

LESSON 8

TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

Introduction

Before the invention of the printing press five centuries ago, each copy of an Old or New Testament book had to be made individually by hand. The process was slow, expensive, and not always accurate. A professional class of scribes arose which carried on this work.

The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. When Judaism and Christianity spread to areas of other languages, it was necessary to translate the Scriptures into new languages. The English Bible is the result of a long history of translation and transmission (conveying from generation to generation) of Scripture.

In a previous lesson, it was noted that the primary writing materials were papyrus and parchment; other materials were clay, stone, bone, wood, various metals such as copper, and potsherds. The earliest writings of the New Testament were probably transmitted on papyrus rolls. Early in the second century, the codex or leaf-book form came into use. The papyrus sheets were folded in the middle and sewn together, enabling a larger collection of material to be combined into one volume than was possible on a scroll. It was also easier to find a particular Scripture in the codex than on the scrolls which had to be unrolled. Later, parchment (writing material made from animal skins) was used to reproduce copies of the Scripture.

Copying documents by hand led to accidental errors. A number of scribes may have written the words of a book as it was dictated. If one of the scribes misunderstood a word or misspelled it, an error or variant would occur. If the copy which contained a variant was used for additional copies, these errors were perpetuated. A manuscript which was many copies removed from the original would likely contain more errors than one which was an immediate copy of the original. The work of textual criticism is to restore the text to the accuracy of the original. In the science of textual criticism, the earlier manuscripts are most valuable because they contain fewest errors. No autographs (original writings) of biblical books have been preserved.

It is impossible in one brief lesson to give attention to the details of the science of textual criticism. A number of excellent books on the subject are available and are listed in the bibliography. Textual criticism is important since it is basic to biblical study. It is not necessary for every Bible student to be a textual critic; however, the subject deserves the acquaintance of every serious biblical student.

The Old Testament

In tracing the transmission of the Old Testament, four sources of study are important: the Hebrew text, the Greek text, the Qumran texts, and other translations. Before the Qumran discoveries in 1948, the earliest known Hebrew text was a manuscript of the Prophets (the Cairo Codex), dated about 895. Although this copy is more than a thousand years old, it is dated many generations after the original writings of the prophets.

Copying of the Scriptures by hand was _____,
_____, and not always _____.

(slow, expensive, accurate)

It became necessary to translate the
Scriptures into new languages when _____
and _____ spread to areas of
other languages.

Transmission means to _____ from
_____ to _____.

(Judaism, Christianity, convey, generation,
generation)

Codex had _____ instead of rolls.

Two advantages of the codex were:

1. A larger collection of material could be
combined into one _____.
2. It was easier to find a particular
_____.

(pages or leaves, volume, Scripture)

The work of textual criticism is to _____
the text to its _____ accuracy.

(restore, original)

The Dead Sea discoveries are important because they produced surviving fragments of the library of a Jewish community dating about 130 B.C. to A.D. 70. A second century B.C. scroll of Isaiah has enabled scholars to go back more than a thousand years closer to the original writings (autographs). Since every Old Testament book, except Esther, is represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls, their discovery has contributed greatly to the study of the transmission of the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Old Testament

The script.—The older parts of the Old Testament were probably written first in the Phoenician Old Hebrew script. This script was the first to employ an alphabet in which writing was reduced to a combination of about twenty symbols. Previous writing had employed thousands of pictograms (crude pictures representing objects such as the sun, etc.). About the fourth century B.C., the Old Hebrew script gave way to the square script of Assyrian origin. The square Hebrew script, without vowel points or markings, has continued to be used for the Hebrew Old Testament (cf. p. 12).

The Antiochean destruction of manuscripts.—Previous to the Maccabean Revolt in 167 B.C., the Syrians had destroyed most of the existing manuscripts of the Old Testament. Antiochus Epiphanes (Syrian king, 175–163 B.C.) attempted to abolish Jewish religion by destroying its writings and worship. The Qumran community made a significant contribution by preserving Old Testament scrolls during this period. Apart from the Qumran writings, no manuscripts of Old Testament books before the ninth century A.D. survived.

