

Chapter 1

The Bible

1. The Bible - Its Compilation

Who compiled the Bible? and at what date?

See any good introduction to the Holy Scriptures, as, for instance, the articles on the Scripture canon in the Oxford Teachers' Bible, or any good Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. In brief, the Old Testament was compiled by Ezra, Nehemiah, and by later servants of God; that is, the generally recognized writings were by them brought together. See Josephus "Against Apion," 1: 8. How and where the first New Testament canon originated is uncertain. But, according to Ori-gen, it was in existence as early as A. D. 250. A century later, Eusebius, acting under Constantine, made up a similar collection.

2. The Scripture Canon

When, by whom, and by what authority, whether by church or by state, were the original manuscripts collected and compiled and dedicated to the world as the Word of God? What means was used to separate the inspired from the uninspired, and to decide concerning the various parts of our Bible?

The Bible is a growth. It is not the product of one man or a council or a decree from some human authority. For instance, the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, was accepted by God's people to the time of Christ. God's law in that book constituted the test of later prophets and their writings. One book after another was added till we come to the close of Old Testament times. After the Babylonian captivity, all the books over which there was no question, which were generally accepted, were collated and arranged by Ezra, Nehemiah, and

their collaborators. These were the Holy Scriptures in the time of our Lord. They are referred to by Josephus, "Against Apion," and are everywhere approved by Jesus. The New Testament was added in the same way, book by book, epistle by epistle, from men filled by the Spirit of God, and bearing the eternal test, "To the law and to the testimony." Before any council acted upon the Scripture canon, as early as A. D. 170, practically all the books as we now have them were accepted as according to the Scripture rule by the early church, while as many others were rejected. Clement, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Origen, and others mention different books. The famous "Muratorian Fragment on the Canon" (A. D. 170) mentions nearly all the books of the New Testament. It mentions the Gospels of Luke and John, the Acts, the thirteen epistles of Paul, 1 and 2 John, Jude, the Revelation. It omits several that are mentioned by others. The Peshito Syriac list of about the same age includes all except 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and the Revelation. The old Italian version, of about the same time, the Bible used by the North African churches, contained all our New Testament books except Hebrews, 2 Peter, and James. Later church councils confirmed our present list, and added others rejected by earlier Christians. Our present books bear every test except with "higher critics."

3. Facts Regarding the Bible

Will you please state if you consider the whole Bible written by inspiration? Some of our teachers say that only part of it is inspired.

We have no reason to regard any part of the Bible as more inspired than any other parts. Concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, the Scriptures that were in existence in the days of the apostle Paul - for the New Testament was not written then - we read, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," - literally, "God-breathed." 2 Tim. 3: 16. We do not understand by this, however, that the translation is inspired, but the original

Scriptures are inspired. The translation is simply turning the Scriptures into another language. In Acts 1:16, in referring to the Psalms, the apostle does not say that they were David's words, but, "The Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David." The same thought is expressed in Heb. 3:7. Peter tells us that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. The apostle Paul says of his own writings, "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth." 1 Cor. 2:13.

In many instances, inspiration records the words of others; and many times, the words of others recorded in the Scriptures are not inspiration. For instance, we read in Genesis 3 that Satan said so and so. Satan's words were not God-breathed, but the record that tells us about them is. So in the case of some of Job's friends. They said many good things. They made wrong application of the good things. Their words were not necessarily inspired, but the record that gives their words is inspired.

If man were to judge as to what is inspired and what is not inspired, in a little while all the Word of God would be set aside. Whatever did not agree with him, or with his judgment, or with his tastes, or with his desires, would be set aside as not of inspiration. Others would reject other parts, until nothing would be left of the Bible but the covers. Better it is, it seems to us, to regard the Word even as our Lord Jesus Christ did. He ever spoke of it reverently. He never questioned. He quoted from Isaiah and Jeremiah, from the Psalms, from Moses, but He always regarded it as the Word of God.

4. The Apocrypha

Upon what authority were the books of the Apocrypha eliminated from the Scriptures and rated as secular, while the balance are rated as inspired ?

