

## **THE ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF THE BIBLE**

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## THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART ONE

### I. WHY DO WE BELIEVE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH---IN GOD & JESUS CHRIST?

A. We are Christians because we have accepted the Christian belief in God and Jesus Christ on faith, without having personally seen God and Jesus (Hebrews 11:1-6; John 20:24-29).

B. We are Christians because we see in the creation the hand of God (Romans 1:18-20; Job 12:7-10; Psalms 19:1-6; Isaiah 40:25-26).

C. We are Christians because we believe that the Bible is the Word of God and it contains overwhelming evidence of the existence of God and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 20:30-31; Acts 17:11 & 18:27-28; Romans 10:17 & 16:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

### II. IS OUR BIBLE RELIABLE?---AN OVERVIEW OF MANUSCRIPT ACCURACY

A. Our Bible is the Word of God ONLY if our translations contain the SAME MESSAGE as was contained in the original Greek and Hebrew words penned by God's inspired servants in the original books of Holy Scripture.

1. If anyone has changed the message contained in Scripture, then that portion of it which has changed is no longer God's Word. Thus, it is imperative that no one changes it (Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2; 2 Peter 3:15-17; Mark 7:1-13; Revelation 22:18-19).

2. It is, therefore, important that we have convincing evidence that the messages of the Bible's books have been handed down to us accurately, with the original messages contained in them intact. If that has not happened, then one of the most important pillars of our faith is shaken.

B. Critics say that since we don't possess the original documents (the "autographs") as written by Moses, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, etc., we can't be sure the Bible we have today is accurate. They say the evidence we have is only circumstantial.

1. Response: Circumstantial evidence can provide a powerful case in a court of law if it is strong enough. If police arrive at the scene of a disturbance and find a man standing over a body, holding a smoking gun, though no one actually saw him murder the victim, the circumstantial evidence points strongly in that direction. It is very likely that he will be convicted. The manuscript evidence for the Bible is just this kind of "smoking gun" evidence.

C. When was the Bible written and in what languages?

1. Old Testament---The Old Testament books were written in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages between about 1400 BC and 400 BC---a period of 1000 years! (Aramaic, related to Hebrew, was used in portions of Daniel and Ezra.)

2. New Testament---It is believed that all the New Testament books were written in Greek between about 50 A.D. and 95 A.D.---a period of only 45 years. A few scholars have suggested that one or more books, such as Matthew, were written in Aramaic or Hebrew and later translated into Greek. But no convincing evidence supporting this theory exists.

D. The span of time over which the Old Testament was written and the large number of human authors involved in writing it are strong evidence for its validity.

1. At least 30 (and probably many more) authors wrote the Old Testament over a period of about 1000 years. Were these writers not guided by the Holy Spirit, it would have been impossible for them to produce a work the size of the Old Testament with a single common theme which did not contradict itself and which did not contain provable historical or other factual errors.

2. The fact that no provable contradictions or factual errors are contained in the Old Testament is powerful evidence that, though written by human beings, its content was controlled by the power of the Holy Spirit and represents exactly what God wanted to communicate to us! Bible critics over the centuries have attempted to point out supposed inaccuracies in the Old Testament. But in every case, these claimed inaccuracies have been shown to be invalid.

a. One example: I Kings 22:39 speaks of "the ivory house which (King Ahab) made" (KJV). Critics attacked this verse as a fraud, since no building could have been made of ivory! But in the 1930s archaeologists excavating the city of Samaria found an incredible amount of ivory splinters at one location. It was Ahab's palace and it became clear that the walls of the palace's rooms had been completely covered in carved ivory reliefs and that it was filled with ivory furniture!

E. How has the Bible been transmitted down to us over thousands of years?

1. The books of the Old Testament and (probably) the earliest copies of the New Testament books were laboriously copied by hand from one papyrus or leather scroll to another by scribes who were carefully trained in copying methods to ensure that there were no additions or omissions. About the 2nd century A.D., they began folding sheets of papyrus (made from a plant) or vellum (made from animal skins) in half and stitching them into a book called a codex.

2. So zealous for accuracy were the Jewish scribes that any scroll that contained errors was destroyed, rather than just corrected. Also, any scroll that became heavily worn or damaged from use was destroyed and replaced with a new copy. As a result, very few really old copies of Old Testament books have survived to the present day. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 in caves near Qumran, Palestine, no copies of Old Testament books produced prior to the time of Christ were known to exist.

3. We know that the Jewish copyists were extremely good at their job, because of the following:

a. The Dead Sea Scrolls included scrolls of every book of the Old Testament except Esther, all copied prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., many of them dating from the first and second centuries B.C. The most important of these scrolls was a leather scroll of the complete book of Isaiah which has been dated 100 to 200 B.C., hundreds of years older than any copy of Isaiah previously found! It had rested in the cave undisturbed for more than 2000 years. This copy varied from the generally accepted text of Isaiah only insignificantly. In other words, the book of Isaiah remains essentially unchanged after more than 2000 years!!

b. As the Hebrew people (and later the Christians) became scattered throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean basin, families of manuscript copies developed. The text of particular books would be copied for hundreds of years by people who had little or no contact with one another. Comparison of manuscripts produced over many centuries from different geographical areas shows that the manuscripts are remarkably identical, with only very minor variations.

c. Scholars have pinpointed the copyist errors in the New Testament and have found them to be insignificant, not affecting a single important fact, doctrine, or rule of faith. Eminent Greek scholar F. J. A. Hort wrote, "Apart from insignificant variations of grammar or spelling, not more than one thousandth part of the whole New Testament is affected by differences of reading."

F. How much Bible manuscript evidence is there?---The manuscript evidence supporting the Bible's accuracy is overwhelming. There are:

1. Over 5,500 Greek manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament.
2. Over 10,000 Latin manuscripts of all or part of the New Testament.
3. Over 9,300 early versions (manuscripts in other languages).
4. Thus, there is a total of about 25,000 manuscript copies of all or part of the New Testament available to us today.

G. How old are these Bible manuscripts and versions?

1. Old Testament- - -The oldest known Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were among the Dead Sea Scrolls and dated 100 to 200 B.C. The oldest Greek version of the Old Testament is the Septuagint, translated into Greek by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt about 250 B.C. The oldest nearly complete copies of the Old Testament in Greek are:

a. Codex Vaticanus (325 A.D.)---This manuscript has been in the Vatican Library since it was established in 1448.

b. Codex Sinaiticus (350 A.D.)---This manuscript was discovered in 1844 in a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai and is now in the British Museum.

c. Codex Alexandrinus (400 A.D.)---This manuscript was given to England's King Charles I in 1628 by the Patriarch of Constantinople who had obtained it from Alexandria, Egypt. It is now in the British Museum.

2. New Testament---The earliest known manuscript fragment of the New Testament (from the Gospel of John) dates from about 120 A.D.---no more than 25 years after the death of the Apostle John. About 50 other fragments are dated less than 200 years from the date of their original writing.

3. The oldest nearly complete version of the Bible in Latin is the Latin Vulgate (400 A.D.)---The scholar Jerome translated the Bible into Latin about 400 A.D. and it became the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church for more than 1000 years.

H. How does the age and quantity of Bible manuscripts compare to other ancient writings?

1. Compared to the amount of other ancient writings in existence, the Bible has more manuscript evidence supporting its reliability and accuracy of translation than all other classical writings combined. In particular, the New Testament manuscripts also stand apart from other ancient literature in regard to their close proximity to the time of original composition.

a. Caesar's Gallic War (written 58 to 50 B.C.)---There are only ten good copies, and the oldest was made 900 years later than the original!

b. The Roman History by Livy (59 B.C.-17 A.D.)---Only 35 of the 142 volumes in this history still exist, in a total of 20 manuscripts. The oldest is from the 4th century A.D.

c. The Histories of Tacitus (100 A.D.)---Of the 14 volumes, only four and a half have survived. Of the 16 volumes of his Annals, only 10 survive. These come down to us in only one manuscript each, one from the 9th century A.D. and the other from the 11th century A.D. ---700 to 900 years after they were written!

d. The History of Thucydides (460-400 B.C.)---Only eight manuscripts survive, the oldest about 900 A.D., except for a few papyrus scraps from the 1st century A.D. The complete manuscripts are from 1300 years after they were written!

e. The Plays of William Shakespeare---In every one of Shakespeare's 37 plays, there are probably a hundred passages still in dispute as to their original text, a large portion of which materially affect the meaning of the passages in which they occur. (Not so, the New Testament, written 1500 years before Shakespeare was born!)

2. Eminent scholar F. F. Bruce wrote, "If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must . . . declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied---a care which has doubtless grown out of a true reverence for its holy words---such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that . . . the New Testament (is) unrivaled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use. . . . The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many classical authors, the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning. And if the New Testament were a collection of secular writings their authenticity would generally be regarded as beyond all doubt."

I. What light do the writings of early church leaders shed on the Bible's accuracy?

1. Manuscripts of the writings of church leaders who lived in the early centuries of the church (often referred to incorrectly as the Apostolic Fathers) contain numerous quotations from the New Testament. So numerous are their scriptural references that if all the New Testament was lost, we could reassemble it in almost its entirety from just their quotations!

2. Some of the earliest of these writings were from Clement of Rome (about 96 AD.); Ignatius (died 107 AD.), Polycarp (a disciple of John the Apostle, died 155 AD.), Justin Martyr (died 165 AD.), Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp, died 200 AD.), Clement of Alexandria (died 220 A.D.), Tertullian (died 220 A.D.), Origen (died 254 A.D.) and Eusebius (died 339 A.D.).

3. The New Testament quotations from just seven of these early church leaders actually total more than 36,000 quotations!!

## THE-ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART TWO

### III. The Old Testament Canon---How Was it Developed?

#### A. What is meant by the terms "canon" and "testament?"

1. The term canon refers to a list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of a religious community. In a Christian context, canon can be defined as the listing of writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of divine revelation. The word "canon" has come into English (via Latin) from the Greek word "kanon," which originally meant "a straight rod used as a ruler," and later came to mean a "series" or "list."

2. The term testament comes to us from the Latin word "testamentum," which commonly refers to a will. But "testamentum" was also used to translate the Greek word "diatheke," which usually meant an agreement between a superior person, who confers certain privileges on an inferior person, while the inferior undertakes certain obligations towards the superior. A better translation in English is covenant, because that word refers to an agreement between God (the superior) and human beings (the inferior). The earliest evidence we have that Christians referred to the Holy Scriptures as consisting of an Old and a New Testament comes from Tertullian of Carthage and Clement of Alexandria near the end of the 2nd century.

