

THE  
CORRUPTIONS  
OF THE  
NEW  
TESTAMENT

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Everything which passes through human hands is liable to be altered, corrupted, and vitiated; and sacred books form no exception to this rule. The integrity of a book may be impaired every time it is copied. In copying any writing, bad men might make alterations, careless men might make mistakes, and good men might seek to change and improve the things which they were copying; and so, in one way or another, the integrity of the document might be seriously impaired. This no intelligent person can deny.

Now it is well known that the New Testament is not a recent production. Skeptics and Christians agree that it has been in existence for a long time. Some affirm that it was compiled, in its present form, by the Council held at Nicea, AD 325; and according to this statement, currently made by various skeptical writers in infidel books, the New Testament is more than 1550 years old. But during the vicissitudes of 1550 years, many books have perished, and others have been purposely or accidentally corrupted. What certainty, then, have we of the authenticity and the integrity of the New Testament books; to say nothing of their truthfulness or inspiration? Is not the whole matter involved in too great doubt to command the confidence and respect of prudent, intelligent, and thinking men?

In examining this subject, let us commence with the facts which are nearest to us, and within our reach, and first let us inquire:

## **HOW OLD IS THE ENGLISH BIBLE?**

On the 17th of May, 1881, was issued, in London, the Revised New Testament, for which one London publisher had advance orders for more than a million copies; and of which their agent in New York, where it was issued May 20th, sold 365,000 copies before the end of the year. It was immediately reprinted in America, in some fifty editions, one of which had a circulation of 100,000 copies, and another a circulation of 65,000 copies, before January, 1882. Probably, within one year from the date of its issue, three million copies were bought in Great Britain and America.

On comparing this book with King James' translation, we find numerous changes, most of which are so unimportant that ordinary people wonder why they were made. In many instances, one word has been changed for another of exactly the same meaning. In some cases a delicate shade of difference can be detected; in other instances, the grammatical construction varies slightly; occasionally a sentence or word is omitted; but the ordinary reader, taking the book and reading it through, would detect few essential differences. No one, so far as we have been informed, has changed one article of his faith or one iota of his practice, and no sect has lost or gained a member, in consequence of the changes which have been made. The same facts are stated, and the same doctrines taught in both books. We have, therefore, substantially the *same book* that has been in circulation throughout the English-speaking world since 1611; the same book of which, during the present century, more than two hundred translations have been made,—thus placing it within the reach of the great majority of the inhabitants of the globe.

We may now go back further, and we find that this New Testament is, in all essential particulars, the same as that published by Tyndale in 1526, and substantially the same as the translation made by Wycliffe from the Latin in 1380. The difference between any of these copies does not affect the general integrity of the book; and whatever variations there may be in them are mainly due to occasional misapprehensions of the meaning of certain passages by translators, or to changes in the meaning of English words, which render some of the old expressions obsolete and unintelligible to the present generation of English readers. Our language has changed, but the book is substantially the same.

We may then safely say that the *English New Testament* has existed, with no essential variations, for the last five hundred years;<sup>1</sup> manuscript copies of Wycliffe's Testament of that age being still in existence; Wycliffe's English New Testament not having been printed till it was more than four hundred years old.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: remember that this book was originally published in 1884. So, the *English New Testament* has existed with no essential variations for the last 630 years.

Of course there have been numerous typographical errors in the different *printed* editions of the New Testament. We sometimes find a letter turned upside down, or a word misspelled. One edition of the Bible is called the "Vinegar Bible," because in one instance the word "vinegar" is printed where it should be "vineyard." Such variations as these are easily corrected, and mislead no one. Other more important, and in some cases *intentional*, errors have occurred, the authors of which have sometimes been severely punished; but these instances were few, and the more important the errors, the more sure they were to be speedily detected and corrected.

## **OLD BIBLES IN OTHER LANGUAGES.**

Printed copies of this Book, equally ancient, also exist in other languages. I have in my library a copy of it in Latin, printed in the year 1501, every line of which is as readable as when it came from the press. But the Book is older than the art of printing, for the first volume of importance ever printed was the Latin Bible, 1450-1455, several copies of which are still in existence; and these are substantially the same book as we now have in English.

But these Testaments in English or Latin were originally translated from the Greek; and there are also ancient translations into other languages, which claim a much greater antiquity than any printed copies. All these New Testaments, in the various languages, are traced back to manuscripts written in the Greek language many years ago, hundreds of which manuscripts, transcribed before the art of printing was discovered, still exist. During the dark ages these manuscripts were hidden in libraries, and copied and re-copied by devout men; till printing superseded this tedious labor.

Before that time manuscript copies of the New Testament were exceedingly expensive. Copies of Wycliffe's English Testament sold in 1420 for four marks and forty pence, equal to about \$14.50,—which, allowing for the difference in the value of money, would be equivalent to \$200 at the present time. Greek and Latin manuscripts were, of course, proportionally valuable, until the art

of printing was discovered, and the sacred books were scattered far and wide over an awakening world.

Since that time, the old manuscripts have only been needed to verify the text, and correct the translations and printed editions. When an error is found in a *printed* book, the same error will be found in every other copy in the whole edition. But though ten men *copying* one book would all be likely to make mistakes, no two would be likely to make the same *mistakes*; so one manuscript copy would serve to correct another. Hence the great advantage of having numerous manuscript copies of the New Testament, and the earlier and more numerous the manuscripts the better.

## UNCIAL AND CURSIVE MANUSCRIPTS.

There are two kinds of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament; the oldest class being written in capital or “*uncial*” letters, so called from the Latin word for *inch*; perhaps because the letters were first made of that length. The oldest of these manuscripts have hardly any punctuation; and the words are not separated by spaces, the letters being run together in solid lines. This style of writing was used down to about the tenth century; after which a “*cursive*” or running, hand was adopted, in which manuscripts were written from the tenth century to the time when the art of printing was discovered.

The “*cursive*” manuscripts were, of course, the most accessible, being the most numerous; and so they were mainly used in printing the earliest editions of the Greek Testament, and in preparing the various English translations, down to that of King James,—only two of the five oldest and most valuable “*uncial*” manuscripts having been at that time known to scholars to be in existence, and those having been little used by them; though some of the “*cursives*” which they did use may have been copied from, and so may represent, very ancient “*uncials*.”

The number of New Testament manuscripts, complete or fragmentary, now known, exceeds seventeen hundred, dating from about AD 330 to 1500. Of these probably seventy or eighty are over one thousand years old. Dr. Scrivener makes record of 158

*uncials* and 1605 *cursives*; some of them being *Lectionaries*, or Service-Books, containing only the Scripture lessons read in the churches;—and the number is increased from time to time by explorations in ancient libraries, especially in the East.

The *cursive* manuscripts, dating from about AD 800 to 1500, number between nine and ten hundred. Some are beautifully illuminated; some being written on linen paper, which was first used in the twelfth century; others upon cotton paper, which was used as early as the ninth century; others, like the older uncial manuscripts, being written upon parchment and vellum, which have been in use from before the Christian era. Some thirty of these manuscripts contain the entire New Testament; others contain only portions. Manuscript books being bulky, the New Testament was for convenience transcribed in several volumes. Hence the manuscripts preserved are mostly of separate portions, rather than entire New Testaments. Of manuscripts containing the four Gospels there are more than six hundred; of the Acts of the Apostles and Catholic Epistles there are more than two hundred; there are about three hundred manuscripts of the Epistles of Paul, and about one hundred of the book of Revelation; besides more than four hundred *Lectionaries*, containing the Lessons for public reading.

Of the more ancient *uncial* manuscripts of the New Testament the number is naturally much smaller; but there are sixty-two manuscripts of the Gospels, fifteen of the Acts, seven of the Catholic Epistles, twenty of the Epistles of Paul, and five manuscripts of the Apocalypse—a total of eighty-three manuscripts; according to the list prepared by Dr. Ezra Abbot in 1883 for the pages of Dr. Schaff's "*Companion to the Greek Testament and English Version*," (p. 101.) In this account some seventy uncial *Lectionaries* are not included, their great antiquity being less certain.

## VARIOUS READINGS.

Of course, the earliest printed editions of the New Testament were issued before most of these hidden manuscripts were

discovered and compared; and hence contained slight errors of copyists, which could only be detected when other copies were collected and collated. Since that time, a vast number of such manuscripts have been discovered, and compared, word by word, and letter by letter; and every real discrepancy in the sense, as well as every little error in spelling or copying,—like the failure to dot an *i*, or cross a *t*—has been noted and reported, thus making up the vast number of “various readings,” about which skeptics talk,—ninety-nine out of a hundred of which are of no consequence whatever. Obviously if there were but one manuscript of the New Testament in existence there could of course be *no* various readings; but the more manuscripts discovered, the more of these “various readings” there will be; and as there are ten times as many manuscripts of the New Testament as of any other ancient book, of course there will be ten times as many “various readings;” and whenever any new reading of importance is discovered, then it is necessary to look through the best ancient manuscripts, and see what is really the true reading of the passage.

No existing manuscripts of Greek or Roman classics can compare with those of the New Testament in number, or antiquity and authenticity. Of Herodotus, the oldest and the most important of the classic historians, there are extant about *fifteen* manuscript copies, most of them written since AD 1450. One or two may date back to the ninth or tenth century. There are still fewer manuscript copies of the writings of Plato. One of the earliest bears date AD 895. And the text of these ancient writers is far less correct than that of the New Testament manuscripts. Take, for example, the Comedies of Terence, who was born at Carthage 195 BC. The learned Dr. Bentley asserts, in his reply to Collins (Part I., § 32), that the oldest and best manuscript copy, now in the Vatican Library, has “*hundreds of errors;*” and remarks, “I myself have collated several, and do affirm that I have seen *twenty thousand various readings* in that little author, not near so big as the New Testament; and am morally sure that if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence, with that minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of variations would amount to above *fifty thousand.*”

From the hundreds of Greek manuscripts of the New



Testament which have been carefully examined, critics have collected perhaps 150,000 various readings; most of which are simple differences in spelling, such as are found in printed books today; as we see by consulting any good dictionary, where we find “traveller” and “traveler,” “worshipped” and “worshipped,” “labour” and “labor.” Only about 400 of them perceptibly affect the sense; an average of *less than one error to a manuscript*. And of this 400 only about fifty are of much consequence. From the writings of Milton, Bunyan, and Shakspeare, though they are little more than two hundred years old, and have been *printed*, instead of being copied by hand, there could doubtless be culled *more various readings* than all that have been gathered from the multitudes of different manuscripts of the New Testament that have been examined.

Says a writer in the *North American Review*, in an article on Prof. Norton’s work on the New Testament, “It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and eight years, should be *far more uncertain and corrupt* than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed *only in manuscript*. . . . With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its reading must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But in *every one* of Shakespeare’s thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially *affect the meaning of the passages in which they occur*. ”

## THE MOST ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS.

The style of writing indicates the age of manuscripts. Recently, certain manuscripts recovered from the ruins of Herculaneum have been unrolled and deciphered with the utmost care, and fifteen folio volumes of them have been published. Now we know that Herculaneum and Pompeii were overwhelmed in the year AD 79, by an eruption of Vesuvius; and hence there can be no dispute in regard to the age of the manuscripts rescued from these ruins. They

must be more than 1800 years old. But these manuscripts are written in “uncial” letters, very nearly resembling the letters used in those manuscript copies of the New Testament which have been universally esteemed the *most ancient*. This style of letters has not been used for many centuries; hence the antiquity of these manuscripts is proved beyond a possibility of dispute.

Among the “uncial” manuscripts, five are generally distinguished from the rest as of primary importance. Of these, the Alexandrian,—known as Codex A, was originally discovered at Alexandria, and was sent to King Charles I., in 1628, seventeen years after King James' version was printed. It is now in the British Museum. The style of the letters indicates that this manuscript is of great antiquity, and its date is fixed by critics at about AD 450. It is much mutilated,—twenty-four chapters of the first Gospel, two of the fourth, and eight of one of the Epistles being missing.

Codex B,<sup>1</sup> in the Vatican Library at Rome, supposed to have been written between AD 300 and AD 400, is said to be the oldest vellum manuscript known. This was not allowed to be copied till 1868, when an edition was issued in *facsimile* type, representing it line for line, and letter for letter. The condition of this is much more perfect.

A third manuscript is in the National Library at Paris, whither it was brought by Catherine de Medici. This is called a “palimpsest;” from a Greek word which signifies to *rub* or *scrape again*,—applied to a parchment from which one writing had been erased to make room for another. This manuscript is known as the “Codex Ephraemi.” Parchment being scarce and valuable, in the twelfth century the original writing was sponged off, and some productions of Ephraem Syrus written in its stead. Notwithstanding this, by the careful application of chemicals the earlier writing has been brought out again, so that the original manuscript has now been deciphered. This manuscript is assigned to the early part of the fifth century.

The fourth manuscript is Codex Bezae in the Public Library of

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<sup>1</sup> This manuscript is commonly referred to as *Vaticanus*, because it was discovered in the Vatican.

the University at Cambridge, England, it having been presented by Theodore Beza in 1581. This is the least valuable, as it is quite incomplete. It belongs to the sixth century.

The Codex Aleph,<sup>1</sup> found Feb. 4, 1859, in the Convent of St. Catherine near Mount Sinai, by Tischendorf, and published by him in 1862, is the *most valuable of the five*, as it contains the New Testament complete.<sup>2</sup> This is judged to have been written between AD 300 and AD 400; and hundreds of corrections which critics had previously made in the text by comparing other manuscripts, have been confirmed by this ancient and independent witness, which had lain for ages in the library of that eastern monastery.

To these may be added, as especially valuable, Codex Claromontanus, of the sixth century, which contains the Epistles of Paul. This was used by Beza in 1582, and is deposited in the National Library at Paris.

