

How We Got Our  
**Bible**



E. E. Byrum



# HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE

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## Preface

Since the publication of the book entitled "Travels and Experiences in Other Lands" requests have been made to have the chapter "How We Got Our Bible" more extensively published. To meet the demand, this little volume is sent forth, which includes the chapter "Examining Manuscripts," taken from the book of travels. As a matter of further interest, a few pages are inserted, being a translation of an old Latin manuscript kept in the Vatican Library at Rome, which is a report of Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Caesar, giving a report of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

—E. E. B.  
Moundsville, W. V.  
Sept. 11, 1905



## Examining Manuscripts of the Bible

While traveling in foreign countries in the year 1904, one of the objects of our mission was to examine ancient manuscripts of the Bible, some of which are kept in England. The first place visited for that purpose was the famous Bodleian Library, Oxford, England. There are probably not more than two larger libraries in the world than this one. Besides the several hundred thousand printed books, there are 32,000 manuscripts. However, there was only one manuscript at that place in which we were especially interested, and that was the volume which contains the New Testament Scriptures, and known as Codex Tischendorfianus IV. This manuscript is a volume in old-fashioned design, and made up of parchment leaves over 1,100 years old, not printed in type, but written in large square capital letters of Greek, without any punctuation or division between the words, having only paragraphs here and there. It is the oldest New Testament that Oxford possesses. While in conversation with a librarian we soon learned that he was a higher critic, and in making mention concerning the ancient manuscripts and especially concerning the Gospels, he said:

“You are no doubt aware that the last twelve verses of the last chapter of St. Mark are spurious.”

We replied, “We are not aware of this being the case, although we have frequently heard it so stated.”

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To this he said, "It is not in the old manuscripts," and aimed to leave the impression on us that it was not in this manuscript.

He further stated, "I have written a commentary on St. Matthew and also on St. Mark. The one on Matthew has been published; the one on Mark has not."

We soon found that he was not very much of a believer in preaching and practicing the whole Word of God in these days. We told him that we should like to examine the ancient manuscript, and especially the last chapter of St. Mark. To this he replied, "It would do you no good, as the passage is spurious."

However, we made application according to the rules of the library, and he could not refuse letting us see the manuscript. Upon examination we found the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark in full, as we had anticipated. Other questionable passages were also to be found in this manuscript. The questionable verses in St. Mark in the Common Version read as follows: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they



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shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Mark 16:9-20.

From Oxford we went to London to continue our work regarding the manuscript at the British Museum. This is one of the greatest museums of the kind in the world. There are several large rooms in this spacious building containing only manuscripts. Some of them contain the most ancient in existence. As we had only two or three days in which to complete our work there, we had to ask the Lord to open the way before us. The rules of the Museum were that those desiring to examine the manuscripts were to take out a reader’s certificate for three or six months, and three days were required after application was made before the certificate was granted.

By the time of the expiration of three days it was necessary that we be on our way to another country. Having a letter of introduction to Lord Kinnaird we visited him at his place of business, and found him very busy. We were received with courtesy. After making known to him our desires concerning an immediate examination of the old Greek manuscripts at the British Museum, he turned to his stenographer, and commenced the dictation of a letter to the secretary of the Museum. After giving the address, he turned to me and said, “You dictate this letter to suit yourself,” and hurried into another room with his hands filled with business papers. In my dictation I asked the secretary to “please permit Mr. E. E. Byrum and Mr. A. D. Khan to have immediate admittance into the manuscript department of the library, granting them any favors necessary for their work.” Upon his return from the room, he hastily

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glanced over the letter, signed his name to it, and expressed a willingness to further aid us should necessity demand other favors.

The secretary was very kind, and gave us special favors, and waived the rules, giving us immediate admittance, and mailing the notice concerning the certificate three days later in fulfillment of the rules of the library. Through these special favors by the help of the Lord we not only had the privilege of examining the photographic copies of the old manuscripts, but were permitted to examine the old manuscripts themselves. Upon these old parchments the Bible was written hundreds of years ago. They were kept in places hidden away until almost forgotten. Since they have been discovered again, they are kept in museums and libraries. They were written in Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, and have since been translated into the English and other languages, and Bibles have been printed.

Here we examined three of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible. The first of these, the Codex Alexanarinus, one of the three most ancient manuscripts of the Bible in the world, was written in Greek paleography about 1,500 years ago, on fine parchments that have so well stood the hostile attacks of unfavorable ages, and the wear and tear of centuries past, standing as a firm and strong monumental witness to the providence of God in preserving the Sacred Oracles in record. The original of these precious documents is kept with great care, and is not for public handling or inspection; but a perfect facsimile, photographic copy is allowed to be used. At first they refused to allow us to examine the original. However, through the grace of God we had the privilege of reading the very original volume, but the superintendent of that department of the library stood by and turned the leaves for us, not permitting us to handle them. In this volume we found the entire passage of Mark 16:9-20.

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Then we examined the Codex Harleianus, a manuscript of the ninth and tenth century, and the Codex Burneium of the eleventh century, both of which contain the disputed conclusion of Mark uncurtailed. Besides this passage we examined some other New Testament scriptures, the genuineness of which is sometimes questioned by the scholars (so called); and we are glad to say that we found them all right in the manuscripts. Now these are all of the most ancient manuscripts of the kind in the British Museum.

A few days later we continued our work with the manuscripts at the Bibliotheque Nationale at Paris. At first everything seemed to go against us in obtaining admittance to the library; but after working hard all day, traveling from place to place, we had made the necessary arrangements, which gave us admittance early the next morning to the National Libraries of Paris. Here we examined the important and curious manuscript known as the Codex Ephraemi, which is one of the most ancient manuscripts of the Bible. In value it is as important as the Codex Alexandrinus of the British Museum, and in antiquity it stands fourth, if not earlier; the Codex Sinaiticus in St. Petersburg, the Vaticanus in Rome, and the Codex Alexandrinus in London, are the first three. But this manuscript is perhaps the most difficult to read, as it is most obscure and blurred, as if blue or black ink had been smeared over the pages of the sacred volume. This was the result of a chemical which the parchment folios underwent in order to bring to light the almost obliterated sacred writing, which was rubbed out to receive a later inscription. The manuscript is about 1,500 years old. We examined this codex and found the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel in it all right.

Then we examined the Royal Manuscript of Paris, which is about 1,200 years old. This is the only manuscript, so far as we know, that contains an alternative conclusion of Mark, but it gives

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in full the usual revision of the text at the end of the gospel. The next manuscript we examined was Codex Cyprius, which is also about 1,200 years old. This contains the section in question **in toto**. Besides these we examined ten other important manuscripts, all of which contain the passage in full, and discovered some of the false arguments and misrepresentations of some of the eminent scholars (so called).

In Venice we had no difficulty in gaining admittance to the library, and had the privilege of examining four important manuscripts of the Bible, one of which was about one thousand years old, and found the passages in question in all of them.

From Venice we continued our work at the Vatican in Rome. The Vatican Library contains one of the five most ancient copies of Biblical manuscripts. The extreme carefulness of admittance is not peculiar to Rome. We met with the same in almost all the other libraries, and had to secure admittance and privileges to handle these manuscripts by special effort and influence.

When we arrived in Rome we thought of getting help of the British Consul, but soon learned that he had no influence with the Vatican. After prayer we secured a Roman Catholic guide as interpreter, went to the Vatican, presented our cards of recommendation, which we secured at London and Paris, and the Lord gave us favor in the sight of the superintendent of the library and he granted our request. The Vatican was well guarded by soldiers both inside and outside the building. We examined the manuscripts in the Vatican, and found the last chapter of Mark uncurtailed in all but one. This has only the first part of Mark sixteen to the end of verse eight; but there is a peculiar fact in reference to this manuscript. The codex is a quarto volume containing three columns on each page. The eighth verse ends about the middle of

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the second column and the entire third column is left vacant, leaving sufficient space for the remainder of the chapter. The Gospel of St. Luke begins over on the next page. Now, there is no other similar instance in the whole New Testament portion of the manuscript. If a book ends in the middle of the first column, the next book always begins at the next column. We examined the whole of the New Testament, and found no other unnecessary vacancy anywhere else. This singular fact decidedly proves that the original manuscript from which this copy was made must have contained the verses nine to twenty in full, but for some reason or other the translator did not copy them. It may be the signs and wonders promised to the church had almost ceased at that time because of the unbelief of the apostate professors, and in order to free themselves they kept the truth hid from the people. Nor is this a wild imagination and groundless fancy, for humanity is so deceptive and deluded that it would sooner doubt God than itself.