#### B. How did the books of the Old Testament come into existence?

1. A century ago many non-believing scholars and liberal theologians insisted that Moses could not have written the five books of the law (Genesis to Deuteronomy) because (they alleged) the peoples of Palestine and Syria hadn't developed writing. They claimed, therefore, that the books of the law were actually written hundreds of years later and were merely a compilation of Jewish folklore handed down orally over many generations. But thanks to a hundred years of archaeological discoveries, we now know that written languages existed in that area even before Abraham's time (20<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), hundreds of years before Moses was born.

a. Scholars now tell us that the Phoenicians developed the modern alphabet, where a set of letters are the building blocks of words---a vast improvement over the "picture writing" of Egyptian hieroglyphics. The Phoenicians were a seafaring race who came originally from the Mediterranean coastal area of what is today called Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. The Phoenicians were also called Sidonians and they are the people of the cities of Tyre and Sidon that are referred to frequently in the Bible.

b. We now know that a hieroglyphic-type script was used in Palestine as far back as the 22nd to 23rd century B.C.---700 years before Moses---and that linear alphabet writing (the ancestor of the alphabet Americans use) was used in Palestine (Canaan) at least as early as 1500 B.C., 200 years before Moses!

#### 2. The Bible provides us information on how the Old Testament was created:

a. Exodus 17:14---"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely erase the memory of the Amalekites from under heaven."

b. Exodus 24:3-4---"When Moses went and told the people all the words and laws, they responded with one voice, 'Everything the Lord has said we will do.' Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said."

c. Exodus 31:18---"When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."

d. Other passages on this subject are Exod. 34:1-2, 27-28, Num.33:2, Deut. 31:9-12, 19-26. Josh. 8:30-35, 24:25-26, I Sam. 10:25, 1 Chron. 29:29-30, 2 Chron. 9:29, 26:22, 32:32, Isaiah 30:8, Jer. 25:13, Ezek. 43:10-11, Dan. 7:1, Hab.2:2.

### 3. Who decided which books belong in the Old Testament?

a. From a date not many years after the last book---Malachi---was written, the Hebrews accepted the 39 books we have in our Old Testament as genuinely inspired by God. They counted them as 24 books, because a number of books were combined (I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra & Nehemiah, and the 12 minor prophets). There was little controversy about the books because their inspiration and authoritative character were recognized by almost everyone.

b. From the writings of Moses, the Scriptures were safeguarded by successive generations of priests, Levites and scribes who took great care in copying and preserving these books. When a scroll was complete, scribes checked its accuracy by reading it to one another. If a single error was made in copying, the entire scroll was destroyed, rather than merely correcting the error. When a scroll became worn or damaged, it was destroyed---the primary reason even older copies aren't available today. Since each book was a separate scroll, there was no specific order to the books, as would be true in a modern collection of writings bound into a single book.

c. But in time, the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) came to be thought of as belonging to three divisions: (1) the Torah (meaning "the Law"), consisting of the five books of Moses; (2) the Prophets, consisting of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets; and (3) the Writings, consisting of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. The earliest reference to this threefold division outside the Bible was from a manuscript written about 132 B.C. (But Jesus may refer to this division in Luke 24:44.) It is possible, but not certain, that the Writings were recognized as Scripture at a later date than the Prophets.

d. Finally, the Jews adopted a definite order for the Scriptures, which is different than the one Christians use today. For example, the last book in the Hebrew Scriptures is Chronicles, which follows Ezra-Nehemiah, a book that covers a later historical period. It appears the Scriptures Jesus knew placed Chronicles last. In Luke 11:50-51 Jesus says, "Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah. . ." Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8) and Zechariah is the last martyr mentioned in Chronicles (2 Chron. 24:20-22), about 800 B.C. However, Jeremiah records the death of the prophet Uriah (Jer. 26:20-23), two centuries later. So Zechariah was canonically (not chronologically) the last prophet to die as a martyr, because his death was recorded in Chronicles, the last book in the Hebrew Scriptures.



e. The canon of the Hebrew Scriptures developed in stages, since they were written over a period of about 1000 years. The five books of the Law (the Pentateuch), which were written first, were recognized first. (The Samaritans never accepted anything else as Scripture. They had their own edition of Joshua and some other books, but did not recognize them as Scripture.) The Prophets and the Writings were accepted later since the last book, Malachi, wasn't written until about 425 B.C.

f. The 1st century A.D. Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote this about the Scriptures: "From Artaxerxes (Persian king when Malachi was written) until our time everything has been recorded but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded. But what faith we have placed in our own writing is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them."

g. After the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in 70 A.D., there was no longer a Jewish ruling body there to provide leadership for the Jewish faith. So a rabbinical school and a Sanhedrin were established at Jamnia, a city 12 miles south of Joppa on the Mediterranean coast. One of the subjects they discussed over the years was the status of certain books, such as Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezekiel and the Song of Songs---whether they should continue to be regarded as Scripture. The Jamnia Sanhedrin about 90 A.D. endorsed the 24 books (our 39) as sacred Scripture, settling this issue among the Jews for good.

h. The Babylonian Talmud (completed about 500 A.D.) confirms the fact that, with the writing of the book of Malachi around 425 B.C., the canon was closed on the Old Testament: "After the latter Prophets Haggai Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel." (The Talmud consisted of the Mishnah, the collection of Jewish oral laws completed about 200 A.D., and a commentary called the Gemara.)

i. It can no longer be effectively argued that some of the Old Testament books were actually written hundreds of years after they were supposed to have been written. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 settled this question forever. More than 500 Old Testament manuscripts, many of them nearly complete and all copied before 70 A.D., were found at Qumran or other nearby caves. In fact, all of the Old Testament books except Esther have been found in these caves which were abandoned over 1900 years ago. The oldest of these scrolls can be dated reliably to 200 B.C. This is a strong argument for the authenticity of 38 of the 39 Old Testament books.

j. The Old Testament Scriptures were repeatedly endorsed by Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. Though Jesus challenged the Jewish leaders for their man-made interpretations and traditions which they added to the Scriptures, He and the scribes and Pharisees were in complete agreement about the accuracy and authority of the Old Testament. Jesus personally verified the following passages:

(1) The Genesis account of creation (Mark 10:6-9).

(2) The existence of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5).

(3) Abel's murder by Cain (Matt. 23:35).

(4) Noah and the flood (Luke 17:26-27, Matt 24:37-39).

(5) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt (Luke 17:28-32).

(6) The existence of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:11).

(7) The existence of Moses and the burning bush (Luke 20:37).

(8) The miraculous manna in the wilderness (John 6:49).

(9) The lifting up of the brazen serpent by Moses (John 3:14).

(10) The existence of David, Solomon, Elijah and Elisha (Matt. 12:3 & 12:42; Luke 4:25-27).

(11) The reality of Jonah's deliverance from the whale (Matt. 12:40).

It is clear from the above that Jesus didn't consider these events to be folklore or myths!!

### C. What about the Apocrypha---the mysterious "hidden" books?

1. The existence of the apocryphal books are cited by some critics as calling into question the Old Testament books. The word Apocrypha means "hidden or concealed." It is applied to a group of religious writings, which are secret or mysterious in nature, unknown in origin, spurious, forged or rejected as uncanonical.

2. These 15 books are I and II Esdras (additions to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah), Tobit, Judith, Additions to the book of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach), Baruch, The Epistle of Jeremiah, The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon (addition to Daniel), The Prayer of Mannasseh, and I and II Maccabees. These books were included in Jerome's Latin Vulgate Version (against his recommendation), which became the Roman Catholic Bible.

3. While some of these books contain some material of literary merit and historical value, they must be rejected as inspired Scripture for these reasons:

a. They were written long after the Old Testament books were completed about 425 B.C.

b. They lack the prophetic character which qualifies them as the word of God. None of the apocryphal writers claim divine inspiration and some openly disclaim it (Ecclesiasticus and I and II Maccabees).

c. They were never recognized by the Jews. No Hebrew canons included them (the Jamnia Sanhedrin, Talmudists, Massorettes, etc.). The Jewish historian Josephus did not include these books in his list of canonical books.

d. Though he was talked into translating the apocryphal books by two bishop friends, Jerome flatly rejected them as part of the canon and stated that the apocryphal books were in no sense a portion of God's. After his death, they were added to his translation of the Bible, the Latin Vulgate Version.

e. These books contain numerous historical and geographical inaccuracies, as well as blatant myths, folklore and fictitious accounts. Judith 1:1-7 calls Nebuchadnezzar the King of Assyria instead of Babylon. Baruch claims to have been written by the secretary to Jeremiah, but quotes from Daniel which was written much later than Jeremiah.

f. These books teach false doctrines, promote questionable ethics and foster un-biblical standards (deception and suicide are justified, the end justifies the means morality is promoted, almsgiving is said to save you, etc.).

g. Jesus and the New Testament writers never quoted from the Apocrypha and no canon or council of the Christian church for the first 350 years of the church recognized or endorsed these books as inspired.

## THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART THREE THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON---HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

### D. What is the origin of the Greek Old Testament---the Septuagint?

1. When Alexander the Great conquered the lands of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East in the 330s B.C., that part of the world was given a new language---Greek. It became the international language of politics and commerce, just like English is in the 20th century world. Almost from the founding of Alexandria, Egypt in 331 B.C, there was a Jewish community there and communities of Jews were established in most other major cities of the Greek-speaking world

2. In time, many of these dispersed Jews lost the ability to read and speak Hebrew and Aramaic. In order for synagogue worship to be effective, it was necessary to translate the Scriptures into Greek. At first the Scriptures were read by the rabbis in Hebrew and then translated orally into Greek. Eventually, the five books of Moses were translated into Greek, probably between 250 and 150 B.C.. According to legend, 72 Jewish elders were brought to Alexandria to do the translation, which they were supposed to have completed in 72 days. Later, Christian writers broadened the legend to say that the entire Old Testament was translated in 72 days by these men.

3. The complete Greek Old Testament that was produced came to be known in later centuries as the Septuagint because "septuaginta" is Latin for seventy. Only a few fragments of early Jewish copies of the Septuagint come down to us today, the oldest (two fragments of Deuteronomy) from the 2nd century B.C. The earliest Christian-produced copies of the Septuagint which we have today (found among the Chester Beatty Papyri in 1931) are only fragments. They have been dated in the mid-2nd century A.D. Each of them is in codex form (similar to a modern book) rather than scrolls.

4. The order of books in the Jewish Septuagint was different than in the Hebrew Bible and closer to the order used in our Christian Old Testament today. The Pentateuch was followed by historical books, then poetical/wisdom books, and finally prophetic books, just like our Bible. It included a book called 1 Esdras, consisting of 2 Chron. 35:1 to Neh. 8:13, and 2 Esdras, which included Ezra and the rest of Nehemiah. Also, Psalms had one extra psalm and Esther and Daniel contained additional material. Several additional books that are not in the Hebrew Bible or modern Protestant Bibles were included---Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (not Ecclesiastes), Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. These extra books are part of what we call the Apocrypha today and, though not in modern Protestant Bibles, are included in Catholic Bibles. We don't know which book order---that of the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint---represents the older Jewish tradition.

5. Although the scrolls that comprised the Hebrew Bible were undoubtedly the ones used by Jesus during His ministry on earth (Luke 4:17, etc.), it is very likely that Greek-speaking Jews in Palestine used the Septuagint at the same time. The Synagogue of the Freedmen where Stephen debated the Scriptures (Acts 6:9) would have been a place where it would have been used. Many scholars believe that the quotations Stephen used in the speech preceding his death (Acts 7), were from the Septuagint.

6. When Paul and others carried the Gospel into the Greek-speaking world, the Septuagint became the Bible for the newly-established Christian churches. Since it was used in all the Jewish synagogues of the Greek world, it was the natural choice for Paul and other evangelists. It thus became the Old Testament used by Christians in nearly all parts of the Roman world during the first three centuries of the church.

