

# A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD



# Council of Rome? (382)

- All purported knowledge about what took place at the (non-ecumenical) Council of Rome is based on the so-called Gelasian Decree (*Decretum Gelasianum*), a five-chapter work attributed to Pope Gelasius I, bishop of Rome from 492-496. Chapter two provides a list of OT and NT canonical books identical to what was later confirmed at Trent.
  - In 1794, Fr. Arevalo espoused the theory that the first three chapters were really the acts of the Council of Rome about a century earlier under Pope Damasus (hence the “Damasine List,” as it is often referred) and then was later edited/expanded by Gelasius. This theory was extremely popular until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
    - In 1912, German NT scholar and textual critic Ernst Von Dobschütz published his meticulous research comparing manuscripts of the three-chapter “Damasine” and five-chapter “Gelasian” versions of the decree. He *decisively* argued on the basis of textual criticism and historical analysis that the three-chapter version *derived from* the later five-chapter version, and therefore, did not actually represent the acts of the Council of Rome, or a decree of a Pope at all. His reasons include:



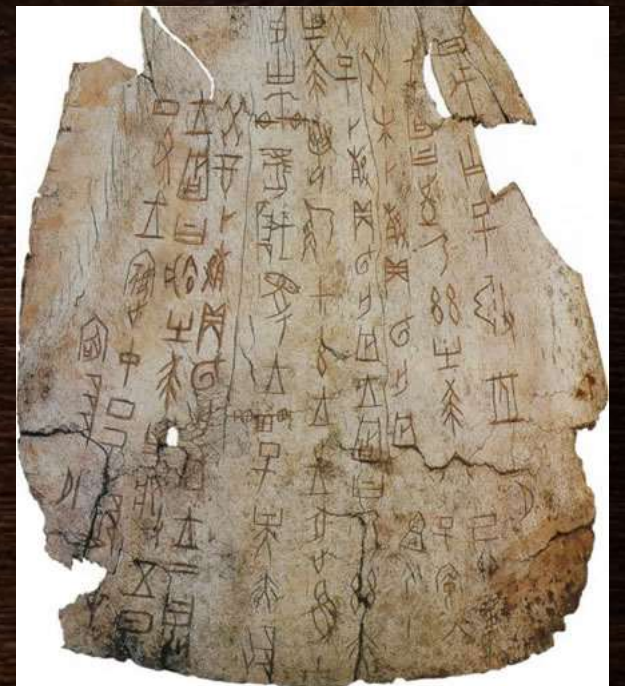
# Council of Rome? (382)

- Given the nature of the 80 or so manuscripts he compared, the shorter form implies the longer form and thus, seems to be derived from it.
- The third subsection (I3) of chapter one contains a substantive quote from Augustine who wrote around 416, over 30 years after the Council convened.
- If it were an official decree of Gelasius, it would have been known and used by Dionysius Exiguus and Cassiodorus.
- The style does not match that of papal decree.
- For these reasons, the vast majority of scholars familiar with the literature surrounding the Gelasian Decree have now concluded with Dobschütz that the decree is a sixth-century forgery from an anonymous (but well-read) author; history has not left us with what happened at the Council of Rome.



# Writing Surfaces

- Stone (Ex. 34:27-28)
- Clay (Ez. 4:1)
- Wood and Wax (Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2; Lk. 1:63; Jn. 19:20-21?)
  - “Albums”
- Metal
- Bone
- Ostraca





# Papyrus (Cyperus Papyrus)





# Parchment/Leather (2 Tim. 4:13)





# Writing Instruments

## – Reed Pen

- Most common writing instrument in antiquity. Often split at the end; stiffer than quills and thus, the point became dull much quicker.

## – Stylus

- Used by ancient Greeks to etch wax tablets

## – Writing Brush

- Bristles set into a handle and dipped in ink. Used since ancient times in Chinese calligraphy.



## – Quill

- Enjoyed some ancient use, but became most popular in the Middle Ages





# Ink-Making

- There were multiple kinds of ink and ink recipes, but the dominant ink for biblical manuscripts was a carbon-based mixture made of charcoal or lampblack (soot) and water, combined with some gum added for thickness.
- Over time, ink-making became more sophisticated both in terms of production process and appearance.





