

The  
**LIGHT** *of*  
**TRUTH**

Early Proof Texts of the Gospel Record

W. MICHAEL MCCORMACK

All Rights Reserved.

Copyright 2015 W. Michael McCormack

For more information on this topic, see:  
*Killing the Bible*, by W. Michael McCormack

Available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com)

## THE GOSPEL RECORD

What if we had no Bibles? Many people in the world don't. What do they do? How do they relate to God and each other? Those who hold to the idea of living within a civilization follow whoever "seems" to have the truth concerning how to live. Their religion is socialized. Even in the United States, most are not really dedicated to their religion. It is a social convention. True Christians are more than social. We are radicals,—radical lovers of people who want to spread the Good News. The Gospel record avails us much and encourages us more.

Genuine Christians believe that the Bible is God's revelation to man. In other words, the Bible is the only place where we can get accurate information about God, mankind's need for God and how provision for that need can be found. It offers guidance for daily life and directions on how to claim eternal life. One writer has commented that the Bible is where God has condensed his thoughts about his relationship with mankind into written form for our understanding and acceptance of him. It is not everything about God and not everything about mankind, but it is enough for us to understand that we can live together happily ever after. And, there is no ancient text with more archeological veracity than our Bible, as we shall see. The main point of the Gospels in particular, is not information, though there is a great deal of it. The principal point is application to our lives.

But first, I would like to give you a word from the Apostle Paul. We know that Paul had an enormous impact on the Gospel of Luke and personally dictated or wrote much of our New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His last New Testament letters were to Timothy who was pastoring a church. Even though Timothy had access to the Gospel, he had a tendency to be timid in the face of the older Jews. In his last letter to Timothy, Paul wanted to make sure that his protégé would not be timid but courageous. In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:8, he says; "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God."

This verse tells us that Paul is not a prisoner of Rome, but of the Lord. This may seem strange, but it is said from a point of great faith that Paul knew he was captive because of his work for the Lord. And, that Timothy should expect suffering for the Gospel by the power of God, the Father. Just like Timothy, we are saved and called to a holy purpose. This, not because of our holy works, but for his own purposes. The aim of Paul's writing is to remind Timothy of God's love and justice, no matter what. Writing this, the Apostle helps us all to remember that Christianity begins with the conviction that God is a reality outside of ourselves. The Gospel message is that of our sovereign God, in Jesus, coming to search for us and save us. This was done in history. Jesus was a real person. Our realization of this worldview puts strength into our walk and our witness.

In another of his New Testament letters, Paul sums up God's plan for us. In the Book of Ephesians, he writes, "[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us

for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

As we do our work for Christ to further his kingdom, we must never doubt that the Sovereign of the universe is for us. If we trust Jesus for our life, we are saved by him to eternal life. We must never doubt that all the evil that might befall us, even if it takes our life, is God’s loving wish in order to glorify him.

In our pluralistic, elitist, materially driven world, we can be distracted or discouraged as Christians. The great lessons and the life of Christ revealed in the Gospels will protect us from human philosophies and traditions. This helps us to become valiant, no matter the odds, for kingdom causes. We who believe in him are secure forever. Nothing can separate us from him. In the end, everyone serves to magnify the glory of our Savior and prove the faith we have in him.

Now, let’s turn to the specific history of the New Testament documents.

## THE TURN OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY PAPYROLOGISTS

There were many British and American Papyri hunters during the late 1800s and the early 1900s. We have time to only cover a few of the central characters who braved the elements and a hostile social climate in Egypt in order to find proof texts of our Christian faith. We start with Grenfell and Hunt. These two intrepid Brits found a treasure trove of biblical documents in a scriptorium dump deep in Egypt at a place called Oxyrhynchus. At the time, the place was in the middle of nowhere. The team was a well educated one. Grenfell was a scientist and Egyptologist who was widely respected in England. Hunt was a former British officer who had been stationed in Egypt and had become a Papyrologist, a collector and protector of ancient paper documents.



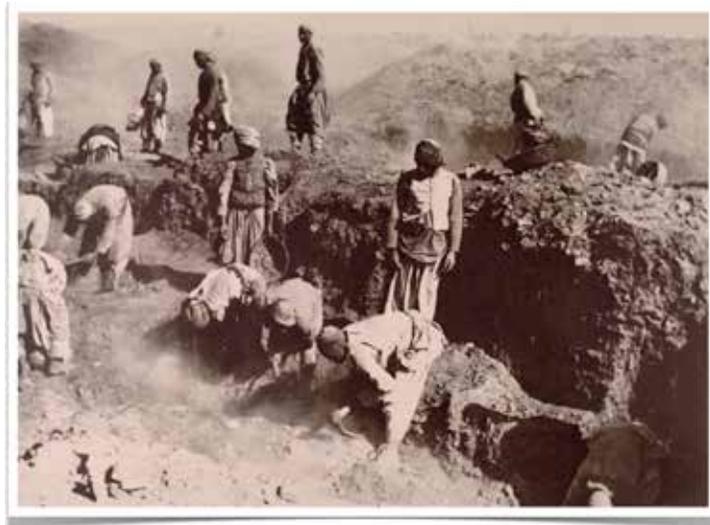
Bernard Pyne Grenfell  
(1869-1926)  
English Scientist and Egyptologist