7. As a result of the adoption of the Septuagint by Christians, Jews who did not accept Christianity became increasingly disenchanted with it and new Greek versions of the Hebrew scriptures were made by the Jews to replace it in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. In Theodotion's translation, the translation of Daniel was so much superior to the one in the Septuagint that Christians began using his Daniel in the Septuagint.

8. The three most important copies of the Septuagint which we have today are the Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Alexandrinus. (These codices contain both Old Testament and New Testament books).

a. The Codex Vaticanus (325 A.D.)---This codex contains all the Old Testament books found in modern Protestant Bibles (with some pairs of books combined into single books), plus the following apocryphal books: Wisdom, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, and Letter of Jeremiah.

b. The Codex Sinaiticus (350 A.D.)---This codex is incomplete because of damage, with Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel and part of Samuel, Kings and the Minor Prophets missing. It also contains these apocryphal books: Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom, and Sirach.

c. The Codex Alexandrinus (400 A.D.)---This codex contains all the Old Testament books found in modern Protestant Bibles (with some pairs of books combined into single books), plus these apocryphal books: Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Tobit, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom, and Sirach.

9. The earliest Christian writer to provide a list of the Old Testament books was Melito of Sardis, about 170 A.D. His list of Old Testament books is contained in a letter to a friend named Onesimus, which is quoted by the Christian historian Eusebius. The list probably includes all the books of our Old Testament except Esther. He lists Esdras (which would be Ezra-Nehemiah) and Wisdom (which is an alternative name for Proverbs), and, although not specifically named, Lamentations is probably considered as an appendix to Jeremiah. None of the Septuagint's apocryphal books are included. Melito is the first known writer to refer to this collection of books as "the books of the old covenant" (or Old Testament).

10. The next surviving Christian list of Old Testament books was drawn up by Origen (185-254 AD.), one of the greatest scholars of the early church. Eusebius preserved Origen's list, quoting him as saying "there are 22 books of the Old Testament, according to the tradition of the Hebrews." He combines Judges & Ruth, 1 & 2 Kingdoms (which includes 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings), 1 & 2 Chronicles, 1 & 2 Esdras (Ezra & Nehemiah), Jeremiah & Lamentations, and the 12 minor prophets into single books. This includes all 39 books found in modern Protestant Bibles. The only addition is the apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah, included as part of Jeremiah

11. The first Christian who we can be certain used the word canon to refer to the books belonging in the Bible was Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria from 323 to 373 A.D. In 367 A.D. he issued a list of "the books which are included in the canon and have been delivered to us with accreditation that they are divine." His 22-book list is the same as Origen's, except that Athanasius separates Judges and Ruth, and omits Esther. Athanasius then adds the comment that there are other books which are read for instructional purposes but are not part of the canon: Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith and Tobit.

12. The Council of Laodicea (363 A.D.) issued a series of "canons" or rules for the guidance of the church. Canon 59 said that "no psalms composed by private individuals or any uncanonical books may be read in church, but only the canonical books of the New and Old Testament." Canon 60 (the last one) then lists the canonical books. It is the same as Athanasius' list, except that Ruth and Judges are combined and Esther is added, thus including all the books of our modern Protestant Bibles.

13. It is clear that the majority opinion of the early church by the 300s was that the Old Testament consisted of the same books as those in our modern Protestant Bibles, except Esther was rejected by some.

#### E. What is the origin of the Latin Old Testament?

1. While Jews in Rome and the earliest Roman Christians spoke Greek in the church's earliest centuries, and thus used the Septuagint, the citizens of Carthage in the Roman province of Africa spoke primarily Latin. As a result, the earliest translations of the Old Testament in Latin were made in that province in the second half of the 2nd century A.D. This Latin Old Testament was translated from the Greek Septuagint and not from the original Hebrew. It thus included the apocryphal books that were part of the Septuagint

2. The greatest Bible scholar in the early centuries of the church was Jerome (346-420 A.D.). In 382 A.D. he was sent by Damasus, Bishop-of Rome, to revise the Latin version of the Bible because of questions about its quality. He first translated the Psalms and Gospels from the Greek, but decided the accurate way to translate the Bible was to work from the Hebrew. He completed his Latin translation of the Old Testament in 405 A.D. It had 22 books, which correspond to the 39 books of the modern Protestant Old Testament, including Esther. Jerome's translation of the Bible (Old and New Testament) came to be known as the Latin Vulgate, since it was written in the vulgar (common) form of Latin.

3. Jerome clearly rejected inclusion of the apocryphal books which were included in the Septuagint (and in today's Catholic Bibles). He wrote, "Whatever falls outside these (22 books) must be set apart among the Apocrypha. Therefore, Wisdom, which is commonly entitled Solomon's, with the book of Jesus the son of Sirach, Judith, Tobias, and the Shepherd (of Hermes) are not in the canon." Jerome also rejected the Septuagint's addition to Jeremiah (Baruch) and included a note with Daniel that the Septuagint's additions to that book have been included reluctantly. Jerome did translate Tobit and Judith into Latin from Aramaic because they had ethical value, but grouped them with the Apocrypha and said they could not be used to establish doctrine.

4. But other important church leaders favored the apocryphal books, including the great Augustine (354-430 AD.), Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. He said that the Septuagint, a product of 72 divinely-inspired wise men, had to be superior to the translation of one man, even if that one man was the learned Jerome. In 393 A.D. the Council of Hippo was hosted by Augustine. The records of the proceedings of that council have been lost, but they were summarized in the proceedings of the Third Council of Carthage (397 AD.), which makes clear that Augustine's list of Old Testament books (including the apocryphal books of the Septuagint) was endorsed.

5. In 405 A.D. Innocent, Bishop of Rome, sent a list of canonical books to Exsuperius, Bishop of Toulouse. It included the apocryphal books in the Old Testament.

6. The Sixth Council of Carthage (419 A.D.) re-enacted the ruling of the Third Council, again including the apocryphal books. All church councils that addressed the question in the following centuries also endorsed these books as canonical.

7. As the years passed, other books, never even included in the Septuagint, were added to the Latin Vulgate Bible. These included the Prayer of Manasseh and 4th Ezra (the 2nd Esdras of the English Apocrypha).

8. Throughout the following centuries, most users of the Latin Vulgate Bible made no distinction between the apocryphal books and the others. It was not until the Middle Ages that a revival of serious biblical study brought up the issue of canonicity again. Hugh of St. Victor served as the prior of the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris, France from 1133 to 1141 A.D. He published a list of the books included in the original Hebrew Bible and said, "There are also in the Old Testament (Latin Vulgate) certain other books which are indeed read (in church) but are not inscribed in the body of the (Hebrew) text or in the canon of authority: such are the books of Tobit, Judith and the Maccabees, the so-called Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus." It is clear that Hugh of St. Victor's research had led him to Jerome!

F. What was the impact of the Protestant Reformation on the Old Testament Canon?

1. When the 16th century reformer Martin Luther took the position that the authority in the church resided in Scripture alone and not in the Pope, it raised up again the issue of what is Holy Scripture. Luther bitterly opposed the Catholic Church's indulgence system, which was tied to belief in purgatory and the practice of masses for the dead. His enemies pointed out that 2 Maccabees 12:45 authorized praying for the dead to save them from sin. Luther replied by quoting Jerome's statement that 2 Maccabees was not part of the canon and not to be used "for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas." Luther had no use for the Apocrypha. In both Old and New Testaments, "what preaches Christ" was for him the dominant principle and the Apocrypha didn't preach Christ as did Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, etc.

2. When Luther published his German Bible in 1534, he gathered the apocryphal books together as an appendix to the Old Testament to show they had different status. This appendix was entitled, "The Apocrypha: Books which are not to be held equal to holy scripture, but useful and good to read." Even earlier, Ulrich Zwingli's Zurich Bible (1524-29) was published with the Apocrypha separated from the Old Testament.

3. In 1546 the Roman Catholic Church finally took up the issue of the apocryphal books at the Council of Trent to answer the attacks of the Protestants on the status of these books. It was decreed that it was to the "ancient and vulgate editions" (the Latin Vulgate Bible) that ultimate appeal should be made. Since that edition made no distinction between these two groups of books, it was decided that the Catholic Church should make no distinction. Thus Jerome's distinction between the books found in the Hebrew Bible and the books which were to be read only "for the edification of the people" was rejected by the Roman Catholic Church. It should be noted, however, that many Roman Catholic scholars today do recognize a difference between the two groups of books, even if the church officially does not.

4. The 39 Articles of Religion have been authoritative for the doctrine of the discipline of the Church of England (Episcopal Church) since 1562. Article VI includes a list of those Old and New Testament books that are canonical.

a. The introduction to this list of canonical books says, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of Faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church " The Old Testament list that follows includes 38 books compared to the 39 of modern Protestant Bibles, since Lamentations is included as an appendix to Jeremiah. The order of books is exactly the same as in today's Bibles, but Ezra and Nehemiah are called 1 and 2 Esdras.

b. Immediately following the Old Testament list are these words, "And the other Books (as Jerome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine; such are these following: . . ." The list that follows is a list of the apocryphal books

5. In 1644 the English Long Parliament, controlled by Puritans, ordained that the Apocrypha should cease to be read in services of the Church of England. In 1647 the Church of England issued its famous Westminster Confession of Faith, which included a list of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books as the only books of Holy Scripture. A following paragraph states, "The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings. Thus a mistake made by the translators of the Greek Septuagint (including the apocryphal books with the canonical books) was finally corrected (at least for English-speaking Protestants) after more than 1800 years!

6. When the Puritan government was overthrown in 1660, the readings from the Apocrypha reappeared in Church of England services, but these books were less favored as time passed.



## THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART FOUR

### IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON---HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

#### A. How did the books of the New Testament come into existence?

1. During the 1st Century A.D., the books of the New Testament were written over a period of approximately 45 years (50-95 A.D.), copied by hand, and circulated among churches (Colossians 4:16) throughout the Roman Empire, which extended from England and Spain to the Middle East. In the early years, not all churches had equal access to these 27 books. They would slowly be copied and circulated among the churches and it would have taken many years for them to have saturated the empire. Then during certain periods of persecution, copies of these books were seized by the government and burned. So each book became known by a specific church one at a time or, at most, a few at a time as copies arrived at that church over a period of many years or even many decades

2. The best information we have on the origins of these books is:

a. Matthew---Early church leaders almost unanimously agreed that this book was written by the Apostle Matthew. It was the most frequently quoted Gospel. It was written sometime prior to 70 A.D., since there is no reference to the destruction of Jerusalem's temple which took place that year and that event is prophesied in Matt. 24:15-22. Irenaeus, who became Bishop of Lyons in 178 A.D., wrote, "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church." Since tradition says Peter arrived in Rome in 63 or 64 A.D. and that he and Paul were martyred there in about 67 or 68 A.D., the best estimate for the writing of the book is 64 to 67 A.D.

b. Mark---Early church tradition said Mark was written by John Mark, a companion of Peter and Paul. Since prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is contained in Mark 13:14, the book must have been written before 70 A.D. Irenaeus and others wrote that Mark wrote the gospel after Peter's death. So a good estimate would be 68-69 A.D. F.F. Bruce dates it 64-65 A.D. Liberal scholars claim Matthew and Luke "borrowed" from Mark when they wrote. These three books are called the "synoptic" gospels because they contain parallel material.

c. Luke---Early church leaders held that this book was written by Luke, a close companion of Paul. It was the first part of a two-part document, the second part of which was Acts (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). Since the account in Acts ends about 62 A.D. and includes nothing of the last five years of Paul's life, it is reasonable to date Luke prior to 62 A.D. Some have suggested Luke wrote his gospel about 58 A.D. while Paul was imprisoned in Palestine before being taken to Rome.

d. John---Irenaeus and most early church leaders accepted John the Apostle as the author. In John 21:20-24 the author identifies himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and "the one who had leaned back against Jesus at supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?'" This is clearly John the Apostle. Most scholars date the book 80 to 90 A.D., but scholar J. A. T. Robinson argues for 65 A.D.

e. Acts---The early church was virtually unanimous in accepting Luke as the author. Since its account ends about 62 A.D. and includes nothing of the rest of Paul's life, it must have been written about 62 A.D.

f. Romans ---There is almost universal agreement that Paul wrote this epistle. It was written on his third missionary journey. Since he spent three months in Greece (Acts 20:3) and he recommends Phoebe (Romans 16:1), the servant of the church at Cenchræa (seaport of Corinth), the letter was probably written from Corinth. The probable date of writing would be 55 to 57 A.D.

g. 1 Corinthians---Paul has always been accepted as the writer of this letter. Clement of Rome said about 95 A.D., in his own letter to the Corinthians, that Paul wrote this letter---the earliest identification of a New Testament writer by name outside the New Testament itself. It was written from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8) during the latter part of Paul's three-year stay there (Acts 19:1-20:1), about 54 to 56 AD.

h. 2 Corinthians---The early church accepted Paul as the author. It was written on Paul's 3rd-missionary journey, some months or even a year or more after 1 Corinthians, in about 55 to 57 A.D. It was probably written from Macedonia.

i. Galatians---The early church accepted Paul as the author and this could be the earliest of his letters. Some scholars date it as early as 48 or 49 A.D., suggesting it was written from Antioch after his 1st missionary journey to that area. Others date it about 53 A.D., early in his ministry at Ephesus. Finally, some date it as late as 56 A.D. during the 3rd missionary journey, because of the similarity of some of its content to Romans, which was written about then, and suggest it was written from Ephesus or Macedonia.

j. Ephesians---The early church accepted Paul as the author. This is one of the "epistles from prison," written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment, probably in 62 A.D.---but certainly between 60 and 62 A.D. A few scholars over the centuries have doubted it was addressed to the Ephesians, since the words "at Ephesus" are not included in Eph. 1:1 in two of the oldest manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. These scholars suggest it was actually intended for the church at Laodicea, since such a letter is mentioned in Colossians 4:16, and that the phrase "at Ephesus" was added in another copy of the letter someone sent to Ephesus to make it more "personal." But early church tradition clearly said the original letter was to the Ephesians. It may well be that "at Ephesus" was removed from some copies of the letter that were sent on to other churches so the letter would seem more applicable to them and that the Ephesus text in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus was descended from those copies!

k. Philippians---Paul is without doubt the author. This letter was written from prison (Phil. 1:12-14). The vast majority of scholars have held that it was written from Rome in 60 to 62 A.D. A few have argued for an Ephesian imprisonment (1 Cor. 15:30-32 & 2 Cor. 1:8-10) and therefore place this letter earlier, about 54 A.D.

l. Colossians---Only a few question Paul's authorship. It was written from prison (Col. 4:3. 10. 18) and delivered along with Philemon by Tychicus and Onesimus (Col. 4:7-9). The dominant view is that it was written from Rome in 60 to 62 A.D. A few say the imprisonment was in Caesarea (58-60 A.D.) or Ephesus (55-56 AD.).

m. 1 Thessalonians---Paul is clearly the author and he wrote it in Corinth. This is

also a candidate for Paul's earliest letter. Acts 18:12 says Gallio was proconsul of Achaia when Corinthian Jews accused him before Gallio. An inscription at Delphi says Gallio's pro-consulship began in 51 A.D. Acts 18:11 suggests Paul was in Corinth 18 months before this incident, giving us a date of 50 A.D. for this book.

n. 2 Thessalonians---Paul is the accepted author and it was probably written in late 50 A.D., a few months after 1 Thessalonians.

o. 1 Timothy---Paul is the author, but a few have questioned it. It was written after Acts closes and between Paul's two Roman imprisonment's, about 63 or 64 A.D., during missionary travel, possibly from Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3).

p. 2 Timothy---A few question Paul's authorship. It was written about 65 or 66 A.D. and shortly before his martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:6-18). This is the last of Paul's letters included in the New Testament.

q. Titus---A few question Paul's authorship. It was written about the same time as 1 Timothy, 63 or 64 A.D. They contain similar lists of elder qualifications.

r. Philemon---Paul is clearly the author. It was written from prison (probably Rome) at the same time as Colossians, 61 or 62 A.D.

s. Hebrews---Authorship of this letter has been debated from the early years of the church. Hebrews does not name its author and the early church was divided on whether it was Paul. Hebrews 13:23 mentions Timothy, Paul's companion, suggesting Pauline authorship. The style is compatible with Paul's but some scholars disagree. Other suggested authors were Apollos, Barnabus, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, and Phillip the deacon. Since it was written to Jews and no mention is made of the Jewish-Roman War and the destruction of the Jewish temple (68-70 AD.), it must have been written before 68 AD. This date would work for Paul as author. Hebrews 13:24 implies it was written from Italy.

t. James---Early church tradition says the author was a brother of Jesus and a leader in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13-21). Similarity of the language in the letter to the quote from James in Acts 15 has been cited as evidence. However, some liberal theologians have argued for an unknown James writing as late as 150 A.D. Martin Luther questioned the book because of its emphasis on good deeds as a demonstration of true faith, which he saw as opposing salvation by faith. The book has been dated by scholars between the late 40s and early 60s A.D. James, Jesus' brother, was martyred in the late 60s A.D. James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, was martyred in 44 A.D., too early for him to have been the author.

u. 1 Peter---There is no doubt Peter is the author. In 1 Peter 5:13 the author refers to Mark as "my son," which fits Peter's relationship with him depicted in church tradition. The same verse suggests the letter was written from Babylon. But this is probably a reference to Rome as a sinful city. Rome is the probable place of writing. Church tradition suggests Peter arrived in Rome in 63 or 64 A.D. and best estimate for date of writing is about 64 A.D., just before Nero's persecution of the Christians began.

v. 2 Peter---2 Peter 1:1 says Peter wrote it., but some of the early church leaders disputed his authorship for several generations, as do some liberal modern scholars, based on unconvincing evidence. The letter warns against false teachers. That may explain some of the opposition to the book since many of the critics of the book have held unorthodox doctrinal views. Martin Luther also opposed the book because its doctrine did not fit well with doctrine he held. The book was probably written from Rome toward the end of Nero's reign and shortly before Peter's martyrdom, possibly 66 A.D. The fact that Peter died soon after writing it may have been a factor in its slow acceptance by some. If he had lived another 20 years, everyone would likely have known whether or not he wrote it.

w. 1, 2 & 3 John---Writings outside the Bible refer to a presbyter (elder) named John in Ephesus in early church times. Tradition has John the Apostle living in Ephesus in his later years. This has led to confusion. Some scholars believe these two Johns are the same person, others say they are different. A minority of scholars have argued that John the Apostle wrote the Gospel of John, while John the Elder wrote at least 2 & 3 John. Comparing the gospel to the letters, however, makes it clear to most people that John the Apostle wrote all of them (John 1:1-5 & 15:9-14; 1 John 1:1-4 & 3:21-24; 2 John 1:4-6). That John would be both an apostle and an elder is not unusual. Peter calls himself an elder (1 Peter 5:1). The best estimate on date of writing of 1 John is about 90 A.D., with the others following soon after.

x. Jude ---In Jude 1:1, the author says he is the brother of James. Matt. 13:55 and Mark 6:3 name Judas and James as brothers of Jesus. Since the author of Jude doesn't identify James, it must be a James that most readers would know. Only James, Jesus' brother, and James, the Apostle, would fit that picture, and James, the Apostle, had no brother named Jude or Judas that we know about. A number of scholars have questioned the authorship of this book, but their arguments are inconclusive. The date of writing cannot be estimated closer than the last half of the 1st century. The legitimacy of Jude has also been questioned because it quotes from the non-canonical books of Enoch (Jude 1:14-15) and the Assumption of Moses (Jude 1:9). But Jude was accepted as part of the New Testament by most church leaders by 350 A.D.

y. Revelation---This book was accepted by the church in the West by the early 2nd century, with John the Apostle as the author. However, many church leaders in the East opposed the book for several centuries and doubted that John the Apostle wrote it. Since it was a book of prophecy containing exotic and hard-to-interpret visions, it was used to prove all kinds of strange doctrines by heretical groups in the Greek-speaking East that we would describe today as cults. So, many orthodox church leaders in the East came to dislike the book. However, there is much common language between Revelation and the Gospel of John. And the tradition of the early church was that John the Apostle was exiled to the island of Patmos by Domitian (emperor from 81-96 A.D.) and the John of Revelation says he was on Patmos when he had the vision (Rev. 1:9-10). Some early church sources said the vision came to John in the 14th year of Domitian's reign, which would date the book in 95 A.D.

3. It is generally agreed that the crucifixion of Christ took place in 30 A.D. Three of the four Gospels, Acts, and all of the letters of Paul, Peter and James were written between about 50 and 70 A.D., only 20 to 40 years after Christ's resurrection and at a time when most of the Apostles were still living, and John's Gospel and letters, and Revelation, though written 50 to 65 years after Christ's resurrection, were written at a time when many of the early disciples of

the Apostles were still living. It is clear that a fraudulent book would not have been accepted by the Church at such an early date. Thus, we have reason for high confidence in the validity of the New Testament books!

a. Bible scholar F.F. Bruce writes, "The time elapsing between the evangelic events and the writing of most of the New Testament books was, from the standpoint of historical research, satisfactorily short. For in assessing the trustworthiness of ancient historical writings, one of the most important questions is: How soon after the events took place were they recorded?"

b. Eminent scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon writes, "The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed."

## THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART FIVE

### IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON---HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

#### B. How did the New Testament books come to be recognized as Scripture?

1. In the beginning, the account of Jesus' life on earth and his teachings were passed on to new Christians through a body of oral tradition taught by the Apostles and their associates (Acts 2:42). They were given the Holy Spirit to help them recall all that Jesus had taught them (John 14:25-26; Luke 12:11-12). Then, for a time as the New Testament books were written, the written witness existed side by side with the oral tradition. But during the 2nd century A.D., the written Word gradually replaced the oral tradition as the primary source of Christian teaching.