Basic manuscripts of the modern Hebrew Bible.—The current edition of the Hebrew Bible, Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*, is based primarily on the following manuscripts:

- The Cairo Codex (895), the oldest known Masoretic manuscript of the Prophets;
- The Leningrad Codex of the Latter Prophets (916);
- The Aleppo Codex (930), a manuscript of the entire Old Testament which was partially burnt in a synagogue in Aleppo in 1948;
- The Leningrad Codex of the entire Old Testament (1008).¹

The Geniza Fragments.—During the rebuilding of the Old Cairo Synagogue in 1890, about 200,000 fragments of biblical and other writings were uncovered. To prevent misuse of a manuscript which contained the Sacred Name, Jews would place worn-out manuscripts in a geniza (hiding place) until they were destroyed by burying. This practice explains why old manuscripts have not survived. The fragments from the Cairo Geniza are dated from the sixth to ninth centuries A.D.

The Nash Papyrus.—In 1902, a papyrus sheet was purchased by W. L. Nash in Egypt. It contains a copy of the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20:2ff. and Deuteronomy 5:6ff. It also contains the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4f. The short collection of texts was probably used for liturgical or educational purposes. Albright has dated it in the Maccabean period. Other scholars have placed it later.

The Dead Sea Scrolls.—The Dead Sea discoveries have produced valuable fragments of Old Testament books. Only the

The Dead Sea Scrolls have enabled scholars to go back more than a _____ years closer to the original _____.

(thousand, writings)

Pictograms are crude _____ representing _____ such as the sun, etc.

(pictures, objects)

Except for the Qumran writings, no manuscripts of _____ books before the _____ century had survived.

(Old Testament, ninth)

Old manuscripts of the Old Testament had not survived because the Jews _____ them to prevent misuse of manuscripts which contained the S _____ N _____.

(buried, Sacred Name)

¹ See Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*, trans. by Peter R. Ackroyd (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), for a full discussion of the texts used in the current edition of the Hebrew Bible.

Isaiah Manuscript is complete. A commentary containing the first two chapters of Habakkuk gives a significant example of Jewish methods of interpretation.

The Masoretic Text.—About A.D. 100, Jewish leaders produced a standardized edition of the consonantal Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Succeeding generations of editors inserted a large number of signs to guide readers in the synagogues in the right enunciation of the sacred writings. These editions included punctuation marks and vowel points. Notes were placed in the margins and at the beginnings and ends of manuscripts. The Jewish scribes who did this work were called *Masorettes*, derived from the word *Masorah* (tradition). The text which the Masorettes established is known as the Masoretic Text. The Jewish scribes did their work reverently and carefully. They were regulated by rules which designated the quality and size of skins to be used, the size of the columns on each page and the letters. They were required to count the number of times each letter of the alphabet appeared in each book. Their detailed calculations included pointing out the middle letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the entire Hebrew Bible. Our present Hebrew Bible is based on the work of these Jewish scholars. Even though the earliest Masoretic Text manuscript is dated in 895, its close agreement with the second Isaiah scroll of Qumran is amazing. The Qumran discoveries have given assurance that the Old Testament has been well preserved.

The Samaritan Pentateuch

The Samaritan Pentateuch is not a translation or version of the Old Testament but a manuscript in the Old Hebrew script containing the five books of Moses. The division between the Jews and Samaritans possibly came during the period of Nehemiah's rebuilding of Jerusalem, forcing the Samaritans to build their temple and adopt their own canon. The Samaritans adopted only the books of Moses.

The Samaritan Pentateuch has resulted in another textual tradition for the Law. It is valuable for comparison with the Masoretic Text. The earliest manuscript in scroll form of the Samaritan Pentateuch dates from the mid-eleventh century. The oldest codex bears a note regarding its sale in 1150, but the manuscript is much older. The Samaritan Pentateuch has approximately 6,000 variants from the Masoretic Text, but they are rather insignificant. The reading of the Masoretic Text is considered the original unless the Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint agree against it.

The Septuagint

Because of the large settlement of Jews who spoke Greek instead of Hebrew in Alexandria, the Pentateuch was translated into Greek about 250 B.C. The tradition that it was translated by seventy Jewish scholars has resulted in the title Septuagint (Seventy or LXX). The translation of other books of the Old Testament into Greek appears to have been completed by 150 B.C.

Geisler and Nix list four observations concerning the quality of the Septuagint. (1) It varies from slavishly literal translations of the Torah to free translations in the Writings. (2) It was designed for public use in synagogues rather than scholarly use by the Rabbis. (3) It was the first attempt to translate the Old Testament into another language. (4) It is generally loyal to the readings of the original Hebrew text.²

² A General Introduction, p. 308.

