

How We Got The Bible



By Dan R. Owen

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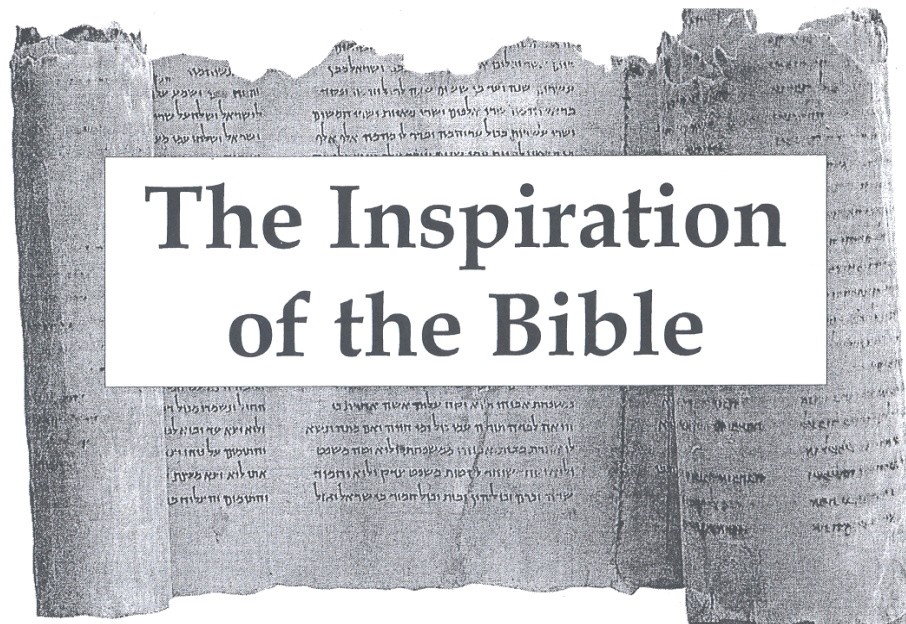
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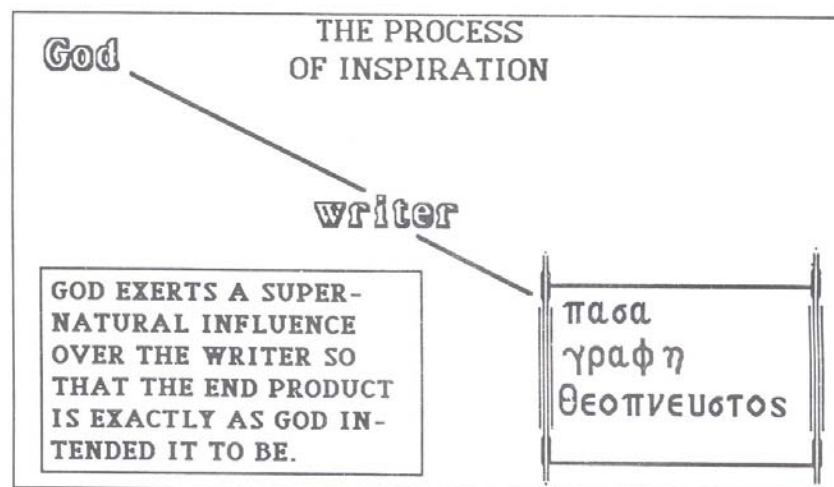
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No discussion of “How We Got the Bible” would be complete without a discussion of inspiration. The Bible claims to be inspired or “God breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). The term “God breathed” indicates, as do similar terms in our discussion, that God exerted a supernatural influence over the various biblical writers so that their written product was exactly as God intended it to be. This is not a casual claim which can be easily dismissed. It resounds from the beginning to the end of holy writ. Thus, to dismiss this claim and to explain the origin of the Bible naturally, would be to deny the veracity of the Bible.



Each book of the Bible has gained its place among the scriptures because it has been recognized as the word of God. Only when we deal with the Bible on the basis of what the Bible itself claims to be can we call ourselves people of faith. It will not be our purpose to deal with the various scientific evidences which support the biblical claims, but simply to place the claims of scripture before the reader so that the reader becomes aware of what the Bible actually claims to be.

Inspiration of the Old Testament

New Testament writers stated that “God spoke” to the fathers through the prophets (Heb. 1:1,2) and that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). These statements are consistent with the claims of the Hebrew scriptures regarding their own inspiration.

Hebrews 1:1

GOD

WHO

IN MANY PARTS AND IN MANY WAYS

SPOKE

IN TIMES PAST

TO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS

The Hebrew Old Testament is divided into three great sections; the “Law”, the “Prophets”, and the “Writings.” Each of these sections of the Old Testament claims to be inspired by God and occupies its place in the Old Testament because the people of God recognized the validity of that claim.

The Law of Moses abounds with claims of inspiration. In the first chapter of Genesis, nine times the text says, “and God said.” Throughout its pages Genesis claims to record the words and actions of God as he interacted with mankind. Even the feelings of God are recorded when the text says, “It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:6). Throughout the books from Genesis to Deuteronomy phrases like “and God spoke”, “the Lord spoke”, and other

similar phrases abound (e.g. Ex. 20:1; Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1; Deut. 1:1). These books not only record the words and actions of God, but even the divine commands to record it all in written form (Ex. 24:3,4; 34:27,28; Deut. 31:24-26). The claim of divine revelation is both abundant and obvious.

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

LAW	PROPHETS	WRITINGS
<hr/> <p>GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY</p>	<hr/> <p>JOSHUA JUDGES SAMUEL KINGS ISAIAH JEREMIAH EZEKIEL THE TWELVE</p>	<hr/> <p>PSALMS, PROV. JOB SONG OF SOL. RUTH LAMENTATION ESTHER ECCLESIASTES DANIEL EZRA - NEH. CHRONICLES</p>

In the Hebrew scriptures the book of Joshua begins the great section called “The Prophets.” In this section, too, the claim of inspiration is quite evident. The section begins by saying , “the Lord spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun...” (Josh. 1:1). Throughout the books of the Prophets the scriptures claim to record both the words and actions of God as he worked out his purpose among his people. The books of Samuel and Kings are filled with accounts of the words and works of God’s spokesmen like Ahijah, Shemiah, Iddo, Azariah, Elijah, Elisha, and many others. The book of Isaiah is “the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz”. The book of Ezekiel plainly states, “the heavens were opened and I saw visions from God” (Ezek. 1:1). According to J. P. Lewis, the phrase “thus saith the Lord” occurs more than two thousand times in the Prophets alone (Spiritual Sword, October, 1973). Thus, it is absolutely clear that the “Prophets” are books which claim to be the product of divine revelation. To treat them otherwise is to deny their credibility.

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

“Thus says the Lord.” This phrase occurs more than 2000 times in the Prophets.

That group of books known to the Hebrews as the “Writings” also presents itself as an inspired collection. Of the Psalmist, David, the Scripture says, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was upon my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:1-3). Moses, another of the authors of the Psalms, was recognized as a prophet even in the Pentateuch (Ex. 33:11; Deut. 18:15). Solomon, the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs is reported to have received his wisdom directly from God (1 Kgs. 3:3-12). The book of Job records the actions and words of God both in heaven and on earth (Job 1,2, 38-42). The historical books like Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther tell the story of the providence of God working among his people to preserve the nation and to help in their rebuilding of Jerusalem (e.g. Ezra 1:1-4; 7:28; Neh. 2:17,18). Daniel directly claims prophetic visions of various kinds (Dan 7:1; etc).



The three divisions of the Old Testament - the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings - are each presented as an inspired collection of scripture books. They contain the revelation of God which was given over a lengthy period of time in “many parts and many ways” (Heb. 1:1). God spoke once from a burning bush, and later from the tent of meeting. He spoke to Joel when the “word of the Lord came to Joel” and to Isaiah and Ezekiel who saw “visions from God.” He spoke to Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5 by writing on the wall and to Samuel by a voice in the night. Though his methods of revelation were many and varied, the progressively revealed message “to the Fathers in times past” has been marvelously preserved for us in the pages of the Old Testament.

The New Testament also affirms the inspiration of the Old Testament. Jesus and the apostles believed the Hebrew scriptures to be God’s inspired word. According to Jesus, David was “in the Spirit” when he penned Psalm 110:1 and Isaiah “did prophesy” when he uttered the words of Isaiah 39:13 (Matt. 15:7; 22:43). Matthew speaks of what

was “spoken by the Lord through the prophet” (Matt. 1:22). John says “the scripture cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35). Peter talks of what was “spoken through the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:17) and of what “the Holy Spirit said through the mouth of our Father David” (Acts 4:25). Paul refers to the Old Testament as “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Jesus believed every word of the Old Testament to be God’s word. In fact, he said, “not the smallest letter or the smallest stroke of a letter shall pass away from the Law until all things be accomplished” (Matt. 5:18).

Jesus’ Verbal Inspiration View

Matthew 5:18

(Hebrew Yod)	(Tiny extension like that on the Hebrew Tav)
	
“Not the smallest letter”	“Not the smallest stroke of a letter”

Every Word Inspired

Therefore, if we view the Hebrew scriptures as anything less than the very oracles of God, we view them differently than did Jesus and his apostles and the very people who wrote them. The only biblical view, then, of the Old Testament is that it is the revelation of God through his prophets. As people of faith we cannot hold any but the biblical view.

Inspiration of the New Testament

“In these last days God has spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:2). This statement by the writer of Hebrews is contrasted with the affirmation that God spoke to the Jewish fathers by the prophets. Christ is the beginning of any discussion of the inspiration of the New Testament.

HEBREWS 1:1

IN THESE LAST DAYS

HE HAS SPOKEN

UNTO US

BY HIS SON

John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He whom God sent speaks the words of God..." (Jn. 3:34). Jesus himself affirmed, "The words which I speak are spirit and are life," and "I do not speak from myself, but the Father who sent me has given me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (Jn. 6:63; 12:49). He told the Jews in the temple, "My teaching is not mine but His who sent me" (Jn. 7:16). According to Matthew, "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). This statement must be read in light of the statement in Matthew 28:18, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth." Though no man has ever seen God, "the only begotten...has revealed Him" (Jn. 1:18). Therefore, the scriptures teach that God revealed himself in a full and dramatic way in the person and the sayings of Jesus.

It remains true, however, that Jesus of Nazareth never penned a word of the New Testament. Thus, what is the link between God's revelation in Christ and the inspiration of the New Testament books?

Jesus, the risen Son of God, sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles. He promised them before his death, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and shall remind you of all things that I said to you" (Jn. 14:26). In the same conversation, he promised them, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all the truth..." (Jn. 16:13). Thus, the apostles would know all divine truth and would preserve the teachings of Jesus after his return to heaven. His promise to send the Spirit to his apostles was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4,5; 2:1-4). From the day of Pentecost onward the apostles laid claim to unique authority from Christ and the people recognized the unique authority of their teaching (Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 5:20).

Not only did the apostles set forth their teaching as ambassadors of Christ but also their writings. Paul said, "If any man thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The apostle warned the Thessalonians, "If any man does not obey our word by this epistle, note that man that you have no company with him..." (2 Thess. 3:14). John said, "These things have I written to you...that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn. 5:13). The apostles, then, were guided by the Holy Spirit to leave us the Gospels and other apostolic books in written form so that we might know the will and purpose of God.

The inquiring student, though, will be aware of the fact that not every book of the New Testament was written by an apostle. By what right, then, do we consider books like Luke, James, Mark, and Jude to be inspired by God?

THE INSPIRATION OF THE PROPHETS

Some of the writers of the New Testament were prophets, though they were not apostles of Christ. To understand this, we must first understand something about spiritual gifts in the first century church.

Προφητεία “Prophecy”

**The ability to receive and
communicate direct
revelations from God.**

Paul lists nine spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. They include the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, various languages, and interpretation of languages. The gift of prophecy enabled one to receive and communicate revelations from God (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:1-26). But how did one become a prophet?

The Apostles imparted gifts like prophecy through the laying on of their hands.

Acts 8:18



2 Timothy 1:6

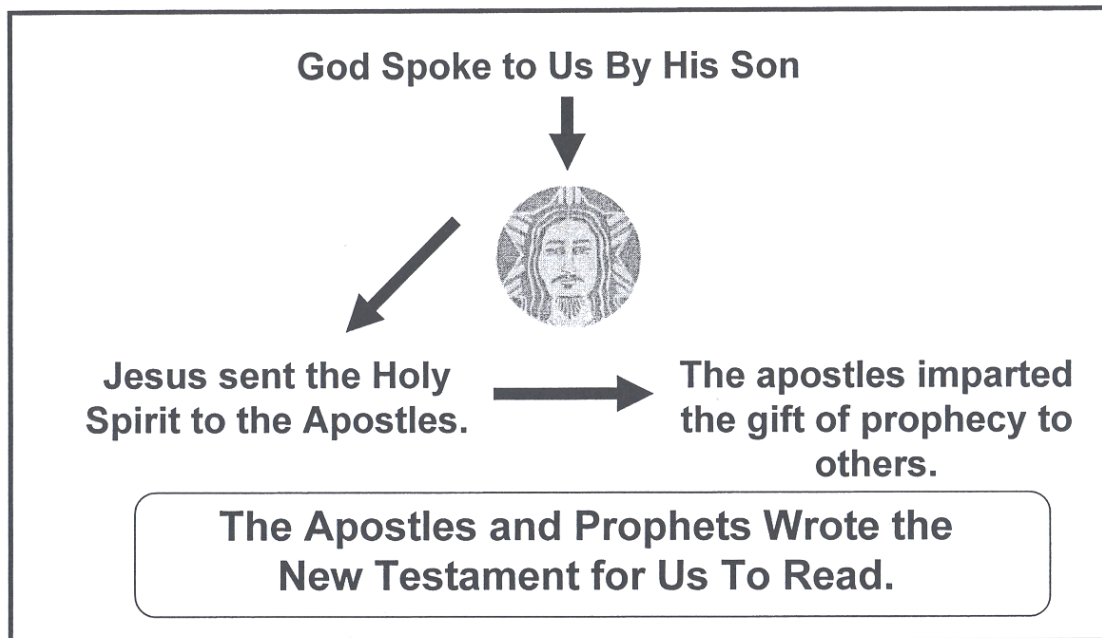
Spiritual gifts like the gift of prophecy, were transmitted from the apostles of Christ to others by the laying on of their hands. While the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian (Eph. 1:13; 1 Cor. 6:19; Acts 2:38) certain gifts of the Spirit could only be transmitted by apostles to others. This is made clear in Acts 8 where Simon the sorcerer tried to purchase the ability to pass on the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit (Acts 8:18,19). Peter demonstrated the uniqueness of this ability when he said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter..." (Acts 8:21). The matter is made even more clear when Paul admonishes Timothy to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). Thus, no one but an apostle could impart the spiritual gift of prophecy.

When the apostles died, and those to whom they had given the gifts of the Spirit died, then the prophets ceased from the earth. Their writings were left to fill the need of divine teaching in the church.

In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul makes it clear that Luke was a prophet. He says, "The Scripture says, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treads out the corn,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his hire.'" The same Paul says that all "Scripture" is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). The first "scripture" quotation in 1 Timothy 5:18, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox...", is from Deuteronomy 25:4. The second "scripture" quotation, "The laborer is worthy of his hire", is a direct quote from the Greek text of Luke 10:7 (it is not a quotation of Matt. 10:10). Thus, Paul was referring to the writing of Luke as "scripture" or inspired writing. This being the case, Luke must have been a prophet, though he was

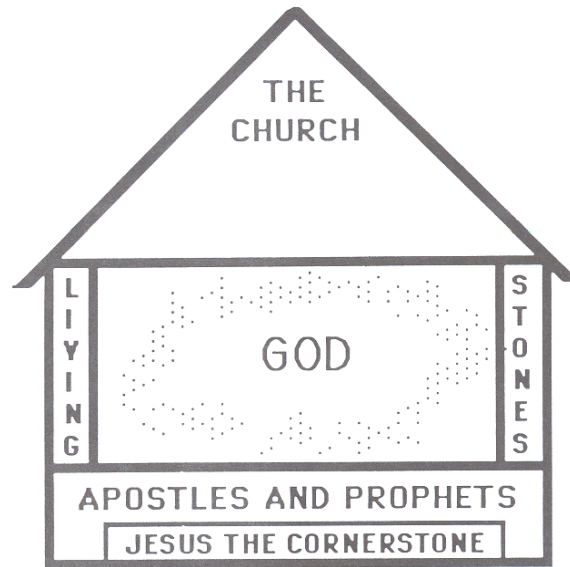
not an apostle. The implication of the canonical principle is that the same thing is true of the other New Testament writers who were not apostles.

The mysteries of God were made known to two groups of people in the first century; the apostles and the prophets. The ancient church collected, copied, and adhered to the writings of these individuals.



EPHESIANS 3:3-5

The New Testament, then, like the Old Testament, presents itself as nothing less than the very word of God with all of the authority of God. To view it as anything less is to view it in an unbiblical sense. It is the word of God which was delivered to mankind through the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:5). If it is the word of God, we must be careful to do just what it says. This is precisely why Paul speaks of God's church as being "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19,20).



APPENDIX ON GIFT OF PROPHECY

Some who believe that people today can still have the gift of prophecy appeal to 1 Timothy 4:14 where Paul says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” Such people believe that this passage teaches that the “presbytery” or eldership of the church has the power to transmit the spiritual gifts. This is not the case for the following reason.

In 1 Timothy 4:14 in the Greek text the gift was given “with” *μετα* the laying on of the elder’s hands. This Greek word means “along with” and means that on the same occasion that Timothy received the gift, the elders also laid hands on him, probably to bless him in his new work (see Acts 13:3). In 2 Timothy 1:6, however, it says that Timothy received the gift “through” *δια* the laying on of Paul’s hands. The Greek word used in this passage does mean “through” and shows the agency by which the gift was given. Thus, Timothy received the gift through the agency of Paul the apostle’s hands but, on the same occasion, the elders laid their hands on Timothy to bless him or to appoint him in his new work as an evangelist.

THE EXTENT OF INSPIRATION

Just as Jesus demonstrated in Matthew 5:18 that he believed every word of the Hebrew scriptures to be inspired, so the writers of the New Testament were verbally inspired. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 2:13. He says, “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches....” Therefore, just as was true in the case of the Old Testament, so every word of the New Testament was given exactly as God wanted it to be.

1 Corinthians 2:13
13 Which things also we
speak, not in words which
man's wisdom teacheth, but
which the Spirit teacheth;
ASV

THE IMPLICATIONS OF INSPIRATION

If we accept the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible as it has been presented in the preceding pages, there are serious implications for our lives. Because the Bible is nothing less than the very word of God, we are compelled to study it carefully and obey it. This means that each of us will need to understand the differences between the Old and New Testaments and what part of God's word specifically applies to us today. We will need to seriously consider what the Bible says about Jesus Christ and God's great plan of salvation. Having done this we will need to obey the command of Jesus to be baptized and become a part of his church. We will then need to study carefully and seek to worship and serve our Lord Jesus just as he has directed in the pages of the New Testament. While doing this we will be rejoicing in the wonderful grace of God which we learn about in books like Romans and Galatians.

If we accept the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible and still ignore the teachings of the Bible in our own lives, we must realize that we are accepting an eternal destiny in hell. We must realize that there is no hope for the salvation of our soul.

It is clear, therefore, that the doctrine of inspiration implies either eternal life with Christ or eternal condemnation, depending on whether or not we obey our Lord as he reveals himself in the Scriptures.