These manuscripts carry us back very near the apostles' days; for they might easily have been copied from the originals, or from manuscripts that had been copied from them; and by comparing these with the hundreds of other manuscripts, Lectionaries, quotations, and ancient translations, it is not difficult for learned and studious men to ascertain whether the New Testament Books have been seriously corrupted in being handed down to our own times. Of course any corruptions or mistakes which have occurred during the last 1500 years are excluded at the outset by the fact that we have manuscripts that date back as far as that; and if these manuscripts, old as they are, have errors, they also may, in rare instances, be corrected from later manuscripts which may have been copied from manuscripts older than any which are yet discovered. From the studies and researches of learned, able, and conscientious men who have minutely examined many hundreds of these ancient authorities, have come...

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: This manuscript is commonly referred to as Sinaiticus, named after the location where it was found.

<sup>2</sup> There is much debate about the value of this manuscript, as well as Codex A (*Vaticanus*), partially because both were considered to be garbage by the ones who owned them.

## THE VARIATIONS IN DIFFERENT EDITIONS

of the Greek New Testament, to which we call attention.

In 1550, Robert Estienne, or Stephen, published at Paris a folio edition of the Greek New Testament. This edition was founded on comparatively few manuscripts, and those mostly modern, and was prepared in the infancy of criticism; but it was for a long time accepted as the standard text, on account of the high reputation of its editor. It differs very little—and in the Sermon on the Mount not at all,—from the Elzevir editions of 1624 and 1633, the latter of which assumed the name of *Textus Receptus*, or “received text,” and has been in common use for more than two hundred years. It also agrees substantially with the text from which our common English version was made. Since the publication of Stephen’s edition, a vast number of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have been examined, many of them very ancient; the old versions of the New Testament in Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Gothic, Armenian, and other languages, and the numerous quotations by ancient Christian writers, have been compared with them, and all the differences noted. We have thus means of correcting errors in the imperfect text of the early editions named, incomparably superior to what we possess in the case of any classical author.

Now, that the reader may judge for himself as to this matter of the “various readings,” we have taken for example the Greek text of the Sermon on the Mount, according to the famous edition of Robert Stephen, as reprinted in Scrivener’s Greek Testament, Cambridge, Eng., 1877, with the various readings of Beza, the Elzevirs, Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, to which we shall add those of Griesbach, the manual edition of 1805, his latest critical text;<sup>1</sup> and Westcott and Hort, in 1881. Now what is the result of the examination of the variations from the so-called “received text,” collated from all these sources by various hands, and examined by these great, critical editors? How important are

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<sup>1</sup> An account of all these critical editions will be found in the Introduction to *A Critical Greek and English Concordance to the New Testament*, prepared by C. F. Hudson, under the direction of Dr. Ezra Abbot and H L. Hastings; also in Dr. Schaff’s *Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version*.

the changes required by the new evidence? A careful analysis will show that nineteen-twentieths of the various readings are of no more consequence than the palpable errata in the first proof of a modern printer, and their origin as the mere mistakes of the scribe is so obvious that no scholar would for a moment regard them as having any claim to a place in the text. Of those which remain and are more or less well-supported, probably nine-tenths are of no importance as regards the sense; the differences being so trivial that they affect the form of expression merely, or cannot be represented in a translation. Neither of these classes concerns us. We will then go through the "Sermon on the Mount" as it stands in King James' translation, and give all the variations from the so-called "received text," which any one of the editors above named has *adopted* as genuine, or has deemed worthy of any record; omitting only those which could not in any way affect the sense of the translation. We can thus judge just how much these "various readings," gleaned by learned men from all sources, through three hundred years of critical study, amount to.

It will be observed that our selection of the Sermon on the Mount for this comparison has not been made with a view to avoid any real difficulties, for this passage contains one of the *few* really *notable alterations* observed in the later manuscripts, when compared with the earliest authorities, namely, the addition in the text of "the Lord's Prayer," of the words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Matt. 6:13. This addition, the origin of which is easily explained, it probably having been inserted by some copyist who heard it used in connection with other prayers, and supposed it belonged here, is of little importance, for we find the same ideas in many other places in the Bible (Rev. 5:12, 14; 1 Chron. 29:11); but it is far more important than most of the variations discovered.

The following collection, prepared with much pains, and carefully revised and corrected by Prof. Ezra Abbot, one of the American Revision Committee, exhibits at a glance the

## VARIOUS READINGS IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### Matthew 5:

**Verses 4-5**—"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." In some MSS. these two verses are transposed.

**Verse 11**—"Say all manner of evil against you falsely." Some MSS. and editors omit "falsely." Some MSS. also omit the word *rema*, denoting "word" or "thing;" but this does not affect the meaning or the translation.

**Verse 13**—"It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Some authorities read, "but, being cast out, to be trodden under foot of men."

**Verse 19**—"Whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great," etc. A few manuscripts read, *houtos* [*with a long 'o'*] for *houtos* [*with a short 'o'*], "Whosoever shall do and teach *so*, shall be called great," etc.

**Verse 20**—"Your righteousness," literally "the righteousness of you." Some MSS. change the order, reading, "Of you the righteousness," making the "your" emphatic.

**Verse 22**—"Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause." Some MSS. and editors omit "without a cause."

**Verse 25**—"Whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer." Some MSS. and editors read, "Whiles thou art with him in the way; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge to the officer."

**Verse 27**—"Ye have heard that it was said by [*or to*] them of old time." The best MSS. and the critical editors omit "by them of old time." It was added here in the later MSS. from verse 21, where it

is genuine.

**Verse 30**—“And not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.” Some MSS. read, “And not thy whole body go into hell.”

**Verse 32**—“Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery.” Some MSS. read, “Every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress.”

Some omit the clause, “and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

**Verse 37**—“But let your communication be Yea, yea; nay, nay.” Some MSS. read, “But your communication shall be, Yea, yea; nay, nay.”

**Verse 39**—“Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek.” Some MSS. read, “Whosoever smiteth thee;” some read “the right cheek” instead of “thy right cheek.”

**Verse 44**—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” The oldest MSS. and other authorities read, “Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.” The words omitted in the oldest authorities were probably transferred to this place in the later MSS. from Luke 6:27, 28, where they are genuine.

**Verse 45**—“That ye may be the children of [literally, “sons of”] your Father which is in heaven.” Three MSS. read, “That ye may be like your Father which is in heaven.”

**Verse 46**—“Do not even the publicans the same?” Some read, “Do not even the publicans so?”

**Verse 47**—“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?” Some MSS. read, “friends” instead of “brethren.” The oldest and best MSS. read, “Do not even the Gentiles the same?” Others read, “so” for “the same.”

**Verse 48**—“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Some read, “Ye therefore shall be perfect, as

your heavenly Father is perfect.”

### **Matthew 6:**

**Verse 1**—“Take heed.” Tischendorf, with some ancient MSS., reads, “But take heed.—That ye do not your alms before men.” The oldest MSS. and the critical editors read, “That ye do not your righteousness before men.”

**Verse 4**—“Thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.” Some read, “Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee.”

**Verse 5**—“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.” Some read, “And when ye pray, ye shall not be.”

**Verse 6**—“Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.” Some omit, “openly.”

**Verse 8**—“Your Father knoweth.” Some read, “God your Father knoweth.”

**Verse 12**—“As we also forgive our debtors.” Some read, “As we also have forgiven our debtors.”

**Verse 13**—“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.” This is omitted by the oldest MSS. and other weighty authorities. Others give the doxology in different forms. It was probably introduced in the later MSS. from the ancient liturgies. Compare 1 Chron. 29:11.

**Verse 15**—“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses.” Some omit, “their trespasses.”

**Verse 18**—“Shall reward thee openly.” Many MSS. omit “openly.”

**Verse 21**—“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Some read, “For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.” Some omit “also.”

**Verse 22**—“Is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single.” Some read, “is thine eye,” and some omit “therefore;” some read “the eye” for “thine eye,” and some have “is” for “be.”

**Verse 24**—“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Some MSS.



have “mamon.”

**Verse 25**—“What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.” Some read, “and” for “or.” Hort brackets as doubtful, “or what ye shall drink.”

**Verse 33**—“The kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” Some read, “his kingdom and righteousness,” and some “his righteousness and kingdom.”

**Verse 34**—“The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” Some read, “The morrow shall take thought for itself.”

### **Matthew 7:**

**Verse 2**—“It shall be measured to you again.” Some omit “again.”

**Verse 4**—“Out of thine eye.” Some read, “from thine eye.”

**Verse 8**—“To him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Some read, “It is opened.”

**Verse 9**—“What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?” Some read, “What man of you, of whom his son shall ask bread will give him a stone?”

**Verse 10**—“Or if he ask a fish.” Some read, “and if he ask a fish;” some, “or shall ask a fish.”

**Verse 12**—“For this is the law and the prophets.” Some read [*houtos* (with long 'o') for *houtos* (with short 'o')], “for so is the law and the prophets.”

**Verse 13**—“Wide is the gate, and broad is the way.” Some omit “the gate,” and read, “Wide and broad is the way.”

**Verse 14**—“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way.” Some read, “How strait is the gate, and some, omitting “the gate,” read, “strait and narrow is the way.”

**Verse 15**—“Beware.” Some MSS. read, “But beware.”

**Verse 19**—“Every tree.” Some MSS. add, “therefore.”

**Verse 21**—“He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” Some add, “he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

**Verse 24**—“These sayings of mine” [literally, “of me”]. Some omit “these,” and read, “the sayings of me,” i.e. “my sayings.” “I

will liken him unto a wise man.” Some read, “shall be likened unto a wise man.”

**Verse 29**—“And not as the scribes.” Some read, “their scribes.” Some add, “and the Pharisees.”

Here, then, are the results of the researches of the ablest scholars in the world, throughout a period of more than three centuries, and especially during the present generation. After hunting old libraries, exploring musty manuscripts, wearing out their eyes on faded parchments, and gathering up everything they could find in the way of variations and discrepancies, in hundreds of ancient manuscripts, translations, and quotations, they have found only such trifles as these, which in an ordinary writer would pass unnoticed, and which would not pay for the trouble of looking them up, were it not that they pertain to the utterances of Him who spake as never man spake, and who has said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”—John 12:48.

This exhibit illustrates the utter emptiness of all the talk about the corruptions of the New Testament, and the uncertainty of the Greek text. No book on earth has ever stood the test of such searching criticism as the New Testament; and after all that has been said and done, this book has emerged from the flames of historic criticism, scathless as the Hebrews from the burning fiery furnace.

From all these facts cited, it most clearly appears that the New Testament books must have been copied with scrupulous care, and that special pains must have been taken to secure...

## **THE PRESERVATION OF THE MANUSCRIPTS.**

During the early persecutions of Pagan Rome, many copies of the New Testament were doubtless destroyed in obedience to the imperial decree;<sup>6</sup> as in the dark ages many copies were lost through

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<sup>6</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, B. viii., c. ii.

neglect, or burned through the malice of persecutors. But though these books were bitterly hated, they were also ardently loved, and hence most carefully guarded and preserved, even at the peril of life. And there have been times when the mightiest monarchs rejoiced to do honor to these sacred records, and took great interest in their preservation and circulation. About the year AD 272, or, as some say, AD 274, was born Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantine, who was the first Christian emperor of Rome. Coming to the throne AD 312 and reigning until his death, AD 337, he was the first Roman emperor who gave open countenance, toleration, and support to the Christian religion, the influence of which at that time had come to pervade the Empire.

**There lies before me a “*Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine*,” in four books, from AD 306 to AD 337, by Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea. This biography of a Roman emperor—written shortly after his death, by an eminent Christian historian and preacher, who was a personal friend of Constantine, and who only survived him about three years—incidentally gives us important information concerning the esteem in which the sacred writings were then held, and the means taken to provide and preserve authentic copies of the same. In his account, Eusebius writes as follows concerning Constantine’s care for the scriptures.**

“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 happens, through the favoring of God our Savior, that great numbers have united themselves to the most holy church in the city which is called by my name. It seems, therefore, highly requisite,

since that city is rapidly advancing in prosperity in all other respects, that the number of churches should be also increased. Do you this, 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.'

“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.<sup>7</sup> This fact is attested by another letter, which the emperor wrote in acknowledgment.”—Eusebius,

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<sup>7</sup> The parchment copies were usually arranged in quaternions or *four* folded leaves, or sixteen pages; or in ternions, consisting of *three* folded leaves, making twelve pages. Books thus constructed were especially liable to be scattered; for which reason we have few *complete* copies of the New Testament;—and sometimes different parts of the same *Codex* or book are preserved in different libraries.

*Life of Constantine*, Book 4, Chapters 34-37.

From this account we see that during the life of Constantine fifty magnificent copies of the sacred books were prepared by the command and at the expense of the Roman Emperor, for the benefit of the churches of God; the public carriages of the empire being used to convey them to the Emperor for his personal inspection. These books, prepared under the direction of the learned Eusebius, and at the expense of the Emperor, would, of course, be carefully copied from the most authentic manuscripts, and, being distributed among the different churches throughout Constantinople, the capital of his empire, would naturally be preserved with care, and regarded as standards from which other copies would be made. And it is quite probable that some of these very copies, made by the order of Constantine, are among the ancient “uncial” manuscripts which have come down to us. Prof. Tischendorf thought it not improbable that the Sinaitic manuscript was one of the copies ordered for Constantine in 331, and that it was presented to the convent of Mount Sinai by its founder, the Emperor Justinian.

The time of Constantine was not as distant from the time of our Saviour as the reign of the Emperor William of Germany from the time of Martin Luther. Imagine the Emperor William deluded into accepting, publishing, and circulating among all the churches of his realm, a magnificent edition of some false, fabulous, and spurious writings, giving an account of the Reformation under Luther and Melancthon, when no such things had occurred, and the accounts were utterly unreliable. Imagine Queen Victoria issuing her royal mandate for the production of fifty magnificent copies of a series of books like “Gulliver’s Travels,” or “Jack the Giant-Killer,” professing to relate events which occurred in the time of her predecessor, Henry VIII., but which all the public monuments and documents demonstrated to be utterly fabulous and deceptive. Imagine the President of the United States ordering the publication and distribution in all the churches of the country, for use in public worship, of a magnificent edition of a lot of utterly fabulous books, containing false accounts of the discovery of America, the settlement of Florida, the founding of Jamestown, the landing of the Pilgrims, and the origin and establishment of the United States

Government; while the original journals and documents of explorers and governors, together with the public records of the nation, were all at hand, ready to give the lie to everything contained in his books.