The standardized edition of the Hebrew Old Testament which was produced about A.D. 100 by Jewish scribes called _____ is called the _____ Text.

(Masorettes, Masoretic)

True or false?

The Qumran discoveries have given assurance that the Old Testament has been well preserved. _____

(Compare your answer with the text)

The Samaritan Pentateuch is a _____ of the first five books of _____ in Old _____ script.

(manuscript, Moses, Hebrew)

The Septuagint was apparently used by Jesus as well as the apostles. Most Old Testament quotations in the New Testament were taken from it. It was perpetuated by the Christians rather than the Jews, and the earliest codices of it include New Testament writings as well. The best manuscript of the Septuagint is Vaticanus (Codex B), dated about A.D. 325.

Other Greek Translations

When the Septuagint was first translated, the Jewish community of Alexandria declared it to be beautiful, pious, and exact. Philo spoke of the translation as a work of divine inspiration and the translators as prophets. Since the Christians made much use of the Septuagint in their disputes with Jews, the Jews rejected the Septuagint which they had once regarded as indispensable and untouchable. They continued to need Greek translations; therefore, a new translation was made by Aquila about A.D. 130. Although he had a good knowledge of the Greek language, he produced such a literal translation that it did not sound at all like Greek. Another Greek translation was made by Symmachus about A.D. 170. A third was made by Theodotus about A.D. 200.

Origen's Hexapla

The Alexandrian theologian Origen arranged a Bible with six parallel columns:

- the Hebrew text
- the Hebrew text in Greek letters
(a transliteration)
- Aquila's Greek text
- Symmachus' Greek text
- the Septuagint
- Theodotus' Greek text

Origen's arrangement of the texts was based on the rationale that the Hebrew text was the original, followed by the literal Greek works of a transliteration and the literal translation of Aquila.

Translations into Other Languages

In post-exilic Judaism, Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the spoken language. It became necessary to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic for synagogue services. The translating was called *targem*, and the translation itself was called *targum*. The translation may have been given orally with interpretative remarks. The translations were eventually recorded in various places, and an explanation of the message of the text was included. Sometimes the text was paraphrased or reinterpreted. The Old Palestinian Targum on the Pentateuch is known from surviving fragments of seven manuscripts of the seventh to the ninth centuries. The Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch and the Targum Jonathan on the Prophets became official by the fifth century A.D.

The Syriac Church required a simple translation of the Old Testament into Syrian Aramaic, a dialect of Palestinian Aramaic. The Syriac Bible is known as the Peshitta which means "simple translation." The translation was probably made in the middle of the first century A.D.

With the spread of the official language of the Roman Empire, the Old Testament was needed in Latin. Latin translations of the Septuagint were in use by 150 A.D. Jerome's translation of the Vulgate in A.D. 400 replaced the Old Latin versions.

<p><i>The Septuagint is important to Christians because it apparently was used by J _____ and the a _____; most _____ quotations are taken from it; it was perpetuated by Christians rather than _____; and it includes New Testament writings also.</i></p> <p><i>(Jesus, apostles, New Testament, Jews)</i></p>
<p><i>The Jews rejected the Septuagint because the _____ used it in their disputes with the _____.</i></p> <p><i>(Christians, Jews)</i></p>
<p><i>Origen's Hexapla was arranged in _____ columns.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>how many?</i></p> <p><i>(six)</i></p>
<p><i>The Targum is a translation of the H _____ Scriptures into Palestinian A _____.</i></p> <p><i>(Hebrew, Aramaic)</i></p>
<p><i>The Peshitta is a simple translation of the Old Testament into S _____.</i></p> <p><i>A _____.</i></p> <p><i>(Syrian Aramaic)</i></p>

The New Testament

The earliest New Testament manuscripts now in existence are on papyrus. After the fourth century A.D., practically all of the manuscripts were written on parchment. In A.D. 331, Constantine ordered fifty copies of the Bible to be made on parchment for the churches of Constantine. The transmission of the New Testament in Greek is divided by the material on which it was written into two periods: papyrus manuscripts (second and third centuries) and parchment manuscripts (fourth to ninth centuries).