1. They were not in the Jewish Scriptures that were held to be sacred, the Scriptures that Jesus learned.

2. They sprang out of that time in the Jewish church concededly after prophets had ceased; that is, after Malachi.

3. They were not written in the Hebrew language.

4. Their style, their character, their teaching, are not up to the standard of the law and the testimony. This is evident to any devout Bible reader.

5. They are considered valuable as throwing light upon the time that produced them, and the books of Maccabees are valuable as history.

5. Catholic Version of the Bible

I would like to know where a person can get hold of the "Vatican version" of the Bible, or how a person can find out what it says on certain scriptures. I would like especially to know how it translates Matt. 28: 19.

There were numerous Latin versions of the Scriptures in the early centuries, and some of them were not considered as satisfactory reproductions of the original text; so in the latter part of the fourth century and the first part of the fifth, Jerome, who was reckoned as an accomplished scholar, undertook the careful translation of the Scriptures into the Latin. His first translations of the Old Testament were from the Septuagint; but these met with criticism, and he finally undertook the work of making a careful translation into the Latin from the original Hebrew Scriptures. Jerome's Vulgate translation came to be the standard of the Catholic Church, having been finally adopted by the Council of Trent. Some of the earliest English translations were made from this Latin text. When the Reformation was at its height, the Catholic Church concluded that it was necessary for them to make a translation of the Scriptures into the English. This was begun at the college in Douay, in Flanders. The college for a time was driven from Douay to Rheims; and while it was at Rheims, the New

Testament was published; hence the name, "the Rheims New Testament." The college finally returned to Douay, and the complete Bible was published. The Douay is the authoritative Catholic version of the English Bible. It may be purchased at almost any large bookstore. The copy that we have is published with the approbation of James Cardinal Gibbons, by John Murphy Company, Baltimore and New York.

In the Douay Version, Matt. 28:19 reads, "Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It will be seen that that text does not materially differ from the translation in our Authorized Version; and the same is true, in the main, throughout the Bible.

6. Difference In Versions, 1 John 5:7, 8

The Common Version renders 1 John 5:7, 8: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the and the blood: and these three agree in one." But the American Revised Version reads thus: "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one." Why is the difference? Was something added in the one, or was it left out in the other?

There are a few very slight differences in the various original manuscripts that have been preserved, of the different books of the Bible; and this is one of those places where a difference occurs. Some of the best Greek manuscripts have it as translated in the King James Version, while others have it as it is given in the Revised. Boothroyd's and Rotherham's translations both omit verse 7. The Syriac retains the verse in the original, but incloses it in brackets. So also does Young's.

But the marvelous thing to the student of the Bible is that there are so few differences in these original manuscripts, and

that none of these differences are really essential. Whether you follow the King James Version or the Revised, in this text or in any other, you get practically the same great truth. There is nothing in this text, in either one of these versions, but what is abundantly and clearly taught in other portions of the sacred Word.

God's great book was copied by hundreds of hands, into many languages, during the first centuries of the Christian era. These original manuscripts, in all these various tongues, as they have been passed on to us, are in substantial agreement. There is no disagreement that amounts to a contradiction. This shows the miraculous care that God has had for His Word. No other book has passed through such an ordeal and come out with such a clear testimony. The way in which the Book has been preserved shows that it is divine.

It will be found not only profitable but intensely interesting to secure and read Dr. Gausson's "Inspiration of the Bible." A more modern volume, that has had brought into it some of the clearest and strongest scholarship of this day, is "The Ancestry of Our English Bible," by Ira M. Price, Ph. D. The evidence that God's Word has been miraculously preserved is of the clearest character. A. o. T.

7. Reading the Old Testament Scriptures

Should we not read the Old Testament?

Most certainly we should read the Old Testament Scriptures. The Master says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." John 5: 39. When the Master made that statement, the only Scriptures in existence were the Old Testament writings. When He was on the way to Emmaus with two of His disciples, after His crucifixion and resurrection, He told them: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms,

concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day,” Luke 24:44-46. Christ taught the Scriptures that were written by Moses, and by the prophets, and by David, and the others who wrote the Psalms. This example and teaching of Christ were after His resurrection, and therefore unquestionably in the new dispensation. It is always safe to follow the example of the great Pattern.

