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New Manuscripts of the Bible from Egypt

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Source: *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1908), pp. 49-55

Published by: [Archaeological Institute of America](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/496857>

Accessed: 29-11-2015 23:34 UTC

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NEW MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE FROM EGYPT

[PLATES II-IV]

MR. CHARLES L. FREER of Detroit, Michigan, has in his possession four very ancient manuscripts of parts of the Bible. He purchased these early in 1907, in Cairo, from a dealer named Ali Arabi, who stated that the manuscripts came from Akhmim (the ancient Panopolis), where, it will be remembered, the Apocryphal Gospel and Revelation of Peter was found in 1886 in an ancient burying-ground. He also stated that a female statue, now No. 381 in the Cairo museum, was found at the same time. It is clear that the manuscripts were dug up from some place where they were buried or lost in ancient times, but we have as yet no accurate information in regard to either time or place of discovery. Before the purchase by Mr. Freer the manuscripts had been examined by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, and on their recommendation Mr. Hogarth had advised the British Museum to buy them.

Early in December, 1907, Mr. Freer invited me to examine and report on the manuscripts and has placed every assistance at my service in accomplishing the work.<sup>1</sup>

The four manuscripts are of different sizes, shapes, and ages, but they apparently once formed volumes of a single Bible, so I shall refer to them by the Roman numerals I to IV in the order in which they would have stood in that collection.

Manuscript I is a parchment manuscript of Deuteronomy and Joshua, written in a large, upright uncial hand of the fourth

<sup>1</sup> The report on which this article is based was read at the joint meeting of the Archaeological Institute and the American Philological Association in Chicago. A brief article dealing more particularly with the value of the manuscripts for establishing the text of the Bible has appeared in the February number of the *Biblical World*.

or fifth century. The manuscript is finely preserved; in fact only a little of the first page, which is slightly worm-eaten, is illegible. This, somewhat reduced, is shown in Plate II. The size of the pages is 0.301 m. by 0.259 m.

The manuscript consists now of twelve quires of eight leaves each and two of six. These are numbered on the upper right-hand corner of the first page from  $\Lambda Z$  to N. Therefore the first thirty-six quires, about two hundred and eighty-eight leaves, are missing. The manuscript must once have contained also Genesis to Numbers inclusive. The fresh appearance of the first page of Deuteronomy convinces me that the manuscript was divided at the time of discovery. The first portion, much damaged by decay, is probably still in Egypt.

The general character of the writing can be seen from the plate. The parchment is smooth, firm, and fairly thin. The ink is dark brown and has faded but little. The first three lines of the book are in red. Lines were ruled with a hard point on the white side of the parchment only. At the top of the page there is a ruling for each of the first two or three lines, after that for only every other line. Perpendiculars are ruled for the ends of the lines. The whole manuscript seems to have been written by the same scribe, though the use of capitals increases slightly in Joshua. The usual church abbreviations occur, and also smaller letters sometimes at the ends of the lines to save space. There are no accents or breathings. Instances of a second hand occur very rarely.

A comparison<sup>1</sup> of the first chapter and a half of Joshua shows the following results concerning the quality of the text. Manuscript I agrees with B alone 7 times, with A, 22 times, with F, 3 times, with AB, 33 times, with BF, 20 times, with AF, 21 times. It has only 11 individual errors, all slight. It stands nearest to A, but is better. It differs most (80 times) from F.

Manuscript II is a much-decayed parchment manuscript of the Psalms. No page of the manuscript is perfect, yet large portions of each of the Psalms will prove recoverable. It seemed best to disturb this decayed, worm-eaten, and hardened

<sup>1</sup> The comparison was made with the three old uncial manuscripts, B, A, and F, as shown in Swete's edition.

mass of parchment as little as possible, until we were prepared to mount and photograph each page as it was freed from the mass. Probably some ninety leaves will prove separable.