Papyrus manuscripts

P 52.—A papyrus fragment, two and one-half by three and one-half inches, containing a few verses from the Fourth Gospel is the oldest known copy of any portion of the New Testament in existence. It dates probably between A.D. 117 and 138.

P 45, P 46, P 47.—In 1930 and 1931, Mr. Chester Beatty of London purchased important biblical papyri containing much of the Gospels, the Acts, the Pauline Epistles, and the Revelation. The papyri are now in the Beatty Museum near Dublin. P 45 contains thirty leaves of papyrus codex: two from Matthew, two from John, six from Mark, seven from Luke, and thirteen from Acts. Originally the codex consisted of about 220 leaves. It has been dated about A.D. 200–250. P 46 comprises 86 leaves (all slightly mutilated) stemming from an original that contained 104 pages of Paul's epistles. The epistles are in the unusual order of Romans, Hebrews, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. It has been dated slightly earlier than P 45 (about A.D. 200). P 47 consists of ten slightly mutilated leaves of a codex of the Book of Revelation. The total book is estimated to have been 32 leaves in length. It is dated about A.D. 250–290.

P 66, P 72, P 75.—The Bodmer Library in Geneva purchased an extensive papyrus collection including both Greek and Coptic (language of Egypt) texts. P 66 contains most of the Gospel of John and is dated about A.D. 200. P 72 contains Jude and the epistles of Peter and is dated in the third century. It also contains several apocryphal books and Psalms. P 75 contains 102 of the 144 pages of a codex of Luke and John. It has been dated about A.D. 175–225.

The Parchment manuscripts

By the fourth century, the Old and New Testaments were transmitted together by the Church on parchment in codex form. The Greek was written in uncials (capital letters).

Codex Vaticanus (B).—This codex dates in the early fourth century (about A.D. 325) and is one of the most valuable of all the manuscripts of the Greek Bible. It is in the Vatican Library and has been available to scholars only within the past century due to the reluctance of the authorities of the library to permit scholars to study it. Missing from the codex are 46 chapters of Genesis, a section of 30 psalms, and the rest of the New Testament after Hebrews 9. Some scholars believe that this manuscript and Codex Sinaiticus were among the original fifty copies of Scripture which the emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to write in A.D. 331.

Codex Sinaiticus.—This codex was written in the fourth century, a little later than Codex Vaticanus. It was secured from the monastery of St. Catharine on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf in 1859. While visiting the monastery, he saw leaves of parchment in a waste-basket. These were part of a copy of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, written in an early uncial (capital Greek letters) script. Upon removing 43 leaves from the basket, a monk

Papyrus manuscript P52 (a few verses of the _____ Gospel) is the oldest copy of a part of the _____.

(Fourth, New Testament)

P45 is one of the oldest codices of the _____ and _____.

P46 is the oldest papyrus codex of _____ epistles.

P47 is the oldest codex of _____.

(Gospels, Acts, Paul's, Revelation)

P75 is an ancient papyrus of _____ and _____.

(Luke, John)

One of the most valuable parchment manuscripts of the Greek Bible is _____, dated in the _____ century.

(Codex Vaticanus, fourth)

Another valuable parchment manuscript of the fourth century is _____.

(Codex Sinaiticus)

casually remarked that two baskets of similarly discarded leaves had already been burnt. During his third trip to the monastery, he was able to secure a codex containing the only known complete copy of the Greek New Testament and most of the Old Testament in uncial script. He persuaded the monks to make a gift of the codex to the Czar of Russia. The British Government purchased the manuscript from Russia in 1933 for approximately five-hundred thousand dollars.

Codex Alexandrinus.—This codex was written in the fifth century and contains the Old Testament, except for mutilations, and most of the New Testament. It was presented by the Patriarch of Constantinople to the King of England in 1627.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C).—This fifth century manuscript was erased in the twelfth century, and the sheets were used for a Greek translation of sermons by St. Ephraim. By using chemicals, Tischendorf was able to decipher the original underwritings of this palimpsest (rubbed out, erased).

Codex Bezae (D).—Beza was a French scholar who succeeded Calvin as leader of the Genevan Church. He presented to the library at Cambridge in 1581 a sixth century manuscript of the Gospels and Acts in Greek and Latin on facing pages. The codex contains free departures of words and sentences from what is taken to be the normal New Testament text.