STUDY QUESTIONS ON INSPIRATION

1. What is the actual meaning of the term “inspired” in 2 Timothy 3:16?
2. In Hebrews 1:1, God _____ to the _____ by the _____.
3. What phrase occurs nine times in the first chapter of Genesis and clearly implies a revelation from God?
4. How could the writer of Genesis 6:5,6 know the thoughts and feelings of God?
5. The three divisions of the Hebrew Old Testament are the _____, the _____, and the _____.
6. With what book does the section called “the Prophets” begin?
7. The phrase “_____” occurs more than 2000 times in the Prophets.
8. Name two inspired authors who contributed to the Psalms.
 - a)
 - b)
9. According to 1 Kings 3:3-12 Solomon received his _____ from God.
10. Because of what is said in question #9, which of the following books would therefore be considered inspired:
 - a) Psalms
 - b) 2 Kings
 - c) Proverbs
 - d) Song of Solomon
 - e) Ecclesiastes

11. Which book begins the section of the Old Testament called the "Writings"?
12. List some of the "many ways" in which God spoke in the Old Testament.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
13. What passage of scripture indicates that Jesus believed in verbal inspiration?
14. When did God speak to us by his Son according to Hebrews 1:1?
15. Jesus said in John 7:16, "My _____ is not _____ but His who sent me."
16. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He whom God sent _____ the _____ of God."
17. True or False: Jesus never wrote a single word of the New Testament.
18. What two things would the Spirit do for the apostles according to John 14:26?
 - a)
 - b)
19. When did Jesus fulfill his promise to send the Holy Spirit to his apostles?
20. Did the converts on the day of Pentecost recognize the authority of the teachings of the apostles? Give a scripture to support your answer.
21. Supply two scripture passages which indicate that the writings of the apostles were authoritative in the early church.
 - a)
 - b)

22. List at least two New Testament books which were not written by an apostle.
- a)
 - b)
23. Those writers of the New Testament who were not apostles were _____.
24. One became a prophet in New Testament times when he was given the _____ of prophecy by the _____ of an apostle's _____.
25. In Acts 8:18,19 what exactly did Simon try to purchase?
26. How did Timothy receive his spiritual gift according to 2 Timothy 1:6?
27. List eight other spiritual gifts besides prophecy from 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.
- a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
 - f)
 - g)
 - h)
28. What did Peter mean in Acts 8:21 when he said to Simon, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter"?
29. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul calls the writings of _____ scripture.
30. What does the statement of question #29 imply about Luke?

31. The New Testament was written by the _____ and the _____.
32. What passage in the writings of Paul shows that the inspired men who wrote the New Testament were verbally inspired?
33. Why does Paul speak of the church as being “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” in Ephesians 2:19,20?
34. What are some of the implications of the doctrine of inspiration for my own life?
- a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

EXODUS 20:1,22
1 KINGS 14:18
2 CHRON. 18:7,13
ISAIAH 7:3
DANIEL 9:21,22
JOEL 2:28-32
MICAH 1:1
ZEPHANIAH 1:1
MAL. 1:1
ACTS 2:25-31
GALATIANS 1:11,12

DEUTERONOMY 1:34
1 KINGS 12:22
EZRA 5:1,2
ISAIAH 30:8
HOSEA 1:1
OBADIAH 1
NAHUM 1:1
HAGGAI 1:1,2
2 SAM. 23:1,2
1 PETER 1:10-12
REVELATION 1:10

JOSHUA 24:26
2 CHRON. 9:29
JOB 38-41
JEREMIAH 36:2
AMOS 1:1
JONAH 1:1
HAB. 1:1
ZECH. 1:1
2 TIMOTHY 3:15
JOHN 16:7-12
JOHN 21:24

The Canon of Scripture



The study of the canon of Scripture is the study of how men came to recognize the various Scripture books as divine and authoritative. While the study of inspiration deals with what God did in giving us the divine books, the study of canon is about man's recognition of what God did. How and when did men accept the books of the Bible as authoritative divine guides? The answers to these questions are often very controversial, but we hope to present carefully studied answers in this booklet which will build the faith of all who read.

The Greek word *κανων* from which we derive the word "canon" means a rule or standard. It also carries with it the idea of a "limit" (Gingrich and Danker, p. 403). Thus, the books in the "canon" are those which measure up to the standard of inspiration. The idea that God limited inspiration to certain people in a certain time period also suggests that the canon contains a limited number of books .

The Canon of the Old Testament

The revelation of God "in times past to the fathers" was a progressive revelation over a period of many centuries. The inspired books were not recognized at the same time, but only as they became available. The canon, then, was accepted bit by bit as God delivered it to man.

Liberal theories of canonicity suggest very late dates for the recognition of the authority of the Old Testament books. Due to theories like the "Documentary Hypothesis" of Julius Wellhausen (which suggested that the books of the Pentateuch were only formed in the fifth to the seventh centuries B.C.) many believe that the Law of Moses was only accepted as canonical by the Jews in the time of Ezra. Such theories suggest that the books of the Prophets were acknowledged as canonical in approximately the third century B.C., and that the canonization of the "Writings" was not finalized until the ambiguous Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.¹ These theories are based on wild subjectivity and are in sharp conflict with both biblical and historical evidence.

Old Testament Evidence For The Canonicity of the Law

OLD TESTAMENT CANON

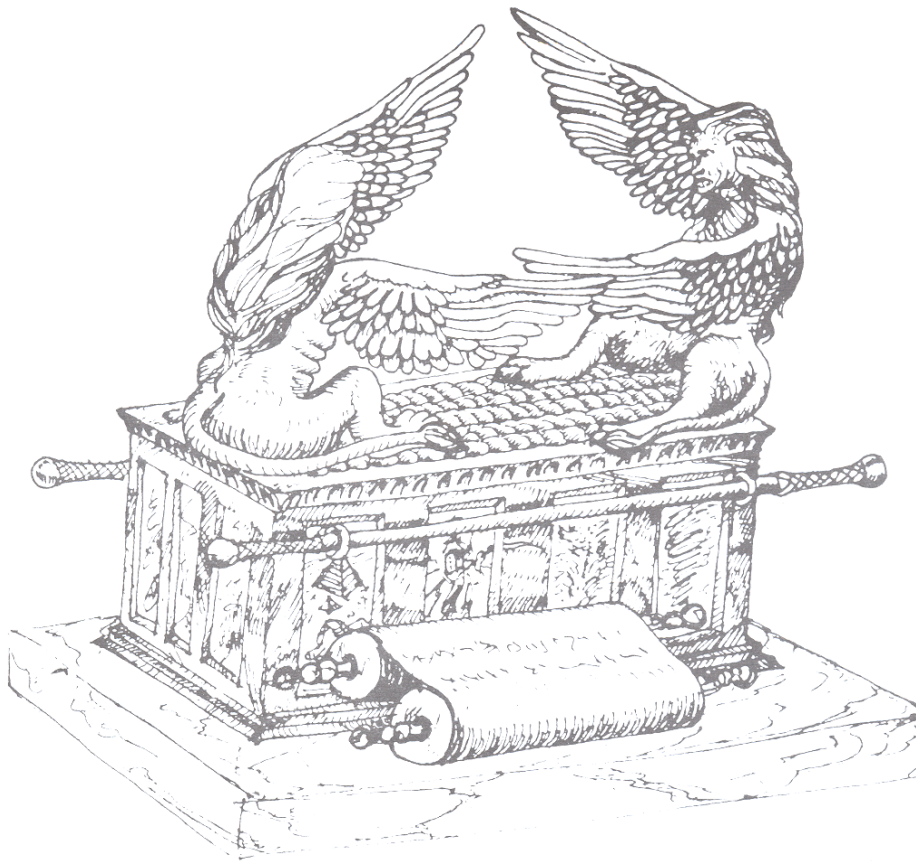
LAW	PROPHETS	WRITINGS
GENESIS EXODUS LEVITICUS NUMBERS DEUTERONOMY	JOSHUA JUDGES SAMUEL KINGS ISAIAH JEREMIAH EZEKIEL THE TWELVE	PSALMS, PROV. JOB SONG OF SOL. RUTH LAMENTATION ESTHER ECCLESIASTES DANIEL EZRA - NEH. CHRONICLES

The Bible indicates that the first section of the Hebrew scriptures, the Law of Moses, was recognized as authoritative even in the lifetime of Moses. In Exodus 24, when Moses returned from his divine encounter on the holy mountain, he "wrote all the words of the Lord." He then "took the book of the covenant and read in the hearing of the people" (Ex. 24:4-7). When this reading was completed the people responded by saying, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do" (Ex. 24:7). The people referred to the contents of the "book" as that which "the Lord has spoken." Thus, it is clear that the portion of the Law which had been written at that stage of Moses' career was already viewed as divine authoritative Scripture.

A reading of the Pentateuch demonstrates that Moses wrote down the divine oracles in stages. He wrote what he had heard from God in the "book of the covenant" (Ex. 24:7). He wrote on the tablets of stone "the ten commandments" (Ex. 34:28; Deut 4:13). He wrote "their goings out according to their journeyings according to the commandment of the Lord" (Num. 33:2). Finally, we are told that "Moses made an end of writing the words of this Law in a book, until they were finished" (Deut. 31:24).

It seems obvious that the people of God recognized the authoritative nature of Moses' writings as they became available. When Moses finished his writing he told the

Levites, "Take this book of the Law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you" (Deut. 31:25,26). The fact that the "book" of Moses was deposited in the sanctuary and viewed as a perpetual "witness" certainly indicates that it had canonical status.



Rabbinic tradition held that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch except for Deuteronomy 34, the account of his own death, which was written by Joshua.² This view may have some merit (see Josh. 24:26). At any rate, it is the claim of the Bible that for all practical purposes, Moses is the author of the Pentateuch. The first five books of the Bible, then, were viewed as holy Scripture by the people of God within the very lifetime of Moses. Scholars like Brevard S. Childs argue with the biblical claims by saying, "This portrayal of the canonization process fails to reckon with the very history of the literature's development."³ This, however, does not disturb us. Such scholars have assumed that the biblical texts developed naturally through a long process of literary evolution. There is not one shred of evidence to support this theory. The only form in which any ancient manuscripts of the Bible exist is in their canonical form. This leads us to believe that they were originally composed just as they now exist.

After the time of Moses, God's people continued to esteem the book of the law of Moses as authoritative. Joshua was told to adhere to the "book of the law" of Moses and to "turn not to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 1:7,8). On the altar of Mt. Ebal Joshua wrote upon the stones "a copy of the law of Moses" (Josh 8:32). There can be no doubt that the people believed the writings of Moses to be authoritative (see Josh. 8:34,35). David, the great king of Israel, admonished Solomon his son to "walk... according to that which is written in the law of Moses" (1 Kgs. 2:3). David's high esteem for the law of Moses is clearly seen in the great 119th Psalm where he extols the great power and value of God's law. The people in the time of Ezra had such great respect for the law of Moses that they stood from morning until midday and listened to its reading, after which they went to great lengths to conform to its teachings (Neh. 8:1-8). The people were convinced that the Babylonian captivity had been the direct result of their disobedience of the law of Moses (Dan. 9:11-13). Thus, to claim that the Law of Moses was only canonized at the time of Ezra and was only being produced at the time of Josiah totally ignores the biblical evidence.

Old Testament Evidence For The Canonicity of the Prophets

The second section of Hebrew Scripture books, the Prophets, was recognized as authoritative by God's people in much the same way as the Law. When inspired materials came from the pen of those who were known to be prophets, they were immediately regarded as authoritative.

Joshua added to the sacred "book of the law" (Josh. 24:26). Thus, it would seem that his contributions were accepted as "Scripture." We are told that the prophet Samuel "told the people the manner of the kingdom and wrote it in the book, and laid it up before the Lord" (1 Sam. 10:25). When this passage is compared with Deuteronomy 31:24-26, it seems likely that Samuel added some materials to the collection of holy Writ. The sanctity of the writing is seen in the fact that it was "laid up before the Lord." Both Isaiah and Jeremiah were instructed to write down their oracles so that they might comprise a perpetual witness to God's people (Isa. 30:8; Jer. 36:2). It is obvious from the historical narratives that both Isaiah and Jeremiah were acknowledged by their contemporaries as prophets of God (2 Kgs. 19:1-7; 2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1). Even during the time of the captivity, shortly after Jeremiah's preaching career, the book of Jeremiah was viewed as holy Scripture (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:11). Daniel refers to Jeremiah's oracles as among "the books," likely the collection of Scripture books. Though there are not specific statements in the Bible about the canonicity of every prophetic book, the implication is that people accepted as authoritative those books which they knew to be the product of true prophets of God.

Old Testament Evidence For The Canonicity of the Writings

The third section of the Hebrew Bible, the Writings, was likely recognized as authoritative in the same way as the first two sections. Because the books in this section were often of a different literary nature (e.g. poetry and wisdom literature) and were, in many cases, completed late in Old Testament history, evidence for their recognition is not as abundant in the Hebrew Scriptures as it is for certain other books. We are not, however, without evidence.

Because the book of Psalms was written by different inspired authors over many centuries of Israel's history, it must have been accepted bit by bit, as the inspired Psalms became available. Some of the Psalms, like Psalm 90, were probably accepted very early. Psalm 90 was the product of Moses, the great prophet and lawgiver. David is called the "sweet psalmist of Israel" in the Second Book of Samuel and these words of his are recorded: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and His word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:1,2). Therefore, it seems likely that Israel accepted David's claim to be inspired and recognized his Psalms as canonical for that reason. Little is known about others who authored Psalms. Asaph, the Levite, was appointed by David over the service of song in the house of the Lord (1 Chron. 6:31-39). The sons of Korah were involved both in the temple song service and as keepers of the thresholds (1 Chron. 6:37; 9:19). Nothing at all is known about the Jewish captives who penned Psalms 126 and 137. Though little is known about some of these authors the principles of canonicity imply that their work was of a prophetic nature. The fact that Israel rejected many writings from their canon implies something unique about those which they accepted as Scripture.

Solomon, who authored many of the Proverbs, the book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs was famed in the book of Kings for his divinely acquired wisdom (1 Kgs. 3:1-15). The words of Agur in Proverbs 30 are called "an oracle" (Prov. 30:1). The words of King Lemuel are also called an "oracle" (Prov. 31:1). The Hebrew word for "oracle" is *massah* (מַסָּה) which indicates a prophetic utterance (Isa. 14:28; 2 Kgs. 9:25; Ezek. 12:10; et. al.). Thus, it still seems that to be included in the Hebrew canon, a literary work had to be recognized by God's people as the product of inspiration.

It appears that the names of Job and Daniel, two great characters of the Writings, were household words to captive Israel (Ezek. 14:14,20). Ezekiel's mention of Job makes it quite probable that the book of Job was well known to God's people in Ezekiel's time. Daniel's divinely sent wisdom seems to have been a matter of common knowledge among the captives (Ezek. 28:3). The recognition of this wisdom by the people amply explains the canonicity of the book of Daniel. Theories which would assign the canonicity of Daniel to a much later time are based only on naturalistic assumptions and not on fact.⁴

The Old Testament does not specifically reveal how each book among the "Writings" came to be regarded as canonical. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles provided a record of how God interacted with his people in various periods of their history. The fact that other historical books like First and Second Maccabees were rejected from the Hebrew canon of Scripture again implies that the people of God saw something unique about the books which they did accept. For example, Lamentations was likely accepted because it was recognized as the product of the prophet Jeremiah. Ruth provided a vital link in the story of the Davidic seed line. In the final analysis, though, we simply trust the fact that God's people unanimously accepted these books as the product of divine inspiration.

The Silence of the Prophets

Not long after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah⁵ the people of God began to realize that their Old Testament was complete. This realization was due to the fact that no more prophets of God were to be found among them. The idea that prophecy was no longer active after a certain time in Israel's history is substantiated by both biblical and extra-biblical sources.

The great prophecy of Joel concerning the coming of the latter days seems to indicate that there would be a time when there would be a break in the succession of God's prophets. While Joel tells of the latter days when God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh and prophecy would be evident, he seems to imply that in the time prior to the latter days, prophecy would not be evident among the people (Joel 2:28-32). The two volume book of Luke-Acts in the New Testament, makes a great deal of the fact that Joel's prediction concerning the revival of prophetic inspiration has come true (Acts 2:17).

Malachi's prediction of the coming of God's "messenger" whom he calls "Elijah the prophet" also implies that messengers of God would not be evident for a time. Jesus plainly tells us that Malachi's prediction was realized in the person of John the Baptizer (Matt. 11:13,14; 17:10-13; Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6).

Several statements from the Jews between the time of Malachi and Christ confirm the notion that no recognized prophets had appeared among the people for some time. Consider these statements from the book of First Maccabees, a highly esteemed Jewish historical work from about 125 B.C.⁶

"...so they pulled down the altar, and laid down the stones in the mountain of the house in a convenient place, until a prophet should come and decide concerning them" (1 Macc. 4:46).

"...and there was great tribulation in Israel, such as was not since the time that a prophet had appeared to them" (1 Macc. 9:27).

"...And the Jews were well pleased that Simon should be their leader...forever, until a faithful prophet should arise" (1 Macc. 14:41).

From these passages in First Maccabees it seems evident that the people had not enjoyed the presence of a prophet for some time, and that the coming of a prophet was still a future hope.

Josephus⁷ confirms for us that there had indeed been a universally acknowledged failure in the succession of the prophets of God after the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi. He writes:

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets" (Against Apion, I. 8.).

Josephus clearly understood the canon of Old Testament Scripture to have been long since completed. In the very same passage he continues:

"For although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add or to remove or to alter a syllable."

Josephus, then, confirms for us what was implied in the book of First Maccabees. After the time of the Persian king Artaxerxes, who had succeeded Xerxes in 465 B.C.,⁸ there was a long period of time in which there were no prophets of God in Israel who added to the list of sacred books. Therefore, the first century Jews viewed their list of Scripture books as complete.

Other Jewish Evidence Relevant To The Old Testament Canon

The three great sections of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings were recognized as authoritative and were in use long before Jesus came to the earth. The ancient Jewish book called Sirach reflects this fact clearly in its Greek prologue. This prologue is dated about 132 B.C.⁹ The writer states that his "grandfather Jesus" had "given himself much to the reading of the Law, the Prophets, and the other books of our fathers...." A few lines later he speaks of "the Law itself, and the Prophecies, and the rest of the books." It seems likely that when the writer spoke of "the other books of our fathers" and of "the rest of the books", he referred to the section known as "the Writings." R.H. Charles proposes that the book of Sirach was compiled by the aforementioned "grandfather" around 180-175 B.C.¹⁰ Others have proposed a date as far back as 300-275 B.C.¹¹ In any case, the book of Sirach proves that the Old Testament was in use and included all three of its great sections two to three centuries before Christ.

The community of Jews at Qumran existed as far back as 125 B.C. according to Theodore H. Gaster.¹² Among the Qumran scrolls, commonly called the Dead Sea Scrolls, 175 biblical manuscripts have been found including portions of every book except the book of Esther.¹³ Many of the manuscripts are fragments which have almost perished with the passing of the centuries. Because large portions of the old manuscripts have not survived, the fact that the book of Esther has not yet been found proves nothing. The fact that fragments of all of the other books of the Hebrew Bible have been found shows that the people of the Qumran community recognized and used the books of the Old Testament more than a century before Christ. A number of commentaries on the biblical books have been discovered at Qumran, a fact which shows the esteem that the people of the community gave to these inspired writings.

In the first century, the Jewish historian Josephus acknowledged the three great sections of the Hebrew Bible as sacred Scripture. In the famous passage Against Apion 1.8., he describes in detail the contents of the Hebrew scriptures in his day:

"Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man to the death of the law-giver.... From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the Prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life."

The twenty-two books mentioned by Josephus are identical to the thirty-nine books in our English Old Testament. The first five books, as he states clearly, are the books of the Pentateuch. Thackeray and Lightfoot both suggest that in Josephus' second division, the Prophets, the thirteen books are probably grouped in the following manner: " 1) Joshua 2) Judges + Ruth 3) Samuel 4) Kings 5) Chronicles 6) Ezra-Nehe-miah 7) Esther 8) Job 9) Isaiah 10) Jeremiah + Lamentations 11) Ezekiel 12) Minor Prophets 13) Daniel. In the third division, the "four books" are likely Psalms, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes."¹⁴ Sometimes, ancient writers set the number of Old Testament books at twenty-four instead of twenty-two because they separated Ruth and Lamentations from Judges and Jeremiah, placing them in the last category among the Writings.¹⁵ Therefore, while the number of books in each division of the canon and the grouping of those books sometimes varied, the same books were consistently accepted as belonging to the Hebrew Bible.

