

Codex Gigas

The largest religious manuscript of the Middle Ages was the 13th cent Codex Gigas, with a complete Latin Bible, two works of Josephus, a religious encyclopedia, and a history of Bohemia, and weighing in at over 165 pounds, all of which appear to be copied by a single hand. It is famous for having on one of its pages a quite graphic devil (see below). In a National Geographic documentary called “The Devil’s Bible,” the tradition is mentioned that a monk copied the manuscript in one night, with the devil’s help! A more sober assessment is that since the facing folio page has an artistic vision of the kingdom of God, the reader of the codex faces his choice between the two kingdoms – God’s or the Devil’s.

At the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648), the manuscript was taken as plunder from Bohemia by the Swedish army and was kept in the Swedish Royal Library in Stockholm. In 1697, a fire broke in the Royal Library, and the codex was rescued from the flames by throwing it out a window. The codex apparently injured a bystander and some of its leaves fluttered away and are still missing today.



Codex Bezae is joined by Codex Gigas in a singular reading that adds these words (in Latin) to Peter's meeting Cornelius (Acts 10:25) προσεγγιζοντος δε του Πητρου εις την Καισαρειαν προδραμων εις των δουλων διεσαφησεν παραγεγονεναι αυτον. ο δε Κορνηλιος εκπηδησας και συναντησας αυτω. When Peter was nearing Caesarea, one of the servants announced his arrival, so Cornelius walked out and met him.