

Part I

THE BIBLE:
ITS DESIGN
AND SCOPE

1

The Bible and Its Preservation

The universal truths and the beauties and consolations of the Bible are the world's heritage, a religious literature unsurpassed in loveliness and sublimity. These are available to all men, but fully to hear the Word of God one must look perceptively beyond the written words. In the Bible the history of the Messianic people and the golden thread of spiritual truth and revelation are closely interwoven—the one transfigured in character by the other, as when a strong light held behind translucent paper illumines the paper with light.

The Bible truths provide a practical guide and impetus for every good thought and action—from the smallest detail of daily living to the fullness of a consecrated life. At every level a study of the Bible is rewarding, but to benefit from its greatest richness everyone must approach it for himself in the attitude of “What is this saying to *me*?”

The Bible is sacred literature, telling over and over again of God's presence, always availing and always available. The Bible is an ancient Oriental literature. The language and customs of the ancient Israelites are in many ways unlike those of the twenty-first-century Western man. The Old Testament is a rich historical and spiritual storehouse which grew out of the life of this Oriental people, the life of a small nation continually tried in its loyalty to its God.

To the English-speaking world *Bible* designates primarily the Christian Scriptures—the Old and New Testaments—consisting of thirty-nine books in the Old and twenty-seven in the New. “Bible” is derived from the Greek word *biblos* (book, the pith of the Egyptian papyrus plant used in ancient times to make writing material); “testament” (Latin *testamentum*) means “covenant” or “will.” The Old and New Testaments are thus translated literally “Old Covenant” and “New Covenant.” The Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew, the language of the Israelites, with a few portions in Aramaic; the New was written in Greek, the language of the Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D.

Preservation of Text

The sixty-six books we now have in our Bible passed through centuries of scrutiny and selection. Other writings were eventually discarded because they were not considered inspired sources of doctrine or reliable history. Rabbinical scholars exercised great care and discrimination to safeguard the authenticity of Old Testament books, and the early Christian Church Fathers were equally scrupulous to ascertain the genuineness of New Testament writings.

The word canon is derived from the Greek *kanohn*, “a straight rod,” “a rule,” “a standard,” “a catalogue,” and the term is applied Biblically to the collection of sacred books considered divinely inspired and authoritative.

Development of Old Testament Canon

The sacred literature of the Old Testament, which preserved the divine revelations of God to the chosen race of Israel and memorialized its history, varies in character from the historical, the prophetic, the legal and priestly to the poetic and devotional. Its composition covered a long period of time, not a single age, and its production took place under a wide variety of circumstances. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings constitute the three divisions of Hebrew Scripture.

The first stage of its transmission was oral—from father to son and from generation to generation. The ordinances which Moses gave to his nation were at first circulated by word of mouth. They included not only the Ten Commandments but also civic and social legislation relating to the community life of Israel. These legislations were developed and elaborated by the priests as they taught the Law to the people; this method of oral law (*torah*) survived long in Israel, adapting itself to Israel’s changing economic and social conditions, later to crystallize into written law codes during various periods of the national history.

Along with the Law was transmitted orally through the centuries the folklore of the Hebrew race, songs of the exploits of its military leaders and heroes, and the stories of the religious experiences unique to the Israelites as the covenant people. In time these were collected and written into separate histories, possibly by scholars of the schools of the prophets originally founded by Samuel.

All these writings existed in fragmentary form up to the Exile (586 B.C.). During the Captivity concerted efforts were made to preserve and assemble existing records. Priestly scribes then edited and wove these segments into a unified whole.

The Law

The five books of the Law (Torah, Pentateuch)—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—reached their final form shortly after the Exile and became canon in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (*ca.* 445 B.C.). Although these are attributed to Moses, modern Biblical criticism finds evidence that the Pentateuch is a compilation from five principal sources: the Jehovistic and Elohist Documents, the Deuteronomic, Holiness, and Priestly Codes (J,E,D,H,P). These sources include the oral and written Mosaic history and law as well as additional history and advancing law codes based on changing social conditions in Israel. In its composite form the Pentateuch is a masterpiece of interwoven records illumined by the revelation of God’s purposeful design.

The **Jehovistic Document (J)**, *ca.* 850 B.C., so named because the Deity is called Jehovah (Yahweh), was written from the viewpoint of the southern kingdom of Judah. It traced the beginnings of the patriarchal and national history of Israel from Adam to the conquest of Canaan.

The **Elohist Document (E)**, *ca.* 750 B.C., in which the Deity is called Elohim, was written from the viewpoint of the northern kingdom of Israel and reflects the powerful religious influence of Elijah. This document parallels the history of J from Abram to Joshua. (A composite record [JE] appeared *ca.* 650 B.C.)

The **Deuteronomic Code (D)**, “the book of the law,” dating *ca.* 621 B.C., was discovered in the Temple in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah (II Ki. 22:8). It was probably written in the century preceding its discovery and gave a restatement and amplified codification of earlier Mosaic legislation. Chapters 12–26 and 28 of our book of Deuteronomy contain this code.

The **Holiness Code (H)**, *ca.* 560 B.C., was a body of laws now incorporated in Leviticus, chapters 17–26. Its author was one in spirit with Ezekiel, and its great emphasis is on holiness—the holiness of God, of worship, and of God’s people.

The **Priestly Code (P)**, *ca.* 500–450 B.C., was prepared by a priestly writer or writers during the early post-exilic period when the religious institutions of the highly organized priestly system of the Second Temple were set up. This code, expressing a lofty conception of the majesty of God and the highest development of ritual religion, forms the framework of the first five books of the Bible. Its ritual portions are to be found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

The Prophets

The prophetic literature of the Old Testament was the result of the vigorous reformative efforts of

Israel's major and minor prophets. The early seers had left no record of their utterances; with the advance of the nation's culture, however, reading and writing became more general, and from the middle of the eighth to the fifth century B.C. these great moral teachers, contemporaries of kings and statesmen, not only fought the social evils of their era and taught the will and revelations of God to their people but wrote down their messages for future generations.