At the present time many do not believe in the genuineness of these verses, because of their inability to work the signs that are to follow the believers. For such reasons the omission of the passage from this manuscript can be accounted for. Besides this, it may also have been because that in the original manuscript this was the last leaf and it was torn off, which caused the absence of the section in subsequent copies of which this manuscript in the Vatican is a sample. This idea has been entertained by several of the able scholars of Biblical criticism; for they are all united in declaring that the gospel could not have been ended with verse eight, the last word of which is a conjunction “for,” which can never close a book without doing severe violence to the simple and elementary laws of composition and rhetoric. There are many other internal and external reasons in favor of the genuineness of the passage. In fact, all the manuscripts that we examined contained the passages, except this

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one. Another one at St. Petersburg, which we have not seen, does not contain it. But we have since received facsimile pages of the last chapter of St. Mark and the first chapter of St. Luke from this manuscript. It is to be found in all the ancient versions and in the writings of the Fathers. One of the earliest Fathers, Irenaeus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of John the Evangelist, quotes the passage in his treatise against the heretics. There are many other overwhelming evidences of the genuineness of these scriptures.

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“We live in a land of Bibles” is an oft-quoted expression. But the inquisitive reader asks, “Whence came this Bible? Have we the original manuscripts and books written by Moses, the prophets, and the apostles?” When we reply that none of these original books or writings have been discovered in this age of the world, then the question comes, “What evidence have we of the genuineness of these Scriptures?” Some say that it was handed down from generation to generation by hearsay until centuries after the time of the apostles; but such is not the case.

The Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible, whose writing is ascribed to Moses, and which is sometimes called “the book,” or “the book of Moses,” was a written book. It was sometimes called “the law,” or “the book of the law.” Moses gave the law to the people, and after his death we find Joshua having the people gather together between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, near Shechem, and the law was read to them.

Centuries after this we find about the time Nehemiah was preparing to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he had the people gather together, and told Ezra to “bring the book of the law.” Neh. 8:4. And the book was brought, “and Ezra opened the book” and read to the people. We find, also, in the Old Testament where it is stated that the acts of the kings are recorded in the book of the Kings and in

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Chronicles, etc. These records were preserved and handed down from generation to generation, and the people of God were made acquainted with their teachings.

When Jesus Christ came and began his ministry, he frequently referred the people to what had been written. In St. Luke 4:16-20 is an account given of the time when Jesus began his ministry at Nazareth, which says, "He went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," etc. "And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down." They not only had in those days the book containing the Law, but here Jesus read from the book or Isaiah the prophet, which told concerning himself. It was a book which could be opened (verse 17), and it says he "closed the book." Verse 20.

It is plain to see that they had the Scriptures recorded in book form, not only during the centuries before Christ, but at the time he began his ministry, and no doubt they had copies of these Scriptures in all the synagogues. It would not, therefore, be a strange thing if many copies of these ancient manuscripts were sealed up and kept in some secluded place for centuries and many copies were made from others. In consideration of the fact that the Scriptures, or Old Testament, were so made into book form and were carefully preserved before and during the time of Christ, it would not seem strange if his own words and the words of the apostles were also carefully preserved in book manuscript, written upon the durable parchments of that day.

When the devil came to tempt him, Jesus said, "It is written," etc. To the Jews who were not willing to accept Jesus as a Savior he



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said, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39. Now, he would not have told them to search the Scriptures had there not been some records for them to search. There was a book of Psalms (Acts 1:20), which David wrote (Luke 20:42); and Jesus told of what was “written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms.” Luke 24:44.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we find Paul preaching to the people, as recorded in Acts 17:11, “and they searched the Scriptures daily.” Upon this occasion there were “noble” Jews, and also “honorable” men and women among the Greeks. At one place was a man named Apollos, of whom it is said, that he was “mighty in the Scriptures.” Acts 18:24. These Scriptures were without doubt the books or writings of the Old Testament. Paul in his second Epistle to Timothy spoke to him about the cloak, which, said he, “when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.” 2 Tim. 4:13. It is very likely that some of these books mentioned were not only the Old Testament, but also the Gospels; and the parchments were to be brought that Paul might complete the writing of the Epistles. The parchments were prepared skins of goats or of some other animals. They were prepared in such a manner as to very much resemble paper, although very strong and durable.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, while the original language of the New Testament was Greek. A knowledge of this fact explains the different use of words. For instance, 1 Kings 18:41-46, which relates the circumstances of the prayer of Elijah after the famine of three years and six months. In referring to him, in translating from Hebrew to English, his name is called Elipah. In Jas. 5:17, referring to the same occurrence, the

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same name translated from the Greek is Elias, meaning the same person. There are a number of similar changes.

The earliest Hebrew text known of the Old Testament is one in the British Museum, which dates back about to the ninth century A.D.; but there are many other evidences of the writings of the Old Testament in existence which date back much further. Aside from the Talmud and the Targums, there is the Samaritan Pentateuch. This is a very ancient manuscript in the form of a roll, written in Samaritan or Old Hebrew characters, independently of the Orthodox Jews, and is supposed to be almost as ancient as the Hebrew. It contains the first five books of the Bible. It has been kept by the Samaritan people at Nablus, a city which is built on the site of the ancient city of Shechem. It is claimed that this manuscript was written by the great grandson of Aaron. In our travels through Palestine we remained one night in this city, where there are about one hundred and fifty of the Samaritan people still living as a colony. They take much pride in the preservation of these manuscripts.

### **The Septuagint Version**

We have today what is called the Septuagint Version or version of the Seventy. This is a translation of the Old Testament made in the Greek language at Alexandria by seventy-two Jewish scholars, and for this reason it is called the Septuagint or Seventy. It is said that Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt B. C. 284-246, while preparing his large library, desired to have reliable books on every theme from the best authority possible; therefore sent an embassy to Eleazar the high priest at Jerusalem to obtain copies of their sacred books and of the Hebrew law, and make a translation of the same. This high priest sent the copies requested, together with these seventy-two translators. It is said that they were separated from each

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other, and that when their translations were compared they were exactly the same. However, let that be as it may, a translation of the books of the Pentateuch was made about two hundred and fifty years or more before Christ, and the other books completed a few years later. Thus the entire Old Testament was translated into Greek over one hundred and fifty years before Christ. There have been a number of other versions since that time. But, it is the New Testament that we desire more especially to dwell upon.

### **The New Testament**

We have a Bible today consisting of both the Old and New Testaments. We have shown that the Old Testament existed in book form before and at the time of Christ and his apostles; but it is almost nineteen centuries since that time, and the question comes to us now, How was this Bible handed down to us from generation to generation and from century to century? or, in other words, How did we get our Bible, as none of the original manuscripts of the apostles' writings are known to be in existence today. The evidences by which we may know the facts concerning the reliability and genuineness of our Bible are through the versions, manuscripts, and quotations from the Bible by early writers. There are however, a few things that we do know beyond doubt. One is that we have today a version of the New Testament called the Twentieth Century Testament, given in modern English. Then, we have what is called the Revised Version of both Old and New Testaments, dated 1881-85. Also, the Authorized or King James' Version, dated 1611. This is the one in general use today. No one calls in question that King James I. almost three centuries ago ordered it to be translated and printed. Neither do they believe that King James or anyone else in his day wrote this book in order to deceive the people. Consequently there must have been some versions or manuscripts older than this one. In fact, the

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title page of what is called the Authorized Version, states that it is **“translated out of the original tongues: and with the former translations diligently compared and revised.”**

We have heretofore stated that the original language of the New Testament was Greek. About the eighth century some portions of the Scripture were made into Anglo-Saxon, and into English about the thirteenth century. About 1380 Wycliffe, with some of his followers, translated the entire Bible into the English from the Latin Vulgate; but as this was before the days of printing, it existed only in manuscript form until about the year 1848 or 1850, when it was published in type. In 1525 William Tyndale began the publication of his translation of the New Testament. In 1534 he published a revised edition of the New Testament. In 1535 Miles Coverdale translated the Bible from the Swiss-German Bible and the Latin Version of Pagninus. This was the first version of the entire Bible published in English. Then came what was known as Matthew’s Bible, 1537; Taverner’s 1539; the Great Bible, 1539; the Geneva Bible, 1560; the Bishop’s Bible, 1568; Reims’ New Testament, 1582; then came the Authorized Version, 1611. King James had fifty-four scholarly persons assigned to the work of translating and preparing this Bible. They were located at Westminster, Oxford, and Cambridge. It was not particularly to be a new translation, but to be a better one, as many errors had been made in the former translations. They were to follow the text of the Bishop’s Bible with as little alteration as the truth of the original permitted. They used the text of Beza’s Latin and Greek Testaments of 1598, and also made considerable use of the Geneva of 1560 and the Reim’s New Testament of 1582. They did not at that time have access to the older Greek manuscripts, the most reliable of which have been discovered and brought into use since that date.

