

MODULE INTRO
ORIGIN AND
TRANSMISSION
OF
THE BIBLE ©

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Module Introduction to the Bible (Non Accredited)

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Briefing:

How did these precious writings come into existence?

Who decided what books should be included in the contents of the Old and New Testaments? And how have they been handed down through the centuries?

A reader with an inquiring mind, who appreciates these books for their spiritual values, will want to know the answers to these questions

THE ORIGIN AND TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

WHEN the average reader opens his Bible, he regards it reverently as the Word of God. He probably has little knowledge of its history as a book. Finding in its pages the means of communicating with his Creator, and receiving sustenance for the inner man, he may give no thought as to how this Wonder Book was assembled and handed to him in its present form.

Yet there are foundation facts concerning the production of the Bible which all Christians should know something about. The Bible is not simply a book; it is a compilation of sixty-six separate writings, composed by many authors over a period of approximately sixteen hundred years, and consists of historical documents, poetry, proverbs, biography, prophecy and letters. When one reads these works in English he is reading a translation, as they were first produced and transmitted in other languages.

How did these precious writings come into existence? Who decided what books should be included in the contents of the Old and New Testaments? And how have they been handed down through the centuries? A reader with an inquiring mind, who appreciates these books for their spiritual values, will want to know the answers to these questions.

While conceding that the Bible is truly a miraculous work, it is also a fact that its books did not drop down from heaven into the lap of earth, but were produced through human agencies. However, they did not originate in the mind of man. Peter states that the sacred prophetic messages came not at any time by the will of man; "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21.) The author of Hebrews refers to the ultimate source of biblical literature in his opening sentence: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Paul tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16.)

The various Bible books represent the fruitful labours of many different writers, living in different centuries and in localities far removed from one another. Each one wrought in his own way, for his own time and for future generations, under the guidance of the omniscient Spirit of God. When they were first written these books were transcribed and circulated as separate manuscripts. Eventually devout scholars collected the sacred writings of the Old Testament into a single volume; and still later the New Testament writings were compiled in the same way.

It may be said with certainty that the Bible is not just another book. It is **The Book**. "It is a voice and the voice is God's." As has been aptly said, "The story of its boring through the mountainous barriers of language is the miracle of literature."

The original manuscripts of the sixty-six books of the Bible have long since been lost or destroyed; as far as is known not a single one of them has been in existence for hundreds of years. Before their disappearance, in the providence of God, copies and translations of the original manuscripts had been made and preserved. Out of these copies and translations from the Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon languages our present English Bible was derived.

Such terms as manuscripts, copies and translations used in reference to ancient teachings presuppose a knowledge of writing. It is at this point that the main barrage against the authority of the Bible has been directed. During the last quarter of the past century, and in the first quarter of the twentieth, philosophers and theologians, with all the pompous assurance of infallibility, built up an aggressive school of adverse criticism on the assumption that the art of writing was unknown until long after the days of Abraham and Moses.

The entire framework of modern destructive criticism rests upon the supposition that the subject matter of the Old Testament was transmitted orally until a century or two preceding the Christian era. Therefore, critics tell us, none of the Old Testament books were written at the time indicated in the text; on the contrary, they were handed down from father to son, or from preceptor to pupil, in legendary fashion. Finally, toward the end of the period between Ezra and the first century B.C., they were put in

writing by various scribes who sought to lend importance to their literary efforts by ascribing them to famous heroes and prophets of the past. Well-known ecclesiastics call this plagiarism a pious fraud.

According to the conclusions based on this theory, none of the Old Testament books were actually written by the men whose names they bear. In the Pentateuch, for example, we do not have the writings of Moses, as Jesus designated them in John 5:46-47; we have only a compilation authored by Jewish rabbis and scribes subsequent to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. They merely ascribe them to Moses for the purpose of adding authority to their writings. The same theory is applied to the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the other great prophets of God. Is it any wonder that faith in the authenticity of the Bible is undermined when people are led to accept such fraudulent speculations?

These speculations flourished with increasing audacity until they were challenged by startling new discoveries which came to light through the excavations of archaeologists in Bible lands from 1925 to 1934. For a brief summary of these discoveries as they relate to the production and transmission of the Bible, we quote from the revised edition of a famous book, "Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts," by Sir Frederic Kenyon, formerly Director of the British Museum, and published by Eyre & Spottiswoode, London:

"There is, however, a preliminary inquiry which lies behind both the composition of the (Bible) books and their transmission. This is the history of writing, without which these books could not have come down to us. The fundamental fact in the history of all ancient literature is the fact that before the invention of printing—that is, until about the year 1450—every copy of every book had to be separately written by hand. The whole history of ancient literature, including that of the Bible, is therefore conditioned first by the invention of writing, and next by the materials and forms of books in the various countries in which they were produced and circulated.

"Now here we have at once occasion to realise how greatly our knowledge has been increased by the many marvellous discoveries of our own age. We have learnt very much of late years with regard to the antiquity of writing. It is not long since it was commonly maintained that the books of the Pentateuch could not be based on contemporary records, much less be attributable to Moses himself, because writing was not known at that time. Eminent scholars in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, such as Wellhausen and Graf, held that writing was not known in Palestine before the time of the kings. Here archaeology has come to our assistance most decisively.

"In Mesopotamia the excavations of American scholars at Nippur in 1888-1900 brought to light thousands of clay tablets, including many bearing literary texts (among them the Sumerian narrative of the Flood) which can be dated to about 2100 B.C. or earlier. To about the same time belong the tablets found by Sir Leonard Wooley at Ur, containing temple records and accounts in the most minute detail; while earlier tablets at Ur, and those found at Kish by the Oxford-Chicago expedition under Langdon, are said to go back to the middle of the fourth millennium or even earlier.