# Scrolls

- Scrolls were made by pasting multiple pieces of papyrus end-to-end and then winding the long strip around a roller, thus creating a volume (derived from the Latin, *volumen*, meaning “something rolled up”). This prevented someone from having to carry around stacks of loose papyrus.
  - Scrolls seldom exceed 35 ft in length, which is undoubtedly why Luke and Acts were written on separate scrolls.
  - The scroll was inconvenient to use, both because it required two hands to unwind it, hold it open and close it and because it made finding individual verses cumbersome. Within the Christian community, the scroll quickly gave way to the codex.





# Codices

- A codex was the ancient equivalent of a book, which the early Christian community adopted early relative to those around them who continued with the scroll for longer.
  - The codex was made by folding one or more sheets of papyrus together and sewing them in the middle. The codex was 1) more economic to produce 2) more convenient to use 3) allowed writing on the back of a page and 4) had theological advantages. Parchment codices quickly followed.
- Due chiefly to its durability but also due to its comparative smoothness as a writing surface, parchment became the dominant medium to receive writing until paper was introduced to into Europe from China by Arabian traders in the late Middle Ages. By the mid-fourteenth century, paper had all but replaced parchment in Europe





# Transcriptional Practices

- The first copies of the autographs (i.e., the original Scriptural documents) were made by individual Christians wanting a copy for themselves or for their congregation. Because of the incredible spread of Christianity, demand for copies of the Scriptures often outpaced competent ability. This has resulted in the reality *that the most significant textual variants are present in our earliest manuscripts.*
  - Additionally, preparation of translations for non-Greek speakers often were poorly done for similar reasons.
    - Augustine: “...anyone who happened to gain possession of a Greek manuscript and who imagined that he had some facility in both Latin and Greek, however slight that might be, dared to make a translation.” *De doctrina christiana*, II.xi.16
    - Once Christianity gained official sanction by the state in the mid-fourth century, it became common for commercial book manufacturers, *scriptoria*, to produce copies of the New Testament books.



# Snapshot of a Scriptorium

– Later, in the Byzantine period, copies were frequently made at monasteries where monks, not under the same time constraints, would often work in their cells.

- The Perils of Monastic Transcription

- With the advent of the printing press and the printing of the first Bible in the mid-fifteenth century, copying by hand quickly became outdated.





# Important Ancient Witnesses: Papyri

## – The Chester-Beatty Papyri

- p<sup>45</sup>, p<sup>46</sup>, p<sup>47</sup>

– p<sup>45</sup> contains 30 leaves of the original (approx.) 220 containing all four Gospels and Acts and dates to the first half of the third century.

– Despite being incomplete, p<sup>46</sup> is our oldest witness to Paul's letters. Now containing only 86 leaves of an original 104, it dates to about 200 A.D.

– p<sup>47</sup> contains ten leaves from the middle of Revelation (9:10-17:2) and dates to the middle or latter second century.

## – The John Rylands Fragment

- p<sup>52</sup>

– P<sup>52</sup> measures only 2 ½ x 3 ½ inches and contains portions of John 18:31-3 and 37-38. Dating to the first half of the second century, it is the oldest portion of the New Testament known to be in existence today.





# Important Ancient Witnesses: Papyri

- The Bodmer Papyri
  - P<sup>75</sup>
    - A single-quire codex containing Luke and John and dating to somewhere between 175-225 AD, P<sup>75</sup> is the earliest extant witness to Luke and one of the earliest to John. It preserves the so-called “primary” Alexandrian witness.



End of Luke, beginning of John



# Majuscule Manuscripts

- Codex Vaticanus (B)
  - Written in the mid-fourth century, Vaticanus contained both testaments, along with the Apocrypha minus the books of Maccabees.
  - There are three lacunae (missing portions) within Vaticanus: the first 46 chapters of Genesis, a section of about 30 Psalms and from Hebrews 9:14-Revelation.