8. Marginal References

How long ago were marginal references put in the Bible?

Marginal references were first introduced by those who translated the Bible under order of James I, in 1611. “Such quotations of places to be marginally set down as may serve for fit reference of one scripture to another.” But, as says “McClintock and Strong’s Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Cyclopedia” (article “English Versions”), “Neither italics, nor references, nor readings, nor chapter headings, nor, it may be added, punctuation, are the same now as they were in the Authorized Version of 1611.” The chief alterations are said to have been made first in 1683 and afterward in 1769, by Dr. Blayney, under the sanction of the Oxford delegates of the press. (Gentlemen’s Magazine, November, 1789.) Dr. Paris did a similar work about the same time at Cambridge.

9. Martin Luther and the Bible

Did Martin Luther translate the whole Bible or only a part of it?

The whole Bible. He translated the New Testament in the Wartburg in 1522. The Old Testament appeared in parts in 1523 to 1532, and the Apocrypha in 1534. The latter he did not

consider canonical. He lived to see ten editions of his Bible translation printed.

10. The End and the Beginning

Will you please explain Zech. 14: 16-21?

It is impossible to take a few passages of Scripture, especially some of the obscure prophecies of the Old Testament, and make them clear in and of themselves. In all the great promises of God, it is well for us to remember what the apostle says in Eph. 3:3-6, - that in time past, these things were not understood as they were revealed later to the apostles and prophets by God's Spirit; and it is only in the light of the clearer later revelations that we may read the prophecies of God to His people in the past.

Some of those prophecies were fulfilled to Israel in the restoration of Jerusalem and the return from Babylon. Some of them were dependent upon conditions. See the conditions stated in Jer. 18: 7-10, and elsewhere. If Israel complied with the conditions, the promises were theirs. If they failed to comply, certainly they could not ask God to fulfill His part

Some of the prophecies, if fulfilled at all, must be fulfilled in harmony with the conditions of the new covenant, in times when all types had passed away. The book of Zechariah contains prophecies of these types. The passage under question points to that time when God's children have gained complete victory over all their foes, and the end of sin has come, and the beginning of the reign of righteousness is inaugurated. Other passages tell us of how all the nations will come up against Jerusalem to fight.

Those who are left of all the nations will be God's remnant He has gathered out, and they will go from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts. All the families that will not come up - carrying us back just a little to the time when the invitation was abroad - upon them will not fall the latter rain of God's Spirit. They shall perish. Though they may belong to

some great nation, like Egypt, and have received great light, they shall be smitten with the plagues.

On the other hand, in God's service in that future time, there will be holiness; even everything that takes part in that service will be holy. Then in the service of God that shall follow throughout eternity there shall come in no more corruption. The Canaanites had crept in among the children of Israel. See Ezra and Nehemiah to show how corruption had come into the very service of the temple. But that would be so no more in the glorious reign that lies before. The passage itself shows that the long reign of sin will end, and only those will have part in the reign of righteousness who have met God's conditions.

11. The Comma in Luke 23; 43

Is there any reason to believe that Luke 23:43 is translated incorrectly or interpolated by some writer who copied Luke's Gospel? What is the meaning of the original? Is it that of the Authorized Version, or does it demand that the comma should be placed after "to-day"?

The literal word-for-word rendering of Hinds and Noble's Interlinear Greek-English Testament is as follows: "And said to him Jesus verily I say to thee to-day with Me thou shalt be in Paradise," more literally, "the Paradise." Punctuation is the work of men, and human wisdom is fallible. The earlier Greek copies have not only no punctuation, but no division of words. Those who punctuated the Bible, about three centuries ago, punctuated as they believed. This is how Rotherham's very literal emphasized New Testament, in his last edition, based on Westcott and Hort's Greek text, renders: "And He said unto him - Verily I say unto thee this day: With Me shalt thou be in Paradise." In his twelfth edition, 1896, he has this note: "It is left for the reader to determine whether the words 'this day' should be joined (A) with the former part of the sentence, or (B) with the latter. In favor of (A) may be urged (1) the fact that *semeron*, 'this day,' does not always stand first in the clause to