The last page of the manuscript, as I found it, closed with the *subscriptio* ψαλμοι ρν, with considerable vacant space below. Yet in a parcel said to contain papyrus fragments of the Songs of David, I found a fragment of parchment which once formed the next leaf after that *subscriptio*. On the first side of it stands the 151st Psalm, on the other the beginning of the first canticle.

As united, the last seven leaves of this manuscript are written in a large sloping, uncial hand, having the letters θ, ο, σ, ε, rather narrow and elongated. It is manifestly the youngest writing in any of the four manuscripts, and may be dated at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century.

The main portion of the manuscript is written in a slightly smaller, upright uncial hand, having well-rounded or square

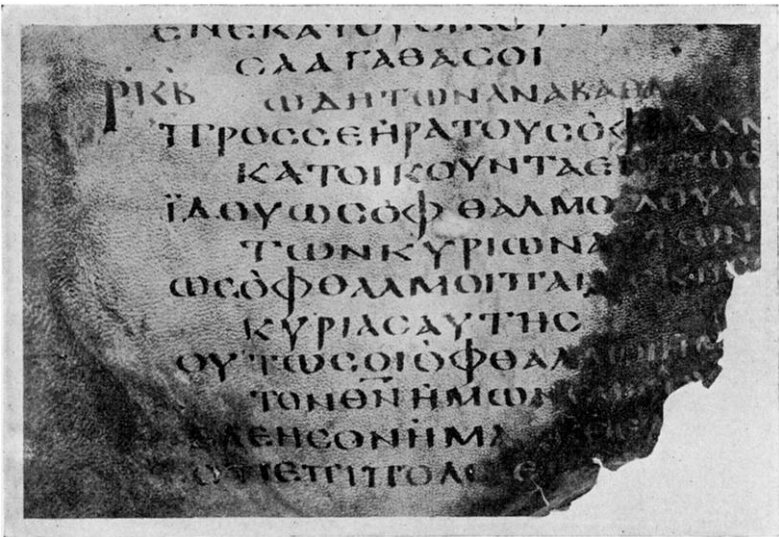


FIGURE 1. — MANUSCRIPT II. PORTION OF PSALM CXXII.

letters. Figure 1, containing a portion of Psalm 122, gives a fair impression of the character of the writing. It is the oldest manuscript of the four and should be dated late in the fourth

century. The pages now measure 0.327 m. by 0.240 m. There is only one column on a page; verses generally correspond to Hebrew parallelisms, and new verses begin new lines. There are thirty lines to a page. The ink is dark brown, but has sometimes peeled off badly. The numbers and titles of the Psalms are in red. There are no accents or breathings, but sometimes a slight, unvarying mark over the first vowel of a word. There is no separation of words, no punctuation, no capitalization, or projection of letters before the line. Corrections by a second hand occur very rarely. A comparison of Psalms 146 and 150 with the manuscript readings given in Swete's edition shows the following results: Manuscript II has escaped 17 errors of **ⲛ**, 9 of A, 5 of R, 5 of T. It never agrees with B, A, or R alone against the rest, but with **ⲛ** it has one common error and 3 with T. In the other 3 cases where it disagrees with B it is supported by two or more of the other manuscripts.

Manuscript III is a parchment manuscript of the four Gospels, written in small, slightly sloping uncials of the fifth or sixth century. The covers (Plate III) are of wood nearly half an inch thick, and are adorned with paintings representing the four evangelists. The name of Mark is still legible in the upper right-hand corner. The manuscript contains one hundred and eighty-four written leaves, of a size 0.208 m. by 0.143 m. The quires are regularly of eight leaves, though some of four, five, and six leaves occur. Quire numbers occur only rarely and very near the edge of the parchment. Apparently the others were trimmed away at the time of a second binding. A second hand has corrected rarely in lighter ink. The style of the writing is shown in Plate IV.