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After some of these older manuscripts were found it was deemed necessary to get out a revised edition in order to correct some of the errors that were clearly pointed out through the reading of the older manuscripts, and some also found to be made by those who copied the manuscripts in later years, although there was nothing of such a serious nature as to change the doctrine or teachings to any great extent. Another reason for the change was to bring the expression in the English up to date, as many of the English words formerly used have become obsolete.

But now we must go further back than the English versions, and see what we can find among the manuscripts. A version is that which is translated from another language. For instance, from Greek to Latin or from Greek to English or some other language. The manuscripts are written on parchments made of the skins of animals. They very much resemble paper, and the words are printed and written with ink. There are two classes of Greek writing; the oldest being written in capital letters, which is called uncial. These are written without any extra space between the words, making it quite difficult to read. It is not divided into sentences, and is without punctuation. However, about the ninth or tenth century another style of writing was used, which is called the cursive style, which is a kind of running hand.

There are about one hundred of the old uncial manuscripts and nearly three thousand of the cursive manuscripts which are to be seen and examined. The most important of the old Greek manuscripts that have been found are the Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus, the Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Ephraemi. These date back from A. D. 300 to A. D. 450. Some claim the Codex Vaticanus to be the oldest, while others believe the Codex Sinaiticus to be the oldest volume. There are strong evidence that both of these

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were copied from other manuscripts between the years 300 and 400 A. D.

The three oldest Greek manuscripts of the Bible in the world are the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian. Frequent use of them was made in making the Revised Version in 1881 and 1885; but none of them were used by the translators of the Authorized or King James' Version. The two latter manuscripts were discovered and brought into use at a later day and the Codex Vaticanus was not accessible at that time. These manuscripts give us positive evidence of the existence of the Bible soon after the apostolic days. From the days of the apostles and their original writings to the time of these manuscripts just mentioned, is about the same period of time as from the date of the King James' Version to the time of the Revised Version and later versions.

The Alexandrian manuscript, the youngest of these three great manuscripts, is preserved in the British Museum. It was presented to Charles I. by the Patriarch of Constantinople, A. D. 1628. This was seventeen years too late to be used in preparing the Authorized Version. Only ten leaves are missing from the Old Testament; but of the New Testament twenty-five leaves have been lost from the beginning of Matthew, two from John, and three from Corinthians. It is written two columns on a page. The Vatican manuscript is written three columns on a page, and the Sinaitic has four columns.

The Vatican, or the Codex Vaticanus, which is generally considered the most ancient in existence, has been in the Vatican Library for at least four or five hundred years. The early history of this manuscript is not known. It contains over seven hundred leaves of the finest vellum, about a foot square, bound together in book form. Gen. 1 to 46 is lost, also Psa. 105 to 127, and all after Hebrews 9:14 of the New Testament. In this manuscript, which is generally

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claimed to be the oldest one, the last twelve verses of the last chapter of St. Mark are omitted. But for some reason, enough blank space is left on the page, showing that the scribe knew of its existence; but for some reason it was not inserted, although in other old manuscripts and still older versions in other languages these verses appear; also in the writings of the early church Fathers. This manuscript having been kept in the Vatican Library by the Roman Catholics, it was not until recent years that anyone but the Roman Catholics had access to it, and at the present time it is very carefully guarded, and a hard matter to obtain the privilege of examining it. A number of years ago Dr. Tregelles, who is said to be one of the most eminent of textual critics, made an attempt to examine the manuscript but he said they would not let him open the volume without first searching his pockets and depriving him of pens, ink, and paper. The two priests who were left to guard and watch him would try to detract his attention if he seemed too intent on any passage, and if he studied any part of it too long they would snatch away the book. Since that time, by order of Pope Pius IX, facsimile pages have been made of it, and bound volumes are to be found in many of our chief public libraries.

When Brother A. D. Khan and I asked for the original, we were at first refused. They gave us a facsimile volume, and told us that we could look at the original open book through a glass case. To this we replied that we had special reasons for desiring to examine the original manuscript, as we were there under peculiar circumstances, and were expected to examine the original without fail. We had already presented our letters of recommendation and our cards showing that we had examined the manuscripts in London and Paris, and after some hesitation the original manuscript was brought forth and was at our disposal, although closely guarded with the greatest of care.

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The Sinaitic manuscript, which was copied about the same time of the Vatican manuscript, was of more recent discovery. The story of its discovery is quite an interesting one. Tischendorf, who for some years had been spending his time principally in examining all the old manuscripts he could find, decided to make a special tour through the East and visit the old libraries and convents in order to find more ancient manuscripts of the Bible. From the very earliest age of the Christian era the Greek texts had been translated into different languages—into Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, etc. Ancient manuscripts of these versions had been brought to light where for centuries they had been hidden away in old libraries and convents. But it was the ancient Greek manuscripts that he was more anxious to obtain.

In the year 1844 he embarked for Egypt, and was soon at the foot of Mount Sinai in the convent of St. Catherine. While here, in the month of May, he found in the middle of a great hall a basket full of old parchments. The librarian told him that two heaps of papers like those had already been committed to the flames. Tischendorf looked over this pile of papers and found several sheets of a copy of the Old Testament in Greek, which seemed to him the most ancient of any he had ever seen. The authorities of the convent allowed him to take one-third of the pile of parchments in the wastebasket, or about forty-five sheets. He was so delighted, and gave expression to his feelings to such an extent that they suspected the manuscript was of great value and refused to allow him to take any more than the forty-five sheets. He tried in various ways to procure the others, but failed.

In February, 1854, he again visited the convent at Sinai. This visit was successful in some ways, but he was not successful in procuring the desired manuscripts. He was not able to discover any



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further traces of those he had seen in 1844, although he found in a roll of papers a little fragment written on both sides which contained eleven short lines of the first book of Moses, which convinced him that the manuscript originally contained the entire Old Testament, but that the greater part had been long since destroyed.

On January 18, 1859, he made a short visit to the convent, hoping to make some further discoveries. After remaining a few days looking over some other ancient manuscripts, he made arrangements with his Bedouin guides to make ready for their return journey soon, when a peculiar circumstance took place. To give it in his own language, he says:

“On the afternoon of this day I was taking a walk with the steward of the convent in the neighborhood, and as we returned towards sunset he begged me to take some refreshments with him in his cell. Scarcely had he entered the room when, resuming our former subject of conversation, he said, ‘And I too have read a Septuagint, that is, a copy of the Greek translation made by the Seventy’; and so saying he took down from the corner of the room a bulky kind of volume wrapped up in red cloth, and laid it before me. I unrolled the cover, and discovered, to my great surprise, not only those very fragments which, fifteen years before, I had taken out of the basket, but also parts of the Old Testament, the New Testament complete, and in addition, the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Pastor of Hermas. Full of joy, which I had at this time the self-command to conceal from the steward and the rest of the community, I asked, as if in a careless way, for permission to take the manuscript into my sleeping-chamber, to look over it more at leisure. There by myself, I could give way to the transport of joy which I felt. I knew that I held in my hand the most precious Biblical treasure in existence—a document whose age and importance

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exceeded that of all the manuscripts which I had ever examined during twenty years' of study on the subject. I cannot now, I confess, recall all the emotions which I felt in that exciting moment, with such a diamond in my possession. Though my lamp was dim and the night cold, I sat down at once to transcribe the Epistle of Barnabas. For two centuries search had been made in vain for the original Greek of the first of this epistle, which has been only known through a very faulty Latin translation. And yet this letter, from the end of the second down to the beginning of the fourth century, had an extensive authority, since many Christians assigned to it and to the Pastor of Hermas a place side by side with the inspired writings of the New Testament. This was the very reason why these two writings were thus both bound up with the Sinaitic Bible, the transcription of which is to be referred to the first half of the fourth century, and about the time of the first Christian emperor.

