

Spurious "Books of the Bible"

The Report of Pilate

The Report of Pilate has appeared in several collections of spurious documents and is still being circulated today. It is supposedly a transcript of the trial of Jesus as recorded by Pilate. It was first published in 1879 by W.D. Mahan, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister in Booneville, Missouri. Mahan published a series of letters explaining how he came into possession of the text, detailing several exchanges with different men that eventually led to him receiving a copy for \$62.42 from the chief guardian of the Vatican, Father Peter Freelinhusen in 1859. Upon arrival into the U.S., C.C. Vantberger reportedly translated the document for \$10.00 and sent it to Mahan. Then for 28 years, Mahan did nothing with the Report, before publishing it in 1879.

Upon research into the letters Mahan uses to certify the document, it is found that none of the various men he mentions seem to have existed, including Father Peter Freelinhusen, who should have been well documented if he indeed occupied the position mentioned above. He also claimed that the Vatican asked for the sum of money in darics, a currency unheard of since the time of Xenophon, and he reportedly paid the sum through a bank that did not exist. Finally, no such manuscript exists today in the Vatican.

Internal problems are so numerous that the document can only be laughed at when read. It is at best a very crude forgery filled with anachronisms and historical mistakes. But as ridiculous as The Report of Pilate was, it was a huge financial success for Mahan when he printed it. Because of this, five years later, he published another book called *The Archaeological and the Historical Writings of the Sanhedren and Talmuds of the Jews* with the supposed aid of a Scottish and of an English scholar who, upon checking, never existed. This work was even more crude than The Report, filled with endless amounts of historical blunders and references to ancient figures and writings who never existed, such as the Roman legislator "Meeleesen" and reference to writings of Josephus that do not exist; it states that Tacitus wrote *Agricola* in 56 AD, when he would have been only 1 year old; etc.

One of the documents by Mahan, *Eli's Story of the Magi*, shows clearly and irrefutably that the entire book was spurious. In this story, it states, "Egypt is satisfied with her crocodiles and *anuman*, holding them in equal honor." Critics of the book were curious as to what *anuman* were until it was discovered that the whole page had been plagiarized from the novel *Ben-Hur*, published four years earlier. On page 272 of *Ben-Hur*, we find:

Egypt was satisfied with her crocodiles and Anu-bis; the Persians were yet devoted to Ormuzd and Ahri-man, holding them in equal honor ...

Mahan had simply skipped a line. Again, as with the 29th Chapter of Acts, General Lew Wallace, author of *Ben-Hur*, was asked to research the claims of Mahan regarding the original manuscripts and persons involved in obtaining the manuscripts. It was again found to be a complete lie. Mahan was later found guilty of falsehood and plagiarism by his presbytery. He had been exposed and he promised not to print the book any more. However, his work was reprinted several times before being printed in 1929 by the well-respected William B. Eerdmans Company and still enjoyed huge success. Even today, it is being reprinted and circulated among Identity organizations as a legitimate historical document.

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