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# Mors Pilati    II    THE DEATH OF PILATE

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Death of Pilate* is an account of Pilate's fate at the hands of Emperor Tiberius, after he had had Jesus crucified. After Pilate's suicide (committed in prison which awaiting his execution), his corpse continues to defile all that it touches.

The Latin text here presented is that of [Constantine von Tischendorf](#), in his 1853 publication, *Evangelia Apocrypha*; the English text is closely based on [Alexander Walker's 1886 translation](#). Tischendorf's text is derived from a 14<sup>th</sup> Century manuscript in Milan (*Ambrosienne L 58 Sup<sup>l</sup>*), which is essentially an abstract of the *Golden Legend* of Jacob of Voragine (1252–1260); however, that work is itself derived from an earlier work, *Historia Apocrypha* (11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century), which contains an extended version of the narrative in the entry, *Cura Sanitatis Tiberii*.

## AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

Although the author and date of the *Death of Pilate* in the form here presented are not known, as mentioned above, it is based on works that have been dated to between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

## Mors Pilati I

*Cum autem Tiberius Caesar<sup>i</sup> Romanorum imperator gravi morbo teneretur, et intelligens quia Ierosolymis esset quidam medicus, nomine Iesus, qui omnes infirmitates solo verbo curat, nesciens quod Iudaei et Pilatus eum occidissent, praecepit cuidam suo familiari nomine Volusianus Vade citius quam potes trans partes marinas, dicesque Pilato meo servitori et amico ut hunc medicum mihi mittat qui me pristinae sanitati restituat. Qui Volusianus audito praecepto imperatoris statim discessit, et ventus<sup>ii</sup> est ad Pilatum sicut praeceptum est ei. Et narrans eidem Pilato ea quae sibi a Tiberio Caesare commissa fuerant, dicens Tiberius Caesar imperator Romanorum, tui dominus, audito quod in civitate ista est medicus qui solo verbo sanat infirmitates, rogat te vehementer ut eum sibi mittere debeas pro sua infirmitate curanda. Audiens haec Pilatus territus est valde, sciens quod per invidiam eum occidi fecerat. Respondit Pilatus eidem nuntio sic dicens Hic homo erat malefactor et homo qui trahebat ad se totum populum: sic habito consilio sapientum civitatis eum crucificari feci. Qui nuntius rediens ad eius hospitium obviatus est cuidam mulieri nomine Veronica, quae fuerat familiaris Iesu, dicens O mulier, medicus quidam qui in hac civitate erat, qui solo verbo aegros sanabat, cur occiserunt eum Iudaei? At illa coepit flere dicens Heu me,*

## THE DEATH OF PILATE 1

And, when Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Romans, was labouring under a grievous disease, and understanding that there was at Jerusalem a certain physician, Jesus by name, who by a single word cured all infirmities, he, not knowing that the Jews and Pilate had put him to death, ordered a certain friend of his named Volusianus, "Go as quickly as possible across the seas; and you shall tell Pilate, my servant and friend, to send me this physician, that he may restore me to my former health." And this Volusianus, having heard the emperor's command, immediately departed, and came to Pilate, as he had been commanded. And he related to the same Pilate what had been entrusted to him by Tiberius Caesar, saying, "Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of the Romans, your master, having heard that in this city there is a physician who by his word alone heals infirmities, begs you earnestly to send him to him for the curing of his infirmity." Pilate, hearing this, was very much afraid, knowing that through envy he had caused him to be put to death. Pilate answered the same messenger thus, saying, "This man was a malefactor, and a man who drew to himself all the people; so, a council of the wise men of the city was held, and I caused him to be crucified." And this messenger, returning to his inn, met a certain woman named Veronica, who had been a friend of Jesus; and he said, "O woman, a certain physician who was in this city, who cured the sick by a word alone, why have the Jews put him to death?" And she began to weep, saying, "Ah me! My lord, my

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### THE DEATH OF PILATE 1

<sup>i</sup> The MS reads *Caeserius* and, once (below the line), *Tiberio Ceaserio commissa*.

<sup>ii</sup> Here, *ventus est* follows the MS, as also in other sections.

domine, deus meus et dominus meus, quem Pilatus pro invidia tradidit, condemnavit et crucifigi praecepit. Tunc ille nimis dolens ait Vehementer doleo quia id pro quo dominus meus me<sup>iii</sup> miserat explere non valeo. Cui Veronica Dominus meus cum praedicando circuiret, et ego eius praesentia nimis invita carerem, volui mihi depingi imaginem, ut dum eius privarer praesentia, saltem mihi praestaret solatium imaginis suae figura.<sup>iv</sup> Cumque linteum pictori deferrem pingendum, dominus meus mihi obviavit et quo tenderem requisivit. Cui cum viae causam aperuissem, a me petiit pannum, et ipsum mihi venerabilis suae faciei reddidit insignitum imagine. Ergo huius aspectum si dominus tuus devote intuebitur, continuo sanitatis beneficio potietur. Cui ille Est huiusmodi imago auro vel argento comparabilis? Cui illa Non, sed pio affectu devotionis. Tecum igitur proficiscar et videndum Caesari imaginem deferam, et revertar.