2. The establishment of the New Testament canon based on our current 27 books did not really take very long when you consider the political situation of those days and the slowness of transportation and communication. The church was persecuted for almost the first 300 years of its existence and transportation was by primitive boats or by foot or horse. The church basically existed as widely separated local congregations with only occasional contacts with one another through letters or traveling evangelists.

3. Because of the limitations of communication and the fact that the New Testament books were written over a period of nearly 50 years, individual churches only gradually assembled collections of these books. It would be natural, then, for some churches to be more familiar with some books than others. Though most of the church was acquainted with the majority of New Testament books from an early date, for a time churches in some areas questioned the books of Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, Jude and Revelation. Basically, churches in the western half of the empire were slow to recognize one group of books, while the churches in the eastern part of the empire delayed recognition of a different group of books. The church in Rome, for example, did not accept Hebrews until after 300 A.D. and some churches in the East did not accept Revelation for a similar period of time.

4. There is evidence in the New Testament itself that some of its books were recognized by the Apostles as Scripture at a very early date. In 1 Tim. 5:18 (written about 63 AD.), Paul clearly shows he understood Luke 10:7 to be Scripture in the same sense that Deuteronomy 25:4 is Scripture. It is also clear that Peter regarded some of Paul's letters as being Scripture (2 Peter 3:15, written about 66 A.D.).

5. There is also evidence that late 1st century and 2nd century church leaders understood our New Testament teachings to be Scripture.

a. Clement of Rome, in a letter to the Corinthian church (about 96 AD.), quotes the words of Jesus as being at least on a level of authority with those of the prophets. He writes (quoting Jeremiah 9:23-24), "The Holy Spirit says, 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom nor the strong man in his strength nor the rich man in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in the Lord, to seek him out and to practice judgment and righteousness . . .'" Clement continues, quoting either oral tradition or loosely from Matthew 5:7: "especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, 'Be merciful, so that you may obtain mercy . . .'" (followed by further loose quotations from the Sermon on the Mount).

b. About 110 A.D, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, wrote that there are some people who refuse to believe anything that is not recorded "in the archives" (the Old Testament Scriptures), even if it is affirmed "in the gospel." When Ignatius says, "It is written" or "Scripture says" (referring to the gospel), his opponents reply, "That is the question" (presumably meaning: Is the gospel Scripture?). Ignatius responds by saying that the ultimate authority is Jesus: whatever authority the "archives" have is summed up and brought to perfection in his death and resurrection (which is, of course, the primary theme of the New Testament books).

c. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, about 110 A.D., wrote to the Philippians and reminded his readers who were "well versed in the sacred letters" that "it is said in these scriptures, 'Be angry and sin not' (Psalm 4:4 & Ephesians 4:26) and 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger'" (Ephesians 4:26). Thus Polycarp places Ephesians on an equal footing with the Old Testament books.

d. The 2nd century Letter of Barnabas (probably the work of an Alexandrian Christian) uses the clause "as it is written" to introduce the quote, "Many are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14).

e. The 2nd century Second Epistle of Clement quotes Isaiah 54:1 ("Rejoice, O barren one . . .") and then says, "And another scripture says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners," a clear reference to Matthew 9:13.

f. Origen (185-254 A.D.) divided the new covenant books into two groups, the Gospels and the Apostles. But he joined them under the name of "the New Testament" and stated that they are "divine Scriptures," written by evangelists and apostles through the same Spirit and proceeding from the same God as the Old Testament. He also asserted that the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John" are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven." Origen also solidly supports Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, Jude and Paul's letters, including Hebrews, as Scripture, although he acknowledges the possibility that someone besides Paul may have written Hebrews. His position on the remaining New Testament books is unclear.

### C. How were the New Testament books assembled into our New Testament?

1. We do not know when the first collection of Paul's letters was put together or who did it, although Luke is a good possibility. However, individual churches were sharing copies of Paul's writings at a very early date, since Galatians is addressed to several churches (Gal. 1:2) and Paul told the Colossians and Laodiceans to share their letters (Col. 4:16). We noted above that Peter regarded Paul's letters as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15) and he no doubt possessed a collection of them. Since Peter was martyred about 66 or 67 A.D., a consolidated collection of Paul's letters may have existed that early in some locations. But it is clear that from the early 2nd century onward Paul's letters circulated as a collection.

a. The oldest surviving copy of the Pauline collection is the Chester Beatty codex P46, copied about 200 A.D., discovered in Egypt. Of the original 104 folios (sheets of paper folded once), 86 survived. This codex appears not to have included the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus---the last epistles Paul wrote), but did have Hebrews. Other early copies of the Pauline collection exist which do not include the Pastoral Epistles or Hebrews or both. The evidence suggests the original edition of the Pauline letters, put together even before the Pastoral Epistles were written, had only 10 letters of today's 14. When the Pastorals and Hebrews were added is uncertain.

b. It should be pointed out that Paul did write other letters, perhaps many more. Colossians 4:16 instructs the Colossians to read his letter which is coming from Laodicea. 1 Corinthians 5:9 refers to a letter written before that one. Also, considering the many churches that he established that are recorded in Acts and that he started other churches after the account in Acts ends, it is highly likely that Paul wrote other letters that we don't have today. But it is certain that God had the power to see that those letters were included in the New Testament had He wanted them there!

2. While collections of Paul's letters were circulating, a collection of the gospels was being put together:

a. One early church leader, Justin Martyr (died 165 A.D.), wrote his Dialogue with Trypho and two defenses of Christianity (Apologies), one to the Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 AD.) and another to the Roman Senate between 144 and 160 A.D. In his Dialogue, Justin speaks of the "memoirs" of Peter (possibly the Gospel of Mark) and in his First Apology, he refers to the "memoirs of the apostles." These memoirs, he says, are called gospels, and they are read in church along with the "compositions of the prophets" (Old Testament).

b. Justin's disciple, Tatian, went back to his native Assyria and produced his Diatessaron, a four-fold harmony of the gospels consisting of one continuous gospel narrative woven from the pieces of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in a more or less chronological order. (It started with John 1:1-5 and then inserted the birth of John the Baptist from the first chapter of Luke, etc.) The Diatessaron circulated at an early date in Syriac (Tatian's native language) and Greek. The oldest existing copy is from the 3rd century. In Syriac it became the accepted form of the gospels for more than 200 years and the church did not replace it with the four individual gospels until the 5th century.

c. John's gospel was the slowest of the four to attain universal acceptance. This was because the gnostic heretics used it to support their strange teachings. A fragment of John 18 in the Rylands collection (P52), dated 130 A.D., came from a codex, but it's unknown if it was bound together with the other three gospels.

d. The manuscript P75 from the Bodmer collection, dated late 2nd or early 3rd century, contains Luke and John, and probably included Matthew and Mark before it was damaged.

e. The earliest surviving codex which still contains portions of all four gospels is P45 in the Chester Beatty collection and is from the early 200s A.D. It also included the book of Acts. This is unusual since, in the early codexes, Acts was usually found bound together with the catholic (universal) epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude.

3. In the early centuries of the church, many spurious books were being written by heretics who mixed Greek philosophy with Christianity, resulting in the questioning of such things as Christ's divinity, Christ's humanity, and the apostles' teachings on salvation. Many of these writings were circulated with the name of an apostle falsely attached to them to lend them credibility. These counterfeit scriptures are called pseudepigraphic writings (false writings), and contain numerous factual errors and doctrinal heresies. Due to the spread of these fake scriptures, some of which were temporarily used among the eastern churches, the need for an officially sanctioned canon of the New Testament became increasingly urgent.



a. Some of the best known of these false writings are The Gospel of Nicodemus (written 2nd to 5th century), The Passing of Mary (4th century), The Gospel According to the Hebrews (2nd century), The Gospel of Peter (150 AD.), The Gospel of Thomas (2nd century), The Acts of Peter (190-200 A.D.), The Acts of John (190-200 AD.), The Acts of Andrew (190-200 AD.), and The Epistle to Laodicea (4th century). There are nearly 50 false Gospels, and many false Acts and Epistles.

4. There were also a number of post-apostolic writings by church leaders which were circulated among the churches for legitimate purposes of encouragement. They were written at very early dates, some as early as one generation after the Apostles. None of them claim to be inspired writings and they all quote liberally from our New Testament books. It was necessary to draw a line between these useful books and the inspired New Testament books.

a. The earliest of these writings were the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (96 AD.), Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (110 AD.), Epistle of Barnabas (90-100 AD.), Epistles of Ignatius (100 AD.), the Didache (100 AD.), and the Shepherd of Hermas (95-140 AD.).

5. A thorough study of these reputable post-apostolic writings, which include a tremendous number of references to and specific quotations from the New Testament writings, makes it clear just which books were regarded as Scripture by the early church. An informal canon of the New Testament had already taken shape in the 2nd century A.D. and the process continued into the 3rd and 4th centuries:

a. Irenaeus (130-200 A.D.) provides more than 1,800 quotations from the New Testament books.

b. Tertullian(160-200 A.D.) provides more than 7,000 quotations from the New Testament.

c. Hippolytus (170-235 AD.) provides more than 1,300 New Testament quotations.

d. Origen(185-254 A..D.) provides more than 18,000 New Testament quotations.

e. Eusebius (264-340 A.D.) provides more than 5,000 quotations.

6. Eventually, church leaders began to provide lists of the books they regarded as inspired New Testament Scriptures. *Please note that the New Testament Canon is not something which was decided 300 years after Christ's resurrection. It was rather an eventual formal recognition of an already existing common consensus.*

a. The earliest such list was, surprisingly, produced by the heretic Marcion about 140 A.D. He taught a system of theology which certainly constituted blasphemy, even asserting that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament were different gods. His canon was drawn up to serve his own heretical views. He actually rejected the entire Old Testament, along with those New Testament books he felt were tainted by Jewish influence. His list included only one gospel, Luke, and 10 of Paul's epistles, excluding I and II Timothy, Titus and Hebrews, and also excluded Acts and the epistles of Peter, John, James and Jude. But his list did not represent the overwhelming consensus of Christian leaders.

b. Another early list was the Muratorian Fragment (written in the late 100s A.D.), named after an Italian church historian who publicized this Latin document in 1740. It probably was a list of the books accepted as Scripture in the Roman church in the late 100s. The list includes all the Gospels, Acts, all of Paul's epistles except Hebrews, two of John's letters and Revelation, and Jude, but not James' or Peter's letters. The author of the list is unknown, but was probably a member of the Roman church.

c. The Old Syriac Version of the Bible, which dates from the middle of the second century, included all the New Testament books except the epistles of James, Peter and John, Jude and Revelation. The Old Latin Version, also from the middle of the 2nd century, omits Hebrews, James and 2nd Peter.

d. Origen (185-254 A.D.) also provided a list, which stated that the four Gospels, Acts, the 13 Pauline epistles, I Peter, I John and Revelation were universally accepted. He added that Hebrews, II Peter, II and III John, James and Jude were disputed by some.

e. The formal acceptance of the 27 books of the New Testament was finally completed in the 4th century. When Constantine became Roman emperor in 306 A.D., he made the Christian historian Eusebius (260-340 AD.) his religious advisor. About 332 B.C., Constantine ordered the writing of 50 Bibles under Eusebius' supervision. Eusebius conducted research to determine the general consensus of which books should be included in the New Testament. The New Testament he produced included exactly our 27 books, though Eusebius himself had questions about Revelation. But it is clear that the consensus of the church as a whole by 332 A.D. was that these 27 books were the New Testament. Since these Bibles were produced at the order of the emperor, this can be regarded as at least a semi-official decision on the contents of the canon. The order of the books probably followed the order preferred by Eusebius, which is exactly the order of the books in our New Testament today.

f. Though we don't have any of Eusebius' 50 Bibles with us today, we do have two early Bibles of great importance that date from that same period of time and a third Bible dating from about 400 A.D.:

(1) Codex Vaticanus (325 A.D.)---This manuscript has been in the Vatican Library since it was established in 1448. Its New Testament section contains the four gospels, Acts, the seven catholic (universal) epistles, the Pauline epistles as far as Thessalonians, and Hebrews to 9:14. The remainder of the codex has been lost through damage. It is assumed that the missing portion included at least Paul's pastoral epistles and Philemon after Hebrews, followed by Revelation.

