoplian or Textus Receptus; the Eusebio-Origen or Palestinain; the Hysychian or Egyptian text type. (*Introduction of the Old Testament in Greek* by H. B. Swete, pp. 76 & ff). More recently men like Lightfoot, in his book *How We Got the Bible*, and Metzger in his book *The Text of the New Testament*, have broken down the divisions further and identify four text streams or text families; **Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine**. While I agree that it is possible to divide and subdivide and micro-divide text types, depending upon the criteria you use, I have decided to look at the text streams issue simply and follow the path of Benjamin G. Wilkinson. He wrote, "anyone who is interested enough to read the vast volume of literature on this subject, will agree that down through the centuries there were only two streams of manuscripts. (*Which Bible* edited by Dr. David Otis Fuller; from the chapter - *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* by Benjamin G. Wilkinson; p. 187).

The Traditional, Byzantine or Eastern Text Group of The Reformation-Protestant Bibles

"The first stream which carried the Received Text in Hebrew and Greek, began with the apostolic churches, and reappearing at intervals down the Christian Era among enlightened believers, was protected by the wisdom and scholarship of the pure church in her different phases: precious manuscripts were preserved by such as the church at Pella in Palestine where Christians fled, when in 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem; by the Syrian Church of Antioch which produced eminent scholarship; by the Italic Church in northern Italy; and also at the same time by the Gallic Church in southern France and by the Celtic Church in Great Britain; by the pre-Waldensian, the Waldensian, and the churches of the Reformation. (Ibid. p.187)

Here is why this is important. Nearly all ancient English Bibles (except the Wycliffe & Douay-Rhimes Catholic Bible), and in fact all the Reformation English Bibles follow the same text family. That family is the Received Text, also called the Textus Receptus. It must be noted that Elzevir first gave the title, Textus Receptus, to the Traditional Text in 1633. This text type has been called by various names by Bible scholars...the Constantinoplian text, Antiochian text, Byzantine text, Traditional text, Apostolic text, the Majority text and the Textus Receptus (Latin for Received Text). The Textus Receptus belongs to the stream of early apostolic manuscripts that were brought from Judea. The Textus Receptus was the Bible of early Eastern Christianity. Dr. Hort admits this when he says, "It is no wonder that the traditional Constantinopolitan text, whether formally official or not, was the Antiochian text of the fourth century. It was equally natural that the text recognized at Constantinople should eventually become in practice the standard New Testament of the East." (*Revision Revised*, John Burgon, p. 134.)

Regardless of where you stand on the "textual debate," this is the fact; the foundational text of all English Bible New Testament translations from 1525 to 1880 was from the Byzantine, Traditional or Majority Text group. The sole exception was the Jesuit Rheimes New Testament of 1582.

I have used the term "Majority Text" several times now, therefore I want to point out just how large this majority is. "This first stream appears, with very little change, in the Protestant Bibles of many languages, and in English, in that Bible known as the King James Version, the one which has been in use for three hundred years in the English-speaking world. These manuscripts have in agreement with them, by far the vast majority of copies of the original text. So vast is this majority that even the enemies of the Received Text admit that nineteen-twentieths of all Greek manuscripts are of this class. (*Which Bible* edited by Dr. David Otis Fuller; from the chapter - *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* by Benjamin G. Wilkinson; p. 187-88).

Indeed, the enormous majority of all Greek New Testament manuscripts in existence are from the so-called Byzantine, Traditional text group. When I began my study several years back, there were 5,255 known manuscripts and portions. Of that number, the large majority, 5,210 of them, more closely matched the Traditional Text group. Only 45 of them followed the minority or Westcott and Hort type text group. So, more than 99% of all the manuscripts that exist are of the Byzantine text family or Traditional text family. "The remainder, representing the Western stream of manuscripts, are clearly defective. Yet it is these defective copies upon which almost all modern translators place their trust. But the Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made no such error." (*Modern Bible Translations Unmasked* by Russell & Colin Standish; p.37).

In fact, there is enormous support for the Majority Text found in Armenian, Ethiopic, Gothic, Latin, and Syriac translations, some predating the earliest Greek manuscripts we possess. But despite this fact, in the nineteenth century, following the texts of the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, many passages of the New Testament have been altered. Yet more recently discovered papyrus fragments have confirmed the Majority Text. "Nineteenth-century biblical scholars claimed that much of the first fourteen chapters of the Gospel of John was corrupted by scribes in the later Byzantine Era. This claim was shown to be utterly false by the discovery of Papyrus Bodmer II. Dated about A.D. 200, prior to the commencement of the Byzantine Era, this Papyrus verified many of the disputed passages attributed to late Byzantine copyists and demonstrated that these passages were present in very early manuscripts." (*Modern Bible Translations Unmasked* by Russell & Colin Standish;p.37-38).