which it belongs (see Luke 2:11; 5:26; 22:34; Acts 20:26; 22:3; 24:21; 26: 29) ; (2) that being essentially a demonstrative word, it will bear any reasonable stress which may be laid upon it, whether it be placed before or after the words which it qualifies; (3) that it is far from meaningless if regarded as belonging to the opening words of asservation (“Thou dost ask Me to be remembered then: verily thou art assured now. As on this day of My weakness and shame thou hast faith to ask, I this day have authority to answer”) ; (4) that the latter part of the verse is thus left free to refer to the very matter of the supplicant’s request (“Thou dost ask to be remembered when I come in My kingdom: thou shalt be remembered then, and with distinguished favor: thou shalt be in My kingdom: thou shalt be with Me in the very Paradise of My kingdom, in the garden of the Lord - Isa. 51:3 [Sept. paradeisos\ Ezek. 36:35; compare Gen. 2:8 [Sept. paradeisos] ; 3:2 [Sept. paradeisos\ ; Rev. 2:7 - in that most central and blessed part of the coming kingdom, of which thou dost believe Me to be the destined king”).”

This makes clear that so far as the original is concerned, the comma may be properly placed after “to-day,” thus making it limit the verb “say” - “I say to thee to-day.” In further evidence, three days after this, Jesus said to Mary, “Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father,” the Father who dwells in Paradise, where are the river and tree of life. Compare Rev. 2: 7 and 22: 1, 2. Then, too, the children of faith enter upon their reward, not at death, but at Christ’s coming. Matt. 16:27; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Rev. 22:12. The teachings of Christ demand the comma after “to-day,” and Greek grammar and usage sanction what truth demands.

12. Fountains and Traditions

Please explain the following scriptures:

“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Jer. 2: 13.

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” 2 Thess. 2: 15.

1. Read the context. It meant with Israel of old that they had not only forsaken God, the Living Fountain, but had gone after other gods, which could be of no more value than broken cisterns. In time of need, the gods could give no help; in time of drought, the cisterns would furnish no water. The text is just as true now concerning those who leave God’s Word for the errors of men.

2. The second text teaches that the brethren in Thessalonica should hold fast to the teaching of the apostles, whether by word of mouth, or by epistle. The word from which “tradition” comes is *paradosis*, and means “delivery, handing over, transmission,” “what is transmitted in the way of teaching, precept, doctrine.” See 1 Cor. 11:2, where the word is translated “ordinances.” The word “traditions,” in 2 Thess. 2:15, refers to what Christ delivered over, or transmitted, to His apostles to teach. That we might know what was taught by spoken word, God has given us the written Word. The text does not refer to erroneous tradition which claims to be apostolic. All such should be tested by the written Word.

13. Apparent Contradiction Dissolved

Please harmonize 2 Sam. 24:24 and 1 Chron. 21:25 - (1) the names, and (2) the price paid for the threshing floor.

To answer the second query first: Two distinct transactions are recorded in the scriptures cited, (a) Fifty shekels of silver were paid for the actual threshing floor and the oxen. “So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.” 2 Sam. 24:24. And (b) six hundred shekels of gold were given for the entire place or property within which the threshing floor was located. “Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord:

thou shalt grant it me for the full price.... So David gave to Oman for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.” 1 Chron. 21:22, 25.

Fifty shekels of silver (@ 72 1/2c) amounts to \$36.25, far too low a price for the entire land. Compare the four hundred shekels of silver Abraham paid for the field of Machpelah. See Genesis 23. The six hundred shekels of gold (@ \$10.88) was equivalent to \$6,528, and was the sum paid for the entire hill on which Solomon afterward built the temple. See 2 Chron. 3:1.

As to the question concerning the difference in names, “Araunah” and “Oman” are merely two forms of the same name.

Seeming contradictions in Holy Writ usually melt away under a close scrutiny of the exact wording and the context of the queried passages.