

# The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

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## STATION 33: The *Codex Sinaiticus*

FOURTH CENTURY





***View of Station 33***

The ***Codex Sinaiticus*** gets its name from the place of its discovery, the famous monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, built in the middle of the sixth century A.D. by the Emperor Justinian. In the mid-nineteenth century Constantine von Tischendorf found the manuscript, some leaves of which were in a waste-basket waiting to be burnt. He was able to take it away to Russia, and in 1855 he presented it to Czar Alexander II of Russia at St. Petersburg, where it remained until well after the Russian Revolution. In 1933, the Codex was purchased by the British Museum for the sum of 100,000 Pounds, raised largely by public appeal in Britain and America, and supplemented by a grant from the British government.

In its original state, the manuscript probably comprised at least 730 leaves (1460 pages) of fine vellum, made from both sheepskin and goatskin. Since the size of the double sheets of vellum, each making two leaves (four pages) must originally have measured about 17 X 30 inches (43 X 76 cm), and since each no doubt represents the skin of a single animal, the expense of providing the necessary animals (about 360) must have come to a considerable sum.

The ***Codex Sinaiticus*** is a fourth-century manuscript of the Bible, preserving part of the O.T. and (unusually among the surviving codices) **all of the New Testament** (of the 274 uncial manuscripts of the New Testament, Sinaiticus is the only one that contains the entire twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The order is, Gospels, Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews following 2 Thessalonians), Acts, Catholic Epistles, Revelation), with the "Epistle of Barnabas" and part of the "Shepherd of Hermas" (as far as Mandate iv.3.6). of the complete original, 43 leaves are now preserved at Leipzig, fragments of three others at Leningrad, and 347 at the British Library (199 of the Old Testament, 148 of the New Testament). Recently, at least 8, perhaps even 14 folios from Codex Sinaiticus have been found at St. Catherine's Monastery. The manuscript is typically written in four columns (two in Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and Job), 48 lines to a column.

Sinaiticus is written in a simple and dignified 'Biblical uncial' hand, the letters being free from ornamental serifs. There are no accents and breathing marks. A new paragraph is indicated by extending the initial letter (which is not enlarged) slightly into the left-hand margin; the preceding line is often not filled out to the right-hand margin. Before the manuscript left the scriptorium, the "Eusebian apparatus" was entered with red ink in the margins of the Gospels, except in Luke.

Tischendorf, followed by Lake, identified four different scribes in the production of the codex, whom he named A, B, C, and D. On the basis, however, of more recent detailed scrutiny of the manuscript by Milne and Skeat, it has become clear that there were only three. These three hands are extraordinarily alike, suggesting that the scribes must have received their training in some large writing school with a definite tradition of its own. At the same time, however, they disclose individual peculiarities, apart from the formation of letters, which make it possible to distinguish them. One of these is the difference in the correctness of the spelling of each scribe. In Greek, as in English, pronunciation continued to develop after the spelling of words had become fixed, with the result that correct spelling had to be learned in the main by sheer force of memory. The spelling of scribe D of Sinaiticus is well-nigh faultless; scribe B, by contrast, is an exceedingly poor speller, while scribe A is not very much better.

These and other points make it possible to show that scribe A wrote most of the historical and poetical books of the Old Testament, almost the whole of the New Testament, and the Epistle of Barnabas, while scribe B was responsible for the Prophets and the Shepherd of Hermas. The work of scribe D was curiously spasmodic: in the Old Testament he wrote the whole of Tobit and Judith, the first half of 4 Maccabees, and the first two-thirds of the Psalms. In the New Testament, besides writing the first five verses of Revelation, he rewrote six pages where, apparently, scribe A had made some unusually serious mistake.

Besides errors in spelling, here and there in the work of all three scribes one finds other faults, particularly accidental omissions. In the light of such carelessness in transcription, it is not surprising that a good many correctors (apparently as many as nine) have been at work on the manuscript, some contemporary (or identical) with the original scribes, and others as late as the twelfth century. Tischendorf's edition of the manuscript enumerates some 14,800 places where some alteration has been made to the text. By far the most extensive of the corrections are those made by a group of scholars in the seventh century (denoted by the sigla `p c.a' or `p c.b,' the latter representing at least three scribes). The most important of these is p c.a, who carefully revised the entire manuscript (except the Epistle of Barnabas), bringing it into general conformity with the Byzantine texts familiar to him. Another corrector, called `p c. Pamph' by Kirsopp Lake, added extremely

important notes at the end of 1 Esdras (= Nehemiah) and Esther. These state that the manuscript was collated with a very early copy bearing an autograph note by Pamphilus the martyr, to the effect that he himself had corrected this manuscript in prison from Origen's own copy of the Hexapla. If this is so, the corrections of this hand (which begin with I Samuel and end with Esther) are based on a manuscript only one step removed from Origen himself.