The Minority, Western or Alexandrian Text Group of The Roman Catholic Bibles

The second stream is a small one of a very few manuscripts. Less than 1% of all Greek New Testament manuscripts fit into this group. Here is a brief overview of the three manuscripts considered to be the most important within this group.

1. Codex Alexandrinus (A) – This codex was the first of the so-called "**great uncials**" to become known to western paleographers. "Walton, in his polyglot Bible, indicated it by the letter **A** and thus set the fashion of designating Biblical manuscripts by such symbols." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* online; *Codex Alexandrinus*; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04080c.htm>). The codex came to the knowledge of the western world when Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of the Greek Catholic (Greek Orthodox) Church in Alexandria was transferred in 1621 AD to become the new Patriarch of Constantinople. He sent the codex as a gift to King James I of England, but James I died before the gift was presented. Finally, in 1627 AD Charles I accepted it in James I's stead. It seems probable that Cyril Lucar had brought it with him from Alexandria. Concerning the provenance of the volume, there is "a note by Cyril Lucar states that it was written by Thecla, a noble lady of Egypt, but this is probably merely his interpretation of an Arabic note from the 14th century which states the MS was written by Thecla, the martyr (shortly after the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD). The article goes on to say that "another Arabic note by Athanasius (probably Athanasius III., patriarch c. 1308 AD) states that it was given to the patriarchate of Alexandria, and a Latin note of a later period dates the presentation in 1098." Upon careful examination, scholars say it is clear that more than one person worked on the volume. Actually, at some time in its history the work was bound into four volumes, three Old Testament Volumes and one containing the New Testament and 1 and 2 Clement. The Catholic Encyclopedia says, "two hands are discerned in the New Testament by Woide, three by Sir E. Maunde Thompson and Kenyon" and, "the greater part of Volume III (last volume of the Old Testament) is ascribed by Gregory to a different hand from that of the others." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* online; *Codex Alexandrinus*). The text of Alexandrinus is in double columns of 49 to 51 lines. It is the first codex to contain the major chapters with their titles. A new paragraph is indicated by a large capital. But, there are some paleographers that believe that the principal scribe who prepared this codex could not even read Greek, because spaces sometimes appear in the middle of a word.

The Old Testament of Alexandrinus

I have often read that Alexandrinus contains a complete Old Testament. But that is not an accurate statement. There are about 30 Psalms missing, **Psalm 49:19 to 79:10**, because along the line some place ten leaves of the Old Testament were lost. There are various other lacunas (gaps) in the Old Testament as well. "**Genesis 14:14-17; 15:1-5, 16-19; 16:6-9; I Kings 12:20-14:9**" are missing as well. (*The Catholic Encyclopedia* online; *Codex Alexandrinus*). The order of the Old Testament books is peculiar.

Not only are there Old Testament deletions, but there are numerous Old Testament additions as well. It contains deuterocanonical books and in addition to 1 and 2 Machabees it adds 3 and 4 Machabees which are apocryphal books of a very late origin. I find it interesting that *The Epistle to Marcellius*, which is attributed to Athanasius, is inserted as a preface to the Psalter, together with Eusebius's summary of the Psalms. It contains Psalm 151 as well as 14 Odes or Liturgical Canticles.

The New Testament of Alexandrinus

The New Testament has lost from 19 to 25 leaves of the Gospel of Matthew, as far as **Matthew 25:6**. Strangely there are two leaves missing from the Gospel of John (**John 6:50 to 8:52**) which cover the much disputed passage about the adulterous woman. But, what is amazing is that the Gospels follow the so-called Syrian type text, the ancestor of the Textus Receptus, which is evidence that the traditional text type did have an early origin! There are three leaves missing in **2 Corinthians containing 4:13 to 12:6**. This manuscript ends with **Mark 16:8**, therefore leaving out 9-20. It omits **John 5:4** (For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.) and **1 John 5:7** (For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.).