"The evidence from the other side of Palestine is equally impressive. From Egypt we have actual manuscripts, written on papyrus, datable to about 2200-2000 B.C., and containing texts which claim to have been written at a much earlier period.

Probably the earliest of these are two ethical treatises, the Teaching of Kagemna and the Teaching of Ptah-Hetep, works of gnomic philosophy akin in character to the Proverbs of Solomon, which are attributed to about 3100 B.C. and 2880 B.C. respectively. There are also several copies of the great ritual work, the Book of the Dead, dating from the XVIIIth Dynasty (about 1580--1320 B.C.), which may be contemporary with Moses; while portions of the Book of the Dead existed many centuries earlier. . . .

"All around Palestine therefore we now have evidence, unknown to our fathers, of the free use of writing back to a time far earlier than that of Abraham. We can also bring new evidence from Syria and Palestine themselves. In the year 1887 an Egyptian woman found, amid the ruins of an ancient city about halfway between Thebes and Memphis, a collection of some 350 clay tablets inscribed with strange markings. The city is now well known as Tell el-Amarna, the capital of the remarkable king Amenhotep IV, or Akhenaten, who made a vain attempt to revolutionise the religion of his country, and was the father-in-law of Tutankhamen, the discovery of whose tomb by Lord Carnavon made such a sensation at the end of 1922. The tablets of Tell el-Amarna, however, raised an almost equal sensation among Oriental scholars; for here, in the middle of Egypt, were

documents written not after the manner of the country, in the Egyptian language and upon papyrus, but engraved upon clay in the unmistakable cuneiform, or wedge-shaped script characteristic of Mesopotamia. Nor did their surprise lessen as the writings were deciphered and their meaning ascertained. For these tablets proved to be the official correspondence of Egyptian governors or vassal-princes, from various places in Palestine and Syria, with their overlord, the king of Egypt. Their date is about the year 1380 B.C., which, according to the view now generally accepted, and which seems to be confirmed by the recent excavations at Jericho, is the period when Joshua and the Hebrews were overrunning southern Palestine, while the Hittites were conquering Damascus, and the Amorites were invading Phoenicia. Jerusalem, Lachish, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, are mentioned by name; and complaints are made of the assaults of the Habiru, who have been generally regarded as the Hebrews, though the identification is not accepted by all scholars.

"In the Amarna tablets, therefore, we have actual documents written in Palestine about the time of Joshua. They show that writing was then familiarly known and freely used, and consequently that historical records may easily have been composed and preserved from that period. They are, however, not in Hebrew or in any other dialect of Palestine, but in Babylonian, which was apparently the official medium of correspondence, even with Egypt, much as French has been in modern Europe. . . .

"Still more remarkable, for their bearing both on the history of writing in Syria and on the intellectual and religious background of the Hebrews, are the results of the excavations which have now for some years been proceeding at a place called Ras-Shamra, a site on the coast of north-west Syria, not far from Alexandretta. Here a chance discovery in 1929 led to excavations which were so fruitful that they have been carried on continuously since that date by M. Claude Schaeffer and his colleagues. The site was identified as that of the Phoenician city of Ugarit, a flourishing settlement from about the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Among the ruins was found a building which had apparently been a library, containing quantities of clay tablets bearing cuneiform writing; and the liveliest interest was aroused when it became known, first, that this was not the ordinary Babylonian cuneiform, like the Tell el-Amarna letters, but was alphabetic in character; secondly, that the language was an archaic form of Hebrew; and, thirdly, and especially, that the texts included a number of literary and religious writings, among which occurred names familiar to us from the Old Testament.

"The decipherment and publication of the Ras-Shamra texts is still in progress, but the general results at present arrived at by the scholars who have worked at them are of the highest interest, both in themselves and for their bearing upon the ancient Hebrew records and religion. They may be briefly summarized as follows. The library of Ras-Shamra seems to have been, if not founded, at least considerably developed about the middle of the second millennium B.C. by a king of Ugarit named Nigmed, whose name appears on several of the tablets. It was housed in a building between the two great temples of Baal and Dagon. The writing is a cuneiform alphabetic script with twenty-nine characters. The exact relation of it to the Sinaitic and Phoenician scripts has still to be worked out. The language is Semitic, and can be fairly described as proto-Phoenician or proto-Hebrew. Many of the texts are non-literary, including Sumerian-Babylonian vocabularies, the former being the language of ancient literary texts, the latter the language of diplomacy (as in the Tell el-Amarna letters) and commerce. Another dictionary is of Sumerian and an as yet undeciphered tongue. In addition, inscriptions in Egyptian, Hittite and Cypriot have been found, showing that Ugarit was a place where many languages met and were in use. Other texts are commercial, medical, legal, diplomatic and private. But by far the greater part of the library of Ugarit was composed of religious writings; and it is these that are of the greatest interest for our present purpose. No one can question their relationship with the early Hebrew religion. . . . Of history there is little, though one group of tablets records a campaign against the Terachites, a name which recalls Terah, the father of Abraham. Altogether, no more remarkable discovery, for the light which it throws on the religion of the Canaanite peoples before the invasion of Joshua, has ever been made. . . .

"We have now seen that, when the Hebrews left the land of Egypt, they left a land in which writing had been practiced for hundreds of years; and when they entered Canaan under Joshua, they came to a land already possessing a literature and an alphabetic writing, available alike for secular

and religious purposes. This has an intimate bearing on the origin and credibility of the books of the Old Testament." (Pages 4-9.)

Now that the antiquity of writing has been firmly established, it is interesting to consider the writing materials used by the biblical authors and by the scribes who copied and translated the manuscripts from the time of their origin to the invention of printing. Many different materials have been used for writing during the long course of history; among them are such contrasting substances as stone, bark, leaves, wood, metals, linen, baked clay and potsherds. But for the main transmission of the Scriptures only leather, papyrus and vellum have been used to any large extent.