God and my Lord, whom Pilate for envy delivered, condemned, and ordered to be crucified.” Then he, being exceedingly grieved, said, “I am vehemently grieved that I am unable to accomplish that for which my lord had sent me.” And Veronica said to him, “When my Lord was going about preaching, and I, much against my will, was deprived of his presence, I wished his picture to be painted for me, in order that, while I was deprived of his presence, the figure of his picture might at least afford me consolation. And, when I was carrying the canvas to the painter to be painted, my Lord met me and asked whither I was going. And, when I had disclosed to him the cause of my journey, he asked of me the cloth, and gave it back to me impressed with the image of his<sup>v</sup> venerable face. Therefore, if your lord will devoutly gaze on his face, he shall obtain immediately the benefit of health.” And he said to her, “Is a picture of such a sort procurable by gold or silver?” She said to him, “No; but by the pious influence of devotion. I shall, therefore, set out with you, and shall carry the picture to be seen by Caesar, and shall come back again.”

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<sup>iii</sup> The MS lacks *me*.

<sup>iv</sup> At this point, the MS adds *Cui refert*.

<sup>v</sup> Throughout his text, Walker capitalizes pronouns the refer to Jesus.

## Mors Pilati II

*Venit igitur Volusianus cum Veronica Romam dixitque Tiberio imperatori Iesum diu a te desideratum Pilatus et Iudaei iniustae morti tradiderunt et per invidiam crucis patibulo affixerunt. Venit igitur mecum matrona quaedam ipsius Iesu imaginem deferens, quam si devote prospexeris, mox sanitatis tuae beneficium obtinebis. Caesar igitur pannis sericis viam sterni fecit et imaginem sibi praecepit praesentari: qui mox ut eam fuit intuitus, salutem est pristinam assecutus.*

## THE DEATH OF PILATE 2

Volusianus, therefore, came with Veronica to Rome, and said to Tiberius the emperor, "Jesus, whom you have been longing for, Pilate and the Jews have delivered to an unjust death, and have – through envy – nailed him to the cross.<sup>i</sup> There has, therefore, come with me a certain matron, bringing a picture of Jesus himself; and, if you will devoutly look at it, you shall immediately obtain the benefit of your health." Caesar, therefore, ordered the way to be strewn with silk cloths, and the picture to be presented to him; <sup>ii</sup>as soon as he had looked at it, he regained his former health.

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### THE DEATH OF PILATE 2

<sup>i</sup> In place of 'nailed him to the cross', Walker has 'affixed to the gibbet of the cross'.

<sup>ii</sup> Walker adds 'and' before 'as soon'.

### Mors Pilati III

Pontius igitur Pilatus imperio Caesaris capitur et Romam perducitur. Audiens Caesar Pilatum Romam advenisse, nimio contra eum furore repletus est et eum ad se adduci fecit. Pilatus autem tunicam Iesu inconsutilem secum detulit: quam indutam coram imperatore portavit. Mox ut imperator eum vidit, omnem iram deposuit et ei protinus assurrexit, nec dure sibi in aliquo loqui praevaluit: et in eius absentia qui videbatur tam terribilis et ferox, nunc in eius praesentia invenitur quodammodo mansuetus. Cumque eum licentiasset, mox contra eum terribiliter exardescit, se miserum clamitans quia ei furorem sui pectoris minime ostendisset. Statimque eum revocari fecit iurans et contestans quia filius mortis est et nefas<sup>i</sup> est eum vivere super terram. Qui cum eum vidit, continuo eum salutavit et omnem animi ferocitatem abiecit. Mirabantur omnes, mirabatur et ipse, quia sic contra Pilatum dum abesset exardesceret, et dum praesens esset nil ei loqui posset asperere. Tandem divino nutu vel forte alicuius Christiani suasu ipsum illa tunica expoliari fecit, et contra eum pristinam ferocitatem animi mox resumpsit. Cumque de hoc imperator plurimum admiraretur, dictum est sibi quod illa tunica fuisset domini Iesu. Tunc imperator eum in carcerem recipi iussit, donec sapientum consilio deliberaret quid de eo fieri oporteret. Post autem paucos