As regards the value of the text, more can be said in praise of the parent manuscript than for the scribe of this one. In the first two chapters of Matthew I noted thirty-six errors, including cases of itacism, metathesis, and dittography, which must be referred to the scribe. In these chapters there are some thirty disputed readings. A comparison of these shows that our manuscript was under Syrian influence in thirteen cases, and under Western in two, while eight cases show pre-Syrian readings, and there are besides three good special variants.

Far more interesting, however, is the relation of manuscript III to the question of the insertions in the text of the Gospels, for it has Mark 16, 9–20, with the following notable addition after v. 14, as shown in Plate IV:

κακείνοι ἀπελογοῦν(ο) λέγοντες ὅτι ὁ  
αἰὼν οὗτος τῆς ἀνομίας καὶ τῆς ἀπιστίας  
ὑπὸ τὸν Σατανᾶν ἐστὶν ὁ μὴ ἔων τὰ ὑπὸ  
τῶν πνε(υμ)άτων ἀκάθαρτα τὴν ἀλήθειαν  
τοῦ θ(εο)ῦ καταλαβέσθαι (καὶ) δύναμιν. διὰ  
τοῦτο ἀποκάλυψον σοῦ τὴν δικαιοσύ-  
νην ἥδη, ἐκείνοι ἔλεγον τῷ Χ(ριστ)ῷ καὶ ὁ  
Χ(ριστὸ)ς ἐκείνοις προσέλεγεν ὅτι πεπληρω-  
ται ὁ ὄρος τῶν ἐτῶν τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ  
Σατανᾶ, ἀλλὰ ἐγγίζει ἄλλα δ(ε)ινά· καὶ ὑ-  
πὲρ (τ)ῶν [εγω] ἀμαρτησάντων (ἐγὼ) παρεδόθη  
εἰς θάνατον ἵνα ὑποστρέψωσιν εἰς τὴν  
ἀλήθειαν καὶ μηκέτι ἀμαρτήσωσιν,  
ἵνα τὴν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ πν(ευμα)τικὴν καὶ ἄ-  
φθαρτον τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξαν  
κληρονομήσωσιν. ἀλλὰ πορευθέντες . . .

Hieronymus, *contra Pelag.* 2, 15, cites the equivalent of the first five lines as found in certain manuscripts, especially Greek. *Et illi satisfaciebant dicentes: "Saeculum istud iniquitatis et incredulitatis substantia est, quae non sinit per immundos spiritus veram dei apprehendi virtutem; idcirco iam nunc revela iustitiam tuam."*

Instead of *substantia*, we must read *sub Satana* with one Vatican manuscript of Hieronymus, and also change *quae* to *qui*, but even then marked differences remain. It seems best to explain these on the basis that Hieronymus quoted from memory, though one error, the absence of *καὶ* in line 5, must have disfigured the manuscripts known to him.

In the Greek text of the new paragraph one emendation needs further mention. Line 11 reads *ὑπερωνεγωαμαρτησαντων*. If we derive *ὑπερών* from *ὑπέρειμι*, it has no satisfactory meaning, and the other alternative, *ὑπεράω*, is not found in Hellenistic Greek. Furthermore, the position of *ἐγὼ* is incompatible with any interpretation. It is either seven letters too late or

twelve too early; but twelve letters is just the length of a line in the narrow columns of the Sinaitic manuscript. So we get a hint that the parent manuscript had narrow columns, and that ἐγώ, written in above the end of one line, was copied at the end of the preceding.

The end of Mark, as completed in our new manuscript, probably shows the form of the lost Gospel, which was used by some early Christian editor to complete the Gospel of Mark. The new paragraph was omitted intentionally, because it referred to the destruction of the world as *near at hand*.

In many of the other cases manuscript III sides with the older manuscripts of the Gospels in omitting passages of doubtful authority.