From a very early date prepared skins were used as writing material. In Egypt there are references to documents written on skins in the fourth millennium B.C., and actual specimens are in existence from about 2000 B.C. It was customary to write all copies of the Old Testament Law on skins, and in roll form. It is said in Jeremiah 36:23, that Jehudi used a penknife to cut in pieces the leaves of Jeremiah's prophecies before destroying the entire roll in the fire. Referring to this incident Sir Frederic adds:

"The use of such an instrument seems to show that the roll was of tougher material than papyrus. A knife was, in fact, part of the equipment of a scribe writing on leather or vellum, for the purpose of erasures, as we know from medieval pictures. Further, it is recorded that the copies of the Law which were sent from Palestine to Egypt in the third century B.C., for the purpose of the making of the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scripture into Greek, were on skins." ("Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts," p. 10.)

Of all the writing materials available in ancient times, papyrus was the most widely used. It is certain that papyrus was used in Egypt as far back as the third millennium B.C., and probably still earlier. It was made from the pith of the papyrus plant which grew abundantly in the Nile. Long before the days of Herodotus, the papyrus roll was the standard material for book production among the Greeks. While the preceding paragraph mentions that the Hebrew Scriptures which were sent to Egypt for translation were on leather, it should be noted also that the first—or Septuagint—translation of the Old Testament into Greek was produced on papyrus rolls. And papyrus must have been the material on which the books of the New Testament were written in the first century A.D. In fact, by the early part of the second century Christians began using papyrus in codex form, which is our modern form of book with leaves arranged in quires.

Desirable as papyrus was in many respects it lacked durability. Dampness destroyed it and if kept dry it became very brittle. Egypt is the only country where papyrus manuscripts can be preserved if buried in the soil—with a few exceptions where the climate is similar. Since this was unknown until within the last fifty years, scholars concluded that all papyrus manuscripts had been destroyed, and that no Greek and Latin works could have come down to us until papyrus was superseded by the more durable vellum. It was stated with certainty that all copies of the Scriptures, and classical literature as well, earlier than the fourth century after Christ had perished. Much light has now been shed abroad by the recovery of many thousands of papyrus documents from the ruins of Egypt.

Vellum, or parchment, is not only durable but it is the most beautiful of all ancient writing materials. It is an improved and more expensive development in processing the skins of cattle, sheep and goats, especially the young of these animals. Although vellum was in use at Pergamum and at Dura on the Euphrates some two centuries B.C., it was not until the fourth century of the Christian era that it was used generally in making the best books. Eusebius states that Constantine the Great ordered fifty copies of the Scriptures for the churches in Constantinople and specified that they must be on vellum. About the same time, according to Jerome, the worn-out papyrus volumes in the library at Caesarea were replaced by vellum copies.

The making of books today is such a simple and speedy matter that we are likely to forget what a tedious job it was not so long since. Less than five centuries ago, around 1450, the printing press was invented. And until that boon was granted to mankind, making books was certainly no mass production business. During all the preceding centuries books existed only in hand-written copies called manuscripts, from the Latin manuscriptum, meaning "written by hand." In order to secure additional copies of the Bible, for instance, each one of the sixty-six books had to be written out by hand. What a colossal undertaking! Perhaps it will impress us to remember that the latest book in the New Testament was

written more than a thousand years before the first crude printing press was made. Thus we see why the copyists, or scribes, played such an important part in the transmission of the Scriptures.

VARIATIONS in the Bible text are due mainly to the fact that copies have been made from copies by thousands of scribes over a long period of time. A contributing factor also is that words frequently change their meaning in the course of centuries. Often there is doubt in the minds of conscientious scholars—and disagreement among them too—as to the exact words used by the original writers. For these reasons our Bibles contain marginal readings and footnotes which give various readings from different authorities, both ancient and modern.

In making revisions and translations of the Scriptures, it is the duty of scholars to examine all obtainable materials and carefully weigh the evidence on each passage where there is a difference of opinion. Their problems are many. Words in many of the ancient manuscripts run together in a continuous line of letters, with no indication as to where a word begins or ends. Furthermore, in the old Hebrew copies there are no vowels and no vowel points. It is not surprising, then, that differences of opinion arise as to the meaning of words and phrases; for not all would readily agree regarding such details as vowels, punctuation and sentence structure. Little do most of us realize the debt of gratitude we owe to the men in all generations who, with reverence and rare patience, have wrestled so effectively with these problems.

While recognizing the difficulties involved in passing the Scriptures down through centuries of time, and the barriers of many languages, it is safe to say that there are no valid reasons for doubting or rejecting their authenticity. Certain contemporary writers weary us with hackneyed theories of sleepy copyists who littered the pages of our Bible with errors. Some are so eager to point out probable mistakes that they are blind to the promise of a guiding Spirit for the protection of the sacred Word. Surely He who inspired its origin is able to guard its transmission even in a changing and turbulent world. "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

By way of verifying the preceding paragraph, let us turn once more to the work of Sir Frederic Kenyon. The following excerpts give the gist of his conclusions on the matter after the study of ancient biblical manuscripts and versions over a period of forty years.

"No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading. Constant references to mistakes and divergences of reading, such as the plan of this book necessitates, might give rise to the doubt whether the substance, as well as the language, of the Bible is not open to question. It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain. Especially is this the case with the New Testament. The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true meaning of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world. Scholars are satisfied that they possess substantially the true text of the principal Greek and Roman writers whose works have come down to us, of Sophocles, of Thucydides, of Cicero, of Virgil; yet our knowledge of their writings depends on a mere handful of manuscripts, whereas the manuscripts of the New Testament are counted by hundreds, and even thousands. In the case of the Old Testament we are not quite in such a good position, as will be shown presently. In some passages it seems certain that the true reading has not been preserved by any ancient authority, and we are driven to conjecture in order to supply it. But such passages are an infinitesimal portion of the whole and may be disregarded. The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true Word of God, handed without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.