The Latin Vulgate of Jerome

In A.D. 382, Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome to revise the Old Latin translation. Jerome chose a relatively good Latin text and compared it with old Greek manuscripts. The Gospels were first corrected, and the Old Testament was completed in A.D. 405. The work became the official Bible of the Latin Church and continues to be the Roman Catholic Bible today. Vulgate means "common" or "usual."

Stephen Langton, a Paris teacher who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1228, divided the Vulgate into the chapters used today. The Council of Trent, April 6, 1546, declared the Vulgate to be the authoritative Bible of the Catholic Church.

Johannes Gutenberg's press with movable type reproduced copies of books more rapidly, more cheaply, and with a higher degree of accuracy than was possible by hand. The first book to be printed was Jerome's Latin Vulgate (between 1450 and 1456). Multiple copying of the Bible, made possible by the printing press, emphasized the need for a standardized text.

The Printed Greek Text

The revival of learning (the Renaissance) in the fifteenth century created a desire to study literature in the original text. However, the Latin Vulgate was so firmly established with biblical scholars that it was half a century after the printing press was invented before a Greek New Testament was printed. The first attempt to print the Bible in Greek was difficult and expensive because the *minusculi* (rather small) Greek handwriting was imitated. The alternate forms of the same letter as well as the many combinations of two or more letters resulted in approximately 200 different characters. In 1502, Cardinal Ximenes of Spain planned a polyglot (many tongues) Bible in which the New Testament edition printed in 1514 contained Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin texts in parallel columns. The Old Testament was printed in 1517; however, the Polyglot was not published until 1522. The Bible became known as the Complutensian Polyglot (*Complutum* is the Latin name for the city in which it was printed).

A fifth century codex which contains most of the Old Testament and New Testament is called _____.

(Compare your answer with the text)

The Roman Church adopted the _____ (translated by _____) as her official Bible at the Council of _____ in _____ (year).

(Vulgate, Jerome, Trent, 1546)

Who invented the printing press? _____

List 3 effects of the printing press on the distribution of the Scriptures. _____

(Johannes Gutenberg, copies could be reproduced more rapidly, cheaply, accurately)

The first printed New Testament in four languages was called the C _____

P _____.

(Complutensian Polyglot)

In 1515, Froben, a Swiss printer, secured the services of the humanist scholar Erasmus to prepare an edition of the Greek New Testament. It was published seven months later in March, 1516. Because of the haste in publication, the volume contained hundreds of typographical errors. Erasmus was unable to find a manuscript which contained the entire Greek New Testament; therefore, he used parts from various New Testaments. He relied primarily on two inferior manuscripts of the twelfth century which he found in a monastic library at Basel. The only copy he had of the Book of Revelation lacked the final page; therefore, he supplied this by translating from the Latin Vulgate into Greek. The first printed Greek New Testament found a ready market and was widely distributed. The second edition was used by Luther for his German translation. The fourth edition of Erasmus' text (1527) was improved by corrections based on the superior text used in Ximenes' Polyglot Bible. His text was inferior in critical value to the Polyglot Bible, but since it was the first on the market and was cheaper it was more widely circulated and became the accepted text.

Stephanus, a famous Parisian printer and publisher, issued four editions of the Greek New Testament (1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551). In the third edition, he divided the text into numbered verses. His son asserted that he divided the work into verses while on a journey from Paris to Lyons. The text of Stephanus, which was based on Erasmus and the Polyglot Bible, became known as the Textus Receptus (accepted text).³

The English Bible

Although Christianity was carried to Britain in the early fourth century, missionary work was in Latin. Some poems and a few verses of Scripture appeared in Old English in the eighth century. Alfred the Great (about 901) put parts of the Bible into English for his people. The Old English period closed soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066.

The translation of the Bible into Middle English began in the fourteenth century. William of Shoreham produced the first prose translation of a Bible portion into a southern dialect of English about 1320. Richard Rolle made a literal translation into the North English dialect from the Latin Vulgate about 1340. These works prepared the way for John Wycliffe (about 1320-84).

The Wycliffe Translation (1383)

John Wycliffe was associated with Oxford University during much of his life. He later became a politician and finally a reformer, preaching against various evils of his day to the extent that he has been called the "morning star of the Reformation."⁴ Wycliffe was probably assisted in translating the Bible; nevertheless, his authoritative and scholarly direction of the work justifies the attribution to him. His work is a very literal translation from inferior Vulgate texts. The translation was completed in 1383, a year before his death. The copies had to be written by hand and in secret. They were distributed to Wycliffe's followers, called Lollards, who travelled all over England reading them to the people.

