

AN ANCIENT REPOSITORY OF MANUSCRIPTS IN THE SINAI DESERT

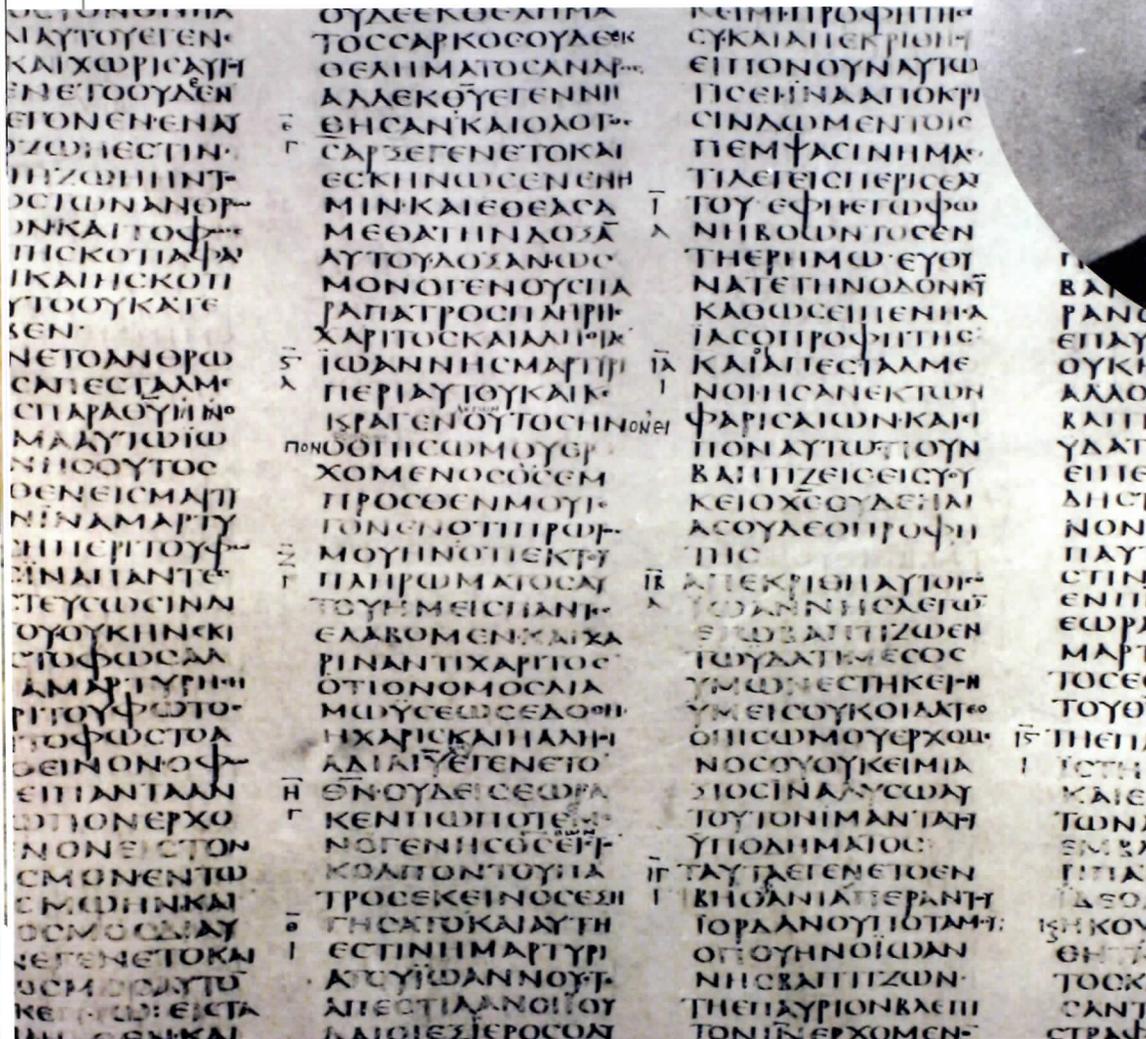
In 1844, Constantine von Tischendorf travelled to an Orthodox monastery in the Sinai Desert searching for biblical manuscripts. The young University of Leipzig (Germany) scholar was planning to edit a new edition of the Greek New Testament and wanted to take into account as many manuscripts as he could identify. While staying at the monastery, he found a bin filled with leaves from a manuscript that were allegedly being used by the monks as paper to light fires. The forty-three leaves were from an Old Testament manuscript that dated to the fourth century AD. In a subsequent visit, Tischendorf discovered the entire codex of which they were a part. The codex contained most of the Old Testament, the entire New Testament, and two second-century Christian docu-

ments. This manuscript, which came to be known as codex Sinaiticus (S), is one of the two oldest complete manuscripts of the New Testament. The entire manuscript collection at St. Catherine's includes 254 New Testament manuscripts. The story is not complete, however. In 1975, workmen accidentally broke through a wall and discovered a small room with 3,000 more manuscripts, including some missing leaves from Codex Sinaiticus.

▼ **A LEAF FROM CODEX SINAITICUS** This is a leaf from the beginning of John's gospel. The codex is the only known copy of the entire New Testament in Greek uncial script (capital letters). It is also the only four-column manuscript of the NT.



▲ Constantine von Tischendorf



▲ **A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF THE WRITING STYLE OF CODEX SINAITICUS** This is John 1:1-4.