"The Bible is so intertwined with our inmost religion, is so rightly regarded as the immutable basis of our faith, that to many people it is hard to admit that any doubt can be allowed to attach to either the form or the substance of any of its statements. But this is to make an assumption with regard to God's methods which is not warranted by what we see in His methods elsewhere. Doubtless He might have imposed the true doctrines of religion on mankind in such a manner that no possible opening could have been left for doubt. He might have made it impossible for man to sin. He might have solved the mystery of pain. But that has not been His method. He has left to man the privilege of free will, and has imposed on him the responsibility of thought, of examination, of faith.

There is therefore nothing that need disturb or unsettle us in the idea that He has also imposed on us the responsibility of using the intellectual faculties with which He has endowed us in the study of the records in which the history of the chosen Hebrew people and of the foundation of the Christian Church have come down to us. These intellectual faculties may lead us astray, just as we may go astray in far more important matters of faith and conduct; but it is a poor faith which does not believe that the Holy Spirit will, if we trust Him, ultimately lead us to the truth. It is incredible, to anyone who believes in God, that there should be an irreparable discrepancy between the truth and the results to which we can attain by the exercise of those faculties which God has given to us, and which He has imposed on us the responsibility of using." ("Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts," pages 23, 28.)

ALL the foregoing points should be kept in mind as we now review the history of the Canon and the principal codices, revisions and translations of the Bible. As has been stated before, the Bible is a collection of writings by many authors in different centuries of ancient times. At some later date they were adopted as having canonical authority and arranged in their present form. This process of canonization and classification is known as the formation of the Canon of Scripture. The Hebrew Canon consists of three groups known as the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, or sacred writings.

1. **The Law** consisted of the five books of Moses which are now called the Pentateuch. It is certain that they were the first writings to receive canonical status. They were read to the people by Joshua. They were "the book of the Law" in Israel's history, prophecies and songs. Sometimes they were lost and forgotten, then discovered apparently by accident as in 2 Kings 22:8. Finally the Canon of the Law was established permanently about the time of the return from Babylonian exile, probably under the leadership of Ezra.

2. **The Prophets** consisted of two distinct classes of writings: the first included the historical books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, which were known as "the Former Prophets;" and the second comprised Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve Minor Prophets, known as "the Later Prophets." This second group of books must have been adopted into the Canon sometime after Malachi, the last of the prophets, although the exact date is unknown.

3. **The Hagiographa** was composed of the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, Esther, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The miscellaneous character of the books in this third group very likely indicates that they were among the last to be considered inspired and worthy to be included in the Canon.

There are three terms used frequently in connection with the Hebrew text which should be briefly defined in passing. First among them is the Targums. They are paraphrases of the Scriptures into the Aramaic dialect—a tongue closely related to Hebrew and sometimes called Chaldee—which was the language commonly spoken in Judea at the time of our Lord's Advent. The Targums began as oral paraphrases for the benefit of the common people who were no longer familiar with the ancient Hebrew in which the sacred text was written; but eventually they were written down with the addition of "accumulated layers of tradition." This method of interpretation was reduced to a system and "practically became the popular Bible of the Jewish nation."

The second term which needs clarifying is the Talmud. This is done adequately for the present purpose in a paragraph by Sir Frederic Kenyon:

"The period of the Targums is overlapped by that of the Talmud. While the Targumists paraphrased the Hebrew text, the scholars known as the Talmudists explained and commented on it. The fact that in ancient Hebrew writing the vowels were entirely omitted led to the occurrence of many words and phrases in which a different sense could be obtained according as different vowels were supplied. Hence plenty of scope was left to the ingenuity of the Talmudists, who gradually accumulated a mass of tradition concerning the proper reading and explanation of the text. It does not appear that they themselves did much towards fixing the actual text which appears in the manuscripts. . . . The Talmudists scholars did not by any means confine their attention to textual matters; on the contrary, the Talmud contains the essence of many generations of traditional commentary of all kinds on the sacred books, concentrated and approved by the judgment of the leading scholars of the period."

Last among the three terms—and the most important—is the Massoretic text. Following the Talmudist period, scholars called the Massorettes began to separate from the Talmudic aggregation the traditions bearing on the actual text of the Old Testament Scriptures. They introduced points in the Hebrew text to indicate the vowels to be used, thus fixing more definitely the meaning of doubtful passages. Their chief concern was to preserve the exact letter of the text. They gave extraordinary attention to the minutest details so that not even one letter or word might be lost or altered. The Massoretic edition is most important to us because it is still the standard text of the Hebrew Bible. It is stated authoritatively that “All the extant manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament contain substantially a Massoretic text.” And furthermore that “Our own Authorized and Revised Bibles, as well as nearly all the translations which preceded them, rest almost entirely upon the Massoretic text, and only very rarely follow the versions in preference to it.”

LET us now consider a few of the many ancient versions of the Old and New Testaments. Versions of the Bible are translations of the original Hebrew and Greek into other languages. Foremost among these is the Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Both textually and historically it is by far the most important of all the ancient translations. Besides being the chief means of testing the Massoretic Hebrew text, it has been the Bible of Greek Christendom from the beginning of Christianity to the present time. The Septuagint is a complete translation of the Old Testament and contains not only the books now in our Old Testament, but also those which, since the Reformation, have been published separately as the Apocrypha. Those who have been puzzled as to the place of the Apocrypha in the sacred Canon will appreciate this appraisal from Kenyon's “Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts:”

“It is unfortunate that the Apocrypha is generally omitted from copies of the English Bible. . . . Jerome rejected them from his Latin Bible because they were not extant in Hebrew; but the older Latin translations of them were subsequently incorporated into the Vulgate, and they have remained in the Latin Bible of the Roman Church to the present day. The Septuagint is, however, their real home, and there they take their proper places among the books of the Old Testament. The First Book of Esdras takes precedence of the book of Ezra, of which it is an alternative version with some additions. . . . Luther followed Jerome in rejecting the books which did not form part of the Hebrew Canon, and the English translators followed Luther.”