If such absurdities as these cannot be imagined, neither can it be imagined that Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, a man of no mean scholarship, ability, and eloquence, could be misled in this way into the publication of an edition of the Holy Scriptures, unless those books were known to be genuine, known to be true, and susceptible of the strongest proof from the writings of historians, the uninterrupted traditions of the people, and the public records of the Roman empire.

It will be borne in mind that after a reign of twenty-five years, Constantine died in 337; about three hundred years from the death of Christ, and less than two hundred and fifty years from the death of the apostle John. He was emperor of that Rome under one of whose provincial governors, Pontius Pilate, Jesus Christ was crucified. Under Nero, one of his predecessors, Paul had been beheaded. In the Coliseum, which is still standing, hundreds and thousands of Christians had been thrown to the wild beasts for avowing their faith in Christ. At some eight or ten different times the sword of persecution had been unsheathed by imperial decree against the defenseless Christians, who had been slaughtered by mobs, and butchered and burned by Roman emperors, whose successor Constantine was.

The soft *tufa*, or volcanic rock, beneath the city of Rome and its environs for miles around, had been excavated by these hated, hunted, and persecuted Christians; and there are now in existence hundreds of miles of galleries, chambers, and corridors chiseled through this soft rock, where the persecuted Christians of those days fled for refuge, concealing themselves from persecution, burying their own dead, and depositing the gathered fragments of their martyred brethren in tombs and recesses which remain to this day. De Rossi says there are about sixty of these Catacombs, and estimates the length of all the passages to be five hundred and eighty-seven geographical miles. Father Marchi says they extend eight or nine hundred miles underground. They are from fifty to

seventy-five feet below the surface.

For about two hundred and fifty years from the time that the gospel was first preached, and Christians were first persecuted in Rome, down to the time of Constantine's Decree of Toleration, AD 313, these Catacombs were the burial place of generation after generation of the Christian population of Rome. De Rossi judges that the number of bodies laid away in the Catacombs was not less than three million eight hundred and thirty-one thousand; while Father Marches estimate is six or seven millions. Gibbon estimates the population of Rome under Theodosius at twelve hundred thousand. Zumpt places it at two millions. But the imperial city in her brightest days never boasted half as many inhabitants as there are Christians in those dark Catacombs, waiting the sounding of the resurrection trumpet. This noble army of martyrs, who had fought the fight of faith, and sealed their testimony with their blood—whose doctrine had revolutionized the Roman empire, and whose bones were hidden in the Catacombs—were not unknown to Constantine, the heir of the throne of the Caesars. The inscriptions on their tombs told of their lives, their deaths, their faith, their hope, and their trust, and were as legible as the inscriptions on the monuments of the English kings in Westminster Abbey, or on the grave-stones of the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers near Plymouth Rock.

To the present day, the leading facts and doctrines of the Bible may be found inscribed upon the walls of those gloomy, subterranean sepulchers, which bear, not only the names and memorials of saints and martyrs who died in the faith and sleep in the peace of Christ, with the dates of their deaths, the memorials of their secular occupations, the palms and crowns expressive of their hopes; but also numerous pictorial representations imaging forth the great facts of divine revelation, and the common faith of the universal church.

Among these representations, which are repeated again and again, we find Adam and Eve, with the serpent and the forbidden tree; the expulsion of our first parents from Eden; representations of Noah in the ark, with the returning dove bearing the olive branch; pictures of Abraham offering up Isaac, of Joseph sold into

Egypt, of Moses putting off the shoes from his feet, receiving the Law, and again standing with the baskets of manna beside him, or smiting the rock from which the waters burst forth; of Job in his affliction; of Jonah cast into the sea, where the fish is waiting to swallow him up, and again sitting beneath his gourd, which the worm is preparing to devour; of Elijah ascending to heaven in the chariot of fire; of the three Hebrews in the furnace; of Daniel in the lions' den; and of various other occurrences which indicate an intimate knowledge of scriptural facts and scenes. We also find representations of the wise men from the East adoring the Savior; of Jesus in the temple disputing with the doctors; of Christ baptized of John in the river Jordan; of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and the seven baskets heaped with fragments standing beside the kneeling apostles; of the restored paralytic walking away with his bed on his back; of the Savior talking with the woman of Samaria by the well, opening the eyes of the blind, healing the woman who touched the hem of his garment, blessing the little children, raising Lazarus from the dead, riding into Jerusalem over the scattered garments, and amid the waving palms, and standing to be judged in the presence of Pontius Pilate. We also see representations of the sower scattering his precious seed; the Good Shepherd leading his flock, or bearing the lost sheep upon his shoulders; of the virgins going forth to meet the bridegroom; of Peter denying his Lord; of Pilate washing his hands; and of numerous other facts and doctrines of the gospel; while on every hand are found the symbols of a Christian faith, the anchor, the cross, the olive branch, the lamb, and the dove.<sup>8</sup>

These sculptured records lie scattered through subterranean galleries long enough to reach from one end of Italy to the other; and Constantine and his contemporaries could not have been ignorant of their existence. The events of Christ's life occurred within less than three hundred years preceding the commencement of his reign. The histories which recited them, and the public records of the empire, containing the official documents, in which were inscribed, no doubt, the account of the crucifixion of Christ himself, and all the various imperial edicts under which Christians

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Catacombs of Rome*, by W. H. Withrow.



had been persecuted, were within the reach of the emperor, who had himself recently professed to embrace the Christian faith, which, notwithstanding the persecutions of his ancestors and predecessors, had overrun the Roman world, permeated all ranks and orders of people, overthrown the idolatries which had held sway for ages, and had come to be the acknowledged religion of the mightiest empire on the globe.

Constantine had the means of *knowing* whether his friend Eusebius was stating facts when in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Book 2, Chapter 2) he wrote: “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. Tiberius referred the matter to the Senate, but it is said they rejected the proposition.” Constantine had the means of *knowing* whether Tertullian wrote truly when in his *Apology* to the Rulers of the Roman Empire (§ 21), he spoke of the darkness at the crucifixion and said, “You yourselves have an account of the world-portent *still in your archives*,” and when after 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 Justin Martyr spoke truly when, in his apology to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (chapter 21), 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*.” Constantine was familiar with all these matters. 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 AD 303, when his predecessor Diocletian published his imperial edict commanding

them to tear down the churches of the Christians, and *burn their copies of the sacred Scriptures*.<sup>9</sup> He had witnessed the last expiring throes of this heathenish dragon, which sought to subvert Christianity by first murdering the men who taught it, and then by destroying the writings on which it was founded. He had access to the official records of the trials of Christians, some of which are now extant, where the Roman commissioner said to the bishop Paul, “Bring forward the Scriptures of the Law;” and where inquisition was made whether any “Scriptures of your Law were burnt according to the sacred law.”<sup>10</sup> He knew the willingness with which some Christians handed over certain “useless writings,” which satisfied the demands of the officers; and the zeal with which they gathered and guarded the sacred Scriptures which were read in their assemblies; and now he had publicly embraced the faith that had so long been persecuted, and had made Christianity the religion of the empire.

Under these circumstances, it appears that the Roman emperor ordered made, at the public expense, fifty splendid copies of the sacred writings which recorded the life of Christ and the beginnings of Christianity, that they might be distributed among the churches in the imperial capital, where they would be publicly read every Lord’s day. The period of Constantine was one of literature, art, refinement, eloquence, and poetry. Christianity had not been imposed upon an unquestioning and sleepy age. It had been launched upon a generation marked by mental activity.<sup>11</sup> It

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<sup>9</sup> “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* (AD 302), in the month of Dystrus, called by the Romans, March, in which the festival of our Saviour 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. ii,

<sup>10</sup> See B. F. Westcott on *The Canon of the New Testament*, Part iii. chap. 1, p. 409.

<sup>11</sup> From the death of Caesar, BC 44, to the birth of Suetonius, AD 70, we find a galaxy of orators, poets, historians, and geographers, such as Cicero, who died BC 43; Sallust, who died BC 34; Virgil, who died BC 19; Horace, who died BC 8; Strabo, who died about BC 21; Philo, who was born BC 20; Seneca, who was

had been assailed and ridiculed for centuries by the wit and wisdom of the Roman world. Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, had assaulted the Christian religion, and done his best to overthrow it. Jews and Gentiles had combined to withstand and uproot the new faith; and still Christianity had held its steady course, and triumphed over its foes. The history of Rome was as well known to Constantine as the history of England is to Queen Victoria. He could not have been imposed upon by a spurious religion or spurious records thereof. It is utterly incredible that he should order the production of fifty magnificent copies of a series of legendary tales and old wives' fables, for distribution and public weekly reading among the worshipers of Almighty God.

There were, doubtless, plenty of men living at that time, whose grandfathers might have seen men who *knew every fact*, and had personal acquaintance with every person mentioned in those books.<sup>12</sup> And it is as impossible to suppose that such books could have been published by the emperor and palmed upon the people as genuine, authentic, and truthful documents unless there were sufficient reasons for their reception, as to suppose that the governor of Massachusetts would publish, for weekly reading in all

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born BC 2; Ovid who died AD 18; Livy, who died AD 17; Josephus, who was born AD 37 or 38; Tacitus, who was born AD 61; Plutarch, who was born AD 46; and Pliny, who was born AD 61. An age that produced such men was not to be imposed upon by vain pretenders; and the fact that the gospel commenced in such an age and overspread the Roman world, is sufficient proof that it was no empty imposture.

<sup>12</sup> About the year AD 130, Quadratus, "a disciple of the apostles," meeting the Roman Emperor Aelius Hadrian, in Athens, his native city, presented him with his *Apology for the Christian Religion* which he had embraced. Of this *Apology*, now lost, Eusebius wrote, "The work is still in the hands of some of the brethren, and also in our own. From which any one may see fitting proof both of the understanding of the man and of the apostolic faith. This writer shows the antiquity of the age in which he lived, in these passages: 'The deeds of the Saviour,' he says, were always before you, for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They *remained living a long time*, not only while our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth. So that *some of them have also lived to our own times*.'"—Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book iv. Chapter iii.

the churches of New England, a book which related that Christopher Columbus walked across the Atlantic ocean on snow-shoes, and that Martin Luther, after being banished from Ireland for causing the potato rot, Came to America in a steamship and founded the Dutch Republic on Plymouth Rock.<sup>13</sup>

Hence we are carried back, by authentic documents bearing the official sanction of a Roman emperor, more than 1550 years, to the times of Constantine and the Council of Nicea, at which period infidels admit that the New Testament, as we now have it, existed. From that point we have only to bridge a chasm of less than 300 years, to clasp hands with the apostles, and witness the events which they described. Can we span this chasm? Most certainly.

It would not have been difficult to have preserved the autograph writings of the apostles until the times of Constantine. We have Egyptian manuscripts four thousand years old; but these were kept from the air and damp in that rainless climate, hermetically sealed in earthen or wooden vessels; or under mummy coverings, deposited sometimes in tombs cut ninety feet deep in the living rock, and also buried beneath the pure, dry, desert sands. But we have, also, numerous printed and written books from three to five hundred years old; and if the original writings of the *apostles* were preserved as long as that, we *may* have, today, manuscripts copied directly from them.

But times of persecution are unfavorable to the preservation of

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<sup>13</sup> Two centuries and a half have elapsed since the settlement of New England by the Pilgrim Fathers; a period precisely equivalent to the interval between Christians in the days of Constantine and Apostles. The rock on which the Pilgrims landed, the houses and fortifications which they erected, the records and official documents which they executed, still exist. Their graves are preserved, and the inscriptions on their tombstones are exhibited to thousands. They are linked by family history with multitudes in all parts the continent. The writer's grandparents were, for thirty years, contemporaries, and in familiar intercourse with the grandchildren of the Pilgrim Fathers. And yet the entire number of those Pilgrim ancestors did not greatly exceed one hundred, and the earlier events in their history had no other witnesses, excepting "the perishing sons of the forest." Dr. E. C. Mitchell's *Critical Handbook*, p. 9

relics, and solitary autographs are specially exposed to danger from corruption and forgery. The church had no central tabernacle or sacred ark like that in which the Law of Moses was preserved; but where two or three were met in Christ's name, He was in the midst, and there his words still lived and were rehearsed. Hence the early church could not depend for the integrity of their sacred books upon some securely guarded manuscript, penned by apostolic hands, but rather upon numberless trustworthy copies, which when a book or epistle was once received and duly authenticated, were so speedily transcribed, and so widely scattered, that no human power could extirpate the sacred records, and no ingenuity of malice could materially impair their integrity.

But we are not entirely dependent upon the testimony of Christians to establish the facts recorded in the New Testament. Many of the facts in early Christian history are proven by the testimony of enemies as well as friends. The writings of Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, Suetonius, Celsus, and others, bear witness to the truth; and even within the present day new witnesses rise up to add their testimony. Amid the ruins of old Pompeii, buried by an eruption AD 79, the explorer's spade not only discloses sculptures and records which tell of morals like those of Sodom and Gomorrah, but also taunting caricatures and inscriptions deriding a crucified God! And on the walls of one of Pompeii's palaces, stands an unfinished sculpture of a cross!<sup>14</sup> Alas for guilty Pompeii! her glory perished in a day; but after eighteen hundred years of silence her mute walls bear witness that so long ago as AD 79, the shameless votaries of lust and pleasure scoffed at a crucified Redeemer as bitterly as they do today.

But in addition to these we have a chain of Christian authors reaching from the days of the apostles down to the time of Constantine, who quoted, copied, defended, criticized, and commented upon the sacred Scriptures, in such a way that almost the entire New Testament is embodied in the writings of those ancient fathers.

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<sup>14</sup> In the palace of the Edile Pansa, in Via Fortuna.—Dr. Mitchell, *Critical Handbook*, p. 46.