By the use of the ultra-violet lamp, Milne and Skeat discovered that the original reading in the manuscript was erased at a few places and another written in its place by the same scribe. In Matthew 6:18, for example, instead of "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they neither toil nor spin," the first hand of N seems to have read "... how they neither card nor spin nor toil." This reading, not otherwise attested in New Testament manuscripts, is included in the New English Bible as a marginal reading.

The last verse of the Gospel according to John (21:25) is another passage where the use of ultra-violet light has confirmed Tischendorf's surmise as to the original reading. It is now known that the scribe for some reason finished the Gospel with verse 24, adding a subscription and drawing, as usual, a **coronis** (tail-piece) in the left-hand margin between the text and the subscription. Later, however, the same scribe washed the vellum clean of the coronis and subscription and added the concluding verse, repeating the coronis and subscription in a correspondingly lower position.

The place of the writing of **Codex**

**Sinaiticus** has been greatly debated. Hort thought that it was produced in the West, probably Rome; Milne and Skeat, following J. Rendel Harris, preferred Caesarea; other scholars, including Kenyon, Gardthausen, Ropes, and Jellicoe, found reasons to connect it with Alexandria.

The date of Sinaiticus is ordinarily given as the fourth century, though Gardthausen, on the basis of epigraphical evidence, argued vigorously for the first half of the fifth century. On the other hand, as Milne and Skeat point out, palaeographically the hand resembles papyrus documents that have been dated between about A.D. 100 and the second half of the fourth century. The one objective criterion of the **terminus post**

**quem** is the presence of the Eusebian apparatus which was inserted, as it seems, by two of the scribes of the manuscript itself. The

**terminus ante quem** is less certain, but, according to Milne and Skeat, is not likely to be much later than about 360.

The character of the text of Sinaiticus varies from book to book in accord with the varying characters of the separate rolls or codices from which its text was ultimately derived. In the Old Testament it agrees, on the whole, with [Codex Vaticanus](#) (B), which is usually regarded as the best all-round manuscript of the Greek Old Testament. As compared with B it contains additionally 1 and 4 Maccabees. In certain books, notably 1 Chronicles, 2 Esdras, and the Prophets, Sinaiticus has the better text, its superiority being especially marked in Isaiah. In Tobit, Sinaiticus has a considerably longer recension than that of Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, but there is no general agreement as to which is superior.

In the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels and Acts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus very frequently agree against the overwhelming majority of later manuscripts. In the Book of Revelation, on the other hand, the character of the text of Sinaiticus is distinctly inferior to that of [Codex Alexandrinus](#) of the following century.

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***Tischendorf's own reproduction of the Sinaiticus is shown as part of [Station 48](#), which shows all three of the great uncial codices. The Chester Beatty Papyri, which predate even these uncials, are shown at [Station 52](#).***

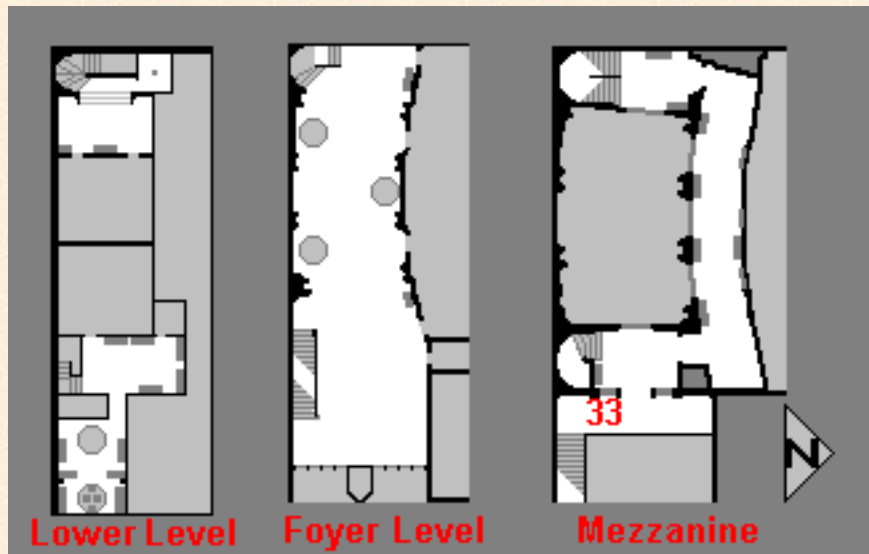
**[Station](#)**

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## STATION LOCATION MAP

Below is a floor plan map of the Cathedral in 3 sections, one for each level. The first section is the Lower Level, the second is the Foyer Level, and the third is the Mezzanine Level. This station is in an Alcove on the Mezzanine level, at the red #33.



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