

**Edward D. Andrews, *The Reading Culture of Early Christianity: The Production, Publication, Circulation, and Use of Books in the Early Christian Church*, Cambridge, Ohio 2019, pp. 247.**

By introducing the book, there have been questions such as: what is the process that the New Testament writers would have followed to get their book ready to be published, that is, copied by others? Once they were prepared for publication, how would they be copied throughout the centuries, up until the time of the printing press of 1455 C.E.? How can we have confidence that what we are reading is, in fact, the word of God when we open our bible?

“The Reading Culture of Early Christianity” was written by Edward D. Andrews and published by Christian Publishing House, Cambridge, Ohio in 2019. It is historical and biblically centered with 226 pages: it provides the reader with the production process of the New Testament books, the publication process, how they were circulated, and to what extent they were used in the early church.

The author Edward D. Andrews is CEO and President of Christian Publishing House. He has authored over one hundred books. He is the Chief Translator of the Updated American Standard Version (UASV). He is awarded AS in Criminal Justice, BS in Religion, MA in Biblical Studies, and MDiv in Theology.

Until 1455 C.E., every manuscript was produced and copied by hand. In addition, it may have been copied in scriptorium, i.e., a room in a monastery for storing, copying, illustrating, or reading manuscripts. In the scriptorium, a lector would read aloud slowly as multiple scribes or copyists took down what he was saying. Unlike our notebooks today, the scribe would use papyrus and parchment sheets using reed pen and later quill pen. Although there were difficulties in using these material which constituted basic difficulties as early scribes made copies of our New Testament books.

In time, sheets of foldable materials replaced rigid tablets: like scrolls, a roll of papyrus, parchment, or other material, used for a written document; the codex is also made up of sheets of papyrus or parchment inscribed with handwritten manuscript texts, especially of Biblical Scriptures, in book form.

There was the study of ancient handwriting where scribes use abbreviations and contractions for various reasons. Ancient handwriting: individual letterforms, ligatures, punctuation, and abbreviations enables them to

read and understand the text. There was also the publishing industry of the ancient world an example was the scriptorium, and distribution of Greek New Testament manuscripts.

According to the author, from ancient times until 1455 C.E., anything that was penned was done so literally, by hand. A “manuscript” is a handwritten text. It would mostly be done one copy at a time in the early decades of Christianity. In the second century C.E., Andrews viewed it may have been copied in a scriptorium.

The author opined, the codex has been viewed as the most significant advancement in the development of the book, aside from the printing press. Some of the earliest surviving codices were made of papyrus, being preserved in the dry sand of Egypt. Again, the Christians played a major part in the eventual death of the scroll. Their evangelism would have been far more cumbersome without the codex.

It is only reasonable to assume that the original 27 books written firsthand by the New Testament authors have not survived. Instead, we only have what we must consider being imperfect copies. The author reasoned beyond doubt that the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament critical texts are a 99% reflection of the content that was in those ancient original manuscript. Why the Holy Spirit would miraculously inspire 27 fully inerrant texts, and then allow human imperfection into the copies, is not explained for us in the scripture. Yet the author explained, God created perfect humans giving them a perfect start and through the abuse of free will, they rejected his sovereignty. God gave us his perfect word and has again chosen to allow us to continue in our human imperfection, learning our object lesson.

The author first argued, it would be the greatest discovery of all time if we found the actual original five books that were penned by Moses himself, or the original Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. However, there would be no way of establishing that they were the originals. Secondly, he opined we do not need the originals, it is content on the original documents that we are after; he justified that we do not need miraculous preservation because we have miraculous restoration.

According to Andrew, in the first paragraph of chapter one, “one of the greatest tragedies in the modern-day history of Christianity (1880-present) is that churchgoers have not been educated about the history of the New Testament text. Sadly, many seminaries that train the pastors of today’s churches have also required little or no studies in the history of Old or New Testament texts”.

Andrews analyzed that papyrus scrolls are mentioned several times in the New Testament; references are usually translated as “book”. Luke 4:17 speaks of the scroll (biblion) of the prophet Isaiah. John uses the same word to refer to his gospel in John 20:30... Rev 6:14 describes the sky as vanishing like “a scroll when it is rolled up”.

Conclusively, the book examines the making of the New Testament books, secretaries and materials used. Exploring how the gospel went from oral to written record, the inspiration and inerrancy in the writing process, and the trustworthiness of the early Christian copyists.

The author did some mental picturing at describing some of the difficulties the early scribes faced in making copies of the New Testament books. The actual scenario in such time could have been different, thereby questioning the authenticity of such mentally picturing scenario.

The book is recommended to the people of the Christian church and all interested in its history, biblical scholars and history students.

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**Ks. Stanisław Longosz, *Opera minora selecta, do druku podali i zredagowali Jan Iluk i Wojciech Stawiszyński, Warszawa 2019, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Sub Lupa”, ss. 450.***

Niniejsza publikacja jest zbiorem 19, raczej trudno dostępnych, artykułów aktualnego nestora polskich badań patrystycznych oraz założyciela i wieloletniego redaktora naczelnego „Vox Patrum”, ks. prof. S. Longosza (ur. 14 marca 1938 w Brzezinach k. Ropczyc). Stanowi ona rodzaj uszanowania, jakie złożyli ich autorowi na jego osiemdziesiąte pierwsze urodziny Wojciech Stawiszyński („mistrz polskiej bibliografii patrystycznej” – s. 11) i emerytowany profesor Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego Jan Iluk (eminentny i wielce zasłużony badacz antyku chrześcijańskiego).

Rzeczony zbiór artykułów został poprzedzony przez kilka dodatkowych elementów: (1) spis treści (s. 7-9), (2) wstęp (s. 11-12) pióra prof. J. Iluka, (3) notę ks. prof. Henryka Pietrasa SJ pt. „Stanisław Longosz” (s. 13-14), która krótko charakteryzuje zarówno dzieło, jak i osobowość jubilatą, (4) wykaz skrótów (s. 15-18), który obejmuje 80 abrewiacji. Ten