Between the death of John, the last of the apostles, AD 100, and the time of the Council of Nicea, a period of about 225 years, we have the writings of Polycarp (AD 69-156), who was a disciple of the apostle John, and bishop of the church at Smyrna; of Clement, bishop of Rome from about AD 91 or 92 to 100 or 101, whom Origen identifies as Paul's fellow-laborer (Phil. 4:3); of Justin Martyr, a converted philosopher (AD 105-165); of Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, an eminent Christian writer, born about AD 115, and martyred about AD 190; of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch in Syria from AD 168 to 181 or 188; of Athenagoras, a converted Greek philosopher, said by some to have been the first principal of the great theological school at Alexandria (AD 161-180); of Clement of Alexandria, who presided over the same school and died about AD 220; of Origen (AD 185-254), the pupil and learned successor of Clement in the presidency of the school, and a most eloquent and voluminous writer; of Dionysius, a disciple of Origen, who was president of the same school AD 231, patriarch of Alexandria AD 248, and died AD 265; of Hippolytus, bishop of the Port of Rome, AD 235; of Tertullian, a presbyter at Carthage (AD 160-220), a learned and eloquent convert from heathenism; of Cyprian (AD 200-258), bishop of Carthage, who suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Valerian; of Gregory (AD 210-270), bishop of Neocaesarea; of Lactantius, "the Christian Cicero," a distinguished writer, and one of the most learned men of his time, who settled at Nicomedia as professor of Latin eloquence, AD 301, at the invitation of the Emperor Diocletian, became a Christian, wrote in defense of the new religion, and died about AD 325. All these, and other writers of learning, eloquence, ability, and intelligence, occupying high positions in society and in the church; men of extensive travel and wide and varied information; men who had renounced the heathenism in which they were nurtured and accepted Christianity with all its pains—many of them for the sake of Christ enduring banishment, imprisonment, and death,—left behind them various treatises containing the records and memorials of their faith, and the truth for which they suffered the loss of all things.

A large proportion of their writings have perished at the hands of persecutors and in the wreck of ages; but those that still remain,

when translated into English, are sufficient to fill about twelve thousand octavo pages of the *Ante-Nicene Library*.

A number of these writers, such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, and Theophilus, wrote ably and acutely against heathenism and in defense of Christianity, some of them addressing and dedicating their writings to the persecuting Roman emperors, and defending their hunted brethren from the outrageous slanders which were made a pretext for banishing and slaughtering them. Writing thus to heathen who did not acknowledge the authority of the sacred Scriptures, of course they would have little opportunity to quote largely from the New Testament writings, though from time to time they refer to the sacred books under various titles, and often quote largely from the words of Christ; but Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus, and others, wrote mainly for the benefit of Christians, and throughout their works, on almost every page, quotations from the New Testament are profusely scattered. Those authors quoted the same sacred books which we quote, as the rule of their faith and the guide of their conduct, appealing to these books as a standard by which to test both doctrine and practice, and regarding them as unquestionably the authentic writings of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These sacred writings were prized, revered, copied, circulated, and read, among all the Christians who were scattered throughout the known world. A hundred years after the last of the apostles died, Tertullian, in whose collected writings, still extant, are quoted eighteen hundred different passages from the New Testament, besides a multitude from the Old, expressly mentions "*the Old Testament*," as well as "*the New Testament*," containing "*the Gospels*" and "*the Apostles*"<sup>15</sup> In his work, "*Against Heretics*," this eminent writer says:

"If you are willing to exercise your curiosity

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<sup>15</sup> If I fail of resolving this article by passages which may admit of dispute out of the *Old Testament*, I will take out of the *New Testament* a confirmation of our view. . . Behold, then, I find both in *The Gospels* and in *The Apostles* a visible and invisible God."—Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*. Chap. xv. works, vol. ii., p. 365. *Ante-Nicene Library*.

profitably in the business of your salvation, visit the apostolic churches, in which the very chairs of the apostles still preside in their places; in which their very *authentic letters are recited*, sounding forth the voice and representing the countenance of every one of them. Is Achaia near you? You have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia you have Philippi and Thessalonica. If you can go to Asia you have Ephesus; but if you are near to Italy you have Rome.”<sup>16</sup>

The original manuscripts, carefully preserved, might have lasted hundreds of years. Of course, when persecutions arose, and churches were scattered, the autograph writings of the apostles would be likely to be lost or destroyed; or they might fade out as the years rolled on. But the books were not lost. At an early date, probably long before these originals had passed from existence, the New Testament was *translated* into both the Syriac and Latin tongues, and both of these versions still exist, and have been retranslated into English.

Besides, multitudes of copies of the New Testament books were made and circulated, and publicly read to “all the holy brethren” in their weekly assemblies. 1 Thess. 5:27.<sup>17</sup> And thus the

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<sup>16</sup> Hermann Ronsch, a German writer, published at Leipsic a volume, *Das New Testament Tertullians*, in which he places all the passages in Tertullian’s works which are quoted from, or refer to, the New Testament, side by side in parallel columns, with the passages from the New Testament quoted or referred to. Of course the quotations, being of different lengths, do not entirely fill the space on each page, but these parallel columns extend from page 54 to page 571, making *more than five hundred octavo pages* devoted to the exhibition of passages from the New Testament quoted and referred to by *this single author*, who wrote about the year AD 200, and whose writings plainly show the estimate in which the books of the New Testament were held by the Christian church a century after the death of the last of the apostles.

<sup>17</sup> Justin Martyr, who was born in Palestine about A. P. 114, and martyred at Rome about AD 165, in his *Apology for the Christians*, addressed to the Emperor Antonius Pius, about AD 140, bears witness to the regular public reading of the “*Memoirs*,” or writings, of the apostles, which he says are “also called *Gospels* and also of the writings of the prophets, as follows:



people became so familiar with them that the change of a word would have been detected instantly. Prof. Andrews Norton in his "*Genuineness of the Gospels*" (1. 50-53), estimates that before AD 200 there were not less than sixty thousand manuscript copies of the Gospels in existence.<sup>18</sup> To falsify books so widely diffused would have been impossible.

Besides, the martyr Polycarp, who was cast to the lions about AD 155, after having served Christ *eighty-six years*, must have been, during some thirty years of his long life, acquainted with the apostle John, whose disciple he was. In his letter to the Philippians he quotes more than thirty passages from our New Testament, and he must have received these books directly from the apostle John, who wrote so large a proportion of them; and his Christian life must have dated back to within some five years of the death of the apostle Paul, who was martyred under Nero, about the year AD 65, Nero having died AD 68. In Polycarp's time there were churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire, in which these sacred books were regularly read on the first day of the week. And the apostolic churches received the Gospels from *those who wrote them*; and the Epistles were written and signed by men whom they

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"On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country, gather together at one place, and the *Memoirs* of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read *as long as time permits*; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray; and as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent, saying, Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons."—Justin, *First Apology*, chap. lxvii.

<sup>18</sup> "At the end of the second century, then, there were three millions of believers, using our present Gospels, regarding them with the highest reverence, and anxious to obtain copies of them. ... In truth, there can be little doubt that copies of the Gospels were owned by a large portion of Christians who had the means of procuring them; and in supposing only one copy of these books for every fifty Christians, the estimate is probably much within the truth. This proportion, however, will give us sixty thousand copies of the Gospels for three millions of Christians."

knew. Paul wrote, “The salutation of me Paul with *mine own hand*, which is the *token in every epistle*, so I write.” 2 Thess. 3:17; Col. 4:18; 1 Cor. 16:21. And as these Epistles were sent by trusty messengers to churches where Paul had lived, and preached, and labored, for weeks, and months, and years, they must have been familiar with his handwriting, and could not have been imposed upon with spurious documents—especially as several of his letters were in answer to letters which they had addressed to him.

The Epistles of Paul must certainly have been written before the death of Paul. The death of Paul occurred about AD 65,—or prior to the death of Nero, at whose command he was slain;—and hence the books of the New Testament which we have are traced back by unbroken chains of reliable evidence, until we reach *their authors*, who were the personal friends and acquaintances of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who testified of the things which they had *seen*; and at the peril of their lives bore witness, not to theories, dreams, or imaginations, but to facts and events which had come within their observation.

These writers testified things which they *knew*. The apostle John does not say, “That which we have dreamed, imagined, or guessed at, that thing do we declare unto you;” but “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *looked upon*, and our *hands have handled*, of the Word of Life.” 1 John 1:1. This was their testimony. They testified that they *saw* Christ, in his life and in his death; that they saw him after his resurrection, and felt his hands and feet, saw the nail-prints and spear wounds; and knew and testified of these things.

## **NO RECORD OF APOSTLES’ DEATH.**

One thing is remarkable; though each of the four Gospels devotes whole chapters to the minutest narration of all the particulars pertaining to the death of our Savior, there is not, in the whole of them, a single account or hint of the time or manner of the death of any of the apostles, with the exception of James, the brother of John. Acts 12:20. Thus, for example, the book of

Matthew does not tell us what became of Matthew, nor of any other apostle; nor does the book of John tell us what became of John. The Epistles of Paul do not inform us what became of Paul; nor do the Epistles of Peter contain any intimation concerning the time and circumstances of his death.

The writings of John present him as a witness of Christ's life, and ministry, and sufferings; as banished to the Isle of Patmos for the testimony of Christ; and as looking with fatherly love on his younger brethren, and having no greater joy than that his children walk in the truth. But they say nothing whatever of the close of his life, or the circumstances of his death.

Peter, in his first Epistle, written evidently in his old age, describes himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, as one of those who "were eye-witnesses of his majesty, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:10, 18); as a "witness of the sufferings of Christ;" and as "an elder" and one who must shortly put off this tabernacle, or die. But the Scripture gives us no record whatever of the time or circumstances of his death. And there is no reasonable way to account for these facts, but to admit that the apostles were *living when these books were written*, and that after they died no one presumed to add to the writings they had left.

In his second Epistle, Peter speaks of the writings of their beloved brother Paul, as among "the other Scriptures," and as containing things "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16); and as no unauthorized manuscript would have been admitted to such companionship, these books must have been identified and authenticated before they could be received.

This reference then leads us back still further to the writings of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, whose numerous epistles give us frequent hints concerning his life and his ministry. To the Corinthians Paul wrote that Christ who died and rose "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this *present*, but some are fallen asleep." 1 Cor. 15:6. In the Epistle to the Philippians he declares, "My *bonds* for Christ are manifest, in all the palace and in all other places;" and he expresses his intention to send Timothy to them, "*presently*, so soon as I shall see *how it will go with me*" Phil. 1:13; 2:22. In his

Epistle to Philemon he represents himself as “Paul the *aged*, and now also a *prisoner* of Jesus Christ.” Philemon 9. And in his second Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of having already stood *once* in the presence of the emperor to whom he had appealed, saying, “At my *first* answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the *lion*” 2 Tim. 4:16, 17.

Here the Scriptures leave him; forsaken by Demas, hindered by Alexander the coppersmith; deserted in the hour of trial by brethren who feared the wrath of the imperial persecutor, and the fury of the fierce lions; yet saying, “I *am now ready* to be offered and the time of my departure is *at hand*. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

This is the last glimpse which we catch of Paul in the pages of the New Testament. For the rest, we must depend on other sources of information. Infidels complain that Deuteronomy is a forgery, because some other writer, perhaps Joshua, added a few lines at the end telling of Moses’ death.<sup>19</sup> But the writer of the Acts of the

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<sup>19</sup> As Hebrew books had no titles but the first word in the book, and were not divided into sections or chapters, but were written on continuous rolls of parchment, it is probable that some transcriber carelessly copied the first part of the book of Joshua on to the end of Deuteronomy. Hence the last chapter of Deuteronomy should probably be placed at the beginning of Joshua, where the connection seems perfectly natural, as without it the book of Joshua begins quite abruptly. A somewhat similar instance may be noted at the end of 2 Chronicles (36:22, 23), where the book concludes abruptly with two verses which make reference to the decree of Cyrus. The next book, that of Ezra, *begins* with the *same two verses*. Probably some transcriber failed to notice the ending of the book of Chronicles, and continued to copy right along, until, discovering his mistake, and knowing that any erasure would cause the destruction of his parchment and the loss of his labor, he probably drew a line and commenced again, rewriting the verses that he had before written, which thus appear repeated in their proper place.

Apostles leaves Paul alive, and no man dared to add a line to tell us when or how he died. The book closes thus: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.” Now, if this book had been written *after the martyrdom* of the apostle Paul, it would most certainly have contained an account of that event; but *not one word does it say on that subject*. It traces the apostle Paul, from the stoning of Stephen, which he sanctioned, and the persecution of Christians, in which he engaged, to his conversion, and on through his ministry, giving an account of journeyings, labors, mobs, imprisonments, and scourgings; telling how he endured stoning, shipwreck, and trials of various kinds, until it leaves him a prisoner who has appealed to Caesar, chained to a soldier in his hired house at Rome, teaching the gospel of the kingdom of God unhindered. He must have been living when that was written, and if so the book of Acts, as well as Paul’s Epistles, must have been written within about thirty years of the time when our Savior died; and as the first sentence in the book of Acts refers to a “former treatise” by the same author, namely the Gospel by Luke, that book must have been written at a still earlier date.

The apostle Paul says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching. For *the Scripture saith*, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, *The laborer is worthy of his hire*.” 1 Tim. 5:17-18—*Revised Version*. Now we read in the Law of Moses, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn” (Deut. 25:4); but we only find the rest of this quotation in the *Gospel by Luke*, who records that when our Lord sent forth his apostles he said, “Into whatsoever house ye enter ... in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for *the laborer is worthy of his hire*” Luke 10:5, 7.

Here we see that Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, written about AD 65, quotes the words of Jesus as recorded in the *Gospel written by Luke*, joined with a passage from the book of Deuteronomy, apparently calling *both* “*the Scripture*” and attributing *authority to both*; which seems to show that before the year AD 65,

Luke's Gospel was classed among the Scriptures, as it is today.