### THE DEATH OF PILATE 3

Pontius Pilate, therefore, by the command of Caesar, was taken and brought through to Rome. Caesar, hearing that Pilate had arrived at Rome, was filled with exceeding fury against him, and caused him to be brought to him. But Pilate brought down with him the seamless tunic of Jesus; and he wore it on him in presence of the emperor. And, as soon as the emperor saw him, he laid aside all his anger and immediately rose up to meet him. Nor was he able to speak harshly to him in anything; and he who seemed so terrible and fierce in his absence, now in his presence was somehow found to be mild. And, when he had sent him away, immediately he blazed out against him terribly, crying out that he was a wretch, inasmuch as he had not at all shown him the fury of his heart. And, immediately, he made him be called back, swearing and declaring that he was the son of death, and that it was infamous that he should live on the earth. And, as soon as he saw him, he immediately saluted him and threw away all the ferocity of his mind. All wondered; and he himself wondered that he should thus blaze out against Pilate when he was absent and that, while he was present, he could say nothing to him roughly. Then, by a divine impulse, or perhaps by the advice of some Christian, he caused him to be stripped of that tunic and, immediately, resumed against him his former ferocity of mind. And, when at this the emperor wondered very much, it was told him that that tunic had belonged to the Lord Jesus. Then the emperor ordered him to be kept in prison, until he should deliberate in a council of the wise men what ought to be done with him. And, a few days after,

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### THE DEATH OF PILATE 3

<sup>i</sup> The MS has, erroneously, *fas*.

*dies data est igitur in Pilatum sententia ut morte  
turpissima damnaretur. Audiens hoc Pilatus cultello  
proprio se necavit, et tali morte vitam finivit.*

sentence was, therefore, passed on Pilate, that he should be condemned  
to the most disgraceful death. Pilate, hearing this, killed himself with  
his own knife and, by such a death, ended his life. <sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> Pilate here dies in a very different manner than as narrated in *Paradosis Pilati*, wherein he is beheaded by order of Tiberius.

## Mors Pilati IV

*Cognita Caesar morte Pilati dixit Vere mortuus est morte turpissima, cui manus propria non pepercit. Moli igitur ingenti alligatur et in Tiberim fluvium immergitur. Spiritus vero maligni et sordidi corpori maligno et sordido congaudentes omnes in aquis movebantur, et fulgura et tempestates, tonitrua et grandines in aere terribiliter gerebant, ita ut cuncti timore horribili tenerentur. Quapropter Romani ipsum a Tiberis fluvio extrahentes, derisionis causa ipsum in Viennam deportaverunt et Rhodani fluvio immerserunt: Vienna enim dicitur quasi via gehennae, quia erat tunc locus maledictionis. Sed<sup>i</sup> ibi nequam spiritus affuerunt, ibidem eadem operantes. Homines ergo illi tantam infestationem daemonum non sustinentes vas illud maledictionis a se removerunt et illud sepeliendum Losaniae territorio commiserunt. Qui cum nimis praefatis infestationibus gravarentur, ipsum a se removerunt et in quodam puteo montibus circumsepto immerserunt, ubi adhuc relatione quorumdam quaedam diabolicae machinationes ebullire dicuntur.*

## THE DEATH OF PILATE 4

When Caesar knew of the death of Pilate, he said, “Truly, he has died by a most disgraceful death, whom his own hand has not spared.” He was, therefore, bound to a great mass, and sunk into the river Tiber. But malignant and filthy spirits in his malignant and filthy body, all rejoicing together, kept moving themselves in the waters, and in a terrible manner brought lightnings and tempests, thunders and hailstorms, in the air, so that all men were kept in horrible fear. Therefore, the Romans, drawing him out of the river Tiber, in derision carried him down to Vienna, and sunk him in the river Rhone. For, Vienna is called, as it were, Via Gehennae, the way of Gehenna, because it was then a place of cursing.<sup>ii</sup> But there, evil spirits were present, working the same things in the same place. Those men, therefore, not enduring such a visitation of demons, removed from themselves that vessel of malediction, and sent him to be buried in the territory of Losania. And they, seeing that they were troubled by the aforesaid visitations, removed him from themselves, and sunk him in a certain pit surrounded by mountains, where to this day, according to the account of some, certain diabolical machinations are said to bubble up.

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### THE DEATH OF PILATE 4

<sup>i</sup> We should perhaps read *Et* here in place of *Sed*.

<sup>ii</sup> The dubious etymology may be derived from *Vigenna*, the Latin name for the River Vienne in the Poitou-Charentes region.