The first Christian Churches adopted the Septuagint as their Bible, or Book of the Old Covenant, long before they realized that their own Gospels and Epistles would become a portion of the same holy Word. It is interesting to note, however, that this adoption of the Septuagint by the Christians caused the Jews to discard it. “When the Christians in controversy pressed them with quotations from the Prophets, of which the fulfilment had been found in Jesus Christ, the Jews took refuge in a denial of the accuracy of the Septuagint translation.” Quite naturally this repudiation led to the production of several rival versions which need not be specified in the present study.

We have no exact history as to how and when the New Testament Canon was formed. We do know that the Apostles themselves began to make collections of their writings for the churches, and that these writings were used in the churches as Scripture along with the Old Testament. Early Christian writers indicate that the New Testament text was fairly well established by the middle of the second century. Clement of Rome, writing in 95 A.D., quotes from or refers to Matthew, Luke, Romans, Corinthians, Hebrews, 1 Timothy and 1 Peter. Writing about 110, Polycarp quotes from ten of Paul's Epistles and 1 Peter. Justin Martyr, in his Apologies written about 140, mentions Revelation and discloses knowledge also of the Acts and eight Epistles. Around 160, Tatian wrote his famous Harmony of the Four Gospels, called the Diatessaron. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who wrote about 185, quotes most of the New Testament books as Scripture, which, by this time had become known as “The Gospel and the Apostles.”

Tertullian of Carthage (160-220), who lived while the original manuscripts of the Epistles were still extant, refers to the Christian Scriptures as the “New Testament.” In his work “Against Heretics,” he says:

"If you are willing to exercise your curiosity profitably in the business of your salvation, visit the Apostolic churches in which the very chairs of the Apostles still preside in their places; in which their very authentic Epistles are read, sounding forth the voice and representing the countenance of each of them."

Origen of Alexandria (185-254) was a renowned scholar who travelled extensively and devoted his life to studying the Scriptures. He was such a prolific writer that he often employed as many as twenty copyists. He accepted the books of the New Testament as we have them and two-thirds of their entire contents are quoted in his writings.

Eusebius (270-340), Bishop of Caesarea and Church Historian, lived through Diocletian's persecution of the Christians and into the reign of Constantine, who made Christianity the religion of his Empire. Eusebius became Constantine's religious adviser. It was under his direction that the fifty vellum Bibles ordered by Constantine were prepared and delivered to the churches in royal carriages. The important fact in this connection is that the contents of Eusebius' New Testament were exactly the same books as now constitute our New Testament.

In 397 the Council of Carthage formally ratified the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as they had already been accepted unanimously by the churches and by the greatest Christian scholars. Thus without further uncertainties the New Testament Canon was closed.

The vellum manuscripts now in existence were made between the fourth and fifteenth centuries. They are called Uncials and Cursives. The Uncials were written in large capital letters and the Cursives in small running letters linked together; the former, being more ancient, are far more valuable. The best known and most important of the vellum uncial manuscripts are the Sinaitic, the Alexandrian and the Vatican. They are called Codices. Codex is a Latin word, meaning a manuscript arranged in modern book form; however, it is frequently used when referring to Bible manuscripts in general.

ONE of the oldest and greatest of all uncial manuscripts is the Sinaitic, or Codex Sinaiticus. Part of it was found in 1844 by the German scholar Tischendorf, at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. While working in the library there he noticed in a waste basket some vellum pages containing the oldest Greek writing he had ever seen. Searching closely he discovered forty-three leaves of the Septuagint Old Testament. Nothing more was found at the time. He returned in 1853 but found nothing. Then in 1859, under the patronage of Tsar Alexander II, he visited the monastery again. Shortly before his departure he was invited to the steward's room to see a copy of the Septuagint. It consisted of a pile of loose leaves wrapped in cloth. At once the amazed and delighted scholar recognized it as the precious manuscript for which he had searched over a period of fifteen years. After lengthy negotiations Tischendorf finally secured it for the Tsar of Russia. It remained in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg until 1933, when "it became known that the Soviet Government was not unwilling to sell it, having little use for Bibles and much for money." It was bought by the British Government for half a million dollars and placed in the British Museum just before Christmas in 1933, in the midst of much rejoicing by the citizenry.

The date of the Codex Sinaiticus is placed in the first half of the fourth century A.D. It is written in a beautiful uncial hand on the finest of vellum. Although parts of the Old Testament are missing, it is the only ancient manuscript which contains the entire New Testament. Two apocryphal works also—the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas—are added to its New Testament Canon.

The Alexandrian manuscript, designated as Codex Alexandrinus, has been in the British Museum since 1627, and is the first of the more important manuscripts to be made accessible to scholars. It was probably written in the first half of the fifth century. With the exception of some missing fragments, it contains the entire Bible, including the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Psalms of Solomon and the two Epistles of Clement of Rome.

As its name implies, the Vatican manuscript—Codex Vaticanus—is in the Vatican Library at Rome. It was written in the fourth century and is the most valuable of the manuscripts of the Greek Bible. Apart from the papyri manuscripts from the ruins of Egypt, it is the oldest and best existing copy of the Septuagint. It has been in the Vatican Library since some time before 1481; however, for centuries Vatican authorities refused to share it with others and it was not until 1889-90, that complete photographic copies were made and its contents became known to scholars everywhere.