And, moreover, Luke was not the first one who wrote an account of our Savior's life and ministry. For he commences his gospel with the statement that "many" had already "taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed" among Christians. Hence it appears that, within twenty-two years of the time of the crucifixion, there were "many" writers who had undertaken to record the great facts concerning the life and ministry of our Savior. Most, if not all, of these unauthorized records to which Luke refers have perished; but we still retain those which were written by apostolic authority, and which were received and endorsed by the church from the earliest ages.

## **WHAT, THEN, ARE OUR CONCLUSIONS?**

Briefly, the leading facts may be thus stated: We have hundreds of New Testament manuscripts from five to fifteen hundred years old, gathered from widely different sources, which have been copied and transmitted to us with the greatest care, and with an accuracy which is utterly unparalleled in any department of profane literature. We have also translations of these same books in other languages, which translations are more ancient than any existing manuscripts of the New Testament, which strongly confirm the accuracy of our existing copies.

We also find that more than fifteen hundred years ago fifty copies of these same Scriptures were made by the authority of the Emperor of Rome, and placed for public reading in all the churches of his capital. We find that his predecessor was so well acquainted with these books, as the foundation of the Christian faith, that he issued an imperial decree for their destruction. We find that a series of Christian writers, reaching from the days of Constantine back to the lifetime of the apostles, received, believed, read, and quoted the New Testament so fully that there are not a dozen verses in the entire book but can be gathered up from the extant writings of those early fathers.<sup>20</sup> We find that the apostolic writings

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<sup>20</sup> In Robert Philip's *Life, Times and Missionary Enterprises of John Campbell*, pp.

were received from their authors, and handed down from generation to generation, as the authentic productions of the apostles, and were regarded by all Christians as possessing divine authority.

We also find that the apostle Peter in his old age mentions the Epistles of Paul; counting them among the “other Scriptures,” and describing them as containing some things “hard to be understood.” We find that Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles, gives an account of the conversion and ministry of Paul, leaving him yet living and a prisoner at Rome; and that he also commences the Acts by stating that he had composed a “former treatise” giving an account of “all that Jesus began to do and to teach;” which treatise was evidently the Gospel by Luke. We find that the apostle Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, quotes from this Gospel by Luke, “*The laborer is worthy of his hire*” and declares that this passage was a portion of “*the Scripture*,” and it seems that Luke’s Gospel, which was written after “many” others had undertaken the work, was already recognized as “Scripture” before AD 65, when Paul’s death occurred; which was five years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

But the twenty-first chapter of Luke contains our Lord’s great prophecy concerning the overthrow of Jerusalem, and destruction of the temple, the calamities to come upon the Jewish nation, their dispersion as captives among all nations, and the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles should be fulfilled; which prophecies began to be accomplished almost immediately after the death of Paul, and have been most wonderfully fulfilled down to our own day.

We may hence conclude, and assert without fear of successful contradiction, that the books of the New Testament which we have, were in the hands of the church before the death of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that one or two of the later Epistles

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215-216, is an account of Lord Hailes, a Scottish judge, who said that he had actually discovered the *entire New Testament* with the exception of less than a dozen verses, in the writings of the Christian fathers who wrote before the close of the third century. See the passage quoted in a tract entitled *The Council of Nicea and the Canon of Scripture*, by H. L. Hastings, pp. 3-5.

were not immediately received by all. Those churches would not be imposed upon. They had no such means of communication as we have; printing-presses and mails were unknown; hence books made their way slowly through the world, and no book was admitted to that sacred number until it could be positively demonstrated that it had a right to stand among the Scriptures of divine truth. But at last they *were* received, and have held their ground; while numerous other books, written in the next succeeding age, were rejected then, and have been rejected ever since, as spurious and unworthy of the confidence of Christian men.

It is true that the statement has been currently made that the early Christians rejected several books that are now received as parts of the New Testament. This assertion is, to some skeptics, a sufficient evidence that those books were spurious; and hence they conclude that *all the other books* bound up in the same volume are to be rejected with them. How they arrive at such a conclusion, is not obvious to ordinary reasoners. Nevertheless the subject is important, and will repay careful attention.

If, then, we be asked, “How can we be certain that the writings contained in the New Testament are those which should have been preserved? Have not many of the Apostolic Books been lost? How are we to know that these books which remain are better than others which have perished, or than some which are now found in the *Apocryphal New Testament*? What certainty have we concerning these matters?” The answer in brief is, “The writings in the *Apocryphal New Testament* which bear the name of the Apostles are *forgeries*, and the genuine and authentic Epistles and other writings contained in that collection do not *profess* to come from the pens of the apostles, but were the productions of other early writers, and so have no claim to apostolic authority.”<sup>21</sup>

But this question is worthy of further consideration, and hence it will be proper to devote some attention to the evidences by

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<sup>21</sup> Editor’s Note: The “genuine and authentic Epistles and other writings” being referred to here are letters written by Christians (for example, Clement’s Letter to the Corinthians) and other writings by them (*Against Heresies*, and other such writings. These writings never claimed to be from the pen of an apostle.



which we distinguish between the:

## GENUINE AND SPURIOUS BOOKS

which existed in the early ages, and were well known to the primitive Christians.

Let it be remembered that to a certain extent the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are independent of each other; and should half of them be proved to be spurious, that would by no means invalidate the authority of the rest. Should three of the Gospels be cast aside, the fourth, whichever it might be, would furnish a firm foundation for a saving faith. So if two or three of the Epistles were found to be destitute of apostolic authority, this fact would no more invalidate the others than the rejection of an incompetent witness from a courtroom would invalidate the testimony of a score of *competent* witnesses who were ready to testify concerning every point in dispute.

Let us then devote a little attention to this subject. We find that Christians in very early ages made a sharp and definite distinction between different classes of religious writings which were current among them. (1) There were those which were *undisputed*, being universally received without question among all Christians as genuine writings, having apostolic authority. (2) There were books which were *disputed*, and which, while acknowledged and received by many, were questioned by others, either because their authorship was unknown to them, or else because, though they were known to the productions of good men, they were not of apostolic origin. (3) There were books which all agreed in rejecting as *spurious*; they being either forgeries, in the names of the apostles, or the productions of persons who were destitute of apostolic authority.

These three classes of books we find described at a very early period. Of course the fact that a book was *disputed* by some was not evidence that it deserved to be rejected; but rather that those who *disputed* its authority had not yet received sufficient evidence of its authorship to warrant them in accepting it. Such evidence might be within the reach of others, and might subsequently be brought to

their notice. But in the absence of such evidence they were warranted in suspending judgment, and declining to receive books for which they had not the fullest warrant and authority.

To examine the various authorities, and exhaust this subject, would require volumes. But a few facts can be given, which have a definite bearing upon the question before us, and we will commence with a quotation from the *Ecclesiastical History* of the learned

## EUSEBIUS ON THE SACRED CANON,

“Now, of the writings of *John*, in addition to the *Gospel*, the *former* of his *Epistles* also has been acknowledged as *undoubtedly* genuine, both by the authors of our own time and by those of antiquity; but the two remaining *Epistles* are *disputed*. Concerning the *Apocalypse*, men’s opinions, even now, are generally divided. This question, however, shall be decided at a proper time by the testimony of antiquity.

“But now that we have arrived at this point, it is natural that we should give a summary catalogue of the writings of the New Testament to which we have already alluded. First, then, we must place the holy quaternion<sup>22</sup> of the *Gospels*, which are followed by the account of the *Acts of the Apostles*. After this we must reckon the *Epistles of Paul*; and next to them we must maintain as genuine the *Epistle* circulated as the *former* of *John*, and in like manner that of *Peter*. In addition to these books, if possibly such a view seem correct, we must place the *Revelation of John*, the judgments on which we shall set forth in due course.<sup>23</sup> And these are regarded as generally

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<sup>22</sup> Set of four, or army of four—Editor.

<sup>23</sup> If Eusebius ever carried out this purpose there has no record of the fact come down to us. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, AD 248, seems to have questioned the authority of *Revelation*, because [he believed] it taught certain doctrines

received.

“Among the *controverted* books, which are nevertheless *well known and recognized by most*, we class the Epistle circulated under the name of *James*, and that of *Jude*, as well as the second of *Peter*, and the so-called second and third of *John*; whether they really belong to the evangelist or possibly to another of the same name.

“We must rank as *spurious* the account of the *Acts of Paul*, the book called *The Shepherd*, and the *Revelation of Peter*. And besides these, the Epistle circulated under the name of *Barnabas*, and the *Teaching of the Apostles*,<sup>24</sup> and, moreover, as I said, the *Apocalypse of John*, if such an opinion seem correct, which some, as I said, reject, while others reckon it among the books generally received. We may add that some have reckoned in this division the Gospel according to the *Hebrews*, to which those Hebrews who have received the Christ are especially attached. All these then will belong to the class of *controverted* books.”<sup>25</sup>

Much more might be quoted from Eusebius, but this will suffice, and we will now go back a century and examine...

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concerning the millennium and the reign of Christ on earth, which he, as a disciple of Origen, who interpreted the Scriptures allegorically, did not accept. But his objections produced no permanent impression upon the church, for the Book made its way to universal acceptance. Dr. Westcott says (Canon, Part 2. Chapter 2, Section 5), “With the single exception of Dionysius, all direct testimony from Alexandria, Africa, Rome and Carthage, witnesses to the apostolic authority of the *Apocalypse*.” For further information consult “*The Reign of Christ on Earth, or the Voice of the Church in all ages concerning the Coming and Kingdom of the Redeemer*.” By D. T. Taylor, edited with a preface by H. L. Hastings. Pp. 84-85.

<sup>24</sup> This is also known under the name *Didache*—Editor.

<sup>25</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 3, Chapter 25.

## THE TESTIMONY OF ORIGEN ON THE CANON.

He was one of the most learned and eminent of the early writers. He was born of Christian parents at Alexandria, about AD 185, and died at Caesarea or Tyre, about AD 254, after a life devoted to Scriptural studies and literary pursuits. Living as he did within a century of the time of the apostles, and inheriting the traditions of his parents, whose recollections were still earlier; having access to libraries and ancient authorities, and being himself a voluminous critic and author, sometimes employing nearly a score of ready writers and copyists in his own literary labors;—the testimony of such a man, as to what books were then received as authoritative by the Christian church, must be especially weighty and conclusive. In his Sermon, or *Homily*, on Luke 1:1, “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand,” etc., we find the following:

“The phrase *have taken in hand* implies a tacit accusation of those who rushed hastily to write Gospels without the grace of the Holy Spirit. Matthew and Mark and Luke and John did not *take in hand* to write their Gospels, but wrote them being full of the Holy Spirit.... The Church has *four* Gospels, heresies very many, of which one is entitled ‘*According to the Egyptians*,’ another, ‘*According to the Twelve Apostles*’... *Four Gospels only* are approved, out of which we must bring forth points of teaching under the person of our Lord and Savior. There is, I know, a Gospel which is called ‘*According to Thomas*,’ and [one] ‘*According to Matthias*;’ and there are many others which we read, lest we should seem to be unacquainted with any point, for the sake of those who think they possess some valuable knowledge if they are acquainted with them. But in all these we approve *nothing else but that which the Church approves*, that is, *four Gospels only* as proper to be received.”

Again, in his *Homily on Joshua*, 7:1, Origen, in his characteristic style of allegory, makes the falling of the walls of Jericho at the sound of the trumpets of the priests an illustration of the effects of

the preaching of the word of God, and thus incidentally furnishes us a list of the New Testament books:

“So, too, our Lord, whose advent was typified by the son of Nun, when he came, sent his apostles as priests bearing well-wrought trumpets. Matthew first sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel. Mark, also Luke and John, each gave forth a strain on their priestly trumpets. Peter moreover sounds loudly on the twofold trumpet of his Epistles; and so also James and Jude. Still the number is incomplete, and John gives forth the trumpet-sound in his Epistles and Apocalypse; and Luke while describing the Acts of the Apostles. Lastly, however, came he who said, ‘*I think that God hath set forth us apostles last of all,*’ and thundering on the fourteen trumpets of his Epistles, threw down even to the ground the walls of Jericho, that is to say all the instruments of idolatry and the doctrines of the philosophers.”

But we go back much earlier than the period of Origen and examine what appears to be the most ancient catalogue of the New Testament books yet discovered, an anonymous document known as

## **THE MURATORIAN FRAGMENT ON THE CANON.**

In 1740 L.A. Muratori published at Milan, in his *Antiquitates Italicae*, a manuscript from the Ambrosian Library, more than a thousand years old, which originally belonged in the great monastery founded at Bobbio in northern Italy by Columban, of Ireland, about AD 612. The beginning and end of the manuscript are missing, and it shows marks of ignorant translation and transcription; but yet its contents are of great importance. The date of this venerable document is fixed by the following passage, in which, after he has described the various apostolic writings, he refers to the Apocryphal book called *The Shepherd*, and says:

“Hermas wrote *the Shepherd* quite recently in our own times, while Pius, his brother was occupying the chair of the Roman Church. And, therefore, it ought indeed to be read: but it should never be used in the church publicly, neither among the number of the prophets, nor among that of the apostles, to the end of time.”

This incidental remark defines the date of this writing as about the time of the episcopate of Pius, bishop of Rome, which commenced about AD 140, and concluded about the middle of the second century. As this writer speaks of the episcopate of Pius as being in *his own time*, it is evident that this manuscript could not have been written later than about AD 175, and that the recollections of its author may have extended back to within twenty-five years or less of the Apostles’ days. This then seems to be

## THE EARLIEST LIST OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

The fragment commences abruptly, with a part of a sentence which doubtless referred to the Gospel by *Mark*, as it goes on to state that the Gospel of *Luke* stands *third* in order, having been written by ‘Luke the physician,’ the companion of Paul, who, not being himself an eye-witness, based his narrative on such information as he could obtain, beginning from the birth of John the Baptist. The *fourth* place is given to the Gospel of *John*, a disciple of the Lord; and the occasion of its composition is thus related: “At the entreaties of his fellow-disciples and his bishops, John said, ‘Fast with me for three days from this time, and whatsoever shall be revealed to each of us let us relate it to one another.’” On the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, that John should relate all things in his own name, aided by the revision of all... What wonder is it, then, that John brings forward each detail with so much emphasis even in his Epistles, saying of himself, ‘What we have seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, and our hands have handled, these things have we written unto you!’ For so he professes that he was not only an eye-witness, but also a hearer,

and moreover a historian of *all the wonderful works* of the Lord in order.”