(2) Codex Sinaiticus (350 A.D.)---This manuscript was discovered in 1844 in a monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai and is now in the British Museum. This is the oldest codex containing the entire text of all 27 New Testament books. The New Testament portion contains the four gospels, 14 Pauline epistles (Hebrews between Thessalonians and Timothy), Acts, the catholic epistles, Revelation, the non-canonical Epistle of Barnabas and a fragment of the non-canonical Shepherd of Hermas.

(3) Codex Alexandrinus (400 A.D.)---This manuscript was given to England's King Charles I in 1628 by the Patriarch of Constantinople who had obtained it from Alexandria, Egypt. It is now in the British Museum. It contains all or part of the four gospels, Acts, the catholic epistles, the Pauline epistles (with Hebrews between Thessalonians and Timothy), Revelation, and the non-canonical 1 & 2 Clement. The first 25 leaves of the New Testament are missing, so Matthew begins with 25:6.

g. The content of the New Testament was further confirmed by a list produced by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in 367 AD. He lists exactly our 27 books and makes no distinction between them (as to those books accepted by everyone and those some question).

h. Jerome (346-420 A.D.)---Damasus, Bishop of Rome, asked Jerome to revise the Latin translation of the Bible. Jerome completed the New Testament in 384 A.D. Jerome's translation, the Latin Vulgate, included exactly our 27 books, with Acts placed after Paul's epistles.

i. Augustine (354-430 A.D.)---Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, was the most honored theologian of the early church. He accepted the 27 books of our New Testament without question.

j. At the Council of Hippo Regius (393 A.D.), the church as a whole formally accepted all 27 New Testament books. They directed, "Besides the canonical Scriptures, nothing shall be read in church under the name of the divine Scriptures." The Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419 A.D. reconfirmed this decision.

## THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART SIX

### IV. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON---HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

#### D. What was the Impact of the Middle Ages & Reformation on the New Testament Canon?

1. In the Middle Ages, the Western Church continued to accept Jerome's Latin Vulgate New Testament with exactly the 27 books contained in our English New Testaments.

a. However, a minority opinion supported a forged Epistle to the Laodiceans as a 15th Pauline epistle. There exist more than 100 Latin Vulgate manuscripts containing this bogus letter, one dating as far back as 546 A.D., even though it was rejected by Jerome. The letter is believed to have been written in the late 3rd century A.D. The Epistle to the Laodiceans was put in all 18 German Bibles printed prior to Martin Luther's translation, as well as in Bohemian, Albigensian, English and Flemish versions. However, the Council of Florence (1439-1443 A.D.) confirmed that the New Testament consisted of only 27 books, apparently settling the Laodicean problem once and for all. Support for that false book faded away after that time.

2. The Protestant Reformation occurred partially as a result of a return to the study of the New Testament in the original Greek. As scholarship slowly reawakened in the 1400s and early 1500s, aided significantly by the invention of the printing press in 1450, Christian scholars began to compare the Greek New Testament to the Latin Vulgate version and the growing number of national language versions being translated, primarily from Latin. It wasn't long before some of them realized that the only good way to translate the New Testament was directly from Greek.

a. The Dutch theologian Erasmus (1466-1536 A.D.) discovered some notes on the New Testament prepared by the scholar Laurentius Valla just before his death in 1457. Erasmus published these notes in 1505. Valla contended that all commentaries on the New Testament books should be based on a study of the original Greek, not Latin. This led Erasmus to publish a printed edition of the Greek New Testament based on about six manuscripts in 1516, just one year before Martin Luther tacked his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg church and launched the Protestant Reformation.

b. This greatly increased study of the New Testament in Greek reopened some of the old questions about some of the books. Erasmus denied Paul's authorship of Hebrews, denied that Revelation was written by John the Apostle on the grounds of writing style, and questioned the authorship of James, 2 and 3 John, and Jude.

c. Luther published his German New Testament in 1522 based on Erasmus' Greek New Testament. The Table of Contents had a blank line between what he regarded as acceptable books and four books that he had doubts about---Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation. Luther didn't exclude them from the canon, but regarded them as having a lower level of quality than the others. He didn't like the theology those four books taught. For example, he felt that James' emphasis on works (James 2:14-26) contradicted Paul's emphasis on salvation by faith (Romans 1:17: 4:18-24; Ephesians 2:4-10). (But Paul also emphasized works: Ephesians 2:10: 1 Timothy 6:17-19). Luther was so blinded by hatred of the Catholic Church's penance system, which emphasized works, that he failed to see how perfectly the theology of James and Paul fit together!

d. John Calvin accepted the New Testament canon without question. He felt the 27 books had a self-authenticating quality about them that was obvious---only the Holy Spirit could have caused men to write those words. But he felt that Luke or Clement of Rome may have written Hebrews instead of Paul; the author of James could have been James, the Lord's brother, or James, son of Alphaeus, one of the 12; and Jude was probably the brother of James, son of Alphaeus, not James, the Lord's brother.

e. The Catholic Church's Council of Trent dealt with the subject of the canon in April 1546, apparently because of the questions that had been raised by Erasmus and other Protestants earlier in the century. The council reaffirmed that the canon consisted of the 27 "received" books. The Catholic Church and the majority of the Protestants agreed on these 27 books as being in the canon. The difference between them was that the Catholics granted equal authority with Scripture to the "unwritten traditions" of the church, which they said were received "from the mouth of Christ himself by the apostles, or from the apostles themselves at the dictation of the Holy Spirit" and that the Catholic Church insisted that the "ancient and vulgate edition" of the Latin Bible was the only authentic text of Scripture.

## V. THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

A. Christianity reached the British Isles at a very early date---Celtic tribes spread from Central Europe after 500 B.C. into much of Western Europe and the British Isles. Celtic Christianity can be identified in southern Gaul (France) by the end of the 1st century A.D. and it reached Britain by at least the late 2nd century.

1. When the Roman Emperor Constantine called the Council of Arles in 314 A.D., three bishops from Britain were present, indicating a sizable growth of Christianity there by that date. The Scriptures they would have used in those days in Britain would likely have been either a Greek Bible or an early Old Latin version.

2. Ninian (360-432 A.D.) was the first missionary to the Scots in north Britain. In 394 A.D. he established a monastery in Whithorn in southwestern Scotland. Patrick (389-461 A.D.) was a native Briton who went to Ireland as a missionary in 432.

3. The Roman army left Britain in 406 A.D., leaving the island open to the invasion of the heathen Germanic tribes called the Angles and Saxons from northwest Germany. They wiped out most of the Christian Celts and pushed the remainder of them into western England and Wales, and the French peninsula of Brittany. For the next 190 years, Celtic Christianity developed independently of Roman Christianity.

B. Christianity from Rome reappeared at the end of the sixth century

1. Gregory I (540-604 A.D.) became Bishop of Rome in 590 and became the first Roman bishop to have the power that we associate with the Pope today. He asserted his authority over all the bishops in the West, claimed authority over those in the East (which was ignored), and began an intense missionary effort throughout the West.

2. In 596 A.D. Gregory sent a missionary team to England, headed by a man who became known as Augustine of Canterbury, with instructions to convert the Anglo-Saxons. His Bible would have been the Latin Vulgate. Within months he converted Ethelbert, King of Kent, and the conversion of southern England followed quickly.

C. Development of an English translation of the Bible took many centuries.

1. The earliest efforts at translation of the Bible into the language of England were actually paraphrases, rather than true translations. The earliest we know about was produced about 670 A.D. by Caedmon, who was a laborer at an abbey in Yorkshire, England. He turned Scriptures from Genesis, Exodus and the Gospels into songs and poems in Old English (Anglo-Saxon) which could be memorized.

2. The earliest true translation of a portion of the Bible in a form of English was produced by Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, who died in 709 A.D. He translated the Psalms in Old English, some of them in prose and some in verse.

3. Bede, Monk of Jarrow (673-735 AD.), was the greatest scholar in the early English church. He wrote a history of the church in England and many commentaries, and translated the Gospels into old English. The story is told that he completed the translation of John the day he died. All copies of his translations were later destroyed when the Danes invaded the region.

4. The Lindisfarne Gospels (950 A.D.) were an Old English translation made by a priest named Aldred, who wrote between the lines of a Latin manuscript of the Gospels which had been made about 700 A.D. by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne.

5. After the French-speaking Normans conquered England in 1066, rapid changes took place in the English language. By the 1300s the French of the ruling Normans had blended sufficiently with the old Anglo-Saxon to form what we today call Middle English. This was the language of Chaucer which, though greatly different from modern English, can clearly be recognized as English. But amazingly, as of the mid 1300s, no complete translation of the Bible in English had yet been made!

6. In the 1300s the Roman Catholic Church was opposed to the translation of the Bible into the languages of the people, preferring to keep the Scriptures in the Latin that only the clergy could read. The Catholic Church insisted that the common man would not be able to understand the Bible without a priest to explain its meaning to him.

7. John Wycliffe (1329-1385 A.D.) was a man who opposed the power of the Pope over the English Church. He preached against the immorality of the church and sought to have its property, which he saw as the source of its corruption, confiscated.

a. Wycliffe said that the Bible was the supreme authority for Christians, not church councils or traditions. He rejected practices of the church not found in Scripture, such as praying to saints, revering holy relics, indulgences for forgiveness of sins, pilgrimages, and masses for the dead. Pope Gregory XI demanded his imprisonment in 1377, but the English government failed to obey.

b. Wycliffe came to believe that the only way that the church could be reformed was for the people to have the word of God in their own language. He completed his English translation of the New Testament in 1380 and the Old Testament, primarily the work of Nicholas Hereford, was finished in 1382. Wycliffe's Bible, published in 1384, was a translation from Latin, not the original Greek, and was extremely literal, following the word order of the Latin.

c. Wycliffe's Bible included the apocryphal books, since it was based on the Latin Vulgate. The second edition of his bible (1395), published after his death, included a prologue which acknowledged Jerome's warning that these books should not be used for confirmation of doctrine, but which went on to praise the book of Tobit: "Though the book of Tobias is not of belief, it is a full devout story, and profitable to the simple people." (*NOTE: This is a modernized version of this statement. The original would have been very difficult to understand and the spelling would have been much different.*)

d. A great controversy over the translation resulted and in 1382 Hereford was summoned to London and excommunicated by the church. Wycliffe was also denounced as a heretic and forced into retirement from preaching. He died in 1384. But in 1428, at the order of Pope Martin V, his remains were dug up and burned and his ashes scattered.

e. In 1408 the English church, in the Constitutions of Oxford, forbid "anyone to translate or even read a vernacular (English) version of the Bible in whole or in part without the approval of his diocesan bishop or of a provincial council." But a second edition of Wycliffe's Bible was published by his former secretary, John Purvey, and both versions continued to enjoy great popularity in spite of church opposition.