Perhaps the most interesting version from the viewpoint of the English reader is the Latin Vulgate. This version was made in the fourth century and is the crowning work of Eusebius Hieronymus, better known as Jerome, who was the most able Bible scholar of his time. The Vulgate is a revision of the Old Latin Version which was made early in the second century. Jerome undertook his great work at the request of Damascus, Bishop of Rome. He completed the New Testament about 385, and later translated the Old Testament from the original Hebrew. It became the Bible of the West for a thousand years and continues to be the Bible of the Roman Church to this day.

Probably the oldest of all New Testament versions is the Syriac. Syriac, a dialect of the Aramaic, is the language of Mesopotamia and Syria and is similar to that used by the people among whom our Lord lived in Palestine. Very likely the Syriac version was made not more than fifty years after the later books of the New Testament were written. Among ancient editions of the New Testament—to mention only a few—we find the Egyptian, or Coptic Versions, which are translations into the vernacular language of Egypt. The Armenian Version was made at the beginning of the fifth century, partly from Greek and partly from Syriac manuscripts. The Gothic Version was made for the Goths by their Bishop Ulfilas in the fourth century, before they invaded Western Europe.

WHEN were the sacred Books first transmitted from the Hebrew, Greek and Latin into our own language? How did their contents become known to English-speaking people generally, by whom they have since been revered as our most valuable heritage? It is a story mixed with romance, courage, faith and tragedy—a narrative of men who neither feared prison walls nor loved their lives unto the death.

In the abbey of Lady Hilda at Whitby the story began. She had a brother named Caedmon who could not sing. When guests were present at dinner and it came his turn to make a song he would leave the table in embarrassment. On one such occasion he took refuge in a stable and fell asleep. Then One stood by him in a dream saying, "Caedmon, sing Me something." He answered, "I cannot sing, and for that reason I have left the feast." But He said, "Nevertheless, thou canst-sing to Me." "What," said he, "must I sing?" And He said, "Sing the beginning of created things." Caedmon sang. And his poem is considered the first native growth of English literature. It is a paraphrase in verse of the Bible narrative, from both Old and New Testaments, written in the early dialect called Anglo-Saxon, but which in reality is the ancient form of English.

Caedmon's poetic Bible paraphrase was written about 670. Soon thereafter Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, who died in 709, translated the Psalms into English and is credited with the honour of being the first translator of Scripture into our mother tongue.

The next translator was Bede (673-735), the most brilliant scholar and historian of the eighth century. He wrote commentaries on many books of the Bible; translated the Creed and the Lord's Prayer; and completed a translation of the Gospel of John in the very closing moments of his life.

While it is probable that the Gospels were translated into English earlier than the tenth century, we have nothing to prove the existence of such a translation before that time. The earliest form in which the Gospels appear in English is known as interlinear glosses, which are translations written between the lines of Latin manuscripts. About this time also a considerable portion of the Old Testament was translated into English. These early English versions continued to be copied and used to some extent, but it was not until the great revival of religion in the fourteenth century that any decided effort was made to increase the circulation of the Bible by translating it in the language of the people.

This movement which brought about the first complete Bible in the English language and marked the beginning of its widespread production and distribution is connected with the name of John Wycliffe. He was born in Yorkshire about 1320. He was an Oxford man and taught there for a time; later he gained prominence as a politician and finally as a reformer. With the assistance of scholarly disciples he translated the Latin Bible (Vulgate) into English, completing his version of the entire Bible in 1382. Wycliffe's translation was the first and only complete Bible in English prior to the invention of printing. Therefore every copy had to be written by hand, making the cost of one volume equal to about two hundred dollars.

Even so, the demand for them was great and hundreds of copies must have been made, as there are one hundred and seventy copies in various libraries today. Wycliffe was bitterly opposed and persecuted by the leading authorities in Church and State. He was protected by influential friends, but so intense was

the flame of hatred that forty-four years after his death, by order of the Council of Constance, Wycliffe's body was disinterred, burned, and his ashes thrown into the river Swift. The light of truth kindled by his zeal and perseverance was not extinguished by this flood of delayed revenge, for he is now remembered as the Morning Star of the Reformation.

AT LAST we come to the glorious era of Gutenberg, William Tyndale and the English printed Bible. It has been said that the invention of printing by movable metallic type is possibly the most important of all inventions if measured by its influence upon the life of mankind. Gutenberg is credited with making the machine; Tyndale and other devout scholars used it to bring the Bible to every man's home in his own language.

William Tyndale has been called the father of the English Bible. He was born at Gloucestershire about 1490 and was educated at Oxford. One of his biographers says that after ten years at Oxford and Cambridge he became so skilled in seven languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English and French—that, whichever he spoke, you would suppose it was his native tongue. Eventually his distress over the stupidity and indifference of many church authorities bestirred his determination to put the Bible into the hands of the people. In controversy with a church leader, he said, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest." In this statement Tyndale echoed the earnest desire expressed by a contemporary Dutch scholar, Erasmus, in the preface to his Greek New Testament of 1516, which, incidentally, was the first printed copy of the New Testament in the original Greek:

"I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the sacred Scriptures, translated into the vulgar tongue, should be read by private individuals. . . . I wish they were translated into all languages of all peoples, that they might be read and known not merely by the Scotch and Irish, but even by the Turks and Saracens. . . . I wish that the ploughman might sing parts of them at his plough and the weaver at his shuttle, and that the traveller might beguile with their narration the weariness of his way."