The writer also speaks of the record by Luke “of those *Acts of all the apostles, which fell under his own notice*,” then follow *thirteen* Epistles of Paul, including all but the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. He also says, “Moreover there is in circulation an Epistle to the *Laodiceans*, another to the *Alexandrians*, forged under the name of Paul, bearing on the heresy of Marcion, and several others which *cannot be received into the Catholic church*; for gall ought not to be mixed with honey. The Epistle of *Jude*, however, and two Epistles bearing the name of *John*, are received in the Catholic [church] (*or are reckoned among the Catholic [epistles]*); and the book of *Wisdom*, written by the friends of Solomon, in his honor. We receive, moreover, the *Apocalypse of John*, and *Peter* only, which (latter) some of our body will not have read in the church.”<sup>26</sup>

The omission of all mention of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* may be due to the fragmentary condition of the manuscript, which begins and ends abruptly, hence the writer’s statements concerning *Hebrews* may be lost; the same may be said of the *Epistle of James* and *Second Peter*. With these exceptions this writer gives an account of the whole New Testament as it *now stands*, with the addition only of a single book, the *Apocalypse of Peter* which the writer declared *some* would not allow to be read in the church, and which has since been universally rejected as spurious.

Here, then, we have an author writing within seventy years of the death of the apostle John, and while men were yet living who had seen the beloved disciple; giving a list of the books which they received as apostolic and authoritative;—admitting that one, the *Revelation of Peter*, was in dispute, referring to others which were *forgeries*, and could no more be reckoned with the genuine books than gall could be mixed with honey; and yet his list, fragmentary as it is, contains evidently the *entire New Testament as we have it*,

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<sup>26</sup> See Westcott’s *Canon of the New Testament*, Part 1, Chapter 2, Section 12. Why the book of *Wisdom* is included in *this* New Testament list does not appear; but it may be that some omitted portion of the manuscript would place it in a different position.

with the exception of the *Epistle of James*, the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, and *Second Peter*; and some of these *may* have been mentioned in the missing portion of the manuscript.

Hence we see that the New Testament, as a whole, dates back to the generation of the apostles. And if these three omitted Epistles were to be left entirely out of the account, what doctrine of the Bible should we lose, or what necessary fact of divine revelation would escape us?

Such, in brief, are the results of years of study, as embodied in numerous volumes devoted to the discussion of this subject; and the more the matter is examined, the more irresistible is the evidence that we have in the New Testament the genuine, authentic, authoritative writings of the apostles of the Lamb.<sup>27</sup>

## THE DISPUTED NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS.

We have seen that the church of Christ in the remotest antiquity recognized *three classes* of writings current among them.

**First, those which were received by all without dispute, as genuine, apostolic writings.** These comprehended the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of Peter, and the first Epistle of John. About the reception of these there was no question or dispute in the earliest ages. They were received by orthodox and heterodox; they were read in the churches; they were quoted by ancient Christian writers so fully that Dr. Tregelles says of one single writer, Origen, "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 writings alone (I speak this from actual knowledge and examination) find cited at least *two-thirds* of the New Testament."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The student will find in the works of Westcott, Schaff, Mitchell, Horne, Lardner and others, all the evidence needful to settle this question forever, with any candid mind. Those who would not believe though one rose from the dead, we must leave to their doubts.

<sup>28</sup> *The Historical Evidence of the Authorship and Transmission of the Books of*



There were, then, a *second class* of books which were in *dispute*. They were not rejected; on the contrary, they were received by many with as full confidence as any other books. But some, for various reasons, stood in doubt of them. These books were, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Revelation.

In the *third place* there were books which were *absolutely rejected from the sacred canon*. Some, like the Epistle of Barnabas, the first Epistle of Clement, Bishop of Rome, and the Epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius, were regarded as the genuine writings of good men, and were counted worthy of perusal, but regarded as not possessing apostolic authority. Others were admitted to be the genuine writings of Christian men, but were full of errors and puerile conceits. Others still were forgeries and falsehoods, as in the case of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, of which Tertullian writes that “in Asia the presbyter who composed that writing, as if he were augmenting Paul’s fame from his own store, after being convicted, and confessing that he had done it from the love of Paul, was removed from his office.”<sup>29</sup>

In discussing the corruptions of the New Testament it is proper to offer some suggestions concerning the *disputed* books which we have named.

The fact that a book is *disputed* no more proves it to be a false book, than the fact that a man is accused proves him to be a criminal. As a man accused of crime is held innocent until his guilt be proved, so a book bearing the name of any individual may be held to be his genuine work until evidence to the contrary is adduced. The authorship of a forged or spurious book can often be determined, as in the case of *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*; or in the case of the *Book of Mormon*, which has been proved to be substantially a romance written by a minister named Spaulding, which came into the possession of certain schemers, and was made the foundation of a new religion. But no one has ever succeeded in

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*the New Testament*, by S. P. Tregelles, p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Tertullian, On Baptism, c. xvii

establishing any other date or authorship for the disputed Epistles of Peter, James, John, Jude, the Epistle to the Hebrews, or the Apocalypse. They must have been written by someone; and if they had been impostures the fact would naturally have been known, and their true authorship would most likely have been ascertained.

Concerning these books we may remark—First: they were all written *later* than most of the other books. The second Epistle of Peter was written in his old age, near the end of his life; for he says, “I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance; knowing that *shortly* I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able *after my decease* to have these things always in remembrance.” 2 Peter 1:13-15. This Epistle also warns the church of the presence of false teachers and apostates; which indicates that sufficient time had elapsed from the foundation of the churches for apostasy and decay to commence. The Epistle of James also notes the corrupting influence of wealth in the church. The Epistle of Jude declares that certain men had already crept in unawares, and turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation was also written at a very late date, near the close of the first century.<sup>30</sup>

Of course writings could not be received until after they were written; and these books were not written until long after most of the other apostolic writings had been received. Paul’s thirteen Epistles must have been written previous to AD 65, the time of his death; the Acts of the Apostles was written while he was yet alive; the Gospel by Luke was a still earlier production; and previous to this, “many” persons had “taken in hand” to write accounts of the life and ministry of Christ. Most of the undisputed books were well-known and universally received long before these later

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<sup>30</sup> Editor’s Note: There is compelling evidence that Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the reasons these books were not as well-attested was that they were written to a Jewish audience in the last days of Judah’s existence. The massive destruction, as well as the immense persecution of Christians during AD 64-68 would have made copying manuscripts more difficult.

productions appeared; and of course, as these made their way slowly from hand to hand, and from church to church, being carefully scrutinized at every step, the lateness of their origin is a sufficient reason for the hesitation with which they were accepted. They were received by *some*, who knew their origin, with all confidence; others, who did not know the facts, waited till their authority was established.

Second, most of these writings were not directed to any particular church. The second and third Epistles of John seem to have been personal letters to friends. The second Epistle of Peter is to "them that have obtained like precious faith;" the Epistle of James is to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad;" while the Epistle of Jude is to "them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called." The Epistle to the Hebrews has no local address or superscription. When epistles were sent by trusty messengers to the Corinthians, the Ephesians, or the Colossians, it was only necessary to go to those cities and consult the original documents to decide the claims of the writings. But these "catholic" or general epistles, which were of the nature of circulars, or tracts, would not be so readily traced, and hence would naturally require more careful scrutiny. The question would arise, Who first received this epistle? Where does it come from? Who vouches for it as being a genuine apostolic writing? To answer such inquiries would require time; and it was not until these questions had been settled again and again, to the satisfaction of different individuals and churches, that these books could be generally received.

Third, in the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews, there was the additional fact that it was sent forth anonymously, and of course this must have increased the difficulty of establishing its apostolic authority.

And yet, in spite of all these difficulties, these books, at first received by few, were gradually introduced to the ever-widening circle of Christian believers, and shortly made their way to universal acceptance. This could not have been the case unless there had been sound and substantial grounds for their reception. There was no lack of vigilance on the part of the early Christians.

There were plenty of spurious writings abroad which they did not hesitate to reject and denounce. No central ecclesiastical authority prescribed their faith, or commanded them to accept one book and reject another. The whole matter was settled by *evidence* which was convincing to the churches and individuals concerned.

A few suggestions concerning these disputed books may be appropriate. The second and third Epistles of John, being apparently personal letters, could not, in the nature of things, be expected to receive that early *public* recognition which was accorded to his other writings. It was most natural that they should be received with caution; and it would require considerable time to effect their introduction among the genuine books of the New Testament. We find, however, that Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (AD 115-190), quotes the seventh and eighth verses of the second Epistle of John,<sup>31</sup> and that Dionysius of Alexandria (AD 231) mentions the second and third Epistles as ascribed to John the apostle.<sup>32</sup>

The Epistle of Jude, like these of John, is mentioned in the ancient Muratorian Canon about AD 175, and Tertullian, AD 200, repeatedly cites this Epistle, expressly saying that "Enoch possesses a testimony in the apostle Jude."<sup>33</sup> And Clement of Alexandria (AD 185) also repeatedly quotes from this Epistle as Scripture.<sup>34</sup>

The Epistle of James is expressly mentioned by Origen, AD 200. He was a disciple of Clement of Alexandria, and there is a record of a lost work of Clement which contained a summary of the Epistle of James. The Epistle of James, being addressed to the Twelve Tribes scattered abroad, would most naturally be early known at Alexandria. Irenaeus, speaking of Abraham, says, "He was called the friend of God,"<sup>35</sup> which seems to be a quotation

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<sup>31</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Book 3, Chapter 16, Section 8.

<sup>32</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book 7, Chapter 25.

<sup>33</sup> Tertullian on *Female Dress*, Book 1, Chapter 3.

<sup>34</sup> *The Instructor*, Book 3, Chapter 8

<sup>35</sup> Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, Book 4, Chapter 16, Section 2.

from James 2:23. The very ancient *Syriac Version* also contains the Epistle of James, though it lacks some of the other disputed books, which may not have been written or known when that translation was made. As this Epistle was addressed to the Twelve Tribes scattered abroad, it would very naturally find its way among the Syrian Christians, and be received by them at an earlier date than among the Greeks and Latins. But in due time it came to be generally received, and even Clement of Rome (AD 91-100) quotes, "Through faith and hospitality a son was given to Abraham in old age, and by obedience he offered him a sacrifice to God; by faith and hospitality, Rahab the harlot was saved,"<sup>36</sup> apparently referring quite distinctly to that justification by faith and also *by works*, as taught in the Epistles of Paul, and in the Epistle of James, 2:21-28.

The second Epistle of Peter was also a disputed book. This was written at a late date, and without specific address; though it plainly purports to be the production of the apostle Peter. It appears, however, to have been addressed to the persons to whom Peter had previously written his First Epistle (2 Pet. 3:1-2), and we know that the first Epistle was addressed to "the strangers scattered abroad throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Bithynia." We should not therefore look for the second Epistle to be received earliest at Rome or at Alexandria; but we should look for evidence of its authority in the region to which it was sent.

About the year AD 256, Firmilian, who was Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, wrote a letter to Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in which he charges the Bishop of Rome with "abusing the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, as if they had delivered this doctrine, though they in their Epistles have execrated heretics and admonished us to avoid them." Now we find no mention of heretics or false prophets and false teachers in the *first* Epistle of Peter; but the *second* Epistle, in the second chapter, contains explicit warnings of false teachers who were to arise and "privily bring in damnable *heresies*." So, from Firmilian, Bishop of *Cappadocia*, AD 256, we have an express reference to this second

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<sup>36</sup> Clement, 1 *Corinthians* 5:12: 6:5

Epistle of Peter, which like the first Epistle, was written “to the strangers scattered throughout ... Cappadocia.” Taking root in these fields, the Epistle shortly spread and was finally acknowledged elsewhere and everywhere.

The book of Revelation was questioned by a few who did not accept the doctrines which it taught; much as Martin Luther questioned the authority of the Epistle of James, because he, just emerging from darkness, did not understand how to reconcile its teachings with those of Paul concerning justification by faith. Some have claimed that the Apocalypse differs in style from the writings of John. But style depends upon the subject; and there is no greater difference in the style than there is in the themes of these different writings. But whatever doubts may have crept in concerning the book of Revelation, two or three hundred years *after* it was written, there is no record of such doubts in the earlier periods of Christian history. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, one of the churches to which the book of Revelation was sent, wrote about AD 177 a work *On the Revelation of John*.<sup>37</sup> Irenaeus, who was familiarly acquainted with those who had known the beloved disciple before his death, not only accepted this book as the work of John, but fixes its date, saying that the Apocalyptic vision “was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.”<sup>38</sup>

Justin Martyr, who lived within a few years of the time of the apostles, held a discussion or dialogue with Trypho, “the most distinguished among the Hebrews of the day.”<sup>39</sup> In this discussion, which occurred at Ephesus, the seat of one of the churches to

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<sup>37</sup> Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*. Book 9, Chapter 26.

<sup>38</sup> *Against Heresies*. Book 5, Chapter 30, Section 3. [It should be noted that the translation of this quotation of Irenaeus is disputed by many. Earlier in the same chapter, Irenaeus mentions “ancient” copies of the *Revelation*. And even in this quotation, “Domitian” is spelled in a way in the original Greek that never appears anywhere else in any writings. However, the spelling used there is occasionally used of Nero’s official royal name. Thus, Irenaeus actually appears to be arguing for an earlier date for Revelation, near the end of Nero’s reign.— Editor.]