There are additions to the New Testament as well. According to the table of contents the New Testament once contained the Psalms of Solomon, though it is now missing. Also added to the New Testament are the Epistle of St. Clement of Rome and the II Epistle of Clement. In these two letters "Clement of Alexandria teaches that: [1] Men are saved by works (2 Clement 2:12,15); [2] Christians are in danger of going to Hell (2 Clement 3:8); [3] Christians don't get new bodies at the resurrection (2 Clement 4:2); [4] He was a prophet who wrote Scripture (2 Clement 4:11); [5] The male and female in **1 Corinthians 11:9** were anger and concupiscence (when they were speaking of Christ's being the head, then the husband, followed by the wife in order or chain of authority). Not believing the Bible literally, Clement both fantasized and spiritualized the Scriptures." (*Which Version is The Bible?* By Floyd Jones Th.D, Ph.D; Published by Global Evangelism of Goodyear Arizona; p.69).

In conclusion, I have to wonder why Codex A is considered so valuable textually when it has so many problems? Copyist's errors are frequent. I remind you that numerous paleographers believe that whoever prepared the text could not even read Greek. Likewise it is agreed that two or three different people worked on the manuscript. One author says it "is considered one of the most valuable witnesses to the Septuagint." But, "it is found, however, to bear a great affinity to the text embodied in Origen's Hexapla and to have been corrected in numberless passages according to the Hebrew." And in fact, "the text of the Septuagint codices is in too chaotic a condition...to permit of a sure judgment on the textual value of the great manuscript." (*Codex Alexandrinus*; The Catholic Encyclopedia; On line edition). The New Testament is not much better because of its mixed origin, not to mention the extra biblical material included in the volume. This early 5th century copy of the Bible (with some mutilations) is in the British Library in London. Many scholars consider it to be 3rd of importance only to the next two...

2. Codex Vaticanus (B) – This codex is an uncial manuscript thought to be from mid-4th century. It is made up of 759 leaves written in three columns and has 42 lines to the column, except for the poetical books where there are two columns per page. "It was written by three scribes" according to the Encyclopedia Britannica which goes on to state that later and then much later changes were made by two other scribes (*Encyclopedia Britannica - 11th Edition; vol.3; p879*). It went unnoticed

in the Vatican library for many years until it became known to textual scholars in 1475. However, it was used by Rome. "Pope Sixtus V made it the basis of an edition of the Greek Old Testament in 1580" (*The New Archeological Discoveries and Their Bearing Upon the New Testament* by Camden M. Cobern; published by Funk and Wagnalls 1922; p.136). It was not published to scholars until it was issued in different volumes between 1828 to 1838 in 5 volumes. This set proved to be very inaccurate. In fact, the Vatican kept the manuscript sequestered and took great pains to be sure it was not readily available to outsiders for about another 400 years! From 1843-1866, leading scholars Constantine von Tischendorf and S.P. Tregelles were allowed to look at it for a few hours, but not allowed to copy the MS.

How is this manuscript viewed? Though I cannot figure out why, **many consider this to be the greatest of Codex witnesses to the New Testament**. In fact, this parchment manuscript "was reckoned as the chief authority among MSS. for the Greek Testament of Westcott and Hort." (*The New Archeological Discoveries and Their Bearing Upon the New Testament* by Camden M. Cobern; published by Funk and Wagnalls 1922; p.136). But there are those who have questioned this evaluation and with good reason! In 1860, while a temporary chaplain of an English congregation at Rome, John Burgon made a personal examination of it and found some major problems with in the manuscript. This has been confirmed by many others. Here are just a few of the problems. "The entire manuscript has had the text mutilated, every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible." (*Vaticanus and Sinaiticus* - www.waynejackson.freeseerve.co.uk/kjv/v2.htm). Dr. W. Eugene Scott, who owns a large collection of ancient Bible manuscripts and Bibles says, "the manuscript is faded in places; scholars think it was overwritten letter by letter in the 10th or 11th century, with accents and breathing [marks] added along with corrections from the 8th, 10th and 15th centuries. **All this activity makes precise paleographic analysis impossible.** Missing portions were supplied in the 15th century by copying other Greek manuscripts." (*Codex Vaticanus* by Dr. W. Eugene Scott, 1996).

I question the "great witness" value of any manuscript has been overwritten, doctored, changed and added to for more than 10 centuries. Let me tell you more.

