

All three of these manuscripts are now so well known to scholars throughout the world that no description is at all necessary for them. But there are many others interested in the Bible who would like to know more than they do about the way in which it has come down to us from the early days of the church. For their sakes a few words about them may be allowable here.

1. The oldest copy of the Bible or of any portion of it known to be in existence is now believed to be the Codex Vaticanus which as the name suggests is lodged in the great Papal library at Rome. It is a thick quarto volume of about 750 leaves of beautiful thin vellum, written on both sides, three columns to a page. The original handwriting is exquisitely neat, but, as the ink had faded with time, most of it has been traced over by a later hand in blacker ink with thicker lines, destroying to some extent its beauty, though of course making it more easily legible. The style of writing is what is known as uncial or rather initial, that is, a sort of small capital, every letter being formed separately and as nearly as possible all of the same size, except at the end of the lines, where they are frequently smaller in order to get a certain number into the space. There was almost nothing corresponding to punctuation as it stood originally except a slight space at the end of a sentence and a wider one at the end

of a paragraph. Many stops, however, have been inserted by the later penman. The words are not separated from each other nor is any effort made to complete a word at the end of a line. Hence it requires some little practice and a tolerably good acquaintance with the language to enable one to read it at all readily so as to make sense. The volume originally contained the whole Bible in Greek, but considerable portions of it are missing both at the beginning and end, which are now replaced by the corresponding portions from a much later manuscript of quite a different character.

This volume is known to have been in the Vatican library since about the middle of the fifteenth century but its previous history is wholly unrecorded. It is generally supposed to have been brought by Cardinal Bessarion from Constantinople at the time when that city fell into the hands of the Turks, and he with many of his compatriots migrated to Western Europe bringing their learning and their literary treasures to enrich the Latin Church. There is nothing in the volume anywhere now to indicate when or where or by whom it was written. Its age, however, can be pretty accurately determined from the style of its execution, and experts are almost unanimous in referring it to the first half of the fourth century, or within a few years of the Council of Nice. It is known that the establishment of Christianity by