<sup>39</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. Book 4, Chapter 18.

which the Apocalypse was sent (Rev. 1:11), and which was the last abode of John, and the place of his burial;<sup>40</sup> not more than fifty years from the time of his death, and of course surrounded by many who personally knew the beloved disciple, Justin says: "There was a certain man with us whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a Revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ should dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal, resurrection and judgment of all men, would likewise take place."<sup>41</sup> We may add that Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch about AD 180, in his book *Against the Heresies of Hermogenis*, makes use of testimonies from the Revelation of John.<sup>42</sup> Numerous other witnesses might be cited, but if the testimony of Justin, the learned philosopher and martyr, given on the very soil where John lived and died, and within fifty years of the date of his death, cannot be accepted, it is useless to adduce later evidence. The church at Ephesus, the home of John and one of the churches to which the Revelation was sent, were competent witnesses concerning the authorship of that book. And Justin Martyr, testifying from Ephesus, gives us ample proof concerning its apostolic origin and authority, which indeed would never have been questioned had not later writers accepted and taught doctrines different from those contained in the Apocalypse and believed by the earlier generations of the church.

There remains one other book to be noticed among the disputed writings, and that is...

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<sup>40</sup> "In Asia also, mighty luminaries have fallen asleep, who shall rise again at the last day, at the appearance of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall gather again all the saints . . . John, who rested on the bosom of our Lord, who was a martyr, and teacher, *rests at Ephesus*." The *Epistle of Polycrates*, Bishop of Ephesus, to Victor, Bishop of Rome. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* Book 3, Chapter 31.

<sup>41</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 81.

<sup>42</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* Book 4. Chapter 24.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

This Epistle stands by itself, as the only specimen of anonymous writing contained in the New Testament. It is also destitute of local superscription or address; and hence can be referred to no particular church for authentication and endorsement. It is not then strange that it was received by some with hesitation, and that questions afterwards arose, not so much regarding its authority, which was admitted, but regarding its authorship, which had been purposely concealed.

The fact that this document, without superscription or signature, and containing the name of only one solitary Christian, Timothy, was promptly received by a *portion* of the primitive church as an authoritative exposition of Christian truth, indicates that those who first received it must have known its origin. It must have been delivered by a trusty messenger, and accompanied by sufficient intimations of its authorship to insure its acceptance. Of course it was not universally received at once. The Latin fathers, down to the year 300, do not quote it as one of Paul's Epistles. Tertullian, AD 200, attributed it to Barnabas; and Cyprian does not admit its Pauline origin. But the Epistle was not sent to the *Latins*, but to the *Hebrews*, and, lacking the ordinary tokens of authority—the signature or salutation of Paul—the Latins were perfectly justified in hesitating, and suspending their judgment until they were fully informed of the facts in the case. On the contrary, the Alexandrian fathers received it,—Alexandria being famed as a center both of Hebrew and Christian learning—and the concurrent testimony of most ancient writers was that this Epistle was written by Paul. The learned Origen, in his *Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, after alluding to certain points wherein it differs in style from Paul's acknowledged Epistles, says, "If I were to express my own *opinion*, I should say that the *thoughts* are the apostle's, but the *diction* and composition that of someone who recorded from memory the apostle's teachings, and sought to illustrate with a brief commentary the sayings of his master. If, then, any church hold this Epistle to be Paul's, we cannot find fault with it for so doing; for it was *not without good reason* that the *men of old time have handed it down as Paul's*. But who it was who wrote the Epistle, God only knows certainly."



Of course no one living in Origen's time could personally know "certainly" who had written a treatise a century and a half before; but the evidence from antiquity was as clear as it could be, from the nature of the case. And such testimony as this seems reasonably conclusive, unless something besides mere opinion is brought to oppose it.

It has been suggested that Hebrews may have been written by Barnabas, Apollos, or Zenas. But would such a treatise have been accepted at the hands of Barnabas, Apollos, or Zenas without the signature of the author or the endorsement of any apostle? And would either of those men have been likely to write such a treatise as this, and send forth the sole production of his pen, anonymously? How could such an Epistle ever have found acceptance among the churches?

The epistles of Barnabas and of Clement of Rome were received with much respect in the early church, *because* their authors were believed to be fellow-laborers with the apostles; but how could an *anonymous* letter gain admission to the list of the sacred writings of the Christian church, unless those who first received it *knew* it to be the production of some one of the apostles?

There are modern writers who, from internal evidence, pronounce with great positiveness against the Pauline origin of Hebrews. They declare it impossible that Paul should have been its author. There are other learned men, however, who draw opposite conclusions from the facts in the case; and who claim to see similarities of thought and expression which indicate the Pauline origin of Hebrews. And those who most strenuously oppose this view admit that the Epistle was *inspired* by Paul, and that it contains and embodies his ideas; but they assert that it differs in style from Paul's writings, and that it exhibits greater eloquence than can be observed in his acknowledged Epistles,

It is not probable that many of the readers of the original are sufficiently familiar with the diction and style of Paul to pronounce an authoritative judgment on such grounds. The mere fact of a difference of style is by no means a conclusive proof of different authorship. The critic who should read *The Metropolitan Pulpit*, *The*

*Treasury of David*, and *John Ploughman's Talks*, could readily detect a very marked difference in their style; but he would be a bold theorist who, on such grounds, would deny that Charles H. Spurgeon was the author of either of these works. Nothing would be more natural than that an anonymous writing should be purposely composed in a style peculiar to itself. And it would be reasonable to suppose that a person writing anonymously a treatise designed for general circulation, and destined, perhaps, to endure the most searching criticism, should take much more pains in the construction of his sentences than would a prisoner in writing a familiar letter to some individual with whom he was acquainted, or to some church for whom he felt a loving sympathy. And as Paul in his acknowledged Epistles frequently joins with him Timothy or Silvanus, they apparently sharing the authorship and responsibility of the writing, it would not be at all surprising if, in writing an anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews, he availed himself of the aid of Apollos, Barnabas, Timothy, or any other of his co-workers.

An Epistle designed to be sent forth anonymously would most naturally be subjected to careful revision; and he who could say, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect," and who had shown such eminent tact and adaptation in his addresses to Romans, Jews, and Athenians, and in the presence of governors, rulers, and kings, would naturally produce a treatise differing both in style and character from the briefer and less elaborate productions which had been written when chained to a Roman soldier, while the burden of the churches lay upon his loving heart.

There can be no doubt concerning the *reception* of the Epistle to the Hebrews by the early Christians. Clement of Rome in his Epistle quotes or alludes to it again and again. In his first *Apology* (Chapter 12) Justin Martyr speaks of Christ as both "Son and *Apostle* of God the Father of all,"—a title of Christ only found in Hebrews 3:1; the "*Apostle* and High Priest of our profession."

According to Dr. Lardner, certain passages in the Epistles of Ignatius, about AD 107, are thought by some to allude to the Epistle to the Hebrews. It seems to be referred to by Polycarp, in his Epistle to the Philippians, AD 108, and it also seems to be alluded to in the account of Polycarp's martyrdom, about AD 150.

It is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, AD 194. It is received in substance as Paul's by Origen, AD 230, and by Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, AD 247. It is referred to by Theognostius of Alexandria, AD 285. It appears to have been received by Methodius, AD 292, and by Pamphilius, AD 294. It was received and ascribed to Paul by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, AD 313. It is often quoted by Eusebius as Paul's. It was received by Athanasius, AD 330; by Admantius, AD 380; by Cyril of Jerusalem, AD 347; by the Council of Laodicea, AD 368; by Epiphanius, AD 368; by the authors of the Apostolic Constitutions about the end of the fourth century; by Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssen, Didymus of Alexandria, and Ephraem the Syrian, about AD 370; also by Diodorus of Tarsus, AD 378; by Hierax, the learned Egyptian, AD 302; by Serapion, Bishop of Thumis in Egypt, AD 347; by Titus, Bishop of Bostra in Arabia, about AD 362; by Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia, about AD 394; by Chrysostom, AD 398; by Severan, Bishop of Gabala, in Syria, AD 401; and by the churches of Syria, as well as by numerous other learned authors mentioned by Lardner, among whom are Gaudentius, Bishop of Brescia, in Italy, AD 380, and Jerome, AD 390, who, while referring to Hebrews as one of Paul's Epistles, testifies that it was generally received by the *Greeks* and *Christians of the East*, but *not* by all the *Latins*.

Let us now look at the Epistle itself, and see what information it will afford us. From a careful examination we reach the following conclusions:

1. The Epistle to the Hebrews was apparently written while the Jewish temple remained standing; for the writer seems to speak in the present tense concerning the priesthood, Heb. 7:28; the holy places made with hands, Heb. 9:24; the sacrifices, Heb. 10:13; the high priest's ministrations, Heb. 10:2; and the altar and tabernacle, Heb. 13:10, 11;—in all these passages making reference to Jewish forms of worship and service as still existing; and hence the Epistle might have been written by one who died about AD 65.
2. It was written by one thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament and the Jewish religion; and so would appropriately

come from one who profited above many of his equals in the religion of the Jews; who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; who was an Hebrew of the Hebrews; according to the strictest sect a Pharisee; and who was accustomed to reason out of the Scriptures.

3. It must have been written by one who felt the deepest interest in the welfare of the Jewish nation; and so might fitly proceed from him who said, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. 9:1-4. And this Epistle, though specially adapted to preserve the Jewish Christians from discouragement and apostasy, was also fitted to be circulated among the "devout Jews," to lead them to a knowledge of the Messiah.
4. It appears to have been written by one who was *not* one of the first disciples of the Lord, as was Barnabas, but rather one who could say that the "great salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord" "was confirmed unto *us* by *them that heard Him*" If this were written some thirty years after the death of Christ, its readers would mostly be those who had *not* personally known the Lord; and though Paul received his message and commission from the glorified Christ, yet it does not appear that he ever attended upon his personal ministry on earth.
5. This Epistle was written by one who felt himself an outcast from the Jewish nation, and so deprived of any rights or privileges in the Holy City to which he as a Jew might have been entitled before he embraced the gospel. After declaring that Jesus, in order to "sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate," he says, "Let us therefore go forth unto him *without the camp, bearing his reproach*; for *here have we no continuing city*, but we seek one to come." Heb. 13:13, 14. How appropriate this language for one who was in perils by his own countrymen, who was hated, persecuted, and accused by his own people, and who was emphatically a pilgrim and a stranger on the earth.
6. The Epistle was written by one who had been "in bonds," and who had received the sympathy of the Hebrew Christians while thus imprisoned. Thus he says, "Ye had compassion of me in

*my bonds*, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.” Heb. 10:34. We know of one person who *could* say this truly, and that was the apostle Paul. What evidence have we that any other of the supposed authors of Hebrews could use this language?

7. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written by one who was so intimately connected with Timothy, the only Christian named in the Epistle, that he mentions him as being now “set at liberty;” and he intimates that he himself at this time was free, or had hope of speedy liberation, and hence was planning a journey with Timothy for the future. Thus he says, “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.” Heb. 13:22, 23. We know that Timothy *was with Paul* during his imprisonment at Rome, for he is expressly named at the commencement of the Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and to Philemon, all of which were written while Paul was in “bonds.” Elsewhere, in writing *to* Timothy, Paul calls him his “own son;” 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; but in writing *of* Timothy to others, he calls him “brother” (1 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 3:2), as does the writer of this Epistle.
8. This Epistle seems to have been written from *Italy*, for its closing words are, “They of *Italy* salute you.” Some suppose it was written while its author was yet in bonds, for he says, “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.” Heb. 13:18, 19. Others suppose the writer to have now been at liberty, and perhaps to have left Rome, thus writing not from the capital, but from some other part of Italy.
9. Finally, this Epistle was written by one who chose to conceal his personality. And this was not through modesty, as a youthful author sends out his first production, not knowing what will befall it. The author of Hebrews was no novice, moving with uncertain tread in an unknown path; he wrote in all the majesty of an accredited messenger of the Most High. But why does he conceal his name? Why should Apollos or

Barnabas send forth such a treatise unsigned?

We can easily conceive why the apostle Paul might choose thus to write. One who from being a furious persecutor had changed to be a zealous Christian, and who had thus incurred the fiercest hatred of his countrymen; who had been mobbed in Jerusalem, where he had been trained at the feet of Gamaliel and honored with high position; who had heard the shouts of Jewish zealots crying, "Away with him, for it is not fit that such a fellow should live on the earth;" who knew that at one time more than forty men had sworn that they would neither eat nor drink until they had shed his blood; who had been accused and assaulted by his countrymen, who so hated him that to secure himself from assassination at their hands he had appealed unto Caesar; a man who had of the Jews five times received forty stripes save one; who had been persecuted and followed from city to city by Jewish zealots, and whose name must have become a hissing and a curse among them, throughout the world;—such a man, yearning over his erring countrymen, and earnestly desiring to lead them to the knowledge of the truth, but knowing that whatever he might say or do, the mention of his name could only awaken prejudice and fill them with rage, and possibly cause the persecution and death of those to whom his testimony was confided, might, in the exercise of only ordinary wisdom, conclude that, after writing many Epistles in his own name, he could in this instance best serve the cause of truth by suppressing his name, and setting forth in an impersonal form those great truths which he so much desired that his brethren according to the flesh should know.