D. An explosion of English translations appeared in the 1500s as a result of the demand for the Scriptures in the language of the people, the invention of the printing press, and the excitement accompanying the Protestant Reformation.

1. The Dutch scholar Erasmus published the first printed edition of a Greek New Testament in 1516, making the Greek text widely available for the first time. Bibles in Dutch, Italian, and French were printed between 1471 and 1478. Martin Luther issued the 95 Theses, which challenged the doctrines of the Catholic Church, in 1517 and his German New Testament appeared in 1522, resulting in great excitement. But an English translation was prohibited by the Constitutions of Oxford.

2. William Tyndale (1494-1536), an Oxford and Cambridge-trained scholar, became excited about Luther's teaching and decided to produce a New Testament in English for the masses. When the Bishop of London refused to permit it, Tyndale went to the continent, published his New Testament in 1526 and smuggled it into England. Here is a sample of that New Testament from Matthew 11:28-30:

a. *"Come vnto me all ye that labour and are laden and I wyll ease you. Take my yooke on you and lerne of me for y am meke and lowly in herte: and ye shall fynde ease vnto youre soules for my yooke ys easy and my burthen ys lyght."*

b. The Bishop of London seized as many copies of the Tyndale Bible as he could find and burned them at St. Paul's Cross in October 1526. The Bishop also bought all the remaining copies possessed by the printer. Tyndale secretly approved the purchase in order to finance the publishing of a second edition and translation of the Old Testament.

c. But the Bishop had Tyndale kidnapped from his home in the free city of Antwerp. Tyndale was tried as a heretic, found guilty, and was strangled and burned at the stake in October 1536. Just before he died, he cried out, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

3. Only a year after Tyndale's death (1537), King Henry VIII, who had separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church in 1533, authorized the translation of an English Bible and in 1541 every parish in England was ordered to have one for the people to read. A flood of English translations followed:

a. Coverdale's Bible (1535)---King Henry's Secretary of State, Thomas Cromwell, had Miles Coverdale publish a complete English Bible translation. Coverdale followed Tyndale's New Testament closely and used his partially completed Old Testament translation of Genesis to Chronicles. Coverdale translated the remainder of the Old Testament. This Bible separated the apocryphal books, including additions to books, from the rest of the Old Testament and placed them after Malachi, with a separate title page which said: "Apocrypha; the bokes and treatises which amonge the fathers of old are not rekened to be of like authorite with the other books of the byble, nether are they founde in the Canon of Hebrue."

b. Matthew's Bible (1537)---Matthew's Bible was produced by John Rogers, a disciple of Tyndale, under the pen name Thomas Matthew. This Bible was a revision of Tyndale's New Testament and a partial translation of Tyndale's Old Testament and Coverdale's translation of the rest of the Old Testament.

c. The Great Bible (1539)---Cromwell asked Coverdale to make a new revision of the Bible based on Matthew's Bible for use in churches. It was bound in a large volume and an order was given that it be put in an accessible place in each church in the country so the people could come to the churches to read the Word of God themselves. This Bible had Coverdale's introduction to the Apocrypha, but called the books Hagiogripha, meaning "Holy Writings." The fifth edition (1541) omitted Coverdale's introduction and added a new title page in which the list of apocryphal books was preceded by the words: "The fourth part of the Bible, containg these bokes." This was clearly intended to minimize the distinction between the Apocrypha and the Old Testament books.

d. The Geneva Bible (1560)---When Mary I became queen in 1553, the religious climate changed because she was a Catholic. Reformers, especially Bible translators, became targets. John Rogers and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, were burned at the stake. Copies of the Bible were removed from the churches and public reading of the English Bible was banned. Many English church leaders fled to Geneva, Switzerland where translation work continued, led by William Whittingham.

(1) In 1560 this group published the Geneva Bible based on the Great Bible's Old Testament and Tyndale's New Testament. Since Elizabeth I had become queen in 1558, they were able to introduce it successfully into England. During Elizabeth's reign (1558-1603), the Geneva Bible was the translation most used in homes, while the Great Bible was used in church services.



(2) The Geneva Bible continued the practice of placing the Apocrypha in a separate section after the Old Testament and stated the books "are called Apocrypha, that is bokes, which are not receiued by a commune consent to be red and expounded publikely in the Church, nether yet serued to proue any point of Christian religion, saue in asmucho as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical to confirme the same . . ." Some users of the Geneva Bible did not approve of the Apocrypha and, to cater to them, a 1599 edition of it was printed without the Apocrypha. This practice was repeated in the 1640 edition.

e. The Bishops' Bible (1568)---Deficiencies in the Great Bible used in pulpits became evident when compared to the carefully prepared Geneva Bible. But the Geneva Bible was unacceptable to church leaders since it had sectarian marginal notes and some questionable passages. Matthew Parker, Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, and eight bishops revised the Great Bible, issuing the Bishop's Bible in 1568 for use in churches.

f. Rheims-Douay Bible (1582-1609)---A Bible in English was finally produced for Catholics. Gregory Martin translated the New Testament at a college in Rheims, France which was published in 1582. The college was later moved to Douay, France, where the Old Testament was printed in 1609. It was translated from the Latin Vulgate, not the original Greek and Hebrew. A later revision by Bishop Richard Challoner was authorized for use by American Roman Catholics in 1810.

THE ORIGIN & HISTORY OF THE BIBLE---PART SEVEN  
THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

4. The King James Bible (1611)---The confusion resulting from the use of several different English translations at the same time led finally in 1611 to the publishing of the King James Bible to replace all of them.

a. When James became king in 1603, he convened a meeting of Anglican bishops and Puritan clergy to settle differences among them over the various translations. When it was suggested a new translation be made from the Greek and Hebrew with marginal notes restricted to matters of language and parallel passages, the king approved it.

b. King James appointed 54 scholars to do the work, with 47 of them actually participating. They were divided into six groups to work on different portions of the Bible. Each group's completed work was reviewed by a committee of 12, consisting of two men from each of the six groups. Final differences were settled by a general meeting.

c. The Authorized (King James) Version of 1611 was technically a revision of the 1602 edition of the Bishops' Bible, which included the Apocrypha. So the first edition of the King James Version included the Apocrypha! In 1615 the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury forbid the binding or selling of Bibles without the Apocrypha on penalty of a year in prison, in response to the opposition of the Puritans to use of the Apocrypha. Nevertheless, copies of the King James Version without the Apocrypha were produced beginning in 1626.

d. It is worth noting that the British and Foreign Bible Society, formed in Great Britain in 1804, chose to end the practice of distributing editions of the Bible containing the Apocrypha in 1826. When no protests came from the public, other Bible publishers adopted the same practice. For a century and a half now, it has been practically impossible to buy over the counter in any ordinary bookshop in Britain or America a copy of the King James Version containing the Apocrypha.

e. The King James Bible didn't receive immediate acceptance by church members. It took almost 50 years for it to gain a higher place than the Geneva Bible. But once it was fully accepted, the King James Bible became the Bible of choice of English-speaking people for the next 300 years. Its beauty of language comes from the period of Shakespeare and Milton, and its heartfelt message breathes from a century when translators had given their lives through fire and sword to deliver the Bible to the people.

f. The King James translators, like the English Bible translators before them, were not without their theological biases. They were primarily Church of England theologians who had inherited much of their theology and church practices from more than 1500 years of church tradition. For example, since the Church of England practiced infant baptism and sprinkling, the translators followed the decision of earlier English translators to transliterate the Greek word "baptizo" into English as "baptize" rather than translate it correctly as "immerse."

5. The popularity of the King James Bible put an end to major church efforts to publish English translations, but private individuals continued to produce new translations. Some of these were:

a. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, made a private revision of the King James New Testament in 1745 under the title, "The New Testament with Notes for Plain Unlettered Men Who Know Only Their Mother Tongue."

b. Anthony Purver brought out a literal translation in 1764, which became known as the Quaker Bible.

c. In America, the earliest translation of the New Testament was issued by Alexander Campbell in 1826 under the title, "The Living Oracles."

(1) In the preface Campbell stated, "A living language is continually changing. Like the fashions and customs in apparel, words and phrases at one time current and fashionable, in the lapse of time become awkward and obsolete. But this is not all; many of them, in a century or two come to have a signification very different from that which was once attached to them: nay, some are known to convey the ideas not only different from, but contrary to, their first signification. This constant mutation in a living language will probably render new translations, or corrections of old translations, necessary every two or three hundred years. For, although the English tongue may have changed less during the last two hundred years, than it ever did in the same lapse of time before; yet the changes which have taken place since the reign of James I, do now render a new translation necessary."

(2) Campbell also pointed out that scholars in the 1800s had access to many more ancient manuscripts than did the King James translators, and possessed a greater amount of knowledge about the history and geography in Bible times, making them more qualified to do a translation. Campbell also felt that, in some passages, the King James Bible reflected the theological biases of the translators, in particular the passages that were rendered more favorable to Calvinist doctrines such as predestination.

(3) Campbell also objected to the transliteration of the Greek word "baptizo" into "baptize," which avoided translating it correctly as "immerse." As a result, Campbell's New Testament replaced "baptize" with "immerse" throughout (Matt. 3:1-16, 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-41, etc.). (It should be noted that Campbell was not the first English translator to do this, since Nathaniel Scarlett had used "immerse" in his New Testament, published in England in 1798). Campbell also avoided using ecclesiastical terms he felt were misleading. For example, he used "assembly" or "congregation" instead of "church" (Acts 5:11, Matt. 16:18, Eph. 1:22) and "favor" instead of "grace" (Rom. 6:14).

(4) Campbell's New Testament is literal and dependable, but it is a little difficult to read today, since the English used commonly in 1826 is different than the English we use today. It is also printed in paragraphs, with only the verse number of the first verse in each paragraph printed, like the 20th century Phillips translation.

d. In 1872 Joseph Rotherham published a literal New Testament. He published the complete Bible in 1902 as The Emphasized Bible. Rotherham was a minister who was first a Methodist, then a Baptist, and finally Disciples of Christ. In an effort to be as literal as possible, he also used "immerse" instead of baptize.