The Old Testament of Vaticanus The first 46 chapters of Genesis are missing through **Genesis 46:28. 2 Kings 2,5-7,10-13** are missing as well. **Psalm 105:27 to Psalm 137:6** are omitted as well. "The order of the books of the Old Testament is as follows: Genesis to Second Paralipomenon, First and second Esdras, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles, Job, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Esther, Judith, Tobias, the Minor Prophets from Osee to Malachi, Isaias, Jeremias, Baruch, Lamentations and Epistle of Jeremias, Ezechiel, Daniel; the Vatican Codex does not contain the Prayer of Manasses or the Books of Machabees." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia On-line; Codex Vaticanus*)

The New Testament of Vaticanus Coming to the New Testament, Barry Burtons writes in his book *Let's Weigh the Evidence* -- "it omits...**Matthew 3**, the Pauline Pastoral Epistles (**1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon**), **Hebrews 9:14 to 13:25**, and all of Revelation... in the gospels alone it leaves out 237

words, 452 clauses and 748 whole sentences, which hundreds of later copies agree together as having the same words in the same places, the same clauses in the same places and the same sentences in the same places." Floyd Jones further notes that **Matthew 16:2-3** and **Romans 16:24** are missing.

There is yet another strange thing about Vaticanus that John Burgon tells us about relating to the **last twelve verses of Mark**.

"To say that in the Vatican Codex (B), which is unquestionably the oldest we possess, St. Mark's Gospel ends abruptly at the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, and that the customary subscription (Kata Mapkon) follows, is true; but it is far from being the whole truth. It requires to be stated in addition that the scribe, whose plan is found to have been to begin every fresh book of the Bible at the top of the next ensuing column to that which contained the concluding words of the preceding book, has at the close of St. Mark's Gospel deviated from his else invariable practice. He has left in this place one column entirely vacant. It is the only vacant column in the whole manuscript - a blank space abundantly sufficient to contain the twelve verses which he nevertheless withheld. Why did he leave that column vacant? What can have induced the scribe on this solitary occasion to depart from his established rule? The phenomenon (I believe I was the first to call distinct attention to it) is in the highest degree significant, and admits only one interpretation. The older manuscript from which Codex B was copied must have infallibly contained the twelve verses in dispute. The copyist was instructed to leave them out - and he obeyed; but he prudently left a blank space in memoriam rei. Never was a blank more intelligible! Never was silence more eloquent! By this simple expedient, strange to relate, the Vatican Codex is made to refute itself even while it seems to be bearing testimony against the concluding verses of St. Mark's Gospel, by withholding them; for it forbids the inference which, under ordinary circumstances, must have been drawn from that omission. It does more. By leaving room for the verses it omits, it brings into prominent notice at the end of fifteen centuries and a half, a more ancient witness than itself." (*Revision Revised: The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel of St. Mark* by John William Burgon; p. 86-87) That's not all. I turn your attention to **John 1:18** -- "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*." Notice the phrase I have underlined, "the only begotten Son." Both Vaticanus (B) and Sinaiticus (Aleph) read "the only begotten **God**" instead of "the only begotten **Son**." That clearly reflects the Arian heresy! In fact, many textual authorities have identified Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, the manuscripts so revered by modern textual critics, as two of the copies of the Greek New Testament made by Eusebius. Frederick Nolan and other authorities have charged Eusebius with making many changes in the Scripture. Nolan writes, "As it is thus apparent that Eusebius was not wanting in power, so it may be shown that he wanted not the will, to make those alterations in the sacred text, with which I have ventured to accuse him." (*An Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate* by

Frederick Nolan; p. 35). I bring this to your attention because, "it is no less true to fact than paradoxical in sound, that the worst corruptions to which the New Testament has ever been subjected, originated within a hundred years after it was composed; that Irenaeus (A.D. 150), and the African Fathers, and the whole Western, with a portion of the Syrian Church, used far inferior manuscripts to those employed by Stunica, or Erasmus, or Stephens thirteen centuries later, when moulding the Textus Receptus." (Scrivener, Introduction to New Testament Criticism, 3rd Edition, 511, quoted in Wilkinson, p.18.).

Here is another interesting fact. "It contains the Epistle of Barnabas...which teaches that water baptism saves the soul." (*Which Version is The Bible?* by Floyd Jones; published by Global Evangelism of Goodyear Arizona; p. 68).