Against the single objection that the style of this Epistle differs from Paul's usual style, we set, then, the facts that it was promptly received as an apostolic production; that it was apparently written before Jerusalem was destroyed; that it was written by one familiar with the Jewish religion and deeply interested in the welfare of the Jews; that its author was *not* one of the first disciples of the Lord, but was one who felt himself an outcast from the Jewish nation; that it was written by one who had been in bonds, and who was in close communion with Timothy; that it was written from Italy; and that, finally, it was written by one who had such reasons as no other person *could have had* for addressing the Jewish people

anonymously. All these indications point to the apostle Paul as the author of the book of Hebrews, and lead us to agree with the learned Origen when he says, "*It was not without good reason that the men of old have handed it down as Paul's.*"

## **THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER.**

We have stated briefly a few of the facts bearing on this subject. There is room for but one conclusion. Christianity had a beginning. None of the writers of remote antiquity mention it. Neither Homer nor Hesiod, Herodotus nor Manetho, Plato nor Socrates, allude to Christ or his gospel. During the seventy years from BC 50 to AD 20, we may scan the writings of Diodorus, Caesar, Sallust, Cicero, Strabo, Livy, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, without finding the slightest reference to the Christian religion. The Jews, notwithstanding their isolation, were known and noticed; but Christianity, in its nature aggressive and expansive, was not mentioned—*because it did not exist*. A generation later we find in the writings of Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny, Trajan, and others, distinct mention of Christ as the founder of Christianity, and of multitudes of Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Somewhere within this narrow circle of a single lifetime, Christianity was established. If it had originated at an earlier date some trace of it would have been found. Its origin could not have been later, because all history agrees that it existed before the year AD 65. When did it originate? Luke, in the third chapter of his Gospel, tells us when it was. The books of the New Testament must have been written in the first century of our era, because they are quoted in the second century, and have been quoted in every century since; and thus, by following an unbroken stream of testimony, we have followed the New Testament writings back to:

## **THE FOUNTAIN HEAD.**

Having thus traced the New Testament writings, step by step, for more than eighteen hundred years, to the persons who wrote them, we at last reach their fountain-head, and find a Man, a Teacher, a Carpenter; surrounded by a few obscure, humble,

unlettered Galileans. We find him claiming more than imperial power, and uttering commands with more than imperial authority. He directs his followers to go into all the world. He predicts that the message which he entrusts to them shall be proclaimed to all nations; and he makes to them the strange and improbable declaration that wherever they go to do his work, He will be with them alway, even to the end of the age. We see him again with them in an upper chamber, where he breaks a loaf and divides it among them; he gives thanks over a cup, and bids them drink of it, and he charges them to repeat that act in remembrance of Him.

Suppose we could have sat that night as quiet spectators in the "large upper room." Suppose it had been said to us, "Before the morning's dawn, this Galilean Teacher will be betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and forsaken by all; and before another sun shall set will be condemned by the priesthood of his own nation, mocked, and scourged, and crowned with thorns by the Roman soldiers, yelled after by a howling mob, sentenced to death by a Roman governor, led out and hung between two thieves upon a Roman cross, there to die in shame and ignominy, and thence be carried, amid the tears of his despairing followers, and laid in a stranger's grave.

Suppose all this had been told, and then the question asked, "How many times will these Galileans ever gather to break the loaf and drink the cup in memory of their Master?" What would have been our answer? Should we not have said, "They will probably never meet again"? Should we not have supposed that, at the very latest, a few years would have eradicated the last trace of such an enthusiast's existence from the minds and memories of men?

But eighteen hundred years have gone. Nations have risen and fallen; the city where they met has been desolated, and of all its gorgeous buildings not one stone left upon another; the Jewish nation has been scattered through all the earth—a race of wandering exiles for eighteen hundred years—Imperial Rome has bowed her proud head beneath barbarian yokes; civilization has lapsed into barbarism, and barbarism has been raised again to civilization; nations, and languages, and laws have perished out of mind; the decrees of the Caesars are forgotten; the commands of



emperors are not worth the paper on which they were written; but probably no *week has passed for the last eighteen hundred years* without witnessing the obedience of His followers to the command He then uttered. In every quarter of the globe, in lands then undiscovered, in nations then unborn, in languages then unspoken, His servants and disciples have met; in magnificent cathedrals, in lowly cottages, in upper chambers, and in dens and caves of the earth;—with streaming eyes and quivering voices they have rehearsed the story of his life and death, and have broken the loaf and drank the cup in solemn memory of His dying love. And in every land and nation today where this tale has been told, and under every form of government beneath the sun, men keep this feast with humble reverence, and with sympathizing love.

From that mysterious Center, that life which began in the manger of poverty, and closed upon the cross of shame, there has gone forth not only a Book, which has enlightened the nations, which has spread as no other writing ever spread, among all races, languages, and tribes; but there have come down to us other memorials and monuments, striking in their significance, and world-wide in their observance. The sacred baptism in which we are “planted together in the likeness of his death,” the cup of blessing, and the loaf we break, are not the only memorials which tell us that He has been here. Throughout the globe, which before his coming was dark with the shadows of inhumanity and sin, has streamed the radiance of his life and love. In a world where purity was but a tradition, his light and blessing has restored in many a dwelling the happiness of an Eden which was lost; and instead of a thousand gladiators hacking each other to pieces to amuse the populace in the proudest and mightiest city of the globe,—“Butchered to make a Roman holiday,”—the good Samaritan now goes his way, lifting up the wounded and the dying, and bringing comfort to the desolate and the sad. Instead of the public shows, and pageants, and slaughters, of antiquity, we have what they knew nothing of, hospitals, asylums, refuges, and reformatories. Instead of the magnificent temples of classic Greece, with their swarming prostitutes and their licentious orgies, we have the church, the university, the college, the seminary, and the common school. Instead of slavery, we have freedom; instead of cruelty, we have

kindness; instead of darkness, we have light; instead of Satan, we have Christ.

And this change has not been through the slow progression of countless ages,—it has been a sudden, personal and radical change, by which old things passed away, and all things became new. There are today, after all the boasted progression of humanity, peoples where the gospel light shines not, who are as brutal, as cruel, and as base as were the nations of antiquity.

Humanity has never civilized itself.<sup>43</sup> Its redemption comes from without, and is wrought by Almighty power. There are peoples on the globe today who within the memory of man were as vile, as godless, and as bloodthirsty as were the inhabitants of Babylon, Greece, or Rome. But today they are changed;—changed within a few brief years, and are living as becometh the redeemed and pardoned followers of the Prince of peace. And the change that has so often transformed races of savages and cannibals into followers of the Lamb of God, is wrought, not by human progression, but by divine mercy; not in obedience to some subtle energy, working through countless generations, but in accordance with the mandate of Him whose gospel is “the power of God unto salvation,” and who, eighteen hundred years ago, in the midst of poverty and shame and rejection, and with the cross of Calvary full in his view, declared, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.”

There is no surer indication of power than is seen in the orderly execution of the mandates of an unseen and absent leader. Mighty monarchs, in the last hour of life, when they had nothing more to give, and could neither reward nor punish, have found that none would do them reverence, and have died neglected; their own mercenary servants leaving them to their fate.

There are certain secret fraternities which sometimes are very efficient. Invisible leaders direct their course of action, and terrible oaths, enforced by horrid penalties, leave the members of these

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<sup>43</sup> Mere savages, left to themselves, never did and never can civilize themselves.” —*The Corruptions of Christianity*, by Archbishop Whateley.

associations no choice but to obey or die. But their influence is usually short-lived, and most of them soon pass and are forgotten.

There is, however, today a brotherhood of men which has long existed in the earth, and which is subject to a control more mysterious than any other of which this world affords us an example. For eighteen centuries the members of this fraternity have felt themselves bound by laws which were paramount to every earthly obligation. The ties of kinship, the charms of pleasure, the authority of monarchs, and all the motives that sway the hearts of men from the highest to the lowest, have given way to some more potent bond. Every earthly ambition, appetite, passion, desire, and hope has been made to yield to the power which has swayed their souls. It has linked men together who were strangers and enemies before; it has, in an hour, made them friends to those whose faces they had never seen; it has bound in close sympathy persons of differing tastes, customs, manners, habits, and education; and has sent men forth, relinquishing their dearest ambitions and their highest hopes, sojourning as strangers in lands unknown, and separated from the fellowships and kinships in which their hearts had found delight. They have traversed deserts; they have crossed seas; their feet have pressed the sands of every shore; they have made their homes in far-off islands; they have climbed to Alpine heights; they have made their dwelling among barbarians, savages, and cannibals; they have gone forth from abodes of luxury and ease, to lives of poverty and toil; they have braved the terrors of the arctic circle and have sweltered beneath the burning heat of the tropics; they have voluntarily consented to endure hunger, and thirst, and hardship, and reproach, and poverty, and toil; they have allied themselves to suffering, and have endured scourging, and chains, and imprisonment, and death itself. These men have not been reckless, nor indifferent to their own interests. They have been persons of wisdom, and understanding, and culture, fitted to grace the highest positions in society; they have sacrificed the love of friends, and faced the fury of foes; they have left the delights of home for the struggles of exile; and they have done this, not for honor, not for grandeur, not for gain, not for fame.

They have endured without complaint; they have suffered

without repining; they have died without a murmur of disappointment or a word of regret. And this has been going on for many, many centuries, and is going on today. There are thousands still ready to lead a forlorn hope, and ten thousands more of their comrades are standing behind them, ready to press forward and fill the broken ranks whenever a hero falls. They have fought on thus for ages, and yet they have not won wealth, nor honor, nor power. They have had a heritage of toil, and conflict, and affliction; they have been hunted through life, hated and defamed in death, and yet they have triumphed amid it all.

What mighty force has bound such a brotherhood together? What mysterious power has launched them into the world, and held them steadfast through the roll of passing centuries? Under whose command did they go? Under whose direction have they acted? They spurn human authority in matters of the highest moment; they bow to no ruler's behest; emperors cannot awe them, kings cannot control them, warriors cannot frighten them. What, then, is the spring of their action, what the motive that has separated them from all earthly associations, and made them such a wondrous power in the world? Who is it that has spoken his commandment in their ears? Is it an Alexander, who conquered a world? There is not a man on the globe who cares for any law that Grecian conqueror made. Is it a Caesar, who ruled the mightiest empire of his age? Who cares for a Caesar now? Is it a Charlemagne, with the iron crown of Rome on his brow, or a Napoleon, with obedient myriads at his feet? These men are dead; and from their tombs there comes no voice of authority, no whisper which even a child would fear to disobey.

By whose command, then, are these men of varied nationality, character and station, controlled? Whose word is it which severs every tie, and speeds them on their mighty errand? At whose direction do they brave the fury of the ocean and endure the terrors of the storm? Who bids them to cross the steppes of the desolate North, and the burning deserts of the South? Who sends them threading their paths through tropic jungles, or climbing snow-clad heights amid the grind of glaciers and the thunder of avalanches? At whose word presses forward that thin, wavering, bleeding, skirmish-line of heroes, who only fall to make room for others as

noble and heroic as themselves? Have they a commander? Do they acknowledge and follow a leader? Who can it be? It is a Commander whom they have never seen; a Leader whose voice they have never heard. And who is he? One who had neither wealth nor prestige; a poor, despised Jew, trained in a carpenter's shop at Nazareth; a man whom no mortal eye has seen for almost two thousand years; a person whose existence is doubted, whose authority is denied, whose words seem to many as idle tales; but who promises poverty, who foretells reproach, and who sets the *loss of all things* as one of the conditions of fellowship with him. Standing on the slope of Olivet, nearly two thousand years ago, he said to a few poor fishermen and lowly toilers, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28:18-20.

This solitary command, uttered ages ago, is the obligation, and warrant, and encouragement of this mighty fraternity. It is this command which has held the elect of God steady in their allegiance, and devoted to their Master's service. It is, to doubters and scoffers, the mandate of a dead Jew, the word of an impostor who has not been seen for nearly two thousand years;—a dream, a fancy, an idle tale. But somehow *that word has* power. Millions of men who never saw that Leader, are ready today to peril life itself to obey his commands. No emperor that ever lived had a sway so grand and glorious as that of the lowly Nazarene.

How is it that every great conqueror of earth has gone to the grave of forgetfulness, and no one heeds their wishes or their words, while this man, without position, without power, without authority, without law, or force, or wealth, or fame, has yet issued commands which are respected in every quarter of the globe, and which will live when nations die, and have a force which the decrees of monarchs never had? What manner of man is this, whose secret whispers are heard through all the ages, and whose mandate, spoken in the ears of a few lowly disciples, rolls its reverberations down to time's remotest hour, penetrates the heart, convicts the conscience, controls the judgment, and rules the lives, of

unnumbered myriads of the sons of men? Surely, a power like this must have a higher than human source. Surely, one whose words are mighty as these words are, must be clothed with an unearthly energy, which demonstrates him to be not merely like the first man, “of the earth earthy,” but like “the second man, the Lord from Heaven.”

Not long since, three little children, a boy of ten years, with his two little sisters, one seven and the other four, living in Klum, in Eastern Prussia, wished to go to Sedalia in the state of Missouri, to join their parents who were already settled in America. None of their relatives were so situated as to be able to accompany them, and hence they were under the necessity of taking their journey alone. An aunt in Berlin furnished each of the young travelers with a little Book, on the first page of which she wrote the name, age, birthplace, and destination of the bearer; Writing below in large letters, in German, and English, and French, a *single sentence* taken from that book. And she told them whenever they found themselves in any trouble or difficulty, to just stand still and open *those little books*, and hold them up before them.

The children started from their German home, traveled until they reached the seaport, embarked on board the steamer, crossed the great Atlantic, landed in America, traveled by rail more than a thousand miles westward into the heart of Missouri, showing their little passports when needful, to all with whom they came in contact; and in no case did they fail to obtain every kindness, tenderness, and protection which could be given, every heart-warming with love, and every hand being stretched forth in helpfulness to the little ones who were thus cast upon the kindness of passing strangers whom they had never seen before and would never see again, but through whose kind assistance they safely reached the far-off home of their grateful and rejoicing parents.

What little book was this, which proved to them such a precious passport? Was it a volume of the decrees and laws of an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Charlemagne? Was it an ukase of the Russian autocrat, or a decree of the emperor of Germany, which made for them a way over land and sea? No! It was none of these. It was a copy of that same *New Testament* which has been so

wonderfully preserved through these eighteen hundred years. And what was the sentence, in German and English and French, which commanded the attention, the respect, and the service of strangers, of whatever nationality? Was it a passage from an Eastern Veda? a maxim of Confucius? an utterance of Buddha? a command of some high and mighty potentate? a commendation from some vast and influential brotherhood? No! It was none of these. The sentence which opened their way and proved to them more effective than the mandate of a monarch, or the safe conduct of an emperor, was this: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me,' saith Jesus Christ."

Are such words the vaporings of a vain pretender, a hypocritical impostor, a mere dead and buried Jew? Do they not prove themselves to be the words of a living, an Almighty Christ, who sitteth at the right hand of the throne of God, and who has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away"?

And shall not we listen to His utterances which come with such eternal power, while He says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day."