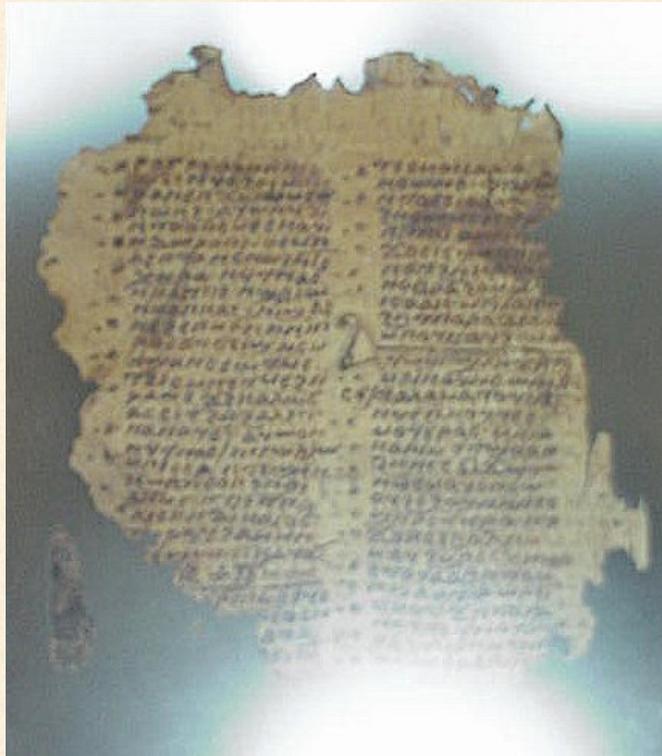


The Dr. Gene Scott Bible Collection

STATION 39: Coptic Manuscript & Palimpsest

Eighth & Tenth Century



*Coptic Leaf &
Palimpsest*

This is the colophon leaf (presenting the "who, what, when and where" of production) of a Coptic book on Christian behavior, **APA SHENUTE: ON GILEAD**. That book is one of the monuments of early Coptic Christian literature; the Copts were (and are to this day) Egyptian Christians, and their Christianity dates back in a straight line to the time of the Apostles. The Sahidic text, of which this leaf formed a part, was the original version of the text, written on vellum at Fayoum, Egypt in the year 715 of the Coptic Era, which corresponds to 998-999 AD.

Only two copies of the text are known, one in the Morgan Library and one in the British Museum. This leaf is the missing colophon to the book in the British Museum, and indeed the British Museum, in its role granting approval or denial to

requests for export permits of such items, for a time delayed this very leaf on its journey from Britain to our Cathedral.

The content of this leaf explains the circumstances, title, and date of the composition, stating that it was made for a convent dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Pilgasook (the modern Arabic Bouljouzook) in Fayoum, and that it was donated to the convent by a woman.

If that were all this leaf revealed, that would be plenty. But this leaf is also a **palimpsest**, that is, a manuscript written on vellum where a previous manuscript has been partly erased. One of the greatest examples of a palimpsest is the *CODEX EPHRAIMI RESCRIPTUS*, which is a very early Bible version barely decipherable beneath a later manuscript. This leaf, like that Codex, shows a portion of the text of the New Testament, the end of I Timothy, from the Sahidic New Testament. As such, its age - 8th Century - and the purity of the Sahidic version, make it one of the oldest Bible manuscript portions in private hands in the world.

Imagine: the text of the Bible which can just be discerned (180 degrees to the later text) is over 1200 years old, and some 700 years older than the first Bibles in English. It was written only some three centuries after Jerome had produced his Vulgate version, though the Coptic text in many ways was less polluted than the Latin that Jerome coped with. As such, it may well be a purer, closer text to the original than any other for this passage. This leaf is obviously one of the great treasures of this collection.

Other great manuscripts are shown at [Station 3](#), the 13th century manuscript Bible, and at [Station 37](#), "God's Word through the Centuries." And of course, [Station 52](#) shows a wealth of papyrus and vellum manuscripts beginning with the 4th Century B.C., some of them with Biblical content or references.

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 located in the "Room of the Book" on the Lower Level at the red #39.



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