We should not leave the impression that there was no debate over any book in the Old Testament. The Mishnah, which incorporates the traditions of the great Jewish Rabbis regarding the Law between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, reflects the fact that there was some discussion about the canon. In the tractates called "Yadaim" and "Eduyoth" there is some discussion about the Song of Solomon and the book of Ecclesiastes. Most of the dispute, however, seems to have centered on Ecclesiastes (Yadaim 3:5; Eduyoth 5:3). While it is true that for a time the rabbinical school of Shammai denied the canonicity of Ecclesiastes, it was not a matter of whether or not to admit Ecclesiastes to the canon, but whether or not it should retain its place. It should be pointed out that the rabbinic discussion of the canon resulted in the retention of all of the canonical books. In A.D. 90 there was apparently some discussion of the canon by a group of Rabbis at Jamnia near Joppa, but these discussions resulted in no changes in the canon.¹⁶ To suggest that the list of books in the Hebrew Bible was decided upon at the

council of Jamnia is ridiculous in view of the evidence which has been presented. The canon of the Old Testament had long since established itself as authoritative Scripture.

The Old Testament and the Apocrypha

THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA

1 ESDRAS

2 ESDRAS

TOBIT

ADDITIONS TO ESTHER

WISDOM OF SOLOMON

BARUCH

ADDITIONS TO DANIEL

PRAYER OF MANASSES

1 MACCABEES

2 MACCABEES

ECCLESIASTICUS
(ALSO CALLED SIRACH)

There were a number of highly esteemed Jewish books of a religious or historical nature written between the time of the Old and New Testaments. Due to the influence of the Greek Old Testament in the time after the apostolic age, some of these books were accepted as canonical by some in Christendom. The early Catholic Church placed its official stamp of approval on these books at the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397).¹⁷ The Latin Vulgate perpetuated these books as part of the canon through the medieval years. The council of Trent in 1546 declared that any person who did not receive the Apocrypha as canonical Scripture would be considered anathema. This was in reaction to Protestants who, as a result of their study of Hebrew, rejected the Apocrypha.¹⁸

The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, seems to have been largely responsible for the acceptance of the Apocrypha by some Christians. The Jews had rejected the Apocrypha because it originated after the time of the prophets and it was not to be found in their Hebrew Bible. It appears, though, upon examination of the evidence, that even the Septuagint (LXX) did not originally contain these books. Philo, an Alexandrian Jew born in 20 B.C., gave an account of how the LXX was translated under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus in about 250 B.C. Philo says that they made "a full version of the laws given by the voice of God" (Life of Moses II. vi. 31-39). Another account of the production of the LXX is given in the Jewish Letter of Aristeas, dated between 135 and 70 B.C. In that document we are told that they translated "...the books of the law of the Jews...written in the Hebrew characters" (I. 30). If the term "law" in these two sources is understood to describe a section of the Hebrew Bible, then perhaps only the books of Moses were originally translated. If "law" is understood in the broader sense, then it still only includes those books in the Hebrew Bible. Many years later, Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem, wrote about the LXX. He spoke of the "22 books of the Old Testament, these that have been translated by the seventy-two interpreters" (Catechesis IV. 33). Thus, as far as Cyril was concerned, the LXX contained only those books listed by Josephus as part of the Hebrew Bible, and did not contain the Apocrypha.

SOME KNOWN SEPTUAGINT MANUSCRIPTS		
NAME	CENTURY	CONTENT
RAHLFS 967	III A.D.	EZEK., DAN. EST.
RAHLFS 962	III A.D.	GENESIS
VATICANUS	IV A.D.	O.T. + APOC. (MINUS 1-4 MACC., PRAY. OF MAN.)
SINAITICUS	IV A.D.	PART OF O.T. + APOC.
RAHLFS G	IV/V A.D.	GEN. TO RUTH
RAHLFS W	V A.D.	DEUT. & JOSH.
ALEXANDRINUS	V A.D.	O.T. + APOC. (PLUS. 3-4 MACC. & PSA. 151)
RAHLFS Q	VI A.D.	PROPHETS

Long after the time of the apostles, some, though certainly not all manuscripts of the Greek Old Testament did include books of the Apocrypha. Even so, these manuscripts do not agree uniformly on which books they included. The chart on this page illustrates this fact.¹⁹

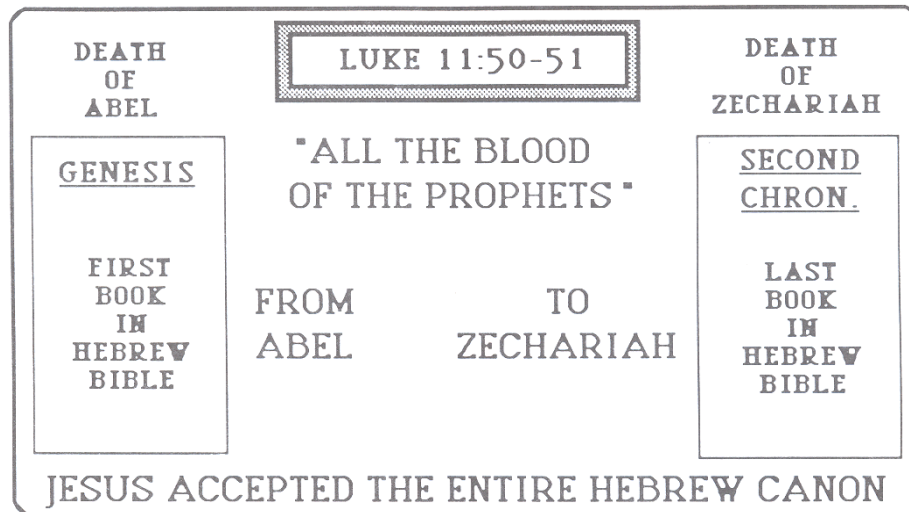
The rest of the manuscripts of the LXX which exist today reveal a picture consistent with the information on this chart. First, we should notice the late date of these manuscripts. They are of Christian, not Jewish origin. Also, they are not at all in agreement as to the extent of their contents. When we consider the evidence already presented, it seems likely that the original LXX did not contain the Apocrypha and that the books of the Apocrypha were gradually accepted into the Greek and Latin Bibles of the early Catholic Church.

Ancient Christians who knew Hebrew knew that the Hebrew Bible did not contain the later "apocryphal" books. Jerome (A.D. 347-420), the scholar of the Latin Church who translated the Latin Vulgate under pope Damasus, says, "...so we reckon 22 books by which as by the alphabet of the doctrine of God, a righteous man is instructed in tender infancy.... What is not found in our list must be placed among the apocryphal writings" (Preface to Samuel and Kings). The historian Eusebius in the fourth century recorded that the great scholar Origen said, "But it should be known that there are twenty-two canonical books, according to the Hebrew tradition; the same as the number of the letters of their alphabet" (Ecclesiastical History VI. xxv. 1-2). While those post-apostolic Christians acquainted with Hebrew knew that the Apocrypha was absent from the Hebrew scriptures, the use of the Apocrypha in the Church alongside the books of the Hebrew canon caused some in the Greek and Latin Church to accept these books. During the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the study of Hebrew led many to reject the Apocrypha because it had not been a part of God's ancient revelation to the Jews in the Hebrew Bible.

While it is clear that the books of the Apocrypha are not part of God's divine revelation to man, they are of considerable historical value. From these books we can learn much about the history and thinking of the Jews in the intertestamental period. The study of these books is of great value for our understanding of the world into which Jesus came.

New Testament Evidence For The Canon of the Old Testament

The Gospels indicate that Jesus accepted the entire Hebrew Bible as inspired Scripture. In a scathing rebuke of the antagonistic Pharisees, Jesus said that all of the blood of God's prophets would be required of that rebellious generation. In an effort to include the entirety of Scripture, Jesus said, "...the blood of all of the prophets...may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary" (Lk. 11:50,51). The account of Abel's murder, of course, is in Genesis, the first book in the Hebrew Bible. The account of the murder of Zechariah is in the book of 2 Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Bible (2 Chron. 24:20,21). Thus, it seems that Jesus accepted the Hebrew Bible which began with Genesis and ended with 2 Chronicles. *Refer to the chart on page 18.*



After his resurrection, the Lord Jesus made another statement which revealed his concept of the Old Testament canon. He reminded the disciples that before his death he had told them that "...all things must be fulfilled which are written concerning me in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Lk. 24:44). From this statement it is clear that Jesus accepted the three great divisions of the Hebrew Canon. Jesus referred to the section usually called the Writings as "the Psalms", probably because the book of Psalms is the first book in that final section (see chart on page 18). While it is true that Jesus sometimes spoke simply of "the Law and the Prophets", his post resurrection statement shows that he also regarded the Writings or "Psalms" as canonical. In further support of this is the fact that Jesus cited specific passages from the Writings with great regularity including passages from Psalms, Chronicles, and Daniel.²⁰

The various authors of the New Testament demonstrated great respect for the Old Testament by their constant recourse to those scriptures as authority for their teaching. When supporting a particular teaching with holy Writ, they often employed the formula "it is written" (*γεγραπται*). This they did only in reference to passages in the Old Testament (not the Apocrypha). The community of Jews who resided at Qumran also regularly cited the Old Testament as authority for their teaching. Remarkably, they used almost this exact formula in a great number of those citations, "it was written," (*γεγραπται*).²¹ The New Testament writers referred to the various Old Testament books as "Scripture" (*γραφη*). These same writers only used the term "Scripture" to refer to books which were part of the Hebrew canon or to other New Testament books. The gospel writers believed that the Hebrew scriptures were "fulfilled", realizing their long-hidden spiritual meaning in the work of Christ and in the establishment of Christianity.²² Paul, of course, affirmed that all "Scripture" is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16). All of this demonstrates the authoritative position which the Old Testament occupied in first century Christianity.

Rabbinic sayings preserved in the Mishnah concur with the New Testament as to the extent of the Old Testament canon. For the Rabbis of 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, the "Scriptures" included the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (Rosh-Ha-Shanah 4:6; Yadaim 3:5). Even the book of Esther which has not yet been found among the Qumran manuscripts was included (Megillah 4:2). While it was common Jewish practice to read from the Law and the Prophets in the synagogue each Sabbath day, they often did not read from the Writings (Acts 13:15; 15:21; Shabbath 16:1). In spite of the preference given to the Law and the Prophets in the regular assembly, the books of the Writings were viewed as "Holy Scripture" and were also periodically read in worship on special days (Shabbath 16:1; Yadaim 4:5; Megillah 2:1; Pesachim 10). Thus, Jesus and the New Testament writers were in complete agreement with the Jewish teachers and the Jewish historian Josephus in their regard for the Hebrew canon as "Holy Scripture." This unanimity is strong evidence that the Old Testament library of divine literature was universally regarded as authoritative in first century Judaism and Christianity.

Like the authors of the Old Testament, New Testament writers sometimes made references to uninspired literature. Paul quoted pagan poets (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). Jude quoted the pseudepigraphical book of First Enoch (Jude 14; cf. 1 En. 1:9). While the works cited in these instances were uninspired, some statements which they contained were true. When the biblical writers made reference to these statements, they accepted the truth of a particular statement and were not attempting to give canonical status to the work itself.²³

The books of the Old Testament established themselves as God's word gradually, as they came from the pens of various prophets and were delivered to God's people. This brief historical survey has shown that the books of the Hebrew Bible stood centuries of scrutiny by both Jews and Christians, establishing themselves as the word of God in the eyes of the people of God.

The Canon of the New Testament

The New Testament is a collection of documents produced in the first century²⁴ which established themselves as the authoritative basis for Christian teaching. These documents were written after the death of Jesus of Nazareth, yet their authority was completely dependent upon Jesus and his authority. According to the New Testament, it was Jesus who commissioned the apostles, promised them the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and made good that promise (Matt. 28:18-20; Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4; 33). The apostles, claiming to be the ambassadors of Christ, penned several books of the New Testament. Other men who were acquaintances or relatives of the apostles also made contributions to the library of New Testament books.²⁵

The New Testament itself indicates that apostolic authority was accepted by the ancient church. Luke reveals that the infant church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42). The writer of Hebrews confirms the unique position of

the apostles when he speaks of the great salvation which "was at first spoken unto us by the Lord, and afterward was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:3,4). "Them that heard him", the apostles, were viewed by this writer as a vital link between the historical Jesus and the faith of the infant church. In his small letter, Jude, the brother of James, placed tremendous importance on "the words spoken by the apostles" (Jude 17). Similarly, Peter enjoined his readers to "remember...the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:2).

The apostles themselves strongly asserted the unique authority of their preaching and writing. Peter claimed authority as an eyewitness of the events surrounding the ministry of Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). Paul claimed to have seen the risen Jesus and to have received his teaching through direct revelation (1 Cor. 2:13; 15:8; Gal. 1:11,12). He set forth his teaching as the very terms of Christian fellowship (2 Thess. 3:6,14). John asserted his authority as an eyewitness and a recipient of direct revelation (Jn. 19:35; 21:24; 1 Jn. 5:13; Rev. 1:1,9ff). The acceptance of the apostolic claims by the ancient church explains the motivation behind the formation of the New Testament canon. It seems clear that any oral or written message which was known to be of apostolic origin was regarded as extremely important in the first century church (2 Thess. 2:2,15). Therefore, the church circulated and collected those writings which they knew to have come from the pens of the apostles.

Though apostolic authority was primary, the church recognized other individuals as prophets of God.²⁶ These individuals were friends, relatives, or acquaintances of the apostles. Their writings were either directly approved by the apostles or at least were in harmony with the apostles' teaching. For example, Paul already recognized the book of Luke as Scripture. In First Timothy 5:18 he quoted the words of Jesus verbatim from Luke 10:7 and referred to his source as "Scripture."

Paul Quoted Luke's Gospel as Scripture

Αξιος ο εργατης του μισθου αυτου

(Greek 1 Timothy 5:18)

Αξιος γαρ ο εργατης του μισθου αυτου

(Greek Luke 10:7)

Compare and see that the only difference is that Paul omitted the introductory word "for," γαρ.

Thus, the church not only regarded the writings of the apostles as Scripture but the writings of the Christian prophets like Luke also. Apostolic approval of such literature caused ancient Christians to regard it as authoritative. All of this shows that the process of canonization was already in motion during the first century.²⁷

By the time of the Apostolic Fathers (roughly the first half of the second century) it seems that the church had widely recognized a basic corpus of New Testament books. These early Christian writers appealed to New Testament as well as Old Testament books as the basis for their faith and practice. The following chart, prepared by Geisler and Nix shows some of the specific books quoted by specific Christian writers in the post apostolic era.²⁸ An "X" indicates that the designated writer quotes or alludes to the New Testament book. An "O" indicates that the writer names the New Testament book as authentic, and a "?" signifies the writer's mention of a dispute concerning the canonicity of the New Testament document.

BOOK	INDIVIDUALS															
	PSEUDO BARNABAS (c. 70-120)	CLEMENT OF ROME (c. 95-97)	IGNATIUS (c. 110)	POLYCARP (c. 110-50)	HERMAS (c. 115-20)	DIDACHE (c. 120-50)	PAPAS (c. 120-50)	IRINAEUS (c. 120-202)	DIOGNETIUS (c. 150)	JUSTIN MARTYR (c. 150-35)	CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150-215)	TERTULLIAN (c. 150-220)	ORIGEN (c. 185-254)	CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (c. 315-80)	JEROME (c. 340-420)	AUGUSTINE (c. 400)
Matt.	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Mark	X		X	X		O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Luke	X		X		X	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
John		X	X			X	O	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Acts			X	X		O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Rom.		X	X		X	O	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		
I Cor.		O	X	X	X	O	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		
II Cor.			X	X		O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O		
Gal.			X			O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O		
Eph.	X	X	X	X		O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Phil.			X	X	X	O		X	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Col.			X	X		O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O		
I Thess.			X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O		
II Thess.			X	X			O	X	X	X	X	O	O	O		
I Tim.		X		X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	O	O	O		
II Tim.	X				X	X				X	X	O	O	O		
Titus	X	X				X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		
Philemon			X								O	O	O	O		
Heb.	X	X			X	X		O	X	?	O	O	O	O		
James		X			X						O	?	O	O		
I Peter	X			X	X	O	X	O	X	O	O	O	O	O		
II Peter	X	X								?	O	?	O	O		
I John				X	X	O		O	X		O	O	O	O		
II John				X		X				?	O	?	O	O		
III John										?	O	?	O	O		
Jude						X		O	X		O	?	O	O		
Rev.				X	X	O	O	X	O	X	O		O	O	O	

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Just as we do not cite every book of the Bible in every sermon, letter, or article that we write, the same was true for early Christians. The fact that Polycarp of Smyrna quoted from eighteen of the twenty-seven New Testament books does not mean that he rejected the other nine books. When Clement of Rome wrote to the Corinthians he quoted or alluded to ten of the New Testament books in the course of his admonitions. This shows simply that he accepted those ten books, not that he rejected any others. In short, Scripture quotations by the early Christians yield only positive evidence as to the extent of the Christian canon. In most cases it is impossible to determine the extent of a given writer's canon. All of the books of the New Testament, however, were either quoted or named as authentic by Christian writers prior to the close of the second century with the exception of Third John. Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202) and Tertullian (A.D. 150-220) were far more vocal than their predecessors in Christian literature in their specific statements about the authenticity of New Testament books. Unlike many earlier writers, their writing was specifically designed to combat heretics who had attacked the authenticity of various accepted New Testament books. In Europe and North Africa respectively, Irenaeus and Tertullian arose in defense of the sacred books which the universal Church had long since revered as inspired Scripture (see Irenaeus, Against Heresies II. xxvii; III. i-xii; Tertullian, Against Marcion IV. ii). Tertullian reflects this approach when he writes in one passage, "Now this heresy of yours does not receive certain scriptures, and whichever of them it does receive, it perverts..." (Pre-scription Against Heretics xvii). Marcion the heretic seems to have been the one who brought the question of the canon into sharp focus in the middle of the second century, for he rejected the entire Old Testament and all of the New Testament books except an abbreviated Luke and ten Pauline epistles.²⁸ To this horrible affront the Church responded, defending those books which had been held as sacred since apostolic times. Between them, Irenaeus and Tertullian quoted or named as authentic all of the presently recognized New Testament books except four: Philemon, James, Second Peter, and Third John.²⁹

A late second century document known as the Muratorian Canon reveals a similar picture. The first part of the document which mentioned the first two Gospels is missing and its authorship is really unknown.³⁰ This unknown writer accepted almost the same books as those in our modern New Testament with a few notable exceptions. He does not recognize Hebrews, James, First and Second Peter, or Third John. He adds the intertestamental Wisdom of Solomon (acknowledging that Solomon did not write it) and the Apocalypse of Peter. The views of this anonymous writer certainly do not reflect the views of the entire Church, but only the views of the author himself. This demonstrates that there was a period in the process of canonization during which Christians everywhere agreed on the basic contents of the canon and only disagreed on the status of a few books. The chart which follows contains excerpts from the Muratorian fragment.

The Muratorian Canon

"...the third book of the Gospel...Luke...the fourth Gospel...John...the Acts of all the Apostles...the epistles of Paul...twice to the Corinthians...to the Galatians...to the Ephesians...to the Philippians...to the Colossians...twice...to the Thessalonians...one to Philemon...one to Titus...two to Timothy ...And John too...in the Apocalypse...and (two epistles) belonging to the above named John...the epistle of Jude... the book of Wisdom...the Apocalypse of Peter, though some will not have this read in the church."