6. In 1870 a major effort was launched in Britain and the United States to make a major revision of the King James Version. The goal was to update the King James Bible, while retaining its style which was so beloved by English-speaking Christians.

a. A group of 27 Hebrew scholars from many of Britain's denominations worked on the Old Testament, while 27 Greek scholars worked on the New Testament. Two similar groups of American scholars also participated. It was agreed that any suggestions made by the Americans, but not preferred by the British, would be noted in an appendix. Then after 14 years the Americans could issue their own Bible.

b. The textual basis for the New Testament revision was the Greek New Testament prepared by B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, which was in turn based on a much greater number of ancient manuscripts than were available to the King James translators. This text differed from the so-called Received Text, which was used for the King James translation in 5,788 places, most of the differences being extremely minor (i.e., spelling of names).

c. The British completed their New Testament in 1881 and the complete English Revised Version was published in 1885. This version included 36,000 changes from the King James. The largest number of changes was the result of changes in the English language since 1611. Other changes were because of the changes in the Greek text used (Westcott and Hort) and changes in interpretation (mostly Old Testament) of what the original Hebrew and Greek writers meant.

d. In 1901 the Americans published their revision, the American Standard Version (ASV). It is generally accepted that this revision was a more accurate rendering of the Greek than the King James Version in a careful literal translation. It became the favorite study Bible of Restoration Movement preachers because of this. But neither the ASV or the English Revised Version achieved the King James Version's popularity with American and British Christians.

7. In the 20th century there developed a craving for the Bible in the everyday language of today's common man, rather than in an eloquent and timeless form that the King James Bible represents. The argument was made that the New Testament was not written in a special Greek of its own, but in the common language of the people, and should therefore be translated in the same way in English today to ensure its closeness to the individual reader. Whereas former days had required translators to be faithful to the meaning of the original text and provide a dignified, understandable rendering in English, now there was a demand for a contemporary style of speech.

a. Moffatt's Bible---In 1913 James Moffat issued the "New Testament: A. New Translation," followed by the Old Testament in 1924 and the complete Bible in 1935. He wrote in the preface, "I have attempted to translate the New Testament exactly as one would render any piece of contemporary Hellenistic prose. . . ." Moffat added, "But once the translation of the New Testament is freed from the influence of the theory of verbal inspiration, these difficulties (the choice of different meanings for the same word)

cease to be so formidable." Moffatt's liberalism shows through in his translation. For example, he translated Matthew 1:16 to say, "Jacob the father of Joseph, and Joseph (to whom the virgin Mary was betrothed) the father of Jesus, who is called 'Christ.'" Here he chose to follow an unusual Greek text found in only one or two manuscripts, ignoring hundreds of other manuscripts.

b. Goodspeed's Bible---Edgar J. Goodspeed was a well-known liberal scholar who taught at the University of Chicago. In 1923 he published "The New Testament, An American Translation." In 1927 "The Old Testament, An American Translation" was issued by four translators under the editorship of J. M. Powis Smith. The complete Goodspeed Bible appeared in 1931. In the preface Goodspeed described the need for a new translation "based upon the assured results of modern study, and put in the familiar language of today." Conservative scholars feel he placed too much emphasis on the "modern study," but it was a very readable translation in contrast to the King James Bible and met a real need for a modern language Bible.

c. The Modern Language (Berkeley) Bible---Gerrit Verkuyl of Berkeley, Calif. published a New Testament in 1945. He headed a group of 20 scholars who worked on the Old Testament for the next 14 years. The complete Bible was published in 1959 and a revised edition was issued in 1969 with the title, "The Modern Language Bible: The New Berkeley Version in Modern English." The translators attempted to maintain a balance between "freedom" which makes a passage live and "literalness" which remains close to the original wording. It was regarded as a helpful translation at a time when modern language translations were not very available

d. Revised Standard Version (RSV)---The liberal National Council of Churches published a New Testament in 1946 and the complete Revised Standard Version Bible in 1952. In 1957 they finished the translation of the Apocrypha and in 1965 the RSV Catholic Edition was published. The original translation was accomplished by a committee of nine men for the New Testament and 13 men for the Old Testament. All of the translators were liberal in their theology and would share with Moffat his denial of verbal inspiration. The RSV claims to be a simultaneous revision of the King James Version and the American Standard Version of 1901. It is very readable but the liberalism of the translators shows through in places:

(1) Psalm 51:18---RSV used "rebuild the walls of Jerusalem" instead of "build the walls of Jerusalem" in this psalm of David, thus supporting the liberal theory that this psalm was actually written hundreds of years after David's death and the building of Solomon's temple. But the Hebrew word "banah" here means "build," not "rebuild."

(2) Isaiah 7:14---RSV used "young woman" instead of "virgin" in this prophecy of Jesus' birth, leaving open the possibility of a human father.

(3) Luke 1:3---RSV used "having followed all things closely for some time past," instead of "from the beginning." The RSV wording better fits the liberal theory that Luke and Matthew borrowed much of their information from Mark's gospel.

(4) Hebrews 1:2---RSV used "a son" instead of "his son" in reference to God's son, Jesus, leaving open the possibility he was not God's actual son.

(5) Hebrews 13:24---RSV used "Those who come from Italy" instead of "Those from Italy," supporting a theory that Hebrews was sent to the Roman church. But the Hebrew here leaves open the possibility that the letter was sent from Rome.

e. Phillips' New Testament---In 1947 J. B. Phillips began translating the New Testament books into plain English to meet the needs of young people. He had been responsible for a youth group in England during World War II, but found that these kids didn't understand the King James Bible. His completed work, "The New Testament in Modern English," was published in 1958. This was for several years the most popular modern translation of the New Testament and is still widely used. It was a very free translation: the KJV's "Salute one another with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16)," becomes, "Give one another a hearty handshake all round for my sake," in Phillips' translation.

f. The Amplified Bible---The Lockman Foundation and Zondervan Publishing House issued the Amplified New Testament in 1958 and the complete Amplified Bible in 1965. This study Bible indicates the various shades of meaning included in each important Hebrew and Greek word translated in each passage by adding words in parentheses and brackets. It is an outstanding study Bible but is too complicated for easy reading or public worship purposes.

g. The Jerusalem Bible---Marie-Joseph Lagrange, a French Catholic Dominican priest, founded a school of Biblical studies in Jerusalem about 1900. Eventually, the school made a French translation of the Bible, published in 1956. Alexander Jones, a Catholic scholar, then led in making an English translation along the lines of the French translation. This English version of The Jerusalem Bible was published in 1966. The notes included with this Bible are liberal, denying that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and that Peter wrote 2 Peter. This Bible renders 1 Timothy 3:1 as "presiding elder" rather than "overseer," or "bishop," or "elder." A footnote is added to Matthew 12:46, which mentions Jesus' "mother and brothers." The footnote says, in order to protect the Catholic doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity, "Not Mary's children but near relations, cousins perhaps, which both Hebrew and Aramaic style 'brothers.'" This version also translates "fruit of the vine" as "wine" (Mark 14:25), even though the Greek word for wine is used nowhere in Scripture when referring to the Lord's Supper. The notes also support the idea of Peter being the first Pope.

h. Today's English Version---Also published under the title, "Good News for Modern Man," the American Bible Society published the New Testament part of this translation in 1966 and the entire Bible in 1976. The purpose was to publish a Bible using contemporary language and that would produce "dynamic equivalence"---that is, language that would produce the same effect on the modern reader as was felt by the original readers. It is easy to read and usually preserves the true meaning of the text. But in places the TEV makes the real meaning of a passage harder to understand and less accurate. In John 1:1, "and the Word was God," becomes "and he was the same as God."

i. The New English Bible (NEB)---In 1946 a plan to publish a completely new English translation in contemporary language was agreed on by the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, and the Methodist, Baptist and Congregational Churches. The New Testament was completed in 1961 and the whole Bible, including the Apocrypha, was published in 1970. This free translation is sometimes close to a paraphrase.

It also contains a number of renderings which display a liberal bias. For example, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive (KJV)" in Isaiah 7:14 becomes "A young woman is with child" in the NEB. Also, "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (KJV)" in Isaiah 9:6 becomes "in purpose wonderful, in battle God-like, Father for all time, Prince of peace" in the NEB. And, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" in Genesis 1:2 becomes "A mighty wind that swept over" in the NEB.

j. New American Bible---In 1750 the Douay-Rheims (Catholic) Bible was revised by Richard Challoner and Francis Blyth. This Douay-Rheims-Challoner Bible became the most-used Bible by English-speaking Catholics. It was authorized in 1810 for use by American Roman Catholics and its use continued into the 20th century. But in 1941 a major revision of the Rheims-Challoner New Testament was published. Then work began on a totally new translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. The complete New American Bible, including a newly translated New Testament, was finally published in 1970. It was the work of 59 Catholic scholars and a few Protestant consultants and is a thoroughly modern language translation.

k. The Living Bible---Kenneth Taylor published this Bible paraphrase in 1971. His intent was "to say as exactly as possible what the writers of the Scriptures meant." It is certainly readable but, as with any paraphrase, its accuracy is poor. All too often the idea in the paraphrased passage is not the idea of the original Scripture (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 2:4; 1 Peter 3:21). This paraphrase should never be used as a primary Bible, but only in conjunction with a very reliable Bible such as the New American Standard, New International Version, or King James Bible.

l. New American Standard Bible (NASB)---The Lockman Foundation had 58 outstanding conservative scholars work for more than a decade to produce this new translation, which was published in 1971. Their primary purpose was to make this translation true to the original Hebrew and Greek by producing a literal, word-by-word translation. Dr. Lewis Foster of Cincinnati Bible Seminary states, "Upon examination, this version shows less departure from the original languages than any of the other modern Bibles tested." The second purpose of the translators was to do the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage. The result is an extremely accurate translation, which is also very readable. The NASB is an outstanding study Bible and is more accurate overall than the King James Bible or the New International Version. It is not as beautiful a translation as the King James or as easy to understand as the NIV.

m. The New International Version (NIV)---Like the NASB, the NIV was translated by men who held a high view of Biblical inspiration. Begun in 1967, the New Testament was completed in 1973 and the complete Bible in 1978. Five-man translation teams were assigned to each book. Their work was reviewed word by word and fine-tuned by three committees. Dr. Lewis Foster of Cincinnati Bible Seminary (Christian Churches and Churches of Christ) was one of more than 100 scholars from the U.S., Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who participated. Their goal was to put the truths of Scripture into expressions used and understood today. But their leading principal was: "At every point the translation shall be faithful to the Word of God as represented by the most accurate text of the original languages of scripture." The NIV is not a word-for-word translation, but is instead a free translation which attempts to acknowledge each Hebrew or Greek word in some way. Its clarity and readability are excellent.

Its accuracy is very good (though Less accurate than the New American Standard Bible), and its beauty of language is good (though not equal to the King James Bible.)

n. The New King James Version (NKJV)---This revision of the classic King James Version was published in 1982, the work of a committee of 130 scholars. They included Dr. Lewis Foster of the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. Since its textual basis is the same Textus Receptus (Received Text) used to translate the original KJV, not a single change was made based on manuscript discoveries made since 1611. This prevents it from being as accurate a Bible as the NIV or NASB, although its accuracy should still be considered good. However, it retains much of the cadence and majesty of the 1611 King James, while improving in clarity over the KJV. Examples of positive changes are the use of "Holy Spirit" instead of "Holy Ghost" throughout, the replacement of "Easter" with "Passover" in Acts 12:4; and replacement of "unknown tongue" with "tongue" in 1 Corinthians 14:2 & 4. But much more could have been done to improve the clarity of the translation if they had not been hampered by their intention to make the NKJV retain the classic style of the original KJV.