“Early on the 5th of February, I called upon the steward and asked permission to take the manuscript with me to Cairo, to have it there transcribed from cover to cover; but the prior had set out only two days before for Cairo, on his way to Constantinople, to attend at the election of a new archbishop, and one of the monks would not give his consent to my request. What was there to be done? My plans were quickly decided. On the 7th, at sunrise, I took a hasty farewell of the monks, in hopes of reaching Cairo in time to get the prior's consent. Every mark of attention was shown me on setting out. The Russian flag was hoisted from the convent walls, while the hillsides rang with the echoes of a parting salute, and the most distinguished members of the order escorted me on my way as far as the plain.

“The following Sunday I reached Cairo where I was received with the same marks of good-will. The prior, who had not set out, at once gave his consent to my request, and also gave instructions to a

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Bedouin to go and fetch the manuscript with all speed. Mounted on his camel, in nine days he went from Cairo to Sinai and bade, and on the 24th of February the priceless treasure was again in my hands. The time was now come at once boldly and without delay to set to work to a task of transcribing no less than one hundred and ten thousand lines, of which a great many were difficult to read either on account of later corrections or through the ink having faded, and that in a climate where the thermometer through March, April, and May is never below seventy-seven degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. No one can say what this cost me in fatigue and exhaustion.”

On the 27th of September Tischendorf returned to Cairo, and received from the monks under the form of a loan the Sinaitic Bible, which he took to St. Petersburg, where it was accurately copied.

Since my return from India, in the month of November, 1904, I received two facsimile pages from the original manuscript, which is now at St. Petersburg, Russia. These consist of the last chapter of St. Mark and the first chapter of St. Luke.

There is another quite important one of the uncial manuscripts, called Codex Ephraemi. This, however, is called a **palimpsest** or **rescript** manuscript, that is, the original writings were rubbed out in order to make room for other writings. It was first written in uncial characters, and about the twelfth century these pages were washed and pumiced, and on it were placed the writings of an old church Father by the name of Ephraem Syrus. This last writing was done in the cursive or running hand style of writing. About two hundred years ago a Swiss theologian attempted to decipher a few traces of the original manuscript. Sometime after that another man undertook it with but little success. In later years an attempt was made to bring out the characters by means of chemicals. But after all these attempts proved to be unsuccessful, Tischendorf tried his skill at the

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manuscript, and by the use of chemicals was enabled to be successful in his efforts, insomuch that he was able to completely decipher the whole of it and distinguish between the dates of the different writers who had been engaged upon the manuscript. This manuscript is kept in the Royal Library at Paris.

## **The Bridge of Time From the Apostles to A.D. 400**

We have heretofore shown that the Old Testament Scriptures were handed down from generation to generation in book form to the day of Christ, and that Ptolemy, king of Egypt, had the Septuagint Version made about two hundred and fifty years before Christ for the great library at Alexandria. We have also shown that from A. D. 300 to 400 up to the present time there have been manuscripts in existence of both Old and New Testaments; that these manuscripts are still in existence, and that we have personally examined the oldest of them. But now there is the space of about three hundred years from the time of the apostles to the time when these old manuscripts were copied, which time must be bridged over by unquestionable evidence; otherwise we shall be at sea, as it were, regarding establishing the truthfulness of the foundation of the Bible. Skeptics, too, will say, as one said to me a few months ago while we were sailing on the Pacific Ocean.

He asked, “How old are the oldest manuscripts of the Bible in the Greek language?”

I replied that they dated back to A. D. 300 to 400.

“Then, there are no older manuscripts in existence? the original cannot be found?”

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“No, sir. The original Greek manuscripts have never been discovered.”

“If that is the case, that the oldest manuscripts date back only to about A. D. 300 to 400, I suppose some impostor just wrote it up about that time, don’t you think?”

But we have an abundance of substantial evidence with which to bridge over these few centuries of time. There is no questioning the fact that there was at one time a man living whose name was Jesus, and that there were twelve apostles and others who were his followers and to whom he gave the Word. After Jesus’ death Saul of Tarsus, who was afterwards called Paul, became a believer in the Christian religion, and went forth preaching the gospel, and also wrote a number of epistles. History tells us of these men.

Constantine, who lived A. D. 272 to 337, became the emperor of Rome. He was the first Christian emperor, and required the people to recognize Christianity, whereas before this time the Christians had undergone the most severe persecutions and torture of every kind, and thousands upon thousands were put to death.

In the year 325 the Nicaean Council was held, where certain authoritative steps were taken concerning this affair. Before Constantine’s time, during the great persecutions of the Christians, a special effort was made by the rulers of the land and others to completely wipe out of existence not only the Christians themselves, but their doctrine by also destroying the manuscripts. Many of these sacred volumes were delivered up and burned, but others were hidden away and sealed up in caves and vaults and in some way preserved. Constantine, desiring to reestablish the work on this line and preserve the Scriptures, gave orders that fifty copies of the Bible be made for use in the churches at the various places. Eusebius Pamphili, bishop of Caesarea, who lived during the time of the

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Emperor Constantine and died a few years later, wrote a history of the life of the Emperor. This great Christian historian, who was a personal friend of Constantine, in giving his account of Constantine, says:

“Ever careful for the welfare of the churches of God, the Emperor addressed me personally in a letter on the means of providing copies of the inspired oracles. . . His letter, which related to the providing of copies of the Scriptures for reading in the churches, was to the following purport:

“ ‘Victor Constantine, Maximus Augustus, to Eusebius:

“ ‘It seems highly requisite, since that city is rapidly advancing in prosperity in all other respects, that the number of the churches should be also increased. Do you, therefore, receive with all readiness my determination on this behalf? I have thought it expedient to instruct your Prudence to order fifty copies of the sacred Scriptures, the provision and use of which you know to be most needful for the instruction of the church, to be written on prepared parchment, in a legible manner, and in a commodious and portable form, by transcribers thoroughly practiced in their art. The procurator of the diocese has also received instructions by letter from our Clemency to be careful to furnish all things necessary for the preparation of such copies; and it will be for you to take special care that they be completed with as little delay as possible. You have authority, also, in virtue of this letter, to use two of the public carriages for their conveyance, by which arrangement the copies, when fairly written, will most easily be forwarded for my personal inspection; and one of the deacons of your church may be entrusted with this service, who, on his arrival here, shall experience my liberality. God preserve you, beloved brother.’

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“Such were the Emperor’s commands, which were followed by the immediate execution of the work itself, which we sent him in magnificent and elaborate volumes of a threefold and fourfold form. This fact is attested by another letter, which the Emperor wrote in acknowledgment.” —Eusebius: Life of Constantine, Bk. IV, Chap. 34-37.

Here we find that fifty copies of the Bible were prepared by the hand and at the expense of the Roman emperor for the benefit of the congregations in the different places. And when Tischendorf found the Sinaitic manuscript, he was quite well convinced that it was very probably one of these fifty copies ordered by Constantine, which had been presented to that convent.

Infidels admit that the New Testament as we have it existed at the time of the Council of Nice in the year 325. Then, we have only to bridge over a chasm of less than three hundred years in order to meet the apostles with their original writings and work.

As Jesus Christ was the foundation and chief cornerstone of the church of God, and he gave his gospel to his apostles, we will now begin building our bridge, using him for our foundation-stone and place of starting. He gave the word and the Twelve and the Seventy who went forth preached it. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels. Paul and others wrote the Epistles. Paul in writings to Timothy told him when he came to “bring the books, but especially the parchments.” He no doubt at that very time had been writing his Epistles to the churches, which have been handed down to us as a portion of the New Testament. John, who was one of the apostles, and who wrote a part of the New Testament, lived until about the year 100. Polycarp, who was a great writer, and whose writings are to be found today, lived from about the year 69 to 165. He was also bishop of Smyrna, was acquainted with John, and was not only



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acquainted with John, but was one of his disciples, who sat at his feet and learned from the blessed apostle.