As time passed, those New Testament books which had enjoyed but a small circulation or which had been addressed to a very limited audience received wider acceptance, and books which had no legitimate claim to apostolic or prophetic origin were exposed and discarded. By the time of the great historian Eusebius (c. A.D. 260-340) there was a great degree of unanimity in the world-wide Church as to the contents of the New Testament canon. Eusebius categorized the books as illustrated below in Ecclesiastical History III. xxv.

RECOGNIZED	DISPUTED	NOT GENUINE
GOSPELS	JAMES	ACTS OF PAUL
ACTS	JUDE	APOCALYPSE OF PETER
EPISTLES OF PAUL	2 PETER	EPISTLE OF BARNABUS
1 PETER	2 JOHN	DIDACHE
1 JOHN	3 JOHN	
REVELATION		

The "recognized" books were so firmly regarded by the ancient Church all over the

world that they were beyond question for Eusebius. The second category, the "disputed books which are nevertheless known to most" were questioned by some people. This is remarkable in view of the fact that the book of Second Peter was quoted by Clement of Rome in the first century and by the writer of the Epistle of Barnabus in the mid-second century. The book of James was also quoted by the highly esteemed Clement of Rome before the first century ended and the book of Jude was quoted by Irenaeus, the great defender of the faith in the late second century. Cyril of Jerusalem named all of these "disputed books" as authentic during the fourth century.³¹ Very small circulation may explain why books like Second and Third John were questioned and a very particular audience may explain why James, Jude, and Second Peter were questioned. Most people, however, according to Eusebius, seem to have accepted these books. This is confirmed when we examine the contents of ancient Bible manuscripts. The Chester Beatty papyrus, dating from approximately A.D. 200, includes the book of Hebrews among the Pauline epistles as does Eusebius in his list. Great fourth century Bible manuscripts like Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus contain all of the books listed by Eusebius in the "disputed" category. In the year 367 in his Easter epistle, Athanasius, the great defender of the faith against Arianism, supplied a list of New Testament books which included all twenty-seven books (all of the "recognized" and "disputed" books of Eusebius). Later councils of the Church, along with great scholars like Jerome and Augustine did nothing but confirm this list of books, a list which had been accepted by Christians from the days of the apostles. It should be pointed out that many spurious books were rejected by the Church from the canon because they could not be proven to have come from an apostle or a prophet. Among these were those books which Eusebius deemed "not genuine" as well as a number of books which Eusebius ascribed to heretics.³² In the final analysis it was the very list of books which appears in our modern New Testament which stood the scrutiny of generations of Christians and established themselves firmly as the authoritative word of God.

As Christians today, we have every reason to believe that our Bible contains exactly those books which it is intended to contain. This survey has shown that over the course of history, the sixty-six books of the Bible have stood all of the tests of time and all of the tests of doctrinal and historical examination. These books credibly commend themselves to us as the word of God. This being the case, we must submit our lives to the things which are taught in these holy books if we hope to live with God in eternity.

ENDNOTES

¹Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 52.

²Baba-Bathra 14b-15a "Joshua wrote the book which bears his name and the last eight verses of the Pentateuch." See I. Epstein, trans., The Babylonian Talmud, (London: Soncino Press, 1935).

³Childs, p. 56.

⁴For example, see the discussion by Arthur Jeffrey on "The Origin of the Book" of Daniel in The Interpreters Bible vol. 6, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 344-49; Jeffrey argues that Daniel was written during the time of the Maccabean revolt (c. 165 B.C.) because the "writer" of Daniel obviously knew the history of that time period. Since Jeffrey assumes it to be impossible to foretell the future, he says that the book must have been written after the events which it describes.

⁵The fifth century B.C. This date is arrived at by dating some of the Medo-Persian rulers like Artaxerxes which are mentioned in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. Josephus (Against Apion 1. 8) says that the time of Artaxerxes (c. 464-424 B.C.) is roughly the time period in which the succession of prophets ceased in Israel and the Old Testament was completed. See R. Dick Wilson, "Ezra-Nehemiah," in International Standard Bible Encyclopedia vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 1083-1085; and R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 1138-39.

⁶R. H. Charles, ed., The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 60.

⁷Josephus ben Matthias was born in A.D. 37-38 in the year of the accession of Gaius Caligula. See H. St. J. Thackeray, trans. Josephus vol.1 Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. vii.

⁸Harrison, Introduction, p. 1139.

⁹R. H. Charles, Apocrypha, p. 293; R. K. Harrison, "The Canon of the Old Testament," in Young's Analytical Concordance supplement, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 5.

¹⁰Charles, p. 293.

¹¹Ibid. p. 294.

¹²Theodore H. Gaster, trans. and ed., The Dead Sea Scriptures Rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964), p. 412.

¹³Neil R. Lightfoot, "The Canon and Text of the Old Testament," in The World and Literature of the Old Testament, vol. 1 Living Word Commentary, ed. John T. Willis (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Company, 1979), p. 157; Gaster, p. 412.

¹⁴Lightfoot, p. 52 ; Thackeray, p. 179 n.b.

¹⁵Childs, p. 54; Lightfoot, p. 44.

¹⁶R. K. Harrison says that there is actually very little known about this "supposed Synod." In his view, whatever conversations might have taken place there were probably not about what should be included in the canon, but whether any book should be excluded. Canon. pp. 8-9; see also Lightfoot, p. 53.

¹⁷The twenty-fourth "canon" or ruling adopted by the Council of Carthage listed all of the books of the "Canonical Scriptures" which were to be read in the churches and included the books of the Apocrypha. See Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 2nd ser., Vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 453.

¹⁸See the discussion by R. H. Charles in his introduction to The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. ix-x.

¹⁹The information is taken from Bruce Metzger, Manuscripts of the Greek Bible, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

²⁰For example, Matthew 7:23; 21:16; Mark 6:34; 14:62; John 13:18.

²¹Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, "The Explicit Use of Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," New Testament Studies 7:300-01.

²²Fitzmeyer says that the idea of the scriptures being "fulfilled" is not found in the Qumran materials, but only in the New Testament. Ibid. pp. 303-4.

²³Jude says that the pseudonymous author of 1 Enoch "prophesied" only in the sense that he spoke the truth. Caiaphas is said to have unwittingly "prophesied" when he said that it was better for one man to die than for the whole nation to perish. Though he had a completely different meaning in mind for his words, he unwittingly told God's truth (Jn 11:50,51). This certainly does not suggest that the wicked Caiaphas was viewed as a prophet of God.

²⁴No New Testament book has been proven to originate later. See, for example, the discussions on dates of the various books in Donald Guthrie, Introduction to the New Testament (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970).

²⁵See the discussion by Dan R. Owen, How We Got the Bible: Part One Christian Development Series (Denver Colorado: Dan R. Owen, 1985), pp. 6-7.

²⁶Irenaeus, Against Heresies III. 1; 111.3.; Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics, xxii; xxxii. These passages demonstrate the truth of this statement in the second century. Our discussion shows that it was true in the first century also.

²⁷E. F. Harrison admits that 1 Timothy 5:18 quotes Luke 10:7, but tries to salvage the liberal case by relegating the book of 1 Timothy to next generation (after Paul's demise). Since there is no reason to believe that Paul did not write 1 Timothy in the middle of the first century, we will stand on the argument that Luke was already recognized as Scripture in the middle of the first century. See "The Canon of the New Testament," in Youngs Analytical Concordance, supplement (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1964), p.13.

²⁸Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 193.

²⁹J. G. Davies, The Early Christian Church, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1965) p.75. See also Tertullian, Against Marcion, IV. 1-2.

³⁰It is ascribed by some to Caius, a Roman presbyter during the period (c.180-217). Others have ascribed it to Hegesippus, but "there is no clue whatever to the authorship." A. Cleveland Coxe, ed. Fathers of the Third Century in The Ante Nicene Fathers vol. 5 A. Roberts and J. Donaldson eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 603 n. 1.

³¹Geisler and Nix, p. 193.

³²Gospels of Peter, Thomas, and Matthias; Acts of Andrew and John; and other such books. Ecclesiastical History III. xxv. 6.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. With what is the study of the canon of Scripture concerned?
2. What time period do the more liberal theories suggest for the recognition of the canonicity of the Law of Moses?
3. What does the Bible indicate about when the Law of Moses was recognized as authoritative? List at least three pertinent passages.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. Could you demonstrate that David respected the Law of Moses as inspired Scripture?
5. True or False: Moses wrote down the Pentateuch in stages over the duration of his career.
6. What manuscript evidence do we have which would prove that the books of the Pentateuch developed naturally over the course of many centuries in Israelite folk literature?
7. Daniel already recognized the book of the prophet _____ as inspired just a few years after it was written.
8. Is there any indication in the Bible that Samuel added to the canon of Scripture?

What about Joshua?
9. What indication do we have that the proverbs which were not written by king Solomon were viewed as inspired?

10. List two different authors who contributed to the Psalms.
 - a.
 - b.
11. The section of the Hebrew Bible known as the _____ was the last section to be completed.
12. What is suggested about the prophets of God by the statement in First Maccabees 9:27?
13. What is the approximate date of the intertestamental book of First Maccabees?
14. What ancient historical text proves that the first century Jews believed the canon to have been closed for several centuries?
15. Why did the Jews believe that the canon of Scripture was complete?
16. Why did some ancient writers count twenty-two books of the Old Testament and some count twenty-four?
17. We know that the Qumran sect was using the Old Testament books in their Dead Sea community in the century before Christ because every Old Testament book has been found among the Dead Sea scrolls except the book of _____.
18. True or False: The sayings of the Rabbis in the Mishnah show that both Esther and Daniel were viewed by the Jews as holy Scripture.
19. What sections of the Hebrew Bible did the Jews read every Sabbath in the synagogue services?
20. What does Jesus' statement in Luke 11:50,51 indicate about how much of the Old Testament he accepted as authoritative?
21. What statement of the risen Jesus clearly shows that he accepted all three of the great sections of the Hebrew Bible?

22. What is the Old Testament Apocrypha and what books are included in it?
23. The _____ version of the Old Testament seems to have had a large influence in the acceptance of the Apocrypha by some Christian writers.
24. Philo and the Letter of Aristeas along with the fourth century Cyril of Jerusalem indicate that the original LXX a) did or b) did not contain the Apocrypha.
25. The Dead Sea manuscripts of Daniel a)do or b)do not contain the apocryphal additions to Daniel.
26. New Testament writers used the term "Scripture" only when referring to books of the _____ or to other _____ books.
27. The early church collected the books of the New Testament which they knew to have been written by _____ or _____.
28. What New Testament book not written by an apostle was quoted by an apostle and referred to as "Scripture"?
29. Polycarp of Smyrna quoted eighteen New Testament books in his short letter to the Philippian church in the mid-second century. What does this prove about his attitude toward the other nine books of the New Testament?
30. In available Christian literature prior to the end of the second century every book of the New Testament was quoted as authoritative except the epistle of _____.
31. What was it that caused second century Christianity to really begin to address the question of the New Testament canon?
32. List five books of the New Testament which were disputed by some people in the ancient church, but which stood the test and remained in the canon of Scripture.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

e)

33. What are some possible reasons why the canonicity of certain New Testament books was disputed by some?
34. True or False: We as Christians today have every reason to believe that our Bible contains exactly the books which it is supposed to contain.

The Transmission of the Bible Text

The study of how the Bible has come down to us must include a discussion of the transmission of the sacred text. This discussion concerns the manner in which the original prophetic and apostolic writings were copied and passed down through the centuries from their production to our own time. Can we be sure that the Bible which we have today is actually what the ancient writers wrote? Has the passing of the centuries brought such corruption to the text that it cannot be trusted as accurate to the original? Did not God promise us that "the word of the Lord abides forever" (1 Pet. 1:25)? In the study to follow we will attempt to address the above questions and thereby build the reader's faith in the trustworthiness of the Bible.

The Languages of the Bible

Before addressing the subject of the transmission of the Bible we must know something about the languages in which the Bible was originally written. These three languages are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

The books of the Old Testament were primarily written in the Hebrew language. This was the language of Abraham the Hebrew (Gen. 14:13). The people and the language may have derived their name from Eber, one of the descendants of Shem (Gen. 10:21,25). From the families of Shem come the Semitic languages which include Hebrew and the other language of the Old Testament, Aramaic. This was the language of Laban the Syrian (Gen. 31:47). Other Semitic languages which were closely related to Hebrew and Aramaic included Akkadian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Moabite.¹ While most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, large sections of the books of Daniel and Ezra were written in Aramaic (Dan. 2:4-7:28; Ezra 4:7-6:18; 7:12-26).² Aramaic names are also included in a number of isolated places (Gen. 10:22; 31:47; 2 Kgs. 18:26; Isa. 36:11; Jer. 10:11).

While the New Testament does contain some Aramaic words³ and clearly reflects Aramaic influence in a number of places, it was written down in the Greek language. The language is Koine Greek which was the common language of the people in the first century world.⁴ Since this common Greek was a universally spoken language in all of the lands which had come under Grecian influence⁵, it provided a wonderful vehicle for the rapid and efficient evangelism of the ancient world. The following chart gives a sample of the three languages in which God's word was originally written. From top to bottom they are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

THE LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

"Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God. The Lord is one," (Deut. 6:4).

ושבי יהודיא בנין ומצלחין

"And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered," (Ezra 6:14)

Ουτως ἡγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον

"For God so loved the world," (John 3:16).

Writing Materials

The Bible, like other ancient literature, was written on a variety of primitive writing materials including stone, clay tablets, parchment, and papyrus.

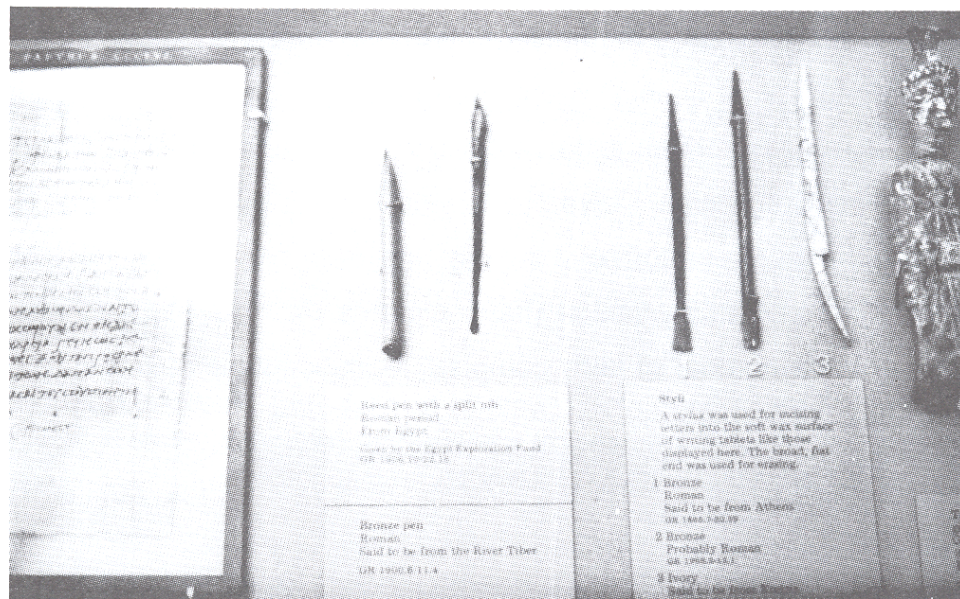
The Ten Commandments were engraved in two tablets of stone, first by God himself and later by Moses (Ex. 31:18; 34:28). Joshua later seems to have inscribed the entire law of Moses on the stones of an altar at Mt. Ebal (Josh. 8:32).

Stone or clay tablets may have been involved in the original writing of other biblical materials like the prophecies of Isaiah. The prophet was told to "write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book" (Isa. 30:8). These tablets may have either been wooden, stone, or clay tablets like those from the ancient city of Ugarit or the famous Amarna tablets.⁶ Since the word "book" (ספר) is not specific as to the type of material with which it is made, a book may have been either on a tablet format or in the form of a parchment⁷ or papyrus⁸ scroll (Jer. 36:2-4). It is quite obvious that by the exilic period the "scroll" was being used among the Israelites (Ezek. 2:8-3:4; Jer. 36:21f.; Dan. 9:2; 12:4). The Dead Sea scrolls provide an excellent example of the "scroll" format.

By the late first or early second century of the present era, Christians were beginning to use another format for biblical manuscripts, the codex. The codex or book format was made by stacking sheets of papyrus or parchment, folding them in the middle, and sewing them together. The production of codices was refined by folding just a few sheets at a time and sewing several folded sets together. Almost all New Testament manuscripts were produced using the codex format.⁹

While scribes who inscribed literary materials on clay tablets had to use some sort of sharp stylus, the biblical manuscripts which are now extant were copied by means of primitive pens and inks. Reed pens, almost like a brush, were commonly used. Later on, the reed was sharpened and the end split like a fountain pen. According to J. Philip Hyatt, a scribe commonly carried a little kit (קסם-הספר) which consisted of some pens in a protective case, a water jar, and a wooden palette for mixing his own ink. This kit seems to be that which is described in Ezekiel 9:2,3,11.¹⁰ By the fifth or sixth century A.D. the quill pen had also come into use.¹¹

In short, biblical manuscripts were difficult and expensive to produce. They were laboriously copied by hand using primitive writing instruments and primitive materials. Countless thousands of hours went into the production of these sacred books and great care was exercised in their use and in their preservation.



Ancient Writing Equipment Displayed in the British Museum

THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

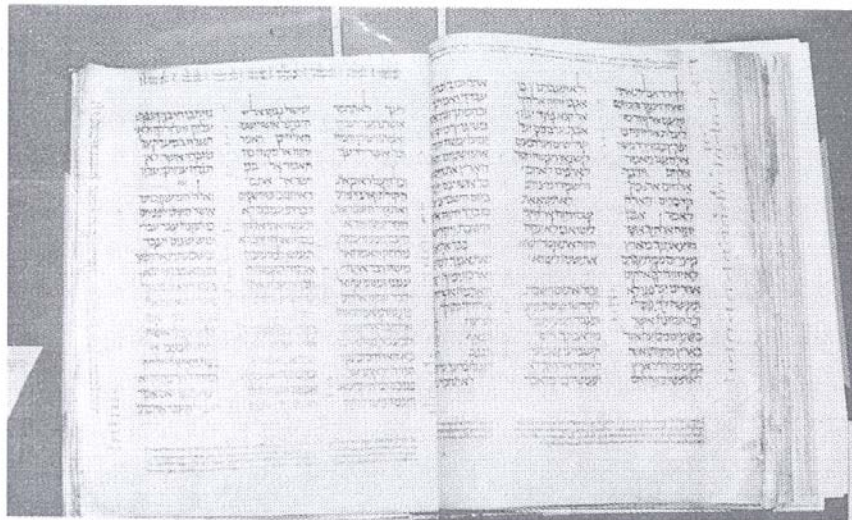
The original tablets and manuscripts upon which our Old Testament was written by God's prophets do not survive. However, numerous copies of these sacred documents have survived the passing of the centuries and provide us with a solid basis for faith in God's enduring message. The discussion to follow will concern some of these manuscript copies and their value in establishing the text of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Masoretic Text

The Hebrew manuscripts on which our modern Hebrew Bible is primarily based are known as the Masoretic manuscripts. The masoretes were a group of Jewish scholars who lived between A.D. 500 and 950 and were responsible for the copying and preservation of the Hebrew text during that period. They relied firmly on the masorah, a carefully preserved scribal tradition which provided numerous safeguards for insuring the accuracy of the text. The masorah provided information regarding the number of occurrences of particular words, names, or phrases in the text. It contained information regarding the specific word which marked the middle of a book or section of the Hebrew Bible. By constantly referring to the masorah and its many statistics, these copyists transmitted the Hebrew Text with meticulous care as it was handed down to them.¹² This being true, we have good reason to believe that the Masoretic Text represents the original text of the Old Testament with a high degree of accuracy.