Manuscript IV is a blackened, decayed fragment of a parchment manuscript of the Epistles of Paul. Its largest measure-



FIGURE 2. — MANUSCRIPT IV. II THESSALONIANS II, Vss. 5-6.

ments are 0.165 m. by 0.112 m. About sixty leaves will prove separable. Figure 2 shows the character of the writing, which belongs to the fifth century, and also how little remains of each page. Originally there were about thirty-six lines to the page. I was able to locate passages from Ephesians, Colossians, Thes-

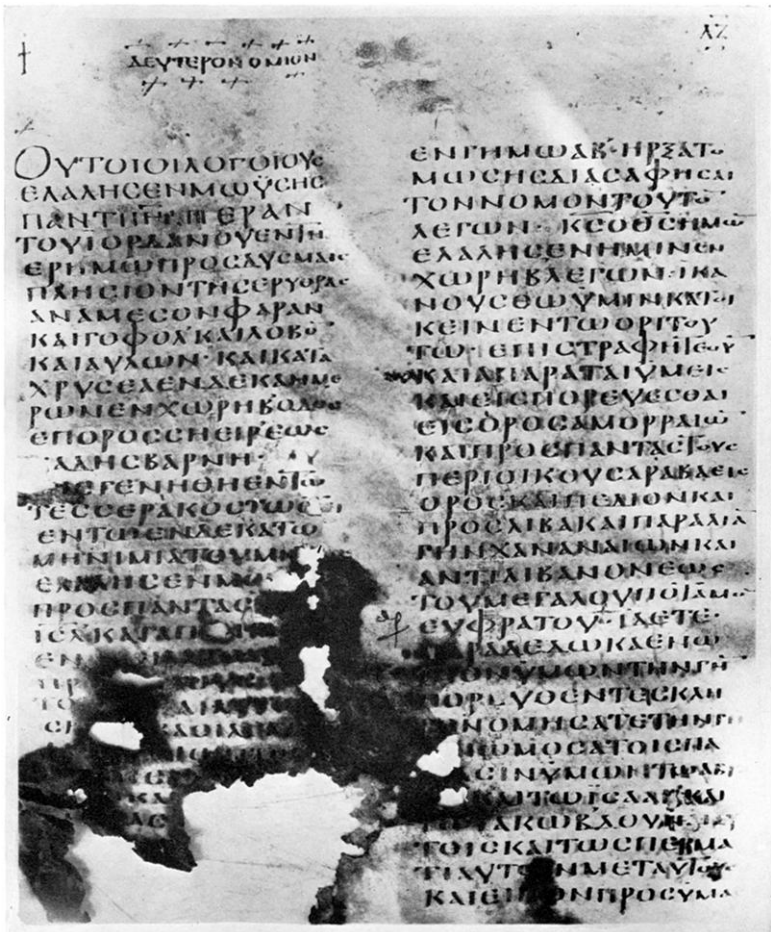
salonians, and Hebrews, also two form or *quaternio* numbers, K and KΓ. On the basis of these facts I have been able to compute the size of the manuscript, and so learn the contents with a fair degree of certainty. There were originally twenty-six quires, though some had less than eight leaves each. This makes it certain that Acts and most of the Catholic Epistles were originally contained, though now entirely lost. The Book of Revelation was surely not present, and we cannot feel sure that all the Epistles of Paul were included. The text is remarkably accurate and free from interpolations in the few passages where I could compare it.

What I have thus far learned of the four manuscripts is not inconsistent with the statement that they came from Akhmîm, and I am now inclined to believe that they once formed parts of a Bible in use in Upper Egypt. Either during or soon after the Moslem conquest in 639 A.D., this Bible ceased to be needed because of the withdrawal of the Greek Christians, and so was either buried or lost. The manuscripts are in consequence free from interpolations and corrections of later times.

HENRY A. SANDERS.

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN.





MANUSCRIPT I. DEUTERONOMY I, Vss. 1-8



COVERS OF MANUSCRIPT III



MANUSCRIPT III. MARK XVI, Vss. 12-17