Among other writers whose writings are still extant is Justin Martyr, who lived from about the year 105 to 163, who was well acquainted with Polycarp, and had heard him tell of his conversations with John and of hearing John preach. There were other noted writers of about the same time. One, Ignatius, who died about A. D. 115; another, Clement, who was bishop of Rome from A. D. 91 to 101. Then, there was Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, who died about A. D. 202; Tertullian, A. D. 150 to 230; Origen, A. D. 185 to 253; Gregory, 210 to 270; Constantine, A. D. 272 to 337; Lactantius, A. D. 301 to 325; Eusebius, A. D. 264 to 349.

As we have heretofore stated, infidels admit that the New Testament existed at the time of Constantine. We have now bridged the chasm over to the apostles by a number of noted reliable writers, whose writings are now extant and a copy of the same is before me as I write. We will now proceed to quote a few expressions from the writings of some of these men. As the dates have already been given at the time which these men lived, it will be unnecessary to mention again all the dates of their lives and writings. However, we would say that Irenaeus died in the second year of the third century, that is, A. D. 202. In his youth he had sat at the feet of the aged Polycarp; and Polycarp had in turn been a disciple of the Evangelist St. John, and had conversation with other eye-witnesses of the gospel narrative. Irenaeus, in speaking of his own personal recollections, gives an account of what he had heard Polycarp say he had received from the lips of St. John and other disciples of our Lord, and expressly adds that all these words agree with Scripture. But let us hear his own words, as contained in a letter to Florinus:

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“When I was yet a child, I saw thee at Smyrna in Asia Minor, at Polycarp’s house, where thou wert distinguished at court, and obtained the regard of the bishop. I can more distinctly recollect things which happened then than others more recent; for events which happen in infancy seem to grow with the mind, and to become part of ourselves; so that I can recall the very place where Polycarp used to sit and teach, his manner of speech, his mode of life, his appearance, the style of his address to the people, his frequent references to St. John and to others who had seen our Lord; how he used to repeat from memory their discourses, which he had heard from them concerning our Lord, his miracles and mode of teaching, and how, being instructed himself by those who were eyewitnesses of the Word, there was in all that he said a strict agreement with the Scriptures.”

This is the account which Irenaeus himself gives of his connection with Polycarp, and of the truths which he had learned from him.

About a century or more after this, Eusebius wrote in his “Ecclesiastical History” (Book II, Chap. 2), and Constantine had the means of knowing whether or not Eusebius wrote the truth: “The fame of our Lord’s remarkable resurrection being now spread abroad, according to an ancient custom prevalent among the rulers of the nations to communicate novel occurrences to the emperor, that nothing might escape him, Pontius Pilate transmits to Tiberius an account of the circumstances concerning the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the report of which had been spread throughout all Palestine. In this account he also intimated that he ascertained other miracles respecting heaven, and having now risen from the dead he was believed to be a God by the great mass of the people.

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Tiberius referred the matter to the senate, but it is said they rejected the proposition.”

Tertullian also wrote in his “Apology” to the rulers of the Roman empire (section 21), wherein he spoke of the darkness of the crucifixion, and said, “You yourselves have an account of the world-portent in your archives”; and when recording Christ’s condemnation, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, he said, “All these things did Pilate do to Christ; and now in fact a Christian in his own convictions, he sent word of Him to the reigning Caesar, who was at the time Tiberius.” Constantine knew whether or not these were facts, and also knew whether or not Justin Martyr spoke the truth in his “Apology” to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (chapter 21), when he testified of Christ’s healing the sick, casting out demons, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead; and added, “And that he did these things you can learn from the **Acts of Pontius Pilate.**” The public records of Rome had not yet been destroyed by barbarian conquerors, and were at his command. He was nearly thirty years old in A. D. 303, when his predecessor Diocletian published his imperial edict commanding them to tear down the churches of the Christians, and to burn their copies of the sacred Scriptures.

Eusebius, in writing concerning some of these things, said: “We saw with our own eyes our houses of worship thrown down from their elevation, the sacred Scriptures of inspiration committed to the flames in the midst of the markets. It was in the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian [A. D. 302], in the month of Dystrus, called by the Romans March, in which the festival of our Savior was at hand, when the imperial edicts were everywhere published to tear down the churches to the foundation and to destroy the sacred Scriptures by fire.”—**Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History**, Book VIII, Chap. 21.

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There are numerous statements made by these early writers concerning the “Acts of Pontius Pilate,” and the report that he gave to Caesar concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And Eusebius and others say that these records or reports were kept in the Archives of Rome. Among the old manuscripts in the Vatican Library in Rome at the present time, is one giving the report of Pontius Pilate to Augustus Caesar, a translation of which I have before me as I write. But even though this manuscript should be forged, there is enough evidence that such a report did exist and was safely kept in the Archives of Rome.

We could continue by giving a great multiplicity of similar quotations from these early writers, but now we will notice what they had to say concerning the Bible. Irenaeus said, “So well established are our Gospels, that even teachers of error themselves bear testimony to them; even they rest their objections on the foundations of the Gospels.”—**Adv. Haer.** III, 11, 7.

It was not Constantine who made the Bible, nor who decided what books were canonical, as this was decided in the days of the apostles and continued to be known as such during the centuries to follow. Polycarp, who was martyred A. D. 155 or 156 and lived about thirty years of his life at the same time with St. John, quotes in his epistle to the Philippians nearly forty passages from our New Testament. Justin Martyr, who wrote about A. D. 140, or forty years after the death of the apostle John, has many quotations and uses the very words that we now read in the New Testament. In the writings of Irenaeus, A. D. 178; Clement, A. D. 194; Tertullian, A. D. 200; and Origen, A. D. 230, are to be found 8,723 quotations from the New Testament, including every book which we accept as canonical.

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Dr. Keith, in the sixth chapter of his “Demonstration of the Truth of the Christian Religion,” records the number of quotations from the New Testament which can be seen in works which are still extant of the writers we have named. He reports 767 passages quoted by Irenaeus, from every book in the New Testament except the third Epistle of John, and the Epistle of Jude; 389 passages quoted by Clement, from every book except the Epistle of James and the second and third Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude; 1,802, or, if repetitions are included, more than 3,000, quoted by Tertullian, from every book of the New Testament except the Epistle of James, the third of John, the second of Peter, and the Epistle of Jude; while the works of Origen yet extant, contain 5,765 quotations from the New Testament, including every book contained therein, and excluding all the so-called apocryphal books, about which infidels sometimes talk so freely. Many works of Origen and other authors of those times have perished, but it is probable that if Origen’s entire writings had been preserved, if the New Testament had been lost, it could have been reconstructed from them alone.”

Tregelles, when speaking of Origen, who died about A. D. 254, says: “In his writings he makes such extensive use of the New Testament, that although a very large number of his works are lost, and many others have come down to us only in defective Latin versions, we can in his extant Greek writings alone, . . . find cited at least two-thirds of the New Testament; so that, had such a thing been permitted as that the Gospels, and some of the other books, should have been lost, we might restore them in a great measure by means of the quotations in Origen.”

These were the Gospels which Justin Martyr said were read in the public assemblies of the Christians every Lord’s day. They were the “authentic writings” which Tertullian (A. D. 200) said were to

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be found in his time by any inquirer, in the custody of the churches of Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Rome. They were the Scriptures which the Emperor Diocletian (A. D. 300) ordered to be surrendered and burned, that he might destroy the foundations of Christianity. They were the same Scriptures that Constantine (A. D. 331) made mention of in a letter which is still extant, ordering Eusebius to provide fifty copies, to be carefully transcribed upon prepared parchments, as heretofore mentioned. Mr. Buchanan of Edinburg relates the following concerning Lord Hailes, a Scottish judge. He says:

“I was dining some time ago with a literary party at old Mr. Abercrombie’s, father of General Abercrombie, who was slain in Egypt at the head of the British army, and spending the evening together. A gentleman present put a question which puzzled the whole company. It was this: ‘Supposing all the New Testaments in the world had been destroyed at the end of the third century, could their contents have been recovered from the writings of the first three centuries?’