Finally, there are two important points that I want to make before moving on. "Erasmus knew about Vaticanus B and its variant readings in 1515 AD while preparing the New Testament the New Testament Greek text. Because they read so differently from the vast majority of mss which he had seen, Erasmus considered such readings spurious." (*Which Version is The Bible?* by Floyd Jones; published by Global Evangelism of Goodyear Arizona; p. 68). Further, as I understand it, Vaticanus was available to the translators of the King James Bible, but they did not use it because they knew it is unreliable..." It wasn't until 1889-1890 that a complete facsimile was made. The manuscript remains in Vatican City to this day.

3. Codex Sinaiticus a (a or ALEPH) – This codex (also mid-4th century) was discovered by Tischendorf at St. Catharine's Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai on his third visit there in 1859. Today, most of this codex is housed in the National British Library. "The original provenance of the codex is debatable, but the two likeliest contenders seem to be Egypt and Caesarea. It was certainly present in the library at Caesarea sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries, where it was corrected at one point against a manuscript that had been corrected against the original Hexapla of Origen by the martyr Pamphilius. Although it has frequently been suggested, it is unlikely that Sinaiticus (or Codex Vaticanus, a very similar manuscript) was one of the fifty parchment books ordered by the Emperor Constantine. The text of the OT reflects the Old Greek (where it has been determined), though it is inferior to Vaticanus in most books. In the NT, Sinaiticus is frequently cited as an Alexandrian witness. However, in **John 1-8**, at least, it contains a text more closely related to the Western tradition." (*Codex Sinaiticus* by James R. Adair, Jr. - Expanded by the author from his article in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*)

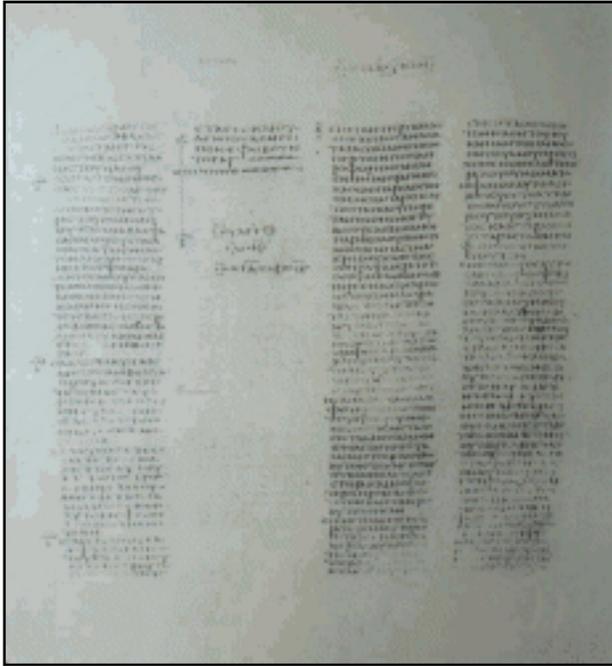
This manuscript is written on thin vellum. The portion of the manuscript that resides at the British Library contains 346½ leaves of that number 199 are Old Testament leaves. There are another 43 leaves at the University Library at Leipzig and yet another 3 partial leaves at Leningrad. In 1975 the monks at St. Catherine's monastery discovered several leaves from Genesis believed to be from Sinaiticus in a room whose ceiling had collapsed centuries ago. The leaves measure 13 X 15½ inches and are written in uncial characters, without accents or breathings, and with no punctuation except, at times, the apostrophe and the single point for a period. It is written in four columns to the

page, except in the poetical books, which are written in two wide columns. There are 48 lines per column except in the Catholic Epistles, which have 47 lines per column. Originally it must have contained the whole Old Testament, but is "has suffered severely from mutilation, especially in the historical books from Genesis to Esdras (Ezra) inclusive. A curious oddity that occur is that Esdras (Ezra) 9:9 follows 1 Parlipomen (1 Chronicles) 19:17 without any break." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia On-line; Codex Sinaiticus*). The article goes on to say that one of the many later correctors has added a note that states that the seven leaves of 1 Parlipomen (1 Chronicles) copied into the Book of Esdras (Ezra) because the manuscript from which Sinaiticus was copied was incorrect as well. One has to wonder about the scribe(s) doing the copying. Either he (or they) did not know the Bible or he did not know the language or he was careless. Perhaps it was a combination of all of these. But, I must say that errors like this lead me to doubt that statement of the "scholars" who claim that this is one of the "best" manuscripts. Speaking of scribes, Konstantin Von Tischendorf identified the handwriting of four different scribes in the writing of the original text. But that is not the end of the scribe problem! "He recognized seven correctors of the text..." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia On-line; Codex Sinaiticus*). Others say there were as many as ten scribes who altered the text. James R. Adair, Jr., author of the article on Sinaiticus in the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* says at one point the codex was "corrected against the original Hexapla of Origen by the martyr Pamphilius." He arrived at this conclusion because of a note that is the manuscript. It reads --