The chart on the following page discusses some of the famous Masoretic manuscripts. Besides the manuscripts from the Masoretic scribes of Palestine, the reader will note the mention of the Cairo Genizah Fragments. These fragmentary manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible were among a vast collection obtained from the ancient Ben Ezra synagogue in Cairo in 1897 by Solomon Schechter. Of the approximately 140,000 fragments which Schechter took to Cambridge University, 24,000 are fragments of the Hebrew Bible. They belong for the most part to the Masoretic tradition.¹³

The reader will immediately notice that the dates of the Masoretic manuscripts are relatively late and the number of fairly complete manuscripts is quite small.



The British Museum Codex, A Famous Masoretic Manuscript, Open At Exodus 20

תורה נביאים כתובים

MASORETIC MANUSCRIPTS

1. BRITISH MUSEUM ORIENTAL 4445 - A COPY OF THE PENTATEUCH DATING FROM ABOUT A.D. 850. PARTS OF THE BOOKS OF GENESIS AND DEUTERONOMY ARE MISSING.
2. CODEX CAIRENSIS - A COPY OF THE FORMER AND THE LATTER PROPHETS, COPIED BY AARON BEN ASHER IN A.D. 895.
3. LENINGRAD MS P- A COPY OF THE LATTER PROPHETS, DATING FROM A.D. 916.
4. LENINGRAD MS B-19A- A COPY OF THE ENTIRE OLD TESTAMENT, CONTAINING THE BEN ASHER MASORETIC TEXT, DATING FROM A.D. 1010.
5. THE ALEPPO CODEX - A PARTIAL COPY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, COMPLETE UNTIL PARTIALLY DESTROYED IN 1948. CORRECTED AND PUNCTUATED BY AARON BEN ASHER IN A.D. 930.
6. THE REUCHL IN CODEX - A COPY OF THE PROPHETS IN THE TRADITION OF THE BEN NAPHTALI FAMILY OF MASORETES. DATES FROM A.D. 1105.
7. THE CAIRO GENIZA FRAGMENTS - OVER 24,000 HEBREW BIBLE FRAGMENTS DISCOVERED IN 1890 DURING THE REBUILDING OF AN OLD SYNAGOGUE IN CAIRO. THEY DATE FROM THE SIXTH TO THE NINTH CENTURIES A.D.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

One of the greatest confirmations of the basic fidelity of the Masoretic Text is the library of manuscripts from Qumran. These manuscripts, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, date a thousand years earlier than the Masoretic manuscripts (between 250 B.C. and A.D. 68).¹⁴ The first of these manuscripts were discovered by an Arab shepherd boy in March 1947 as he was pursuing a lost goat seven miles south of Jericho and a mile west of the Dead Sea. There, in a cave, he discovered a number of old earthenware jars containing ancient leather scrolls. During the next twelve years a total of eleven caves were excavated and a considerable library was found. The library had belonged to an ancient Jewish sect which had inhabited the community of Qumran between the second century B.C. and the latter part of the first century A.D.¹⁵ Among the volumes of the community's literary collection were a number of biblical manuscripts. They include the following witnesses to the Old Testament text:

From Cave 1: There is one manuscript of Genesis, one of Exodus, one of Leviticus (including Numbers), two of Deuteronomy, one of Judges, one of Samuel, two of Isaiah, one of Ezekiel, three of Psalms, and two of Daniel.

From the Minor Caves 2,3, 5-10: There are three manuscripts of Genesis, three of Exodus, two of Leviticus, three of Numbers, five of Deuteronomy, two of Kings, one of Isaiah, one of Jeremiah, one of Ezekiel, one of the Minor Prophets, four of Psalms, one of Job, two of Ruth, one of the Song of Songs, three of Lamentations, and one of Daniel.

From Cave 4: There are eleven manuscripts of Genesis (one includes Exodus), eleven of Exodus, four of Leviticus, two of Numbers (one includes Leviticus), eighteen of Deuteronomy, two of Joshua, two of Judges, three of Samuel, one of Kings, fifteen of Isaiah, three of Jeremiah, three of Ezekiel, seven of the minor prophets, seventeen of the Psalms, three of Job, two of Proverbs, two of Ruth, three of the Song of Songs, two of Ecclesiastes, one of Lamentations, five of Daniel, one of Ezra, and one of Chronicles.

From Cave 11: There is one manuscript of Leviticus, one of Ezekiel, and three of the Psalms.

Included in this inventory are twelve manuscripts in paleo-Hebrew script, an archaic form of Hebrew which predates that of the other Qumran manuscripts. These are copies of the books of the Pentateuch and Job.¹⁶

The study of the biblical manuscripts of Qumran has done much to confirm the notion that the medieval masoretes inherited a faithful text of the Hebrew Scriptures and transmitted that text in a careful and conservative manner. Patrick Skehan, who along with F. M. Cross has studied a number of the Qumran manuscripts, speaks of the

"sound, tightly organized, unexpanded text of the Torah that stands in our Bibles" as "an exceptionally good text."¹⁷ Regarding the famous manuscript of Isaiah found at Qumran which dates from about 100 B.C., Lightfoot states that "for all practical purposes the text of this ancient scroll reads the same as the standardized text (called the Masoretic Text) in printed Bibles."¹⁸ According to Skehan, the book of Samuel is the only Old Testament book in which the Qumran manuscripts may help us to significantly improve on the accuracy of the Masoretic Text.¹⁹ In this case the Qumran scrolls will only help us to bring a greater degree of accuracy to an already good text.

Other important manuscript finds have also helped to confirm the accuracy of the Masoretic Text. In addition to the Dead Sea scrolls, some exciting finds have been made near Wadi Murabba'at at Masada, including a manuscript of the Psalms and one of the Minor Prophets which are from the same time period as those from Qumran. These manuscripts, according to Lightfoot, are remarkably like those of the Masoretic Text.²⁰ In short, the manuscript evidence available on the text of the Old Testament serves to confirm our faith that God has truly kept his promise and preserved his holy word.

SECONDARY WITNESSES TO THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT

A number of ancient versions of the Old Testament have survived in manuscript form, supplying us with secondary witnesses to the text of the Old Testament. While these translations and paraphrases bear witness to the existence of the Old Testament books and even the existence of the specific passages in these books, it would be virtually impossible to restore the exact form of the Hebrew text from these translations. Happily, we do have ample Hebrew manuscript evidence as was discussed earlier. These translations of the Old Testament, then, are valuable in that they confirm the general veracity of our Hebrew Bible.

The most famous ancient translation of the Old Testament is the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation which was begun about 250 B.C. According to the ancient Jewish Letter of Aristeas and Philo's Life of Moses it seems that the Pentateuch was all that was originally translated. In the years that followed the other books of the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek by many different individuals. The most ancient complete manuscripts of the Septuagint are from the Fourth Century A.D., although a few fragments exist from earlier centuries.²¹

The Aramaic Targums are another secondary witness to the Hebrew Bible. After the Babylonian Captivity the Jewish people spoke Hebrew less and less and began to speak more in the Aramaic tongue. As this change progressed it became necessary for the Hebrew Bible to be explained or paraphrased in the synagogue services so that the people could understand what was being read. It appears that this was done to some degree as early as the time of Ezra (Neh. 8:7,8). This paraphrasing in Aramaic was

done orally until about A.D. 200 when the Targums or paraphrases began to be written down. An example is the Targum of Onkelos from the third century A.D. Onkelos is said to have adhered quite closely to the Hebrew text in most places. Later Aramaic paraphrases, like the Targum of Johnathan ben Uzziel on the Prophets (fourth century A.D.), the Targum of Pseudo-Johnathan on the Torah (A.D. 650), and the Jerusalem Targum on the Torah (A.D. 700) are reportedly much more paraphrastic and are of little critical value.²²

In addition to the Septuagint and the Targums, some Latin translations of the Old Testament have survived. These manuscripts are primarily copies of Jerome's Latin Vulgate which was originally completed A.D. 390 - 404, and became the standard edition of the Bible in the western world throughout the middle ages. Prior to Jerome's time there was the Old Latin translation of the Greek version. Old Latin manuscripts survive from as early as A.D. 450 but are of minimal critical value.

Among the other ancient versions of the Old Testament Archer includes the Syriac or Eastern Aramaic translation, published originally in the second or third century A.D., the Coptic or Egyptian translation of the LXX which originated in about the second century A.D., the Ethiopic version from about the fourth century A.D., the Gothic version from the fourth century A.D., and the Arabic version from the tenth century A.D.²³ It should be understood that while the translations may have been done at the times mentioned above, the extant manuscripts are generally much later in date.

This casual survey of Old Testament manuscript evidence yields the conviction that our Bible is well substantiated. The Hebrew text was obviously transmitted quite carefully by the Masoretic scribes and their predecessors. The combined testimony of the ancient versions gives further credence to this fact. Christians, therefore, have every reason to trust the accuracy of the Old Testament text.

THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The text of the New Testament is a matter of scientific and historical record. This is true because libraries around the world contain multitudes of New Testament manuscripts dating from the second century to the sixteenth century. These manuscripts provide a vast reservoir of textual evidence from which scholars can scientifically demonstrate the original text to an extremely high degree of accuracy. As of 1976 a total of 5,366 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament had been cataloged.²⁴ This massive library of New Testament manuscripts may be divided up into four major categories.

Of the four types of Greek manuscripts the papyrus uncials are the oldest. Papyrus is the type of material on which they are written. They are called uncials because they are written in Greek capital letters. As of 1976, eighty-eight papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament had been cataloged.²⁵ Papyrus is an aquatic plant

which grows in marshes and along rivers in the Near East. In ancient times the stems of the tall plants were cut into sections of equal length, split open, and the pith was removed in strips. These strips were placed side by side on a board moistened with muddy river water. Then, another layer of strips was placed on top perpendicular to the first layer, thus making a lattice work. The two layers were then pressed together and dried in the sun. The resultant paper was then cut into sheets and either pasted together into rolls, or sewn together into a codex or "book" form.²⁶ It seems that the Second and Third Epistles of John were originally written on papyrus (2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 13).

The oldest papyrus fragment of the New Testament is papyrus number 52, better known as the John Rylands Fragment. It dates from the beginning of the second century (only shortly after the death of the apostle John), and contains a portion of the eighteenth chapter of John's Gospel. The two most important collections of papyrus manuscripts are the Chester Beatty and Martin Bodmer collections. These manuscripts are very ancient and some contain large portions of the New Testament. Papyrus 46 of the Beatty collection includes eighty-six leaves from a papyrus codex containing all or part of ten Pauline epistles (including Hebrews). It dates from about A.D. 200. Papyrus 45 from the same collection contains portions of thirty leaves from the four gospels and Acts. It dates only slightly later than papyrus 46. Among the important manuscripts of the Bodmer collection, papyrus 66 is a manuscript of the Gospel of John from about A.D. 200. It preserves large portions of the Fourth gospel on its 104 surviving pages. Papyrus 72 of the Bodmer collection contains our earliest surviving copies of Jude and the two Epistles of Peter. It also dates from the third century. The eighty-eight extant papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament date from the beginning of the second century to the eighth century, most of them falling in the earlier part of that time period. They are vitally important to our understanding of the early transmission of the New Testament text.²⁷ It is a thrilling and faith building experience to translate a portion of scripture from one of these ancient manuscripts and realize that our Bible today still says the same thing!

The second major category of New Testament manuscripts includes the parchment uncials. Like the papyrus uncials they were written in Greek capital letters. These manuscripts, however, were written on parchment or vellum, a writing material made from animal skins. According to Metzger, after the hair had been removed from the skins of very young or unborn animals, they were "washed, smoothed with pumice, and dressed with chalk" to make a fine writing material.²⁸ It seems that Paul was anxious to have his "parchments" to study during his final days in prison (2 Tim. 4:13). It is quite likely that some of the books of the New Testament were originally written on parchment.

Among the most important parchment uncials is codex Sinaiticus from the fourth century. When compared with the papyrus manuscripts it seems clear that Sinaiticus was a professionally produced manuscript. It was copied in neat columns of carefully written uncials. Discovered in 1859 by Tischendorf at the monastery of St. Catherine on

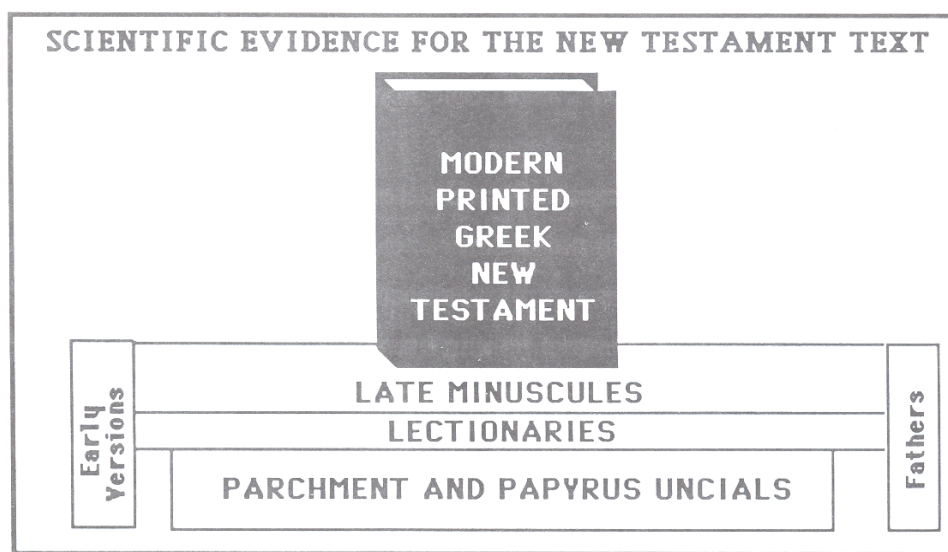
Mt. Sinai, this manuscript contains most of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament. It agrees closely with the earlier papyrus manuscripts and is extremely valuable. Codex Vaticanus from the fourth century preserves 142 leaves of the New Testament and 614 leaves of the Old Testament. Its text agrees quite closely with that of papyrus 75 which dates from about A.D. 200. Along with Sinaiticus, Vaticanus is deemed by textual scholars a very fine and accurate witness to the ancient New Testament text. Other important parchment uncials include Codex Alexandrinus from the fifth century, Codex Bezae from the fifth century, Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus from the sixth or seventh century and the Washington Gospels from the fourth or fifth century. The 274 parchment uncial manuscripts which are extant today date from the fourth to the tenth century. They provide us with vital evidence for establishing the text of the New Testament with confidence.²⁹

The third category of Greek New Testament manuscripts includes the minuscule manuscripts. Minuscule manuscripts are manuscripts from the ninth century and later which were written in a running cursive hand in contrast to the individual capital letters of the uncial manuscripts. This change in Greek writing style seems to have taken place around the beginning of the ninth century. Because they are later in date these manuscripts have survived in much greater numbers than the older papyri and other uncials. As of 1976, 2795 minuscules had been cataloged.³⁰

The lectionaries form the final category of Greek New Testament manuscripts. As in the Jewish synagogue, it became the custom of Christians to read selected passages from the Gospels and the Epistles on given Sundays and holidays during the year. In the course of time, manuscripts of these selected passages, called lectionaries, were prepared to be used in the worship services of the churches so that on a given day the appropriate passages could be easily located and read. A total of 2209 lectionaries had been cataloged as of 1976. 245 are in uncial script, and 1964 are in minuscule script.

Since the citation of scripture in official liturgical books tended to be very conservative, the lectionaries provide valuable evidence for the study of the transmission of the New Testament text.³¹ These four categories of evidence, the papyri, the parchment uncials, the minuscules, and the lectionaries, supply modern scholarship with a vast reservoir of evidence for the Greek text of the New Testament .

As in the case of the Old Testament text, the New Testament text is confirmed in a general way by many early translations. The Syriac versions, the Coptic versions, the Old Latin versions, the Latin Vulgate, the Armenian version, the Gothic version, and the Ethiopic version are among the many ancient translations of the New Testament which survive in manuscript form. Several thousand of these manuscripts are extant today. There are some 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate alone! Indeed, a huge library of ancient versions provides yet another means of confirming the text of the Greek New Testament!³²



In addition to the Greek manuscript evidence and the evidence of ancient versions, quotations of Scripture in the writings of early Christians supply valuable evidence for the confirmation of the New Testament text. A greater portion of the New Testament could be reconstructed from these quotations alone. Of greatest value to scholars are direct quotations from an author who wrote in Greek. Of lesser value are quotations from Latin writers, Syrian writers, or those who wrote in some other language.

Several difficulties are involved, however, when textual critics use these patristic writings to help decide textual problems in the New Testament. It must first be determined whether the text of the Christian writer has been accurately preserved. Next, it must be determined whether the writer was actually giving a verbatim quote or whether he was simply commenting or elaborating on a passage. In any case, the thousands of verses quoted in the writings of early Christians yield much helpful evidence for the confirmation of the New Testament text.

What About Textual Variants?

While it is true that variations in the text have arisen in many passages over the centuries of time, this great library of Greek manuscripts from different centuries and different geographical locations helps the modern textual critic to scientifically determine the original text to a very high degree of accuracy. In a large percentage of cases scholars are able to determine at what point in time and why the variation occurred and then demonstrate what the original reading was.³³ This scientific process of reconstruction is called textual criticism and is a very exacting process. Since we do not possess

the actual autographs or originals of the New Testament books, textual criticism is also a very necessary process. Norman Geisler estimates that at present, the text of the New Testament is 99.5% pure, and that the .5% of the text about which there is any question is of a trivial nature in that it does not affect our understanding of the teachings of God's word.³⁴ As time progresses and more manuscripts are studied, the assured demonstrable accuracy of the New Testament can only become greater.

History of the New Testament Text

The History of the N.T. Text

Period of Free, Unrestrained Copying
By Various Individuals
A.D. 55-300

Standardization of Text in Various
Geographical Locations, Employment Of
Trained Copyists
A.D. 300-800

General Revision and Standardization of
Expanded Byzantine Text By Trained
Monastic Copyists
A.D. 800-1500

Development of Popular Printed Greek Text
or "Textus Receptus-Based on Late
Byzantine Manuscripts
A.D. 1500-1650

Discovery of Many More Ancient Manuscripts,
Collection and Study of Variant Readings
A.D. 1650-1880

Further Discoveries and Reconstruction Of
Text Based on Vast Manuscript Evidence From
All Of Christian History
A.D. 1880-Present

The study of the relationships between the many manuscripts now available has led modern scholarship to some general conclusions regarding the history of the New Testament text (see the chart on the following page). It appears from a study of the papyri that in the early years of Christianity, the New Testament was copied in an atmosphere of great freedom. Christians in many different locations simply made copies of the sacred books for their own personal or congregational use. While some variations arose in these manuscripts, there seems to have been no attempt at standardization.

In about the fourth century there emerged several identifiable strands of the textual tradition. It appears that there were some attempts at standardization in various geographical locations and, as a result, certain discernible text types emerged. Among these were the Alexandrian, the Caesarean, the Western, and the early Byzantine text types.³⁵ Manuscripts following these various textual traditions continued to be perpetuated until around the ninth century when some kind of major revision seems to have taken place. From the ninth century onwards, the monks who copied the text of the New Testament achieved a great degree of uniformity and standardization in what is called the Byzantine textual tradition. This tradition took on several marked characteristics. 1) There was an attempt to alleviate ambiguity in the text by making what was implicit explicit. For example, in Matthew 16:20 the earlier text reads "he was the Christ" while the expanded text reads "Jesus was the Christ." 2) There was an attempt to erase seeming contradictions (for example, seeming conflicts between similar gospel accounts) by making the texts read alike. This process is called harmonization. 3) In cases where two prominent variants existed in the earlier textual traditions, they were both included in the text. This process is called conflation of readings. 4) In a few cases the marginal comments of early scribes were incorporated into the text resulting in the addition of non-original material. In spite of these factors, the text of the New Testament remained about 95% pure, a fact which surely points to the guiding hand of God. These variations did not change the message of Christ or God's commands for his church, and did not affect one's ability to understand and obey God's word. The Byzantine text type remained the standard text until after the printing press was invented.