“The question was novel to all, and no one even hazarded a guess in answer to the inquiry. About two months after this meeting, I received a note from Lord Hailes inviting me to breakfast with him next morning. He had been one of the party. During breakfast he asked me if

I recollected the curious questions about the possibility of recovering the contents of the New Testament from the writings of the first three centuries.

“ ‘I remember it well,’ said I, ‘and have thought of it often, without being able to form any opinion or conjecture on the subject.’

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“ ‘Well,’ said Lord Hailes, ‘that question quite accorded with the turn or taste of my antiquarian mind. On returning home, as I knew I had all the writings of those centuries, I began immediately to collect them, that I might set to work on the arduous task as soon as possible.’ Pointing to a table covered with papers, he said, ‘There have I been busy for these two months, searching for chapters, half-chapters, and sentences of the New Testament, and have marked down what I have found, and where I found it, so that any person may examine and see for himself. I have actually discovered the whole New Testament from those writings, except seven (or eleven) verses (I forget which), which satisfied me that I could discover them also.’ ‘Now,’ said he, ‘here was a way in which God concealed or hid the treasure of his Word, that Julian, the apostate emperor, and other enemies of Christ who tried to extirpate the Gospels from the world, never would have thought of; and though they had, they could never have effected their destruction.’ ”

With all this evidence we feel that the chasm of time has been well bridged; that we can clasp hands, as it were, with the apostles, and when we read our New Testament, feel assured that we are speaking the same words that they spoke; and when we search our Old Testament, we do not question it being the same Scriptures to which Jesus referred when he said to the Jews, “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.”

## **The Acts of Pilate**

### *The arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as reported by Pontius Pilate*

It is considered not out of place to insert here a portion of Pilate's letter to Caesar, Emperor of Rome, translated from the manuscripts that now exist in the Vatican at Rome, as referred to earlier. Tiberius Caesar was the emperor of the Roman empire during the time of Christ, and Pontius Pilate was the procurator or governor of the Province of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. At the time of the crucifixion of Christ his headquarters were at Jerusalem, and all valuable records and reports from all the provinces had to be sent to Rome to the emperor, where they were kept in "The Archives of Rome."

Tertullian, a noted ecclesiastical writer, who lived A. D. 150 to 230, in writing to the rulers of Rome concerning the crucifixion, said (section 21), "You yourselves have an account of the world-portent in your archives." He further said concerning the death of Christ, "All these things did Pilate do to Christ; and, in fact, a Christian in his own convictions, he sent word of Him to the reigning Caesar, who was at the time Tiberius."

Justin Martyr, who lived about the year A. D. 105 to 163, in writing concerning the same, said, "And that he did these things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate."



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Eusebius who lived about A. D. 264 to 349, was the Christian historian who was engaged by the Roman emperor for that work, and he says, "Pontius Pilate transmits to Tiberius (Caesar) an account of the circumstances concerning the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, the report of which had been spread throughout all Palestine." There is, as has heretofore been stated, at the present time old manuscripts purporting to be a letter from Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Caesar.

To Tiberius Caesar, Emperor of Rome.

Noble Sovereign:—Greeting:

Recent events in my province have been such that I should not be surprised if ere long they may change the destiny of our nation; for it seems the gods have ceased to be propitious. I am inclined to rue the day I accepted the government of Judea, for since that time my life has been one of great uneasiness and distress.

On my arrival at Jerusalem, I took possession of the pretorium, and ordered a splendid feast to be prepared, to which I invited the tetrarch of Galilee, with the high priest and his officers. At the appointed hour no guests appeared. This I considered an insult offered to my dignity, and to the whole government to which I belong. A few days after the high priest deigned to pay me a visit. His deportment was grave and deceitful. He pretended that his religion forbade him and his attendants to sit down at the table of the Romans, and eat and offer libations with them, but this was only a sanctimonious seeming, for his very countenance betrayed his hypocrisy. But I thought it expedient to accept his excuse, but from that moment I was convinced that the conquered had declared themselves the enemy of the conquerors; and I would warn the Romans to beware of the high priests of this country. They would betray their own mother to gain an office and procure a luxurious

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living. It seemed to me, of conquered cities, Jerusalem was the most difficult to govern. So turbulent were the people that I lived in momentary dread of an insurrection. I had not soldiers sufficient to suppress it. I only had one centurion and a hundred men at my command. I requested a reinforcement from the Prefect of Syria, who informed me that he had scarcely troops sufficient to defend his own province. An insatiate thirst for conquest to extend our empire beyond the means of defending it, I fear, will be the cause of final overthrow of our whole government. I lived in obscurity from the masses, for I did not know what those high priests might influence the rabble to do; yet I endeavored to ascertain as much as I could the mind and standing of the people.

Among the various rumors that came to my ears, there was one that attracted my attention in particular. A young man, it was said, had appeared in Galilee, preaching with a noble unction, a new law in the name of the God that had sent him. At first I was apprehensive that his design was to stir up the people against the Romans; but my fears were soon dispelled. Jesus of Nazareth spake rather as a friend of the Romans than the Jews. One day in passing by the place of Siloe, where there was a great concourse of people, I observed in the midst of the group a young man who was leaning against a tree, calmly addressing the multitude. I was told it was Jesus. This I could easily have suspected, so great was the difference between him and those listening to him. His golden colored hair and beard gave to his appearance a celestial aspect.

He appeared to be about thirty years of age. Never have I seen a sweeter or more serene countenance. What a contrast between him and his hearers, with their black beards and tawny complexions. Unwilling to interrupt him by my presence, I continued my walk, but signified to my secretary to join the group and listen. My

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secretary's name was Manlius. He was the grandson of the chief of the conspirators who encamped in Etruria waiting for Cataline. Manlius was an ancient inhabitant of Judea, and well-acquainted with the Hebrew language. He was devoted to me, and worthy of my confidence.

On entering the pretorium I found Manlius, who related to me the words Jesus had pronounced at Siloe. Never have I read in the works of the philosophers anything that can compare to the maxims of Jesus. One of the rebellious Jews, so numerous in Jerusalem, having asked him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, Jesus replied: "Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, and unto God the things that are his."

It was on account of the wisdom of his sayings that I granted so much liberty to the Nazarene; for it was in my power to have had him arrested, and exiled to Pontus; but this would have been contrary to the justice which has always characterized the Roman government in all her dealings with men; this man was neither seditious nor rebellious; I extended to him my protection, unknown perhaps to himself. He was at liberty to act, to speak, to assemble, and address the people, to choose disciples, unrestrained by any Pretorian mandate. Should it ever happen, (may the gods ever avert the omen!) should it ever happen, I say, that the religion of our forefathers should be supplemented by the religion of Jesus, it will be to this noble toleration that Rome shall owe her premature obsequies, while I, miserable wretch, shall have been the instrument of what the Jews call Providence, and we call destiny.

This unlimited freedom granted to Jesus provoked the Jews, not the poor, but the rich and powerful. It is true, Jesus was severe on the latter, and this was a political reason, in my opinion, for not restraining the liberty of the Nazarene. "Scribes and Pharisees," he

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would say to them, “you are a race of vipers; you resemble painted sepulchers; you appear well unto men, but you have death within you.” At other times he would sneer at the alms of the rich and proud, telling them that the mite of the poor was more precious in the sight of God. New complaints were daily made at the pretorium against the insolence of Jesus.

I was even informed that some misfortune would befall him; that it would not be the first time that Jerusalem had stoned those that called themselves prophets; an appeal would be made of Caesar. However, my conduct was approved by the Senate, and I was promised a reinforcement after the termination of the Parthean war.

Being too weak to suppress a sedition, I resolved upon adopting a measure that promised to establish the tranquility of the city, without subjecting the pretorium to humiliating concession. I wrote to Jesus, requesting an interview with him at the pretorium. He came. You know that in my veins flows the Spanish mixed with Roman blood—as incapable of fear as it is of puerile emotion. When the Nazarene made his appearance, I was walking in my Basilic, and my feet seemed fastened with an iron hand to the marble pavements, and I trembled in every limb as a guilty culprit, though he was calm; the Nazarene was as calm as innocence itself. When he came up to me he stopped, and by a signal sign he seemed to say to me, “I am here”; though he spoke not a word. For some time I contemplated with admiration and awe this extraordinary type of man—a type of man unknown to our numerous painters who have given form and figure to all the gods and the heroes. There was nothing about him that was repelling in its character, yet I felt awed and tremulous to approach him.