"This codes was compared with a very ancient exemplar which had been corrected by the hand of the holy martyr Pamphilus [died 309 AD]; which exemplar contained at the end of the subscription in his own hand: "Taken and corrected according to the hexapla of Origen: Antonius compared it: I, Pamphilus, corrected it." The problem is that Origen was a Bible corrupter, who "was moving away from the pure text of Scripture which had come from the Apostles hands." (*Rome and The Bible*; by David Cloud; published by Way of Life Literature, 1996; p. 22). And there is good reason to come to this conclusion. Origin "cited the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, on the former part of the Canon, he appealed to the authority of Valentinus and Heracleon on the latter. While he thus raised the credit of those revisals, which had been made by heretics, he detracted from the authority of that text which had been received by the orthodox. Some of the difficulties which he found himself unable to solve in the Evangelsits, he undertook to remove..." (*Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate* by Frederick Nolan; published 1815; p.432).

My point is simply this. The early corrections of the manuscript are made from Origen's corrupt source. But that was just the beginning of the tampering! As many as nine other scribes tampered with the codex. Consider the observations of Tischendorf once again. He "counted 14,800 corrections in Sinaiticus." (*Codes Sinaiticus* by Navida Shahid; www.beyond-the-illusion.com/files/Religion/Islam/research/codx0894.html). Alterations, and more alterations and more alterations were made, and in fact, most of them are believed to be made in the 6th and 7th centuries. "On nearly every page of the manuscript there are corrections and revisions, done by 10 different people." (*Which Is The Right Version of the Bible*; www.waynejackson.freeseerve.co.uk/kjv/v2.htm). He goes on to say, "...the New Testament...is extremely unreliable...on many occasions 10, 20, 30, 40, words are dropped...letters, words even whole

sentences are frequently written twice over, or begun and immediately canceled; while that gross blunder, whereby a clause is omitted because it happens to end in the same word as the clause preceding occurs no less than 115 times in the New Testament."



There is one particular omission that made a real impact upon my mind, that I believe is important to bring into the picture at this point. Several years back I went to the British Museum, specifically to take a look at Sinaiticus. To my surprise I discovered that, while **Mark 16:9-20** indeed was missing, it was clear to see that it had originally been there, but had been pumiced (erased) out. The space was still evident in the codex and the letters could faintly be seen.

My point is, it was there originally. I could see it with my own eyes! It was at that point that I realized that the note in my New International Version - "The two most reliable early manuscripts do not have **Mark 16:9-20**", was not telling the whole story! In reality, the verses were originally there! I should be noted that the New

Testament omits **Matthew 16:2-3; John 5:5, John 8:1-11; Acts 8:37; Romans 16:24; 1 John 5:7** and about a dozen other entire verses. "The most significant fact regarding these MSS is that in both Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus Aleph, **John 1:18** reads that Jesus was the only begotten "God" instead of the only begotten "Son." God was not begotten at the incarnation! God begat his "only begotten son who, insofar as his deity is concerned, is eternal as we read in **Micah 5:2**. That is the original Arian heresy. The Arian heresy is believed by many to have resulted "from Origen's editing the Greek manuscripts encountered in his travels and appears in Vaticanus B and Sinaiticus **α** which were derived from copying his work. (*The Septuagint: A Critical Analysis* by Floyd Jones; published by Global Evangelism 1998; p. 10).

There are numerous other problems with this codex as well. For instance, it includes two uninspired books in the New Testament. The entire Epistle of Barnabas (which teaches baptismal regeneration), except six leaves, and the Shepherd of Hermas, which is incomplete.

Finally, I must point out something ironic about these two alleged "oldest and best" manuscripts. They do not agree with each other! "There are 3036 differences between the readings in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in the Gospels alone" (*Codex B and Its Allies* by Herman Hoskier; volume 2, p.1). John Burgon points out that it is easier to find two consecutive verses in which the two manuscripts differ, than two consecutive verses in which they entirely agree. We should find that very disturbing. My research has led me to conclude that **the three "Great Uncials" are at best unreliable.** I am thankful that the Bibles of the Reformation were based on what came to be called the Traditional text or the **Textus Receptus.**