The Textus Receptus

The printed Greek New Testament that was popular in the sixteenth century is commonly known as the Textus Receptus or "Received Text." This printed text was derived from a few of the aforementioned late Byzantine minuscules.³⁶ It is substantially the same as our modern critical Greek text except, as discussed earlier, it is considered by modern textual scholars to be slightly less pure.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, began to prepare for the publication of a printed Greek New Testament. He was commissioned by the famous publisher, Johann Froben, to undertake the task in 1515.

Erasmus made a quick trip to Basle in July of that same year and found some late medieval manuscripts which, with a certain amount of correction, could be used as a printer's copy. Because he lacked a complete manuscript of Revelation, he was forced to depend on the Latin Vulgate for the final verses instead of the Greek text and, thus, introduced some readings never before found in Greek manuscripts. In the case of 1 John 5:7,8 Erasmus was charged with negligence when he was reluctant to include the Trinitarian statement from the Latin Vulgate which reads, "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one, and there are three that bear witness on earth." He explained that he could find the passage in no Greek manuscript and if one could be shown to him he would include it. A Franciscan monk is suspected to have prepared such a manuscript from the Latin Vulgate and, when it was presented to Erasmus, he reluctantly included the passage with a lengthy note indicating his suspicions regarding its origin.³⁷ By March 1516 Erasmus' Greek New Testament was completed, although its hurried production resulted in hundreds of typographical errors. The text rested on half a dozen minuscule manuscripts, the oldest and best of which was from the tenth century.

After Erasmus, Robert Estienne, a printer from Paris, produced a Greek Testament using both the work of Erasmus and the Greek text of Spanish Cardinal Francisco Ximenes from the Complutensian Polyglot.³⁸ Estienne's third edition, which largely reproduced the work of Erasmus, became for many people, especially in England, the "received text." This same basic Greek Testament was published in different formats by a number of individuals until Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir of Leiden published a pocket edition in 1624. Evidently, it was from the preface to their second edition (1633) that the term *textus receptus* arose. They stated, in Latin of course, "the reader has the text which is now received by all in which we give nothing changed or corrupted."³⁹ Thus, the *Textus Receptus* Greek text is simply the printed Greek New Testament which represents the work of sixteenth and seventeenth century scholars. The *Textus Receptus* lies behind the famous King James Version of the Bible. It rendered valuable service to the world for many years and is really remarkably accurate, but subsequent discoveries of thousands of ancient Greek manuscripts have demonstrated some places, like the above mentioned addition to 1 John 5:7-8, where the text had been slightly expanded and its accuracy could be improved. The following are some prominent examples.

Acts 8:37 is a passage which illustrates the point. The King James Bible translated the statement of Philip and the answer of the Eunuch, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" Though the late medieval manuscript (ms. 2) upon which Erasmus had most depended did not contain the passage, another of his manuscripts (ms.4) had the passage written in the margin and Erasmus included it with the remark that it must have been omitted because of the carelessness of scribes.⁴⁰ The discovery of many earlier manuscripts later demonstrated that the passage was, in all probability, a very late addition to the text and was not written in Luke's original Acts. While it is true that according to the Latin text which we possess, Irenaeus refers to part of the statement

(Against Heresies III. xii. 8), it is not clear whether Irenaeus was actually quoting his Bible or simply commenting on what he thought must have happened.⁴¹ The earliest papyrus and parchment uncials do not contain the passage. In addition, one must keep in mind that there were no chapter and verse divisions in the ancient manuscripts, and they do not leave the impression that anything has been skipped as do modern Bibles which go from verse 36 to verse 38. The earliest known Greek manuscript which contains the confession of the Eunuch is the bilingual codex Laudianus from the sixth century. Even in this manuscript the Eunuch's statement is in a different form than the later form translated in the KJV.⁴² Other later manuscripts which contain the passage are divided as to how it should be worded, the order of the words, etc. Thus, while the doctrine of pre-baptismal confession is clearly taught in other passages about which there are no textual questions (cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Tim 6:12), it appears that Acts 8:37 was a later addition. This should not shake our faith in the Bible, for we want nothing added to it as surely as we want nothing taken from it. The more modern translations like the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version are simply more accurate at this point than the King James which was based on a later and slightly inferior text.

Another example of this phenomenon is the story of the woman taken in adultery which the Textus Receptus includes at John 7:53-8:11. In the earliest papyrus and uncial manuscripts the passage is not present. Those manuscripts which include the passage either place asterisks beside it or cannot decide where to put it. Such a passage is known by textual scholars as a "floating text." Some scribes include the passage after John 7:52. Some include the passage at the end of John's Gospel after John 21:25. Another group of manuscripts includes the passage after Luke 21:38. The passage has also been included after John 7:36 and after John 7:44. Several which did include the passage in John chapter eight disagreed on how it should be worded.⁴³ The fact that scribes had difficulty determining how to treat this passage and where to put it is clear evidence that they recognized a problem. As the editors for the United Bible Society's Greek Testament said, "...the Committee was unanimous that the pericope was originally no part of the Fourth Gospel." English Bibles today either place this passage in brackets, leave large spaces before and after it, place it in italics, or relegate it to the footnotes to show that they recognize it as a later addition. Unfortunately, because most readers do not carefully read the preface to their translation, they are often unaware of the significance of such symbols. This passage, then, is another case in which the abundance of manuscript evidence helps us to maintain the purity of the text and prevents our adding to what the Apostle John wrote. Again, the modern translations are simply more accurate to the original text at this point than is the King James which was based on the expanded Byzantine text.

Another passage which may give Bible students some cause for concern is Mark 16:9-20. This passage presents considerably more difficulty to the textual scholar than does Acts 8:37. In fact, there are four different endings to the Gospel of Mark that are attested in the manuscript tradition. Only two, however, are substantiated by enough evidence to be considered. These are the longer ending (verses 9-20) and the shorter

ending (text ends at verse 8). Both choices are substantiated by early evidence. Manuscripts Alexandrinus, Ephraemi Rescriptus, Washingtonianus, and Bezae (all from the fourth or fifth centuries), support the longer ending along with quite a number of other manuscripts. Manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus from the fourth century support the shorter ending. It seems quite incredible, though, that the book of Mark should end with the Greek word *γαρ* which means "for," but this is precisely how it would end were the text to cease with verse eight.⁴⁴ The longer ending was questioned even in the earlier years of the church, but it is certainly doctrinally harmonious with the rest of the New Testament. While the actual manuscript evidence available makes it impossible to determine with certainty how the Gospel of Mark originally ended, the same things that are taught in verses 9-20 are taught elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. the work of the Holy Spirit among the apostles, the necessity of faith and baptism, the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus). Thus, while we admit that a rather thorny textual problem exists at this passage, it is of no consequence to our understanding of what the word of God teaches.

In the years since the publication of the King James Bible, much has been learned about the history of the New Testament text. Scholars have learned much about the tendencies of scribes and the causes of textual variants by studying the thousands of manuscripts now available. Such insights have greatly helped to confirm and solidify the original text of the New Testament. For a deeper insight into such matters the reader should consult a good introduction to textual criticism.⁴⁵

In the main, the textual variants in the New Testament manuscript tradition are of little consequence. For example, what difference does it make whether Christ "washed us from our sins by his blood" or "loosed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev 1:5)? Is the church of the New Testament the "church of God" or the "church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28)? Such things will not change our understanding of the doctrines of the New Testament.

Where significant variants do exist most English Bibles will supply a footnote with an explanation of the alternate reading. This should not shake one's faith in the dependability of the Bible. It should simply make the reader aware that some manuscripts have an alternate reading at that particular point in the text. We explain all of this to assure the reader that the fractional percentage of the New Testament where variant readings exist will not affect one's ability to understand and obey the word of God.

It is the nature of textual criticism to seek to determine the original reading in cases where variant readings exist in the manuscript tradition, thus maintaining the purity of the text. Because of the nature of the task, attention is drawn to the few passages in which significant variants exist like the passages discussed above. The reader should realize, however, that it is truly only the smallest fraction of the New Testament with which the efforts of textual critics are concerned. The vast majority of the text is totally beyond question. For every passage in which the marginal note of our

English Bible reads "many ancient authorities include" or "...omit" we will read hundreds of verses where there is no such note. Remember, careful honest textual criticism can only result in making our incredibly accurate Bible even more minutely accurate. The more than 5000 Greek manuscripts upon which the text of the New Testament is based clearly demonstrate the overwhelming veracity with which the text has been preserved. We know of no other ancient book which can boast the kind of manuscript evidence which supports the Bible. God's promise that "the word of the Lord abides forever" is secure (1 Pet 1:25). His message to mankind in the Old and New Testaments has been remarkably and faithfully preserved as evidenced by thousands of manuscripts. Our Bibles are an accurate transmission of what the apostles and prophets wrote in the ancient past by inspiration of God. Thus, we know scientifically that the text of our Bibles is quite sound. Of more concern to us should be the manner in which some modern men choose to translate the Hebrew and Greek text. While there are several good English translations, there are some which are, in our view, much too careless with the sacred text. This, though, will be the topic of the next chapter in this series if the Lord wills.

ENDNOTES

¹Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 215-217.

²Ibid.

³For example, the name Cephas is an Aramaic name meaning "stone." The term Messiah is the Aramaic equivalent to the the Greek title Christ meaning "Anointed." The word Abba is Aramaic for "father." For a full discussion see Matthew Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts, 3rd. ed., rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

⁴F. Blass and A. Debrunner, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Trans. and Rev. by R.W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 1-4.

⁵Ibid.

⁶For a discussion of these materials see H.L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Studies and the Bible" in The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, 2 Edited by David N. Freedman and E. F. Campbell, Jr. (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 34-50.

⁷Parchment or vellum was a fine writing material made from scraping, washing and smoothing the skins of animals. See Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 4-5.

⁸Papyrus is made from layers of pith which come from the papyrus plant, an aquatic plant which is plentiful in the Nile Delta. See Job 7:11 and the discussion in Metzger, Text, pp. 3-4. In Jeremiah 36:2 the book is specifically called a "roll" or "scroll" book (מגלת ספר). J. Philip Hyatt feels certain that it was a papyrus roll. See his excellent discussion in "The Writing of an Old Testament Book" in The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, 1, Edited By G. Ernest Wright and David N. Freedman (Missoula, Montana: Scholar's Press, 1975), pp. 22-31.

⁹Metzger, Imo, pp. 6, 247.

¹⁰Hyatt shows through a comparison of the Hebrew term and the Egyptian termgsty that the phrase in Ezekiel chapter nine which is usually rendered "writer's inkhorn" should be translated "scribal kit." Op. Cit. pp. 29-30.

¹¹Bruce Metzger, Manuscripts of the Greek Bible, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 17.

¹²Gleason L. Archer, A Survey of Old Testament Introduction. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 63-65. As time went by the masorah was sometimes actually copied down in the margins of Hebrew Bible manuscripts. In some instances, artists even created elaborate pictures at the beginning or in the margins of manuscripts by using tiny lines of Hebrew text containing the statistics of the masorah. See David Goldstein, Hebrew Manuscript Painting, (London: The British Library Board, 1985).

¹³Raphael Levy, "Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Preserves 2000 Years of History," in Biblical Archaeological Review 8 (Sept./Oct. 1982), pp. 50-52; Neil R. Lightfoot, "The Canon and Text of the Old Testament" in The World and Literature of the Old Testament, ed. John T. Willis (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 63-64.

¹⁴Theodor H. Gaster, Trans., The Dead Sea Scriptures, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Inc., 1964): v.

¹⁵While this information is readily available from a number of sources, a good overview may be found in Norman Geisler and William Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 254-264; and Neil R. Lightfoot, "Canon and Text", pp. 56-58.

¹⁶The above information is taken from Patrick W. Skehan, "The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Text of the Old Testament" in The Biblical Archaeologist Reader 3, Ed. by E. F. Campbell, Jr. and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 240-41.

¹⁷Ibid. p. 252.

¹⁸Lightfoot, p. 61. The manuscript is 1 Qlsa.

¹⁹Skehan, p. 250.

²⁰Ibid. p. 62.

²¹See Letter of Aristeas 1:30 and Life of Moses II. vi. 31-39. See also Alfred Rahlfs, "History of the Septuagint Text" in Septuaginta, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1935): xxii-xxxi.

²²Archer, pp. 49-50.

²³Ibid. pp. 50-53.

²⁴Metzger, Manuscripts, p. 54.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Jack Finegan, Encountering New Testament Manuscripts, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 20-22; Metzger, Text, pp. 3-4. Both of these authors cite Pliny, Natural History XIII. 21ff.

²⁷Metzger, Text, pp. 36-42. See also the introductory section of the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament for a listing of the papyrus manuscripts, their dates, and their contents.

²⁸Metzger, Text, p.4.

²⁹Metzger, Text, pp. 42-57; Manuscripts, pp.74,76-77,82,86,88,96. For a more complete listing of parchment uncials see the introductory section in the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament.

³⁰Finegan, pp. 31-32; Metzger, Manuscripts, p. 54; Text, pp.9-12.

³¹Metzger, Text, pp. 30-31.

³²Metzger supplies a detailed discussion of the versional evidence. Ibid. pp. 67-86.

³³Any time two manuscripts read differently in even the smallest detail at the same passage there is a textual variant or an alternate reading. It then becomes the task of the scholar to determine which is the original reading. Most of these variants are extremely insignificant and in many cases the original reading is quite simple to determine.

³⁴Geisler and Nix, pp. 365-367. See the discussion in Metzger, Text, pp. 149-246 for details regarding the methods and practice of New Testament textual criticism.

³⁵Some scholars use slightly different names to refer to these various families or groups of manuscripts. A text type is a group of manuscripts which agree in a high percentage of cases where variant readings exist.

³⁶This basic theory of the history of the text can be found in any number of sources. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968); J. Harold Greenlee, Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964); Jack Finegan, Encountering New Testament Manuscripts, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1974); Bruce M. Metzger, The Text of the New Testament, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); etc.

³⁷J. Harold Greenlee, Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 70-71; Metzger, Text, p.101. The manuscript Erasmus used is minuscule number 61, which dates from the sixteenth century.

³⁸Metzger says that the Complutensian Polyglot was actually the first printed Greek New Testament, though Erasmus' text was the first to be put on the market for sale. It has not been satisfactorily determined exactly which manuscripts were used as the basis for the Complutensian text. Text, pp. 96-98.

³⁹Greenlee cites the Latin text, "Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo immutatum aut corruptum damus.", p. 71.

⁴⁰Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, (New York: United Bible Society, 1975), p. 360.

⁴¹Irenaeus writes, "(Philip declared) that this was Jesus, and that the Scripture was fulfilled in Him; as did also the Eunuch himself: and immediately requesting to be baptized, he said, 'I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God.' This man was also sent into the regions of Ethiopia to preach what he himself had believed..." (Against Heresies III. xii. 8). It is obvious that Irenaeus is elaborating. There is no record in Scripture of the Ethiopian actually being sent to Ethiopia to preach. In the first part of the quotation when Irenaeus tells us what Philip declared, he is not quoting, but explaining. It is likely, then, that Irenaeus is doing the same when he tells us what the Eunuch "said" or must have said. Another difficulty is that the text of Irenaeus does not survive in the original Greek but only in three late Latin manuscripts. Thus, it is impossible to determine with great accuracy what Irenaeus actually wrote at this passage. See A. Coxe's "Introductory Note to Irenaeus Against Heresies" in The Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. I ed. J. Donaldson and A. Roberts, (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 312.

⁴²The manuscript reads *πιστευω εις τον χριστον του υιου του θεου* (in uncial script, of course, with nomina sacra contractions). The Latin side reads *credo in christum filium dei*. Both are translated "I believe in the Christ the Son of God." Compare the wording in the King James. See Metzger, Manuscripts, plate 22.

⁴³The manuscript evidence is discussed fully in Metzger, A Textual Commentary, pp. 219-223.

⁴⁴Translated into English, the last part of verse eight reads, "...and no one said anything, for they were afraid."

⁴⁵See note 36.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What promise did God make in 1 Peter 1:25 regarding the endurance of his word?
2. List the three languages in which the Bible was originally written.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
3. In which two Old Testament books were large sections originally written in Aramaic?
 - a)
 - b)
4. List four different writing materials used in the production of the sacred books.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
5. Who were the masoretes? (Give dates, occupation, and significance).
6. What is the masorah?
7. What great discovery demonstrates that the Masoretic Text accurately represents the Hebrew text from pre-Christian times?

8. What was Neil Lightfoot's comment about the famous Isaiah scroll, I QIsa, and its relationship to the Isaiah in our present Hebrew Bible?
9. What is the Septuagint version of the Old Testament?
10. What is meant when we speak of a "version"?
11. What caused the Aramaic targums to come into being?
12. To what degree do the versions help in witnessing to the Old Testament text?
13. How many Greek manuscripts of the New Testament had been cataloged as of 1976?
14. What are the four major categories of Greek manuscripts?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
15. Which of the writing materials on which New Testament manuscripts were written was made of animal skin?
16. The oldest fragment of the New Testament known to us is:
17. What are the two most important collections of New Testament papyri?
 - a)
 - b)

18. What is uncial script?
19. In what type of script are most of the New Testament manuscripts written?
20. When did this style of writing come into vogue?
21. What is a lectionary?
22. What do we mean when we talk about a “textual variant”?
23. True or False: The fractional percentage of the New Testament in which significant variants exist is crucial to our understanding of the teachings of God's word.
24. Which text type is considered by most textual scholars to be an expanded form of the original? In what century did this text type come into general acceptance?
25. What are four notable characteristics of the text type which was mentioned in the previous question?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
26. What is the "Textus Receptus"?
27. Where did the term come from?
28. Is the inclusion of the trinitarian statement in 1 John 5:7,8 a positive factor for the Textus Receptus? Explain.

29. What is the earliest Greek manuscript extant which contains the confession of the Eunuch?
30. How does that manuscript read? (See the footnote.)
31. Which of the passages discussed in this volume would be called a "floating text"?
32. In our desire for a pure New Testament text, how should we feel about things that are added to the original? (See Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18).
33. How should the English Bible reader react when his Bible confronts him with a footnote pointing out an alternate reading? Should his faith in the Bible be shaken?
34. True or False: According to the evidence presented in this booklet, our confidence in the accuracy of the Bible text is based on good scientific and historical evidence.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE

The ancestors of English speaking people were largely ignorant of the Bible during the Middle Ages. They heard the mass in Latin and only occasionally heard the Bible stories told in the Anglo-Saxon tongue. At times they saw pictures depicting these stories in ecclesiastical buildings or on illuminated manuscripts. In all of this, the people of Britain were largely at the mercy of the interpreter, the artist, or the story teller where the knowledge of the Bible was concerned. Thankfully, the light of God's word eventually made its way into the English speaking world and changed the lives of millions.

The story of the English Bible begins in the seventh century. In the monastery of St. Paul at Jarrow, there lived a British monk known as the Venerable Bede. A rare and learned man in an age of ignorance and illiteracy, Bede produced a volume entitled "A History of the English Church and People." In this work he described some of the earliest efforts to communicate the message of the Bible in English. He tells of a monk named Caedmon who lived at the monastery of Streanaeshalch in the year 680. Caedmon was gifted at putting the Bible stories into poetic form in the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

So skillful was he in composing religious and devotional songs that, when any passage of scripture was explained to him by interpreters, he could quickly turn it into delightful and moving poetry in his own English tongue. These verses of his have stirred the hearts of many folk to despise the world and aspire to heavenly things. (IV. 24).