³ A fuller discussion is given by B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 97ff.

⁴ *A Ready-Reference History of the English Bible* (American Bible Society, 1965), p. 6.

The first published Greek New Testament was _____ New Testament.

(Erasmus')

The Textus Receptus is the text of S _____, based on E _____ and the P _____ Bible, and it is divided into numbered _____.

(Stephanus, Erasmus, Polyglot, verses)

The earliest English translation was based on the _____ and was called the _____ translation. Wycliffe's followers were called _____.

(Vulgate, Wycliffe, Lollards)

The preaching of the Lollards disturbed the Church; therefore, the Church banned the use of Wycliffe's English translation and the work of his followers. He died before persecution was instigated, but his body was exhumed and burnt in 1428. The ashes were thrown into a nearby stream. Despite persecution, the Wycliffe Bible continued to be used widely throughout the fifteenth century. Some gave as much as five marks (about four hundred dollars) for a manuscript Bible.

The Tyndale printed Scriptures (1526)

William Tyndale took his M.A. in 1515, at Oxford, before moving to Cambridge where Erasmus had created interest in the Greek Testament. His ambition was to do for England what Luther had done for Germany. He declared that before many years had passed he would cause a boy who drove a plow to know more of the Scripture than leaders of the Church. He felt that the people had the right to know what was promised to them in the Scriptures, but many of them could not read Latin.

Since the king and Church of England had prohibited the use of an English translation, Tyndale went to Germany to print the New Testament. Copies appear to have reached England early in 1526. From 1527 to 1531, Tyndale seems to have been at Marburg, engaged in translating the Old Testament. He was betrayed treacherously in 1535 while working on the translation of the Old Testament. He was condemned to be strangled and burnt. His last words were, "Lord, open Thou the King of England's eyes."⁵ His New Testament translation appears to have been based on Erasmus' second and third editions, the Vulgate, and the German translation of Luther. His Old Testament translation was based on the Hebrew, but he apparently consulted other translations. Much of Tyndale's work was used in the production of the Authorized Version (1611). Fifteen thousand copies of the New Testament had been sold by 1535.

The Coverdale Bible (1535)

The work which Tyndale started was completed by Myles Coverdale who was born in Yorkshire, about 1488. After completing a Bachelor of Canon Law degree at Cambridge in 1531, Coverdale left the Augustinian priesthood and went about preaching against various current religious practices. He may have met Tyndale in Hamburg in 1529. His translation of the Bible was printed in 1535, possibly at Marburg, Germany. He dedicated it to King Henry VIII, probably hoping to gain the approval of the king for its circulation in England. Coverdale distinguished his Bible from Tyndale's translation which was banned in England. He signed his name to the Prologue which was addressed to the reader. Although the Bible did not gain a license for its sale from the king, it was not suppressed.

Coverdale's work is a secondary translation (not based on the original Hebrew and Greek, but from a Latin translation). According to Bishop Westcott, Coverdale's New Testament is Tyndale's first edition revised by the help of the second edition and by Luther's German translation. He carried on and enriched the work of his predecessor. His Bible is significant because it is the first printed English Bible.

The Great Bible (1539)

The royal policy towards the Bible was changing in England, even before Tyndale's death. Papal authority was repudiated in England by Henry VIII in 1535. Matthew's Bible was published

Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English was based on the Erasmus' Greek text, the Vulgate, and Luther's German translation.

(Vulgate, Luther's)

The first printed English Bible was the Coverdale Bible.

(Coverdale)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

in 1537. It was based on Tyndale's Pentateuch and New Testament, Coverdale's version of the books from Ezra to Malachi, and an unassigned version, possibly Tyndale's unpublished works, of the books from Joshua to 2 Chronicles. According to Bruce, both Coverdale's and Matthew's Bibles received the royal license in 1537.⁶ Since there were two forms of the English Bible, Coverdale's and Matthew's, King Henry VIII authorized Cromwell to provide a new translation which would be uniform, authoritative, and free from interpretations. In 1538, Coverdale agreed to join Richard Grafton in preparing a new text in which other men's works would be used in preference to his own. The "Great Bible" (so named because of its size), which appeared in 1539, was actually a revision of Matthew's Bible. In accordance with the king's injunction, a copy was placed in every church in England. The Great Bible bore on the title page: "This is the Bible appointed to be read in Churches." It was actually a revised edition of Tyndale's version. After the execution of Cromwell, the Great Bible was approved by Bishops Tunstall and Heath. Tunstall was the bishop of London who had condemned Tyndale and his work. Now he officially authorized a Bible that largely contained Tyndale's work.