It was Tyndale's plan to do his work under the patronage of the church leaders, but it was a vain hope. His application to the Bishop of London was rejected and Tyndale found "not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England." Consequently he left England in 1524 and went to Hamburg. There he finished his translation of the New Testament and went to Cologne to have it printed. Just as it was about finished his secret was discovered. Seizing the printed sheets, he fled to Worms where Luther lived at the time. It was there that his work was finally published in 1525. By the following year the six thousand copies of his first edition were smuggled into England in bales of merchandise by British merchants who financed the work and distributed them secretly to eager readers. During the next four years Tyndale worked on a translation of the Old Testament and later revised his own edition of the New Testament.

While Tyndale laboured unceasingly, the enmity of the Roman Church against him continued unabated. In the midst of his unfinished task, after twelve years on the Continent, he was betrayed by a traitorous friend belonging to the Romanist party. After a long imprisonment he was brought to trial. In October 1536, he suffered martyrdom by strangulation and his body was burned at the stake.

Again the despisers of light and truth failed. The consecrated genius of Tyndale lives on today in our beloved King James Bible. His superb mastery of the English language at its best set the standard of the Bible for all time. It is said of the Authorized Version that "about 80 per cent of the Old Testament and 90 per cent of the New are Tyndale's."

In the words of one writer, "The path of the Bible was at last open. Nor king nor bishop could stay its progress. Over England's long night of ignorance and superstition God has said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." Tyndale's dying prayer—"Lord, open the King of England's eyes"—was soon answered. At the request of Cromwell, then Secretary of State, Miles Coverdale, who had known Tyndale abroad, finished and published in 1535-6 a translation in which he made considerable use of Tyndale's work. It is worthy of note that Coverdale's Bible appeared near the time of Tyndale's tragic death and was dedicated to Henry VIII, the king for whom Tyndale prayed with his last breath. Coverdale's Bible was the first to circulate in England without undue opposition from king and prelate; and it was also the first

complete English printed Bible, owing to the fact that Tyndale was unable to finish all of the Old Testament.

Other new revisions appeared from time to time. In 1537 an edition known as Matthew's Bible was prepared by John Rogers. It is simply a reproduction of Tyndale's Version with very slight changes and the addition of many marginal comments. Taverner's Bible (1539) was a reprint of Matthew's with some of the notes omitted. The famous Great Bible was brought out in 1539. With Archbishop Cranmer's approval, Cromwell employed Coverdale to prepare the script on the basis of Matthew's Bible. It was, therefore, little more than a revision of Tyndale's translation which dignitaries of the church had so bitterly hated and condemned only a few years before. By royal proclamation in 1541, it was authorized to be used in every church in the kingdom.

The next important revision was the Geneva Bible in 1557-1560. It was the work of Protestant scholars who fled from the persecution of Queen Mary and took refuge in Geneva. "The Geneva Bible," says Doctor Westcott, "from the time of its first appearance became the household Bible of the English-speaking nation, and it continued to be so for about three-quarters of a century." After the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne, a movement was started to thoroughly revise this edition. The revision was made under the leadership of Archbishop Parker. It was published in 1568 and became known as the Bishop's Bible.

Thus at the beginning of the seventeenth century there were two English Bibles in common use: the Bishop's Bible, which was sanctioned by churchmen for use in public services; and the Geneva, which was preferred by the people and used generally in their homes. When King James VI of Scotland became James I of England the two countries were united under one sovereign but each retained its own Church and laws. Soon friction arose over the forms and ceremonials of Christian worship. To avoid schism the King called for a conference at Hampton Court in 1604 to frame uniform religious observances and policy. During these deliberations the monarch was petitioned to give his preference to the Geneva, or else authorize a new translation. James decided on the latter course. Some fifty of the most eminent scholars of the day were commissioned to prepare the new Bible and the result of their labours is the Authorized Version or King James Bible, published in 1611. It is a revision of versions based on Tyndale's translation. For three hundred years it has been the accepted version of all British and American Protestant Churches.

THE influence of the King James Bible on the literature and character of the English-speaking world is immeasurable. We shall now give terse summaries of its value from both the British and the American viewpoint: Sir Frederic Kenyon says of it:

"But great as has been the literary value of the Authorized Version, its religious significance has been greater still. For nearly three centuries it has been the Bible, not merely of public use, not merely of one sect or party, not even of a single country, but of the whole nation and of every English-speaking country on the face of the globe. It has been the literature of millions who have read little else, it has been the guide of conduct to men and women of every class in life and of every rank in learning and education. No small part of the attachment of the English people to their national church is due to the common love borne by every party and well-nigh every individual for the English Bible. It was a national work in its creation, and it has been a national treasure since its completion. It was the work, not of one man, nor of one age, but of many labourers, of diverse and even opposing views, over a period of ninety years. It was watered with the blood of martyrs, and its slow growth gave time for the casting off of imperfections and for the full accomplishment of its destiny as the Bible of the English nation." ("Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts," page 234.)

Francis Carr Stifler, Editorial Secretary of the American Bible Society, in his excellent little work "Every Man's Book," calls the King James Bible "the Mother of Bibles." Of its amazing vitality and influence, he writes:

"England and America are inexplicable apart from the Bible. In a sense the English people are not European, because unlike the other nations of that part of the world they have been so definitely moulded by the Bible. England possessed the Bible, albeit in an imperfect form and to a limited extent, but nevertheless in her own tongue, a full century before the rest of Europe. The Anglo-Saxon heart leaped to the message of the Bible so much that the terse epigrams of the Scriptures

became the tools that carved out England's attitudes and philosophies. When, in the coronation service of an English king, the Bible is called the most valuable thing this world affords, it is not a pious sentiment but the expression of the Englishman's conviction on the matter. When Queen Victoria handed a Bible to one of her nation's leaders with the words, 'This is the secret of England's greatness' she stated a fact that is as demonstrable as any connected with the British Empire. England's King James version of the Bible is the greatest book in the world if measured by its sheer literary beauty, or by what it has done for England, or by what it did in shaping the life of the American colonies and of the American nation that grew out of them, or by what it has done in the hands of missionaries who have gone out into all the continents to translate the Scriptures into the tongues of men, or by what it has done alone, unaided, in transforming the lives of individuals now for over three hundred years. It is God's brightest lamp in the hands of men."