The songs of Caedmon were marvelous indeed for a people who had largely been deprived of the Bible message, but they were still only poetic paraphrases of the Bible stories, and not translations of the Bible itself.¹ F. F. Bruce provides us with one such poem from Caedmon in Old English which is set forth on the chart on the following page.² Old English is the designation for the earliest known stage of our language which has since evolved into a completely different tongue. The reader will recognize that it requires translation as surely as any other foreign tongue.

Others in the Middle Ages attempted to give portions of the Bible to the English people in the vernacular. Aldhelm, the first Bishop of Sherborne in Dorset, is said to have translated the Psalms into Old English around the year 700. The Venerable Bede himself is said to have given the English people parts of the New Testament in their native tongue. He is reported to have died after translating the Fourth Gospel into English. The English King Alfred (871-901) supplied the people with a translation of the Ten Commandments, other parts of Exodus, a negative form of the golden rule, the apostolic letter drawn up by the Jerusalem council in Acts 15, and part of the Book of Psalms.³

CAEDMON'S POETRY

Ne beoþh ge þu forhtan, theaþ the Faraon brohte,
 sweordwīgendra side hergas, eorla unrim!
 Him eallum wile mihtig drihten thurh mine hand
 to dæge þissum daedlean gýfan,
 thaet hie lifigende leng ne moton
 aegnian mid yrmthum Israhela cyn.
 Ne willað eow ondraedan deade seþan
 faege ferhthlocan! Fyrst is æt ende
 laenes lifes. Eow is lar godes
 a-broden of breostum: ic on beteran ræd,
 thaet ge gýurthien wuldres aldor
 and eow liffreaan lissa biddz,
 sigora gesynto, thaer ge sithien!

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A LINE BY LINE RENDERING OF THIS
 PORTION OF THE POEM IN MORE RECENT ENGLISH

Be not frightened thereat, though Pharaoh had brought
 Sword-wielders, vast troops, men without number!
 To them all will the mighty Lord through my hand
 this very day a recompense give,
 that they may not live long
 to frighten with distress Israel's kin.
 Be not afraid of a dead army,
 death-doomed bodies, the term is at an end
 of their mortal life. By you the exhortation of God
 has been removed from your breasts: I offer better counsel,
 that you honor the Prince of glory
 and pray the Lord of life for favor to you,
 victory's fruit, wherever you journey!

Still, the Bible in English was far from complete and certainly not widely available. In the tenth century, other attempts at English Bible translation were made. A priest named Aldred wrote a literal English translation between the lines of a seventh century Gospel manuscript. This famous manuscript, pictured below, resides in the British museum and is known as the Lindisfarne Gospels.



THE LINDISFARNE GOSPELS: BRITISH MUSEUM

The Rushworth Gospels, a similar Latin-English interlinear, was reportedly done about a generation later by an Irish scribe, Mac Regol. Some time before the year 1000, the first extant independent English translation was completed. It is known as the Wessex Gospels and is also the property of the British museum.⁴ F. F. Bruce gives this excerpt from the tenth century Wessex Gospels. The reader will still find it very difficult to understand, even if he is familiar with the parable.

Wessex Gospels: Matt. 13:3-8

Sothlice ut eode se sawere his saed to sawenne. And tha tha he seow, sumu hie feollon with weg, and fuglas comon and aeton tha. Sothlice sumu feollon on staenichte, thaer hit naefde micle eorþan, and hraedlice up sprungon, for thaem the hie naefdon thaere eorþan diepan; sothlice, up sprungene sunnan, hie adrugodon and forscruncdon, for thaem the hie naefdon wyrtruman. Sothlice sume feollon on thornas, and tha thornas weoxon, and forthrysmdon tha. Sumu sothlice feollon on gode eorþan, and sealdon waestm, sum hund-jealdne, sum siextigjealdne, sum thritigjealdne.

Following the year 1066 the effects of the Norman Conquest left the English language and culture greatly changed. The English of this period is called Middle English. In this period there was some English translation of parts of the Bible, includ-

ing a work known as the Ormulum, a poetic paraphrase of the Gospels and Acts. A translation of the book of Psalms was done by William of Shoreham, and another by Richard Rolle.⁵ But the greatest effort at English Bible translation during this period was that of John Wycliffe.

John Wycliffe (1320-84) was a great theologian and scholar who taught at the University of Oxford. He was disheartened and outraged by many of the abuses and inconsistencies which he saw in the Roman Church. His study of the Scriptures led him to oppose many of the teachings and practices of Catholicism. He became convicted that every man was responsible to obey the Bible and must, therefore, know what to obey. For this reason he believed that the Bible must be made accessible to the people in their own tongue. Under his inspiration and perhaps with his own help, the friends and colleagues of Wycliffe set about the work of translating the Latin Vulgate into English. According to Bruce, the first Wycliffite Bible was produced in the last four years of Wycliffe's life (1380-84). After Wycliffe's death his secretary, John Purvey, thoroughly revised the Wycliffite Bible. Most of the extant Wycliffe Bibles today are actually copies of Purvey's revision. Wycliffe's teachings were pronounced heretical by the Roman Church and only his own death from natural causes prevented his martyrdom. Some of the poor priests who taught the Bible in the English countryside were not so fortunate. The efforts of Wycliffe, though, were to be repeated over a century later with much greater success. The following is an excerpt from John 17:1 ff taken from the Purvey revision of the Wycliffe Bible.⁶ One will immediately notice the many different words and archaic spellings which make comprehension for the modern reader a tedious task.

"These thingis Jesus spak; and whanne he hadde cast up hise
eyen into hevene, he seide: 'Fadir, the our cometh; clarifie thi
sone, that thi sone clarifie thee; as thou hast yorun to hym
power on ech fleische, that al thing that thou hast yorun to
hym, he yve to hem everlastynge liif. And this is everlas-
tynge liif, that thei knowe thee very God aloone, and whom
thou hast sent, Jesus Christ. Y have clarified thee on the erthe
Y have ended the werk that thou hast yorun me to do. And
now, Fadir, clarifie thou me as thisilf, with the clereness that
Y hadde at thee bifor the world was maad.

The next hundred years saw very little work done on translating the Bible into English. This was true, at least in part, because it was illegal. The famous Synod of Oxford in 1408, summoned by the archbishop of Canterbury, stated that it was illegal for

anyone to translate or even to read a vernacular version of the Bible, in whole or in part, without the approval of his diocesan bishop or a provincial council.⁷

In spite of this tyrannical law, William Tyndale forged ahead in giving the Bible to the English people. William Tyndale (1495-1536) is sometimes called the father of the English Bible, because a large percentage of his work is carried over into later versions of the English Bible. His translation of the New Testament was the first one to be printed in English (1525). It was Tyndale's desire to give every man a chance to know the will of God firsthand. According to John Foxe, Tyndale was once in a conversation with a learned follower of the Pope. The papist is said to have affirmed, "We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." To this Tyndale replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws," and added, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."⁸ Tyndale found it impossible to do his work of translation in England and was forced to flee to the European continent to complete the task. From the Continent he imported the New Testaments into England, smuggling them in bales of cloth. He was also able, according to Foxe, to translate the Pentateuch into English. Eventually, Catholicism and the secular authorities wanted him so badly, that they arranged to kidnap him and thereafter executed him. Tyndale was strangled by the hangman and burned at the stake in October 1536.⁹

Miles Coverdale, one time assistant to William Tyndale, was the first man to give the English people the entire Bible in printed form in 1535. His New Testament was basically a reproduction of Tyndale's work, but was slightly revised in light of the German versions. In the Old Testament he depended on Tyndale in those books which Tyndale had translated, and upon the Latin and German versions in other sections. He was not himself a Greek or Hebrew scholar.¹⁰

In 1537 at Antwerp, the entire Bible was again published. This edition, known as The Matthew's Bible, is thought to be the work of John Rogers. It is basically a reproduction of the work of Tyndale and Coverdale. The Matthew's Bible was dedicated to King Henry and Queen Jane, and was granted a license. It was thus the first printed Bible to be officially authorized by the government.¹¹

Several English Bibles were issued by various Protestants in the years that followed. In 1539 Richard Taverner published an English Bible. In April of the same year, another Bible was issued for use in the churches. This Bible, called the Great Bible because of its enormous size, was published with the approval of the king. Miles Coverdale was the overseer of the project. Copies of the huge Bible were placed in the churches and chained to the reading stands where they could be read by the people. In the years that followed, restrictions upon reading the Scriptures were imposed and relaxed from time to time. Perhaps the heaviest restrictions came in the reign of Queen Mary who, in 1553, prohibited public reading of the Scriptures by proclamation. The restrictions were relaxed, however, with the coming of Queen Elizabeth to the throne in 1560. The protestant exiles in Geneva then presented Elizabeth with The Geneva Bible

which enjoyed a considerable popularity in Britain. In 1568 Matthew Parker and a number of English Bishops issued a revision of the Great Bible known as The Bishop's Bible, which became the standard church Bible in England for some time to come.¹²

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Catholics also felt the need to prepare an edition of the English Bible to combat the ever rising influence of Protestantism. They insisted that many false translations which had changed the meaning of the Holy Scriptures had been put forth by the Protestants, and had necessitated the new English version which they set forth. According to Lewis, extensive notes by William Allen which strongly argued the Roman theological positions accompanied the Catholic translation.¹³ Exiles Gregory Martin, William Allen, and Richard Bristow issued the New Testament at Rheims in 1582. It was translated from the Latin Vulgate. The Old Testament was not completed until 1609-1610 at Douai. In accordance with the rulings of the Council of Trent in 1546, the Rheims-Douai Bible printed the Apocrypha, like the Vulgate, as part of the canonical Old Testament. In contrast, Protestant English Bibles since Coverdale's translation had printed the Apocrypha as an appendix at the end of the Old Testament, demonstrating their belief that the books were not a legitimate part of the Old Testament canon.¹⁴

By the year 1610 the English Bible had become firmly entrenched in the English speaking world. A variety of translations had brought the word of God into the lives of countless persons who diligently sought to live the things they came to understand from its pages. The coming year, however, was to witness the birth of the most popular and influential English translation of the Scriptures ever produced. This translation was to become the standard English Bible for all of Protestantism for the next three hundred years.

THE KING JAMES BIBLE

The English translation destined to become the most popular of all was known as the King James Bible. James I became King of England in 1603 after the death of Queen Elizabeth. In the following year, the Hampton Court conference was held by a number of churchmen and theologians. The participants in the conference resolved that, "a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as can be to the original Hebrew and Greek...without marginal notes, and only to be used in all Churches of England in time of divine service."¹⁵ The absence of pro-Protestant or pro-Catholic notes was to make this Bible the least offensive translation to have been produced in some time. Its purpose seems to have been rather limited at first. It was simply designed to replace the Bishop's Bible as the official translation to be read in Anglican churches. Its ultimate influence, however, was much wider.

According to Bruce, King James himself organized the work of translation, appointing six panels of translators. These panels included a total of forty-seven men

from Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster. Two men from each panel served on a final review board. Miles Smith composed the preface, "The Translators to the Reader."¹⁶ This preface, recently reproduced and commented upon by Edgar J. Goodspeed, is extremely informative.

According to their own assertions, the translators believed that it was the responsibility of all people to study the Scriptures for themselves. Miles Smith writes, "The Scriptures, then, being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect, how can we excuse ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them..."¹⁷

The translators believed quite strongly that the Bible should be in a form that is understandable to the masses. Smith asks, "But how shall men meditate in that which they cannot understand?...Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well...without a bucket or something to draw with."¹⁸ Insisting that the Scriptures in the common language help in the saving of souls, Smith continues, "Now what can be more available thereto, than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue they understand?"¹⁹

The translators were under no delusion that they had done a perfect work. They were fully aware that mistakes would be found from place to place in their work and that their work would need to be corrected and improved. Smith says, "No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word, ... notwithstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it."²⁰ In support of this idea, Smith reminds the reader of the imperfections of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and how the apostles used it nevertheless.

The translators believed that the English Bible should be kept current with the language and scholarship of the day. Smith insisted that there was no reason why the word translated should be "forbidden to be current." In view of this, it is not surprising that the KJV was updated and improved many times in the coming years. According to Lewis, two editions were printed in 1611 which differed from one another in several respects. Changes were again made in 1612. In 1613 another 413 changes were made. In 1629 the first edition without the Apocrypha was published, though the omission of the Apocrypha did not become common until the nineteenth century.²¹ Over the years of KJV publication, the spelling of words was greatly changed as the English language continued its evolution. We arbitrarily selected the KJV rendering of Matthew 12:1 to illustrate this fact. Notice particularly that *lesus*, *thorow*, *corne*, *&*, *beganne*, *eares*, and *eate* have been modernized.

Matthew 12:1 (1611 Version)

At that time, Iesus went on the Sabbath day
thorow the corne, & his disciples were an
hungred, and beganne to pluck the eares of
corne, and to eate.

Matthew 12:1 (1955 Version)

At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day
through the corn; and his disciples were an
hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn
and to eat.

The KJV translators recognized that their work was not all original with them. Many English translations had been done before. Having received much criticism for producing yet another English translation, Smith says on behalf of the group, "...we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, ... but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one."²² As was pointed out earlier, it is estimated that some 90 per cent of the King James Bible retains the wording of William Tyndale's translation.²³

For many years there have been advocates of the idea that the King James Version of the Bible should be the final translation for all time. People like David Otis Fuller, author of Which Bible? and True or False?, would have us believe that any attempt to revise the text or modernize the language of the KJV is a satanic attack on the foundations of Christian faith.²⁴ If one examines the comments of the KJV translators themselves, however, it is quite obvious that they did not share this opinion. The King James Bible, which became the most popular English Bible in history, served its day well and opened the truths of scripture to many people, but it is not the version to end all versions. It was the belief of the KJV translators that the word of God should be

kept "current" in the language of the day and that it should be as accurate as possible to the original languages. Since 1611, not only has the English language greatly changed, but much has been learned about the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible. There came a time, then, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the cry arose for a revision of the long reigning King James Bible.

The discovery and study of multitudes of ancient manuscripts of the Bible made it evident that the Textus Receptus, the late medieval Greek Text upon which the King James Bible was based, was in need of some correction.²⁵ This realization prompted the Upper House of Convocation in Canterbury to set forth a motion about the possible revision of the KJV. After a study to see if the revision was warranted, the motion was approved. The resultant work of revision was carried out by committees of Catholic and Protestant scholars from Great Britain and the U.S. between 1870 and 1885. The published work in England was known as the Revised Version. The work was published with a few variations in 1901 in the U.S. as the American Standard Version. The fury of criticism launched against the revision centered substantially on the text underlying it. The Textus Receptus Greek text was completely abandoned in favor of a critically reconstructed text. This "new" text was based on the mass of manuscript evidence which had been accumulated in the years since 1611, and was actually closer to the original than the Textus Receptus. Much of the outcry from people like England's John W. Burgeon was over isolated passages which were shown by the early manuscripts to be later additions to the text, and were not included in the revision. Of course the English sentence structure of the revision was also criticized as inferior. This, in the view of most who study the RV and the ASV, is a valid criticism and is due to the fact that the revision attempts too literal a translation from the Greek text. The fundamental issue, particularly in the New Testament, still concerns the underlying text.²⁶ Most modern English versions since the 1881 revision have continued to translate the most up to date critical Greek text, based on the totality of the manuscript evidence. The notable exception to this rule is the New King James Bible which has reverted to the Textus Receptus in an appeal to the reader who still prefers the King James tradition.²⁷

In the pages which follow, we will not attempt to give a history of English Bible Translation since the revision of 1881, nor will we deal with obviously perverted translations of the cults like the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Rather than giving dates of publication and names of committee members for the various translations, we will attempt to offer some objective comparisons between some of the more popular English Bibles of today, and will draw some tentative conclusions as to their relative value. In each case, we will supply the reader with the Greek text from the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament, second edition. Then we will give the text of several translations at a specific passage and make some comments about the pros and cons of each.

Test Passage #1
1 Peter 3:21

Greek Text

²¹ὁ καὶ ὑμᾶς ἀντίτυπον νῦν σώζει βάπτισμα, οὐ
σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ρύπου ἀλλὰ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς
ἐπερώτημα εἰς θεόν δι' ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

King James Version

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

American Standard Version

which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Revised Standard Version

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

New American Standard Bible

And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

New International Version

And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

New English Bible

This water prefigured the water of baptism through which you are now brought to safety. Baptism is not the washing away of bodily pollution, but the appeal made to God by a good conscience; and it brings salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Today's English Version

This water was a figure pointing to baptism, which now saves you, not by washing off bodily dirt, but by the promise made to God from a good conscience. Baptism saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

New King James Version

There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Simple English Bible

Today, this is a picture of how immersion saves us through the raising of Jesus Christ from death. Immersion is not getting rid of body dirt. No, it is an appeal to God for a clear conscience.

Living Bible Paraphrased

(That, by the way, is what baptism pictures for us: In baptism we show that we have been saved from death and doom by the resurrection of Christ; not because our bodies are washed clean by the water, but because in being baptized we are turning to God and asking him to cleanse our hearts from sin.)

Discussion of Test Passage #1

Concerning the first assertion of the verse, the ASV is certainly the most literal of all of the translations here considered. The verse begins with the Greek neuter pronoun "which". The pronoun refers to the water in the previous verse. It is the "water" of the flood which is somehow said to correspond to or be an antitype of the water of baptism. The KJV also achieves a fairly literal translation, though it seems to ignore the pronoun, "which." The NIV replaces the pronoun "which" with the words "this water" making the ambiguity disappear, and making the meaning quite clear. One may question, however, whether a translator has the right to go beyond translation to *explanation* in such a case. The NKJV is also quite literal in its translation of the first portion of the verse and perhaps succeeds in putting the assertion in a little better English. Both the NASB and

the RSV achieve a better English statement than does the ASV and still retain a quite literal rendering. Perhaps these two are slightly better than the NKJV's "antitype" which is simply a transliteration of the Greek *αντιτυπον*. They use the words "corresponds" and "corresponding" to bring out the meaning of the word. This is certainly an improvement in communication over the archaic "the like figure whereunto" given by the KJV. The TEV is comparable to the NIV and certainly communicates a proper meaning in the first portion of the verse. Slightly more paraphrastic are the NEB and the SEB with their free addition of words and substitution of words which they feel enhance the *explanation* of what Peter said. To the credit of the SEB, it does abandon the traditional transliteration "baptism" for the translation "immersion." On the first portion of the verse, the only outright change of meaning is the Living Bible's paraphrase which does not at all say what Peter said. The Greek *βαπτισμα* "baptism" is in the nominative case and is the subject of the verb "saves" *σωζει*. It is baptism which now saves, as all of the other translations properly say. But Kenneth Taylor's Living Bible irreverently affirms that baptism only "pictures" the fact that one has already been saved. Surely this is a case where the theology of Taylor has crept into his paraphrase. Of this danger, however, he warned the reader in the preface to his work.²⁸

The second portion of the verse, commonly treated as a parenthetical statement, negates the idea that baptism is for bodily cleansing and relates its purpose to the cleansing of the conscience. The negative portion of this parenthetical statement is translated quite literally by the KJV, ASV, NASB, and NKJV. "Putting away" and "removal" as well as "filth" and "dirt" are simply legitimate alternate translations of the Greek words. The RSV, NIV, and SEB expand the word "flesh", *σαρκος*, to "body." This may not be an estrangement from the basic meaning, but is not what the Greek text actually says. The word "body" is the Greek word *σωμα* which does not occur in this verse. The SEB also repeats the word "immersion" which does not appear again in the Greek text. The NEB and TEV substitute the word "washing" for "removal" or "putting away" or "getting rid of" which would be legitimate translations of *αποθεις*. Again, while they still retain the essential meaning of the assertion, they are not reproducing what the writer actually wrote. As in the previous discussion, the Living Bible Paraphrased completely ignores the Greek text and gives a commentary on the passage.