“Jesus,” said I unto him at last—and my tongue faltered—  
“Jesus of Nazareth, I have granted you for the last three years ample

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freedom of speech; nor do I regret it. Your words are those of a sage. I know not whether you have read Socrates or Plato, but this I know, there is in your discourses a majestic simplicity that elevates you far above these philosophers. The Emperor is informed of it, and I, his humble representative in this country, am glad of having allowed you the liberty of which you are so worthy. However, I must not conceal from you that your discourses have raised up against you powerful and inveterate enemies. Neither is this surprising. Socrates had his enemies, and he fell a victim to their hatred. Yours are doubly incensed against you, on account of your discourses being so severe against their conduct; against me, on account of the liberty I have afforded you. They even accuse me of being indirectly leagued with you, for the purpose of depriving the Hebrews of the little civil power which Rome has left them. My request—I do not say my order—is, that you be more circumspect and moderate in your discourses in the future, and more tender toward them, lest you arouse the pride of your enemies, and they raise against you the stupid populace, and compel me to employ the instrument of law.”

The Nazarene calmly replied: “Prince of the earth, your words proceed not from true wisdom. Say to the torrent to stop in the midst of the mountain gorge; it will uproot the trees of the valley. The torrent will answer you that it obeys the laws of nature and the Creator. God alone knows whither flow the waters of the torrent. Verily I say unto you, before the rose of Sharon blossoms the blood of the just shall be spilt.”

“Your blood shall not be spilt,” said I, with deep emotion; “you are more precious in my estimation on account of your wisdom than all the turbulent and proud Pharisees who abuse the freedom granted them by the Romans. They conspire against Caesar and convert his bounty into fear, impressing the unlearned that Caesar is a tyrant and

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seeks their ruin. Insolent wretches, they are not aware that the wolf of the Tiber sometimes clothes himself with the skin of the sheep to accomplish his wicked ends. I will protect you against them. My pretorium shall be an asylum, sacred both day and night.”

Jesus carelessly shook his head and said with a grave and divine smile: “When the day shall have come, there will be no asylums for the Son of man, neither in the earth nor under the earth. The asylum of the just is there,” pointing to the heavens. “That which is written in the books of the prophets must be accomplished.”

“Young man,” answered I mildly, “you oblige me to convert my request into an order. The safety of the province, which has been confided to my care, requires it. You must observe more moderation in your discourses. Do not infringe my order. You know the consequences. May happiness attend you; farewell.”

“Prince of the earth,” replied Jesus, “I come to bring peace, love and charity into the world. I was born the same day on which Augustus Caesar gave peace to the Roman world. Persecutions proceed not from me. I expect it from others, and will meet it in obedience to the will of my Father who has shown me the way. Restrain, therefore, your worldly prudence. It is not in your power to arrest the victim at the foot of the tabernacle of expiation.” So saying, he disappeared like a bright shadow behind the curtains of the Basilic to my great relief, for I felt a heavy burden on me, from which I could not extricate myself while in his presence.

To Herod, who then reigned in Galilee, the enemies of Jesus addressed themselves, to wreak their vengeance on the Nazarene. Had Herod consulted his own inclinations, he would have ordered Jesus immediately to be put to death; but though proud of his royal dignity an act that might diminish his influence with the Senate, or, like me, was afraid of Jesus himself. But it would never do for a

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Roman officer to be scared by a Jew. Previous to this Herod called on me at the pretorium, and, on rising to take leave, after some insignificant conversation, asked me what was my opinion concerning the Nazarene. I replied that Jesus appeared to me to be one of those great philosophers that great nations sometimes produced; that his doctrines are by no means sacrilegious, and that the intentions of Rome were to leave him to that freedom of speech which was justified by his actions. Herod smiled maliciously, and, saluting me with an ironical respect, departed.

The great feast of the Jews was approaching, and the intention was to avail themselves of the popular exultation which always manifests itself at the solemnities of a Passover. The city was overflowing with a tumultuous populace, clamoring for the death of the Nazarene. My emissaries informed me that the treasurer of the temple had been employed in bribing the people. The danger was pressing. A Roman centurion had been insulted. I wrote to the Prefect of Syria for a hundred foot soldiers, and as many cavalry. He declined. I saw myself alone with a handful of veterans in the midst of a rebellious city, too weak to suppress a disorder, and having no other choice left but to tolerate it. They had seized upon Jesus, and the seditious rabble, although they had nothing to fear from the pretorium, believing, as their leaders had told them, that I winked at their sedition—continued vociferating: “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Three powerful parties had combined together at that time against Jesus: First, the Herodians and the Sadducees, whose seditious conduct seemed to have proceeded from double motives; they hated the Nazarene, and were impatient of the Roman yoke. They could never forgive me for having entered the holy city with banners that bore the image of the Roman Emperor; and although in

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this instance I had committed a fatal error, yet the sacrilege did not appear less heinous in their eyes.

Another grievance also rankled in their bosoms. I had proposed to employ a part of the treasure of the Temple in erecting edifices for public utility. My proposal was scorned. The Pharisees were the avowed enemies of Jesus. They cared not for the government. They bore with bitterness the severe reprimands which the Nazarene for three years had been continually throwing out against them wherever he went. Too weak and pusillanimous to act by themselves, they had embraced the quarrels of the Herodians and the Sadducees. Besides these three parties, I had to contend against the reckless and profligate populace, always ready to join a sedition, and to profit by the disorder and confusions that resulted therefrom.

Jesus was dragged before the high priest, and condemned to death. It was then that the high priest, Caiaphas, performed a divisory act of submission. He sent his prisoner to me to pronounce his condemnation and secure his execution. I answered him that, as Jesus was a Galilean, the affair came in Herod's jurisdiction, and ordered him to be sent hither. The wily Tetrarch professed humility, and, protesting his preference to the Lieutenant of Caesar, he committed the fate of the man to my hands. Soon my palace assumed the aspect of a besieged citadel. Every moment increased the number of the seditionists. Jerusalem was inundated with crowds from the mountains of Nazareth. All Judea appeared to be pouring into the devoted city. I had taken a wife from among the Gauls, who had pretended to see into futurity. Weeping and throwing herself at my feet, "Beware," said she to me, "beware, and touch not that man; for he is holy. Last night I saw him in a vision. He was walking on the waters; he was flying on the wings of the wind. He spoke to the tempest, and to the fishes of the lake; all were obedient to him.



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Behold, the torrent in Mount Kedron flows with blood, the statues of Caesar are filled with gemonide; the columns of the interium have given away, and the sun is veiled in mourning like a vestal in the tomb. Ah! Pilate, evil awaits thee. If thou wilt not listen to the vows of thy wife, dread the curse of a Roman Senate; dread the frowns of Caesar.”

By this time the marble stairs groaned under the weight of the multitude. The Nazarene was brought back to me. I proceeded to the halls of justice, followed by my guard, and asked the people in a severe tone what they demanded?

“The death of the Nazarene,” was the reply.

“For what crime?”

“He has blasphemed; he has prophesied the ruin of the Temple; he calls himself the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of the Jews.”

“Roman justice,” said I, “punishes not such offenses with death.”

“Crucify him! Crucify him!” belched forth the relentless rabble. The vociferations of the infuriated mob shook the palace to its foundations.

There was but one who appeared to be calm in the midst of the vast multitude; it was the Nazarene. After many fruitless attempts to protect him from the fury of his merciless persecutors, I adopted a measure which at the moment appeared to me to be the only one that could save his life. I proposed, as it was their custom to deliver a prisoner on such occasions, to release Jesus and let him go free, that he might be the scapegoat, as they called it; but they said Jesus must be crucified. I then appealed to them as to the inconsistency of their course as being incompatible with their laws, showing that no

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criminal judge could pass sentence on a criminal unless he had fasted one whole day; and that sentence must have the consent of the Sanhedrim] and the signature of the president of that court; that no criminal could be executed on the same day his sentence was fixed, and the next day, on the day of his execution, the Sanhedrim was required to review the whole proceeding; also, according to their law, a man was stationed at the door of the court with a flag, and another a piece off on horseback to cry the name of the criminal and his crime, and the name of his witnesses, and to know if anyone can testify anything in his favor; and the prisoner on his way to execution had the right to turn back three times, and to plead any new thing in his favor. I urged all these pleas, hoping they might awe them into subjection; but they still cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

I then ordered him to be scourged, hoping this might satisfy them; but it only increased their fury. I then called for a basin, and washed my hands in the presence of the clamorous multitude, thus testifying that in my judgment Jesus of Nazareth had done nothing worthy of death; but in vain. It was his life these wretches thirsted for.