Arthur Surridge Hunt  
(1871-1934)  
English Papyrologist

In the year of 1895, they travelled up the Nile from Alexandria, past Cairo and into the hinterlands of the Egyptian desert in search of a rumored scriptorium dump. This

sort of dump is the garbage heap where scripts of all sorts were copied as the originals got old and brittle. Papyrus documents had a short shelf life of about 15–20 years depending on how much they were used and the humidity in the air. Therefore, every 20 years or so, copyists were hired to make exact copies of important originals so that the messages were properly read. (The ink of those days became brittle on the page and would begin to “fleck-off” over time and the paper discolored.) These copyists were professionals who took great pains to be true to each page. Not all manuscripts were biblical. Civilization required all sorts of legal documents. Copies were made of wills, merchant transactions, military orders, divorces, —all sorts of agreements. Among them were certainly books of the Bible. When the copies had been successfully made for the client, the old copies were dumped into a pile outside the scriptorium. Over the centuries the sands of Egypt covered the old scripts until there was little evidence they had ever been placed there. However, 15 to 20 feet down into the dunes they lay conserved at almost the same state they were when discarded.

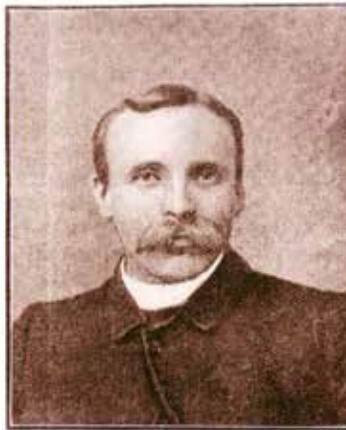


Grenfell and Hunt were after this treasure trove and they found one outside the little hamlet of Oxyrhynchus. They used their own money and some funds from Bible societies in Great Britain, to begin excavations in the dry climate and soon began to find papyri. To make a long story short, the yield was over 100,000 documents that were carefully packed and sent back to England. Many were of the earliest Bible books in existence. We will see these designated as P. (for Papyrus) Oxy (for Oxyrhynchus) plus the number that was given to the document in the order it was retrieved from the dump. An example would be P. Oxy 4449.

The Christian Church in England was ecstatic with the find! Why? Because there had been several decades of atheist propaganda based on the theologies of Hegel, Kant and Herder, the unholy trinity of German pagan scholars, who wrote and taught that the Bible was invented by the church in the 4<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries because there was no found evidence of its existence before these dates. In 1860, a Frenchman named Ernst Renan, published a book called *The Life of Jesus*, which proposed the theory that Jesus was mostly “the Christ of faith than the Jesus of history.” In other words, the historic

character called Jesus was a made-to-order Savior for the purposes of the Christian Church. It seemed right to readers that, since there were no writings dated before the fourth century, the church had to reach back and make Jesus into what they wanted in a Savior.

This heresy, combined with the 1860 publication of Darwin's Origin of Species and his Theory of Evolution, was the kindling for the new atheistic movement. Leading atheist author Richard Dawkins has stated that "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist." In the 1870s the theory of the Gradual Assent of Man became the academic rage in Europe with the Theory of Evolution taking hold. The birth of secular humanism brought the teaching that mankind, as he progresses, is the model for ethical living, and that the highest order of intellectual man was the truest truth. This became very popular in the universities of Europe. British Christians had little evidentiary, historical proof that Jesus was not the Christ made up by the 5<sup>th</sup> century church. And so, the hunt for evidence was on.



Charles Bousfield Huleatt  
(1863-1908)  
Anglican Priest

Shortly after the first searchers went out, an Oxford graduate and Anglican Priest from England was assigned as chaplain to the English hospital in Luxor, Egypt. Luxor was the place of temple ruins which were unmatched for grandeur. During his time at Luxor, Charles Bousfield Huleatt made a hobby of visiting the market for unusual items that he could send back home. One of the things that he was most interested in was biblical papyri. One day, Huleatt was sold some papyri scraps that he recognized as verses of scripture. He put them in an envelope and sent them to his old university library at Magdalene College, Oxford. Within a year, Huleatt was transferred to Italy. He and his family died there in the great earthquake of 1908 and the tiny scraps were shelved in a box in the old library. Many years later, those little scraps of paper sent to Oxford were analyzed and dated to the first century AD! Most importantly, they were codices (book form) copies of the Gospel of Matthew. This precious find proves conclusively that the Gospel of Matthew must have been written within the lifetimes of those who walked with Jesus and that He was not the Christ made-up by the official church but truly the Jesus of history.