The second part of the parenthetical statement is that which explains that baptism is really an appeal to God for a good conscience and instead of a physical bath. This portion of the verse is possessed of a single difficulty which accounts for the basic differences in the various translations. The difficulty lies in the translation of the word *επερωτημα*, which may, according to the sources examined by Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, be rendered "question, request, appeal,...or pledge."²⁹ The ASV uses an equivalent word, "interrogation", but this seems only to worsen the ambiguity of the already difficult statement. The NASB, RSV, NIV, and SEB all use a legitimate alternative here. The KJV and NKJV translate the word in question as "answer", which seems quite unjustifiable. The NEB and TEV make the statement read as if the conscience of the baptismal candidate is already clear before baptism. Particularly, the TEV says that

baptism is a "promise made to God from a good conscience." Thus, the KJV, NKJV, NEB, and TEV all weaken the statement made in the first part of the verse that baptism brings about salvation from sin. As in the previously discussed sections, the Living Bible's rendering is a complete paraphrase or commentary and is not a straight forward translation.

Amazingly enough, the final segment of the verse regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ is translated quite consistently by all of the translators. Taylor leaves out the name Jesus, but in view of our previous observations, this should not be too surprising.

This discussion should reinforce to the reader that the issue of translation and translation theory is not a simple one. There are many factors to be considered with every verse. Let us now consider another test passage.

Test Passage #2 John 20:30-31

GREEK TEXT

³⁰ Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ]^ρ, ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ. ³¹ ταῦτα δὲ γεγραται ἵνα πιστεύσητε^ς ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ.

King James Version

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

American Standard Version

Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.

Revised Standard Version

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

New American Standard Bible

Many other signs, therefore, Jesus also performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

New International Version

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

New English Bible

There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. Those here written have been recorded in order that you may hold the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may possess eternal life by his name.

Today's English Version

Jesus did many other mighty works in his disciples' presence which are not written down in this book. These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may have life in his name.

New King James Version

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book: but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

Simple English Bible

Jesus showed many more proofs from God in front of his followers, but these are not written in this book. These proofs have been written so that you, the reader, might believe this: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. If you believe this you will have eternal life by his name.

Living Bible Paraphrased

Jesus' disciples saw him do many other miracles besides the ones told about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in him you will have life.

Discussion of Test Passage #2 John 20:30-31

The first statement of the passage reveals the fact that Jesus did other signs which are not recorded in the Gospel of John. The KJV, NKJV, ASV, RSV, and NASB all give a quite literal rendering of the statement using legitimate alternative translations for the Greek words present in the text. The word "truly" in the KJV and NKJV is the only notable addition to the Greek text. The Greek word *εποιησεν* is correctly translated as either "did" (KJV, RSV, NKJV, ASV) or "performed" (NASB). The RSV omits the word "therefore."

Almost as literal as the aforementioned translations is the NIV's rendering, except that it renders the word *σημεία* as "miraculous signs." This is more of an interpretation than a translation. While it is true that most of the signs recorded in the Gospel of John were miraculous, it is not necessarily true that a "sign" was always miraculous. It is quite clear in the Greek text that the cleansing of the temple in John 2 was considered to be a "sign," or a symbolic action designed to teach a spiritual lesson. It was not, however, a miracle. The prophetic "signs" of Ezekiel or Isaiah in the Old Testament were certainly symbolic acts, but were not miracles.³⁰ Thus, when the NIV renders *σημεία* as *miraculous signs* it forces the reader to a particular understanding which is not always correct. This tendency toward interpretation which goes beyond translation, in our view, is a less than desirable feature which sometimes crops up in the NIV.

The NEB and TEV are roughly in the same category as the NIV. The NEB is the best rendering of the three. Perhaps "recorded" is a legitimate translation of *γεγραμμενα*, though it is most literally translated "written." The TEV renders "signs" or *σημεία* as "mighty works" which has a similar weakness to the "miraculous signs" of the NIV. In this case, the reader may not understand that "mighty works" were usually miraculous. The reader may also fail to grasp that these works were often symbolic and designed to teach spiritual lessons. For these reasons, the translation is deficient.

The SEB and LBP are still more paraphrastic. That Jesus "showed many more proofs from God" or that his disciples "saw him do many more miracles besides the ones told about in this book" are certainly both factual statements, but are in no way translations of the Greek text.

The next part of our text concerns the fact that these signs were recorded to produce faith in the reader that Jesus is the Christ. The KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, and NKJV are all virtually identical here, giving a very straightforward translation. The NEB expands *γεγραπται* to "here written have been recorded" in the interest of clarity of meaning but at the price of true translation. The SEB inserts the word "proofs", and says that they are written so that "you, the reader," might believe. Of course, "the reader" does not appear in the Greek text. The TEV, SEB, and LBP have chosen to replace the Greek "Christ" with the Aramaic "Messiah" which does not occur here as it does in John 1:41 and 4:25.

The final portion of our test passage regards the fact that while one is believing on Jesus he will enjoy eternal life. It is important to note here that "believing", is a present participle and that the present participle of *πιστεω* is prominent in the entire Fourth Gospel (3:16; 36; 5:24; 6:35; 11:25 etc.). The KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV and NKJV all translate quite literally. The NEB and TEV translate this as "through this faith." First, this rendering destroys the verbal aspect of the participle. Next, it implies that eternal life is linked to the simple acceptance of the fact that Jesus is the Christ. On the contrary, the word "believing" in John includes all that is involved in "receiving" Jesus and "obeying" Jesus (1:12; 3:36). In the Fourth Gospel, "believing" is also viewed as a continuous action or way of living. The NEB and TEV do not do justice to this idea. The SEB does the same thing by saying, "if you believe this." Again, it is not a translation. The Living Bible is better, but leaves out the word "name" which is in the Greek text.

Test Passage #3 **1 JOHN 1:7**

GREEK TEXT

⁷ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί,
κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ
υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας.

King James Version

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

American Standard Version

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Revised Standard Version

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

New American Standard Bible

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

New International Version

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin.

New English Bible

But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share together a common life, and we are being cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus his Son.

Today's English Version

But if we live in the light - just as he is in the light - then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, makes us clean from every sin.

New King James Version

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Simple English Bible

God is in the light. We should also live in the light. If we live in the light, then we have a relationship of sharing with each other, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, continues to cleanse us from all sin.

Living Bible Paraphrased

But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin.

Discussion of Test Passage #3

1 John 1:7

The first section of the verse under discussion is the "if" part of the sentence technically called the protasis. The KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NEB, and NKJV all translate this segment in virtually the same way. The only notable difference is that the NASB and the NEB render the word *αὐτός* as "he himself" instead of simply "he." It is questionable whether this emphasis is necessary. Also peculiar is the capitalization of the pronouns in the NASB and NKJV in order to give more reverence to deity. This practice is certainly unnecessary in view of the fact that the Greek text does not do it. The TEV, SEB, and LBP translate the verb "we walk", *περιπατῶμεν*, as "we live." This is certainly the meaning. The text, though, is using the metaphor of "walking" down a path to depict a particular style of living. Not to leave the translation "walk" is to erase the metaphor. Both the SEB and LBP add much to what is actually present in the Greek text. The SEB adds two entire sentences to those which actually appear in the Greek text, "God is in the light. We should also live in the light." The LBP speaks of "the light of God's presence" which not only is not what the text says, but is not even what it means (see John 8:12). The LBP then adds, "just as Christ does." This is a mistake because the word "he" obviously refers back to the word "God" in verse five.

The next part of the verse concerns the fact that those who are walking in the light have fellowship with one another. The KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, and TEV all give a very literal translation here. The word *κοινωνίαν* is legitimately translated "fellowship, sharing, participation, communion, contribution," and perhaps a few other things. The word describes that which Christians share with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, which they also share with other Christians (1 Jn. 1:3). The NEB translates the clause under consideration "then we share together a common life." While this gets close to the meaning, there is more to the idea of "fellowship" than "a common life." It also includes that relationship which we alone share with the Father and the Son (1:3). The SEB says that "we have a relationship of sharing with each other." This is dynamically equivalent with the word fellowship. The last part of the verse deals with one who, walking in the light, is cleansed of all sin by the blood of Jesus. The KJV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, TEV, and LBP translate the statement in virtually the same way. There is, of course, no difference between "cleanseth" and "cleanses", the archaic and modern forms both expressing the Greek present tense. "All" and "every" both convey the idea that there is no sin left uncleansed. The NIV's "purifies" and the TEV's "makes us clean" are other legitimate translations of *καθαρίζει*. The translation of the SEB "continues to cleanse" is also a legitimate rendering of the present tense verb. Neither changes the meaning of the statement. The most notable difference among those translations mentioned here is the fact that the KJV and NKJV read "Jesus Christ his Son" instead of "Jesus his Son." This is a difference in the underlying text and not a translation difference, the Textus Receptus having "Christ" while the critically based text simply reads "Jesus."

The NEB changes the active "cleanses" to the passive "we are being cleansed" for which there is no justification. The SEB changes the ambiguous "his Son" to "God's Son" in the interest of clarity, but at the price of honesty with the Greek text. The word "God," *θεός*, does not occur.

Tentative Conclusions

The three test passages presented above in no way provide the reader with conclusive evidence regarding the overall character or reliability of the translations here mentioned. They do, however, in the view of the author, constitute a basis in the reader's mind for the comments that follow. First, we will comment briefly about translation theory. Then, we will attempt to categorize the translations mentioned above in view of the translation theory espoused by the translators.

According to Beekman and Callow, there are four basic types of translations. Two of these are acceptable, according to them, and two are unacceptable. The four types of translations include the *highly literal*, the *modified literal*, the *idiomatic*, and the *unduly free* types. The following chart is from their book, Translating the Word of God.³¹

Unacceptable Types			
	Acceptable types		
highly literal	modified literal	idiomatic	unduly free

It is true, as Beekman and Callow point out, that it is really unproductive to give a woodenly literal translation simply because such a translation would be exceedingly difficult to understand. For example, Greek word order is different than English word order. Greek grammar and syntax do not correspond exactly to the grammar and syntax of English. Therefore, to be completely literal would actually obscure the message of the sacred text.

The modified literal approach tries to stay as close as possible to the wording and structure of the original without masking the meaning. A modified literal translation may not literally preserve an idiom or figure of speech in certain cases, if that idiom could not be properly understood by the reader in translation. For example, the KJV translated the Greek idiom in 1 John 3:17 as "shutteth up his bowels of compassion

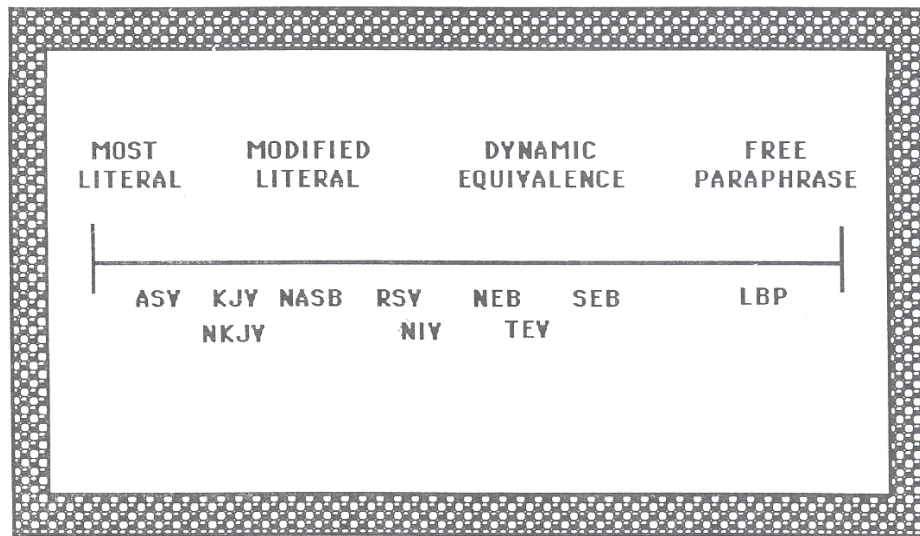
from him." The Greek text literally reads, "shuts up his bowels from him," but the translators had to add the words "of compassion" to explain the meaning of the idiom. The NASB translates the idiom, "closes his heart against him" and also conveyed a proper meaning.

The idiomatic approach advocated by Beekman and Callow goes a step farther. They maintain that as long as the same "meaning" is conveyed in every passage as was conveyed in the original, it is immaterial whether the same words or metaphors or structure is preserved. To produce such a translation, they heavily emphasize the necessity of proper exegesis.³² The problem with such an approach is that it relies too heavily on the human exegete. Human exegetes, however, are not infallible. Whereas the original may, in some cases, be ambiguous enough to admit two or three possible interpretations, the dynamic equivalence approach will pick one possibility and destroy the others. For example, when one literally translates the word *σημεία* in John 20:30 as "signs" he is on safe ground. From reading John's Gospel, one discovers that "signs" were most often miracles, but were not always miracles. Also, one discovers that "signs" were often actions which carried symbolic meanings. The NIV, however, translates the word as "miraculous signs," excluding the possibility that some signs, like the cleansing of the temple in John 2, were non-miraculous. The TEV translates the word as "mighty works," which eliminates the idea of the symbolism contained in those works. In short, it seems that it would be better just to retain the literal translation "signs", and leave the interpretation up to the reader.

A major weakness of the "dynamic equivalence" or "idiomatic" approach of Beekman and Callow is that it does not do justice to the idea of plenary verbal inspiration. If indeed the very words of scripture are inspired by God (Matt. 5:18; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16), then we should be very uncomfortable about abandoning those words (Deut. 4:2). We should, it seems, preserve as nearly as possible the words of the original text without damaging the meaning. Translators should simply translate and leave interpretation up to each reader.

The unduly free approach mentioned by Beekman and Callow is that which is represented by the Living Bible Paraphrased and other similar works. Such paraphrases make no attempt whatever to translate the original. These are nothing more than commentaries on the text. They are not Bibles.

Based on the observations presented above, let us now present our views in regard to where the various translations discussed might be placed along a continuum from most literal to most paraphrastic.



We admit that there is a degree of subjectivity in classifying these translations along such a line, but the classifications are also based on extensive observations. We would in no way suggest that this chart is immune to alteration. It is given simply as a general guide to some of the most popular English Bible translations.

If the reader believes the biblical doctrine of inspiration, he will want to choose one or more modified literal translations from which to do his careful study. The more comparison is made between translations, the better. For explanatory purposes he may want to use a dynamic equivalence translation, but should realize that he is not reading exactly what the inspired writers wrote. As a commentary, perhaps a paraphrase has its place. The reader should fully realize, though, that he is not reading a valid translation of the Bible and he should not appeal to a paraphrase to confirm matters of doctrine.

It is our conviction that careful study of any good modified literal translation of the Bible will yield an understanding of the biblical teachings, and that there can be unanimity on those teachings. Let us realize, then, that no English translation is perfect, but that several good translations are available which can teach us God's truth. Of utmost importance, in view of the conviction that the Bible is the word of God, is that we study it in view of eternity and seek to obey it to the best of our ability.

ENDNOTES

¹F.F. Bruce, The English Bible, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 2-5; Norman Geisler and William Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 399-400; Jack P. Lewis, The English Bible From KJV to NIV, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 17.

²Bruce, pp. 4-5.

³Bruce, pp. 6-7

⁴Geisler and Nix, p. 401.

⁵Bruce, pp. 9-10; Geisler and Nix, pp. 401-2.

⁶The excerpt and a photograph of the actual page from a manuscript of the Purvey revision is reproduced in Tim Dowley, "John Wyclif," in Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity, ed. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 339.

⁷Bruce, pp. 20-21.

⁸John Foxe, Fox's Book of Martyrs, ed. Wm. B. Forbush, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), p. 178.

⁹Ibid. p. 184.

¹⁰Bruce, p. 58-59; Lewis, p. 23.

¹¹Lewis, p. 24.

¹²Bruce, pp. 94-95; Lewis p.26.

¹³Lewis, p.27

¹⁴Bruce, p. 123. The council of Trent had decreed that any person who did not accept the Apocrypha as canonical exactly as it appeared in the Latin Vulgate would be considered anathema.

¹⁵Bruce, p. 96.

¹⁶Bruce, pp. 97-98.

¹⁷Edgar J. Goodspeed, ed., The Translators to the Reader: Preface to the King James Version 1611, (Chicago: University Press), p. 19.

¹⁸Goodspeed, pp. 20-21.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 27.

²⁰Ibid. p. 29.

²¹Lewis, pp. 37-39

²²Goodspeed, p. 29.

²³Tony Lane, "William Tyndale and the English Bible," in Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity, ed. Tim Dowley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 370.

²⁴David Otis Fuller, True or False?, (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1973), p.19. Fuller dedicates his book to all those who believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures...and who hold that the Textus Receptus is nearest to the original manuscripts, as if these two tenants are inseparable.

²⁵See Bruce M. Metzger's discussion in The Text of the New Testament (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 106-256.

²⁶See the discussion of the text of the New Testament in Dan R. Owen, How We Got the Bible: Part Three. Transmission of the Text, (Denver: Christian Development Publications, 1986), pp. 12-16.

²⁷See the detailed discussion in Lewis, pp. 334-338.

²⁸Kenneth Taylor, The Living Bible Paraphrased, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1971): Preface.

²⁹William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. 2nd rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p.285.

³⁰See C. H. Dodd's excellent discussion of this matter in The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (London: Cambridge University Press), pp. 133-143. Ezekiel and Isaiah both performed symbolic, prophetic actions which were called "signs" though they were not miracles (Ezek. 4:1-3; Isa. 20:1-4).

³¹ John Beekman and John Callow, Translating the Word of God, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p.21.

³² Ibid, pp. 33-35.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the ways in which Anglo-Saxon people in the early Middle Ages were exposed to the messages of the Bible?
2. The earliest known stage of the English language is known as _____.
3. What is the name of the monk who composed primitive songs and poems on biblical subject matter in the Anglo-Saxon tongue in the seventh century?
4. The _____ Gospels is a famous manuscript now housed in the British Museum in which a tenth century priest named Aldred placed a literal English translation between the lines of a seventh century Latin manuscript.
5. Why is the year 1066 significant in the history of the English language?
6. Would it be advisable for us to keep our present day Bibles in the same kind of English as that represented by the tenth century Wessex Gospels? Why?
7. _____ was the famous scholar from Oxford whose manuscript translation of the Latin Vulgate appeared in 1382.
8. Study the segment from the Purvey revision of the Wycliffe Bible and compare it with your own Bible at John 17:1 ff. What does Wycliffe mean by:
 - a) clarifie?
 - b) eyen?
 - c) ech?
 - d) yovun?
 - e) clereness?
 - f) hem?

9. What is the name of the man who produced the first printed English New Testament in 1526 and was finally martyred in 1536?
10. The KJV reproduced the work of William Tyndale in about _____ percent of its text.
11. List four English Bibles which circulated before the KJV.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
12. What Catholic translation of the English Bible was completed in the year 1610?
13. What was the textual basis for this translation?
14. For what purpose did the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 propose that the King James Version be produced?
15. How many men comprised the six panels of translators who worked on the KJV?
16. The famous introduction of the "Translators to the Reader" which accompanied the KJV when it was published in 1611 was composed by _____.
17. According to the KJV translators:
 - a) Is it right to translate the Bible in the common language of the English people?
 - b) Should translations be kept current?
 - c) Did they feel that their work would ever need correction?
 - d) Did they create an original work?

18. What caused the people of 19th century England to see the need for a revision of the KJV?
19. As a result of the revision mentioned in the previous question the _____ Version was published in England in 1881 and the _____ Version was published in the United States in 1901.
20. Nearly all of the English Translations of the Bible since 1881 rely on the critically based Greek Text with what notable exception?
21. Upon what Greek Text are the KJV and the NKJV based?
22. Exactly what is the Textus Receptus?