Considering the unchallenged place of the beloved King James Bible for generations, what led to its revision in 1881-85? The principal cause is the increased knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek texts resulting from the discovery of the Alexandrian, Sinaitic and Vatican Codices. Only sixteen years after the publication of the Authorized Version the Codex Alexandrinus reached England, and in the nineteenth century the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus became accessible to researchers throughout the world. By this time scholars began advocating the use of these and other recently discovered texts and inscriptions in a new revision of the Bible. It was found that these fourth and fifth century manuscripts shed light on many obscure and difficult passages. In the meantime the English language itself had undergone such alterations that many words had completely changed in meaning. In view of these developments it seemed necessary to revise the Scriptures.

Accordingly, a royal commission was appointed to consider the matter and to name a Revision Committee. The British Revision Committee consisted of two companies, each composed originally of twenty-seven members. At the invitation of the British, two committees were formed in the United States to cooperate in the work. As a result of their combined efforts the Revised Version of the New Testament was issued in 1881, and the Old Testament revision appeared in 1885.

After the publication of the Revised Version the British companies disbanded, but the American committees continued their organization for further study. In addition to their own research during the years following, they had access to the written notes and opinions of all the scholars with whom they had worked, besides new light on the subject from the criticism of the English Revision. The fruit of their labours produced the American Standard Bible in 1901.

THIS brings us to our own era and the modern speech translations, the best of which are probably those of Weymouth, Goodspeed, Moffatt and Ferrar Fenton.

In his "Short History of the English People," the great historian Green, writing of the Reformation, declares:

"England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. . . . The whole temper of the nation felt the change. A new conception of life and of man superseded the old. A new moral and religious impulse spread through every class."

Woodrow Wilson once said, "America was born a Christian nation. America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelation of Holy Scripture." And Calvin Coolidge sounded a warning that ought to be heeded especially in these days when confusion and clashing ideologies are rampant:

"The foundation of society and of our government rests so much on the teachings of the Bible, that it would be difficult to support them if faith in these teachings should cease to be practically universal in our country."

Links such as these between Britain and the United States cannot be ignored by intelligent men and women. We have the same language and the same Book. We are the same people under the covenants and destiny of Almighty God. Only the ignorant or subverters will give support to propaganda which seeks to create suspicion and division among us.

It hardly seems fitting to conclude a treatise on the Book of books without some eloquent personal tribute to its influence—some evidence that the dreams of Erasmus and Tyndale came true—and that the

boy at the plough did learn the Psalms of Zion and sings them as he works in the field. Such a glowing testimony was given by the late Bishop William A. Quayle, in his address at the Centennial celebration of the American Bible Society. Who can resist the winsomeness of the following paragraphs from his "Joyful Melody unto the Bible"?

"This is a thing I have noticed, that the Bible is a wonderful symposium of God, and tells about wandering minstrels and beggars and poets and prophets and kings that lost their crowns—and those sunburned sons of deserts, those laughter-makers of the world, those people who turned midnight into the minstrelsy of morning because they saw God! Through them all we got together that strange, composite, eternal music called the Bible. What I rejoice in is that the Bible can by its shaping words make the world anew. . . .

"Now I know we do not understand it very well; but, honestly, we understand it better than we think we do if we only use the little sense that we have. I was a farmer boy and knew so little that it was lovely, and I never enjoyed anything more than the little I knew, because every day I learned a lot more, and at the end of the day I did not know much, but a little more than in the morning. So every day in the year was a kingdom of prosperity in the kingdom of my knowledge. And I was a farmer boy and I kept the New Testament in my back trousers pocket. And when the horses would stop to consider at the end of the row—horses are great on ruminating and considering—but when they would stop to consider at the end of the row, I would take the Book of God out and I would read a little Scripture, and then I would parse it, for I had no grammar; yes, I would parse a little Scripture and learn my grammar. What happened to me was this: I did not misunderstand things very much. I did not have to be rectified very much in my theology. When I got to be theological and became a D.D., and an LL.D., I did not have to change it very much. But I know it was beautiful, and the farmer lad, knowing nothing but the west and south wind in his face, and the blowing to and fro of the tasseling corn, and the growing of the corn, and reading God's Book out of doors—that is how he became matriculated to literature and history and nature and astronomy and the wide world and the world to come—just because he had the Bible. It was quite a Book. I do not understand it much, but I understood more than people reckoned on. And all of us understand more than we reckon on.

If we would read commentaries less and trust in His Word more and use our imagination (such as we have), and dream and live over it and pray and hope over it, we would have more sense and better theology. Now that is the truth.

"And sometimes, too, we need a light—not the stars. I have travelled many dark nights when I would have traded all the stars for one lantern. It is not that I do not love the stars; it is not that I have not sat under their drip of beauty; it is not that I have not held out my hands and felt the light of the stars fairly splash upon my palms. Please God, I will feel that way many times hereafter. But when I want to go some place in a hurry I cannot keep my head in the air but must keep my feet on the ground. And the lantern is a lamp to the feet. And so the Bible is a lamp to the soul, a light to the path.

"Oh, no, we have to have the Bible yet. So long as people have to live, so long as people have to have strength, so long as people have to die, we have to have the Bible. Oh, blessed Book! I lift my love note to thee. If any deny, still thou art the language of God. And the wayfaring man though he were blind and dumb and deaf can hear thy voice, can see thy shining way and have a lamp to light him into everlasting light."