The distribution of the Great Bible was accompanied by a royal declaration encouraging all to read it. The response was so great and the resulting public arguments over the meaning of the Bible were so intense that the king issued a second declaration urging readers to approach Bible reading "humbly and reverently." Conservative church leaders reacted against the freedom of lay interpretation. In 1543, all translations bearing Tyndale's name were proscribed (denounced). In 1546, Coverdale's New Testament was also proscribed. Upon the death of Henry VIII, the Great Bible was restored to its place in churches. Queen Mary suppressed the printing of Bibles during her reign, but Queen Elizabeth saw the production of two further English versions of the Bible.

The Geneva Bible (1560)

The first English New Testament with the chapters divided into verses according to Stephanus' Greek New Testament was the Geneva Bible, printed in 1557. This New Testament was a correction of Tyndale's text by Beza's Latin Testament. In 1560, the entire Bible was revised and printed at Geneva. The type, the size, and the notes gave it great popularity with the common people.

The King James Version

By the end of the sixteenth century, English-speaking Protestants had two versions of the Bible: the Great Bible preferred by the Anglicans, and the Geneva Bible preferred by Calvinistic Protestants. In 1604, King James called a conference to settle the differences of opinion over versions of the Bible. Fifty-four scholars were appointed to provide a new translation which would be approved by all the churches. The new work was based on a study of early Hebrew and Greek manuscripts as well as many of the later translations. Attention was given to the beauty of the language. The new Bible replaced the versions then being used in the churches. It has remained "the Bible" wherever the English language is used for over 300 years. Jewish scholars as well as Catholics have recognized the excellence of the version.

⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments* (3rd edition; Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), p. 224.

The Bible which Henry VIII approved for reading in the churches was called the _____, so named because of its _____.

(Great Bible, size)

The King James Version replaced the _____ Bible and the _____ Bible.

(Geneva, Great)

Recent editions

The *English Revised Version* was approved in 1870 and was published in 1881-85. New manuscripts had been discovered and old ones were better understood. The text was more accurate, but the people were disappointed to find many familiar phrases dropped and words changed. Others were disappointed to find no greater change in the English.

American scholars had been invited to participate in the English Revised Version. In 1901, after fourteen years of sanctioning the English Revised Edition, the American committee prepared an edition that contained its preferences. The word Jehovah was substituted for Lord or God, Holy Spirit for Holy Ghost, and the word love for charity. The American version became known as the *American Standard Version*. This version does not contain the beauty of the Authorized Version nor the modern expressions of recent versions, but its accuracy has commended it to teachers and students.

The International Council of Religious Education authorized a committee to proceed with another revision. This version was to embody the best results of modern scholarship and express the Scripture in English diction which is designed for use in public and private worship. The New Testament was published in 1946, and the Old Testament was completed in 1952. The revision by American scholars was based on the versions of 1611 and 1901. The new version has been criticized for obscuring the traditional Messianic passages. It is named the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV).

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland approached the Church of England and the principal free churches concerning a revision of the English Revised Version. The Revised Standard Version by Americans had used good literary English of quality that was acknowledged on both sides of the Atlantic. However, it did not retain the Cambridge idea of paying meticulous attention to verbal accuracy and to translating as literally as possible without positive violence to English usage. The British churches began revising the English Revised Version in 1947 in order to prepare a new translation of the Bible into modern English. The *New English Bible*, published in 1961 and 1970, continues the long established tradition of the earlier English versions. It is genuinely English in idiom, avoiding both archaisms and transient modernisms, and is plain enough to be understood by reasonably intelligent people.

The American Standard Version has been revised and published by the Lockman Foundation under the title *New American Standard Bible*. The foreword states that the translation proposed to adhere as closely as possible to the original language of the Holy Scriptures and to make the translation fluent and readable according to current English usage.

The Revised Version is a revision of the _____ Version with the use of newly discovered _____.

