

Le Codex Beza

(CODEX CANTABRIGIENSIS), one of the five most important Greek [New Testament manuscripts](#), and the most interesting of all on account of its peculiar readings; scholars designate it by the letter D (see BIBLICAL CRITICISM, sub-title *Textual*). It receives its name from Theodore Beza, the friend and successor of [Calvin](#), and from the [University of Cambridge](#), which obtained it as a gift from Beza in 1581 and still possesses it. The text is bilingual, Greek and Latin. The [manuscript](#), written in uncial characters, forms a quarto volume, of excellent vellum, 10 x 8 inches, with one column to a page, the Greek being on the left page (considered the place of [honour](#)), the parallel Latin facing it on the right page. It has been reproduced in an excellent photographic facsimile, published (1899) by the [University of Cambridge](#).

The codex contains only the [Four Gospels](#), in the order once common in the West, Matthew, John, Luke, Mark, then a few verses (11-15), in Latin only, of the Third Epistle of St. John, and the Acts. There are missing, however, from the [manuscript](#) of the original scribe, in the Greek, [Matthew 1:1-20](#); [\[3:7-16\]](#); [6:20-9:2](#); [27:2-12](#); [John 1:16-3:26](#); [\[18:14-20:13\]](#); [\[Mark 16:15-20\]](#); [Acts 8:29-10:14](#); [21:2-10](#), [16:18](#); [22:10-20](#); [22:29-28:31](#); in the Latin, [Matthew 1:1-11](#); [\[2:21-3:7\]](#); [6:8-8:27](#); [26:25-27:1](#); [John 1:1-3:16](#); [\[18:2-20:1\]](#); [\[Mark 16:6-20\]](#); [Acts 8:20-10:4](#); [20:31-21:2](#), [7-10](#); [22:2-10](#); [23:20-28:31](#). The passages in brackets have been supplied by a tenth-century hand.

It will be noticed that [St. Luke's Gospel](#) alone, of the books contained, is preserved complete. The condition of the book shows a gap between the Gospels and Acts; and the fragment of [III John](#) indicates that, as in other ancient [manuscript](#), the [Catholic Epistles](#) were placed there. The fact that the [Epistle of Jude](#) does not immediately precede Acts is regarded as pointing to its omission from the codex; it may, however, have been placed elsewhere. We cannot tell whether the [manuscript](#) contained more of the [New Testament](#), and there is no indication that it was, like the other great uncial manuscripts, ever joined to the text of the [Old Testament](#). Besides the hand of the original scribe, there are corrections in several different hands, some probably contemporary with the original, later [liturgical](#) annotations and the *sortes sanctorum*, or formulae for telling fortunes; all these are important for tracing the history of the [manuscript](#)

Beza wrote in the letter accompanying his gift that the [manuscript](#) was obtained from the [monastery](#) of St. Irenæus in [Lyons](#), during the [war](#) in 1562. Lyons was sacked by the [Huguenots](#) in that year and this [manuscript](#) was probably part of the loot. The reformer said it had lain in the [monastery](#) for long ages, neglected and covered with dust; but his statement is rejected by most modern scholars. It is claimed, in fact, that this codex is the one which was used at the [Council of Trent](#) in 1546 by William Dupré (English writers persist in calling this [Frenchman](#) a [Prato](#)), [Bishop of Clermont](#) in Auvergne, to confirm a Latin reading of [John 21](#), *si eum volo manere*, which is found only in the Greek of this codex. Moreover, it is usually identified with Codex *beta*, whose peculiar readings were collated in 1546 for Stephens' edition of the Greek Testament by friends of his in [Italy](#). Beza himself, after having first denominated his codex *Lugdunensis*, later called it *Claromontanus*, as if it came not from [Lyons](#), but from [Clermont](#) (near [Beauvais](#), not Clermont of Auvergne). All this, throwing Beza's original statement into [doubt](#), indicates that the [manuscript](#) was in [Italy](#) in the middle of the sixteenth century, and has some bearing upon the locality of the production.