Often in our civil commotions have I witnessed the furious animosity of the multitude, but nothing could be compared to what I witnessed on this occasion. It might have been truly said that on this occasion all the phantoms of the infernal regions had assembled at Jerusalem. The crowd appeared not to walk, but to be borne off and whirled as a vortex, rolling along in living waves from the portals of the pretorium even unto Mount Zion, with howling screams, shrieks and vociferations such as were never heard in the seditions of the panonia or in the tumult of the forum.

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By degrees the day darkened like a winter's twilight, such as had been at the death of the great Julius Caesar. It was likewise the Ides of March. I, the continued governor of a rebellious province, was leaning against a column of my Basilic, contemplating athwart the dreary gloom these fiends of Tartarus dragging to execution the innocent Nazarene. All around me was deserted. Jerusalem had vomited forth her indwellers through the funeral gate that leads to Gemonica. An air of desolation and sadness enveloped me. My guards had joined the cavalry, and the centurion, to display a shadow of power, was endeavoring to keep order. I was left alone, and my breaking heart admonished me that what was passing at that moment appertained rather to the history of the gods than that of men. A loud clamor was heard proceeding from Golgotha, which, borne on the winds, seemed to announce an agony such as was never heard by mortal ears. Dark clouds lowered over the pinnacle of the temple, and setting over the city covered it as with a veil. So dreadful were the signs that men saw both in the heavens and on the earth, that Dionysius the Areopagite is reported to have exclaimed, "Either the author of nature is suffering, or the universe is falling apart."

Whilst these appalling scenes of nature were transpiring, there was a dreadful earthquake in lower Egypt, which filled everybody with fear, and scared the superstitious Jews almost to death. It is said Balthasar, an aged and learned Jew of Antioch, was found dead after the excitement was over. Whether he died from alarm or grief is not known. He was a strong friend of the Nazarene.

Towards the first hour of the night I threw my mantle around me, and went down into the city toward the gates of Golgotha. The sacrifice was consummated. The crowd was returning home, still agitated, it is true, but gloomy, taciturn and desperate. What they had witnessed had stricken them with terror and remorse. I also saw

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my little Roman cohort pass by mournfully, the standard bearer having veiled his eagle in taken of grief; and I overheard some of the Jewish soldiers murmuring strange words which I did not understand. Others were recounting prodigies almost similar to those which had so often smitten the Romans by the will of the gods. Sometimes groups of men and women would halt, then, looking back towards Mount Calvary, would remain motionless in expectation of witnessing some new prodigy.

I returned to the pretorium sad and pensive. On ascending the stairs, the steps of which were still stained with the blood of the Nazarene, I perceived an old man in a suppliant posture, and behind him several Romans in tears. He threw himself at my feet and wept most bitterly. It is painful to see an old man weep, and my heart already overcharged with grief, we, though strangers, mutually wept together. And in truth it seemed that the tears lay very shallow that day with very many whom I perceived out of the vast concourse of people. I never saw such a complete division of feeling both on the extreme. Those that betrayed and sold him, those that testified against him, those that said, "Crucify him, we have his blood" all slunk off like cowardly curs, and washed their teeth with vinegar. As I am told that Jesus taught a resurrection and a separation after death, if such should be the fact I am sure it commenced in this vast crowd.

"Father," said I to him, after gaining control of my feelings, "who are you, and what is your request?"

"I am Joseph of Arimathea," replied he, "and am come to beg of you upon my knees the permission to bury Jesus of Nazareth."

"Your prayer is granted," said I to him; and at the same time ordered Manlius to take some soldiers with him to superintend the interment lest it should be profaned.

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A few days after the sepulcher was found empty. His disciples published all over the country that Jesus had risen from the dead, as he had foretold. This last report created more excitement than the first. As to its truth I cannot say for certain, but I have made some investigation in the matter; so you can examine for yourself, and see if I am in fault, as Herod represents me.

Joseph buried Jesus in his own tomb. Whether he contemplated his resurrection or calculated to cut him another I cannot tell. The next day after he was buried one of the priests came to the pretorium and said they were apprehensive that his disciples intended to steal the body of Jesus and hide it, and then make it appear that he had risen from the dead, as he had foretold, and of which they were perfectly convinced. I sent him to the captain of the royal guard (Malcus) to tell him to take the Jewish soldiers, place as many around the sepulcher as were needed; then if anything should happen they would blame themselves, and not the Romans.

When the great excitement arose about the sepulcher being found empty, I felt a deeper solicitude than ever. I sent for Malcus, who told me he had placed his lieutenant, Ben Isham, with one hundred soldiers around the sepulcher. He told me that Isham and the soldiers were very much alarmed at what had occurred there that morning. I sent for this man Isham, who related to me as near as I can remember the following circumstances: He said at about the beginning of the fourth watch, they saw a soft and beautiful light over the sepulcher. He at first thought that the women had come to embalm the body of Jesus, as was their custom, but he could not see how they had got through the guards. Whilst these reflections were passing through his mind, behold, the whole place was lighted up. and there seemed to be crowds of the dead in their grave clothes. All seemed to be shouting and filled with ecstasy, while all around and

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above was the most beautiful music he had ever heard; and the whole air seemed to be full of voices praising God. At this time there seemed to be a reeling and swimming of the earth, so that he turned so sick and faint that he could not stand on his feet. He said the earth seemed to swim from under him, and his senses left him, so that he knew not what did occur. I asked him in what condition he was when he came to himself? He said he was lying on the ground with his face down. I asked him if he could not have been mistaken as to the light? Was it not day that was coming in the east? He said at first he thought of that, but at a stone's cast it was exceedingly dark; and then he remembered it was too early for day. I asked him if his dizziness might not have come from being wakened up and getting up too suddenly, as it sometimes had that effect? He said he was not, and had not been asleep all night, as the penalty was death for him to sleep on duty. He said he had let some of the soldiers sleep at a time. Some were asleep then. I asked him how long the scene lasted? He said he did not know but he thought nearly one hour. He said it was hid by the light of day. I asked him if he went to the sepulcher after he had come to himself? He said not, because he was afraid; that just as soon as relief came they all went to their quarters. I asked him if he had been interrogated by the priests? He said he had. They wanted him to say it was an earthquake, and to say they were asleep and offered him money to tell that the disciples came and stole him; but he saw no disciples; he did not know that the body was gone until he was told so. I asked him what was the private opinion of those priests he had conversed with. He said some of them thought that Jesus was no man; that he was not a human being; that he was not the son of Mary; that he was not the same that was said to be born of the virgin in Bethlehem; that the same person had been on the earth before with Abraham and Lot, and at many times and places.

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It seems to me if the Jewish theory be true, these conclusions would be correct, for, to sum up his life, it would be in accord with this man's life, as is known and testified by both friends and foes; for the elements were no more in his hands than the clay in the hands of the potter. He could convert water into wine; he could change death into life, diseases into health; he could calm the seas, still the storms, call up fish with a silver coin in its mouth. Now, I say if he could do all these things—which he did, and many more as the Jews all testify; and it was doing these things that created this enmity against him; he was not charged with criminal offenses, nor was he charged with violating any law, nor of wronging any individual in person ; all these facts are known to thousands, as well by his foes as by his friends; so I am almost ready to say, as did Manulas at the cross, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

Now, noble Sovereign, this is as near the facts in the case as I can arrive at them, and I have taken this pains to make the statement more full so that you may judge of my conduct upon the whole, as I hear that Antipater has said many hard things of me in this matter. With the promise of faithfulness and good wishes to my noble Sovereign, I am your most obedient servant

—Pontius Pilate