(King James, manuscripts)

The Revised Standard Version is an _____ revision published in 1946 and 1952.

(American)

An English version of the Revised Version is the New _____.

(English Bible)

Home Study Exercises

Basic assignment (to be answered by Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Transmission refers to (underline the correct answer):

- (1) conveying the Bible from one language to another.
- (2) conveying the Bible from one country to another.
- (3) conveying the Bible from one generation to another.

2. Give two advantages of a codex over a scroll. _____

3. Why is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls significant for Old Testament textual studies?

4. Why was the preservation of Old Testament scrolls by the Qumran community significant?

5. Explain why the Old Testament manuscripts, other than the Qumran scrolls, have not survived?

6. What is the Masoretic Text?

7. Why is the Septuagint important to Christians?

8. Why did the Jews stop using the Septuagint?

9. Match the title with the correct description of ancient translations:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| A "simple translation" into Syriac Aramaic. _____ | a. Samaritan Pentateuch |
| The "translation" of Hebrew into Palestinian Aramaic. _____ | b. Vulgate |
| The Pentateuch in Old Hebrew script. _____ | c. Origen's Hexapla |
| The Bible with six parallel columns. _____ | d. Targum |
| Jerome's Latin translation. _____ | e. Peshitta |

10. Match the following by writing the letter of the term which corresponds to each description of an ancient papyrus manuscript.

- | | |
|--|--------|
| The oldest papyrus fragment containing a few verses of John (A.D. 117-138) _____ | a. P45 |
| One of the oldest papyrus codices of the Gospels and Acts (A.D. 200-250) _____ | b. P46 |
| The oldest papyrus codex of the Pauline Epistles (A.D. 200) _____ | c. P47 |
| The oldest papyrus codex of the Book of Revelation (A.D. 250-290) _____ | d. P52 |
| An ancient papyrus codex of Luke and John (A.D. 175-225) _____ | e. P75 |

11. The two most valuable parchment manuscripts are Codex _____ and Codex _____ which are dated in the _____ century.

12. The Roman Church adopted the _____ as her official Bible at the Council of _____ in _____ (year).

13. List three effects of the printing press on the distribution of Scripture.

14. Write the letter of the Greek text beside the description which fits each.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| The first <i>published</i> Greek New Testament (1516) _____ | a. Textus Receptus |
| The first printed New Testament in four languages (1514) _____ | b. Erasmus' New Testament |
| The text of Stephanus based on Erasmus and the Polyglot Bible and divided into verses (1551) _____ | c. Complutensian Polyglot |

15. Write the letter of the correct English translation beside each description.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. King James or Authorized Version | e. Revised Standard Version |
| b. Revised Version | f. Tyndale |
| c. New English Bible | g. Coverdale |
| d. New American Standard Bible | h. Great Bible |
| | i. Wycliffe |

- The earliest English translation based on the Vulgate (1383) _____
The first printed English New Testament based on the Greek text, the Vulgate, and Luther's translation _____
The first complete Bible printed in English (1535) _____
The Bible approved by Henry VIII to be read in the churches _____
The Bible which replaced the Geneva and Great Bibles (1611) _____
The revision of the King James Version in 1870 using newly discovered texts _____
An American revision published in 1946 and 1952 _____
An English revision of the Revised Version (1961, 1970) _____
An American revision of the American Standard Version (1960, 1970) _____

Supplementary assignment (for Levels 2 and 3)

1. Explain how the Masoretic Text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint are used by textual critics to derive the original text.
2. Briefly trace the history of the ancestry of the King James Version.

Advanced assignment (for Level 3)

Read pages 249–266 and 316–328 in Geisler and Nix and answer the following questions.

1. List four reasons for the scarcity of Hebrew manuscripts.
2. How do the Old Testament manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls compare with the Masoretic Text of a thousand years later?
3. Identify: Diatessaron of Tatian, Coptic.

Pages 222–447 in Geisler and Nix also relate to this lesson, and the student is encouraged to read as much of this additional material as time will permit.

Seminar Discussion

1. Did the use of scrolls or codices have any effect on the collection of books in the canonization process? How?
2. Which modern translations would you select as a pulpit, study, and devotional Bible? Why?
3. What is the relation between the work of textual criticism and biblical interpretation?
4. What are the benefits in knowing the history of the translation of the English Bible?