It has commonly been held that the [manuscript](#) originated in Southern [France](#) around the beginning of the sixth century. No one places it at a later date, chiefly on the evidence of the handwriting. [France](#) was chosen, partly because the [manuscript](#) was found there, partly because churches in [Lyons](#) and the South were of Greek foundation and for a long time continued the use of Greek in the Liturgy, while Latin was the vernacular- for some such community, at any rate, this bilingual codex was produced- and partly because the text of D bears a remarkable resemblance to the text quoted by St. Irenæus, even, says Nestle, in the matter of [clerical](#) mistakes, so that it is possibly derived from his very copy. During the past five years, however, the opinion of the best English textual critics has been veering to Southern [Italy](#) as the original home of D. It is pointed out that the [manuscript](#) was used by a church practising the [Greek Rite](#), as the [liturgical](#) annotations concern the Greek text alone; that these annotations date from the ninth to the eleventh century, exactly the period of the [Greek Rite](#) in Southern [Italy](#), while it had died out elsewhere in [Latin Christendom](#), and show that the Byzantine Mass-lections were in use, which cannot have been the case in Southern [France](#). The corrections, too, which concern the Greek text but rarely the Latin, the spelling, and the calendar all point to Southern

[Italy](#). These arguments, however, touch only the home of the [manuscript](#), not its birthplace, and [manuscripts](#) have travelled from one end of [Europe](#) to the other. [Ravenna](#) and [Sardinia](#), where Greek and Latin influences also met, have likewise been suggested. It can only be said that the [certainty](#) with which till recently it was ascribed to Southern [France](#) has been shaken, and the probabilities now favour Southern [Italy](#).

Following Scrivener, scholars universally dated it from the beginning of the sixth century, but there is a tendency now to place it a hundred years earlier. Scrivener himself admitted that the handwriting was not inconsistent with this early [date](#), and only assigned it a later date by reason of the Latinity of the annotations. But the corrupt Latin is not itself incompatible with an earlier date, while the freedom with which the Latin N.T. text is handled indicates a time when the Old Latin version was still current. It probably belongs to the fifth century. Nothing necessitates a later date.

The type of text found in D is very ancient, yet it has survived in this one Greek [manuscript](#) alone, though it is found also in the Old Latin, the Old Syriac, and the Old [Armenian](#) versions. It is the so-called Western Text, or one type of the Western Text. All the Fathers before the end of the third century used a similar text and it can be traced back to sub-Apostolic times. Its value is discussed elsewhere. D departs more widely than any other Greek codex from the ordinary text, compared with which as a standard, it is characterized by numerous additions, paraphrastic renderings, inversions, and some omissions. (For collation of text, see Scrivener, *Bezae Codex*, pp. xlix-lxiii; Nestle, *Novi Test. Graeci Supplementum*, Gebhardt and Tischendorf ed., Leipzig, 1896.) One interpolation is worth noting here. After [Luke 6:5](#), we read:

On the same day seeing some one working on the [Sabbath](#), He said to him: 'man, if you [know](#) what you do, blessed are you; but if you do not [know](#), you are [cursed](#) and a transgressor of the [law](#)'.

The most important omission, probably, is the second mention of the cup in Luke's account of the [Last Supper](#).

The Latin text is not the [Vulgate](#), nor yet the Old Latin, which it resembles more closely. It seems to be an independent translation of the Greek that faces it, though the fact that it contains two thousand variations from its accompanying Greek text have led some to [doubt](#) this. Of this number, however, only seven hundred and sixteen are said to be real variant readings, and some of these are derived from the [Vulgate](#). If the translation be independent, both the [Vulgate](#) and Old Latin have influenced it greatly; as time went on, the influence of the [Vulgate](#) grew and probably extended even to modifications of the Greek text. Chase, however, traces many of the variants to an original Syriac influence. The text, which was in so great [honour](#) in the Early Church, possesses a fascination for certain scholars, who occasionally prefer its readings; but none professes to have really solved the mystery of its origin.