By 150 B.C., in addition to the record of Israel's early history and law codes, the Hebrew Scripture included a second group of canonical books, historical and prophetic, called the Prophets. These included Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habak-kuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi. Modern study prefers to group the book of Joshua with the first five books of the Law under the title Hexateuch ("six books") because its literary style and theological viewpoint bear the imprint of the Priestly Code.

The Writings (Hagiographa)

In the next several centuries following the return of Judah to Palestine the books of exile and restoration history appeared. The sayings and practical precepts of Israel's wise men, who sought to solve the great problems of life (the Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), had been collected, as had the lyrics of poet and psalmist long used in Hebrew worship. This third great group of poetic, prophetic, and historic books, consisting of Job, Psalms, Proverbs (three devotional books used in synagogue worship), Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther (the "Five Rolls" read yearly at special Jewish festivals), Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I and II Chronicles, ranked as Scripture before the close of the first century B.C. Their canonicity was accepted when the Old Testament canon of thirty-nine books was officially set by a synod of rabbis at the Council of Jamnia, near Joppa, in 90 A.D.

Apocrypha

Beside these Old Testament canonical books there was in existence a body of religious literature never used in the Palestinian synagogues. These books—of uncertain origin or written by anonymous authors using the names of great historic figures and claiming a "hidden" wisdom—gradually came to be rejected as spurious or lacking divine inspiration. As generally understood by Protestant Christians, *Apocrypha* denotes the fourteen books which appeared in the Greek Septuagint (LXX) in addition to the Old Testament books. These were translated into Old Latin and carried over mainly in this form into the Latin Vulgate by Jerome.

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|--|---------------------------------|
| I and II Esdras | |
| Tobit | |
| Judith | |
| Additions to book of Esther | |
| Wisdom of Solomon | |
| Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach | |
| Baruch (including Epistle of Jeremy, Baruch chap. 6) | |
| Song of the Three Holy Children | } Added to book of Daniel |
| History of Susanna | |
| History of Bel and the Dragon | |
| The Prayer of Manasses | |
| I and II Maccabees | |

The question whether these books should be included in the canon was re-examined during the Renaissance and Reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; because these books had never been part of Hebrew Scripture, they were not accepted by Protestant Christians as canonical. Wycliffe's Bible (1382) did include them, between the Old and New Testaments, as did the Coverdale Bible (1535) and the King James Bible (1611), although they were omitted from the latter version as early as 1629. At the Council of Trent (Italy) in 1546 these books (with the exception of I and II Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses) were officially accepted by the Roman Catholic Church as part of its Old Testament canon.

Development of New Testament Canon

Although marked lines cannot be drawn in the process of the development of New Testament canon, three stages may be seen clearly: (1) the appearance of the apostolic epistles and gospel records, circulated among the churches in fragmentary form, the substance of which were known and quoted by the Apostolic Fathers; (2) a growing acceptance of their authenticity in the second and third centuries; (3) their formal canonization in 397 A.D.

The New Testament text has come down to us in Greek in the vernacular *koine* used in the first-century Graeco-Roman world. The original manuscripts no longer exist, but many Greek manuscripts dating from the second century to the fifteenth (when printing was invented by Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany, in 1450) have since come to light to authenticate the New Testament text. Like the Old Testament, it was preserved in manuscript form and copied by hand by layman and scribe on perishable papyrus.

The canon of the New Testament developed slowly. The gospel of Jesus was at first testified to by word of mouth by apostles and Christian converts and only gradually preserved in writing to meet the need of a growing Church. Not till the close of the first century A.D. did the Church have a Scripture of its own, and even then this was not a cohesive whole. Rather, it consisted of scattered gospel records and

epistles possessed by widely separated churches and honored because these told of the life and words of Jesus or of the teachings of the apostles, but by the close of the century or early in the second the Synoptic Gospels were already grouped together, as were some of Paul's Epistles.

Certain early-church ecclesiastics were influential in the selection of the New Testament books. *Marcion*, a Christian Gnostic of Rome, accepted Luke's Gospel and ten of Paul's Epistles in 140 A.D. *Justin Martyr*, a Palestinian church father, referred in 150 A.D. to the three Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *Tertullian*, 150–222 A.D., an early Latin church father, a native of Carthage, accepted the four Gospels and most of the New Testament books, while *Clement of Alexandria* (Egypt), 165–220 A.D., also a Christian church father, mentioned all the New Testament books except James, II Peter, and III John. *Irenaeus*, bishop of Lyons in Gaul in 180 A.D., was a pupil of Polycarp, who had been a disciple of John. Irenaeus accepted as canonical most of the New Testament books, and henceforth Paul's Epistles became doctrine for the Church. The eminent Alexandrian theologian *Origen*, 185–254 A.D., catalogued most of the New Testament books as genuine. One of the lists made by *Eusebius*, 260–340 A.D., bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, agrees with present canon. *Jerome*, 340–420 A.D., the Latin church father and scholar who produced the Latin Vulgate, accepted all the present New Testament books as authoritative, distinguishing canonical from apocryphal writings. *Augustine*, Numidian bishop of Hippo (Africa), 354–430 A.D., whose influence was great in the Church, also accepted all the New Testament books as genuine.

The present canon of the New Testament closed when its twenty-seven books were accepted as authoritative Scripture at the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.

Principal Versions

The preservation of the texts of both Old and New Testaments was a miracle in itself as none of the original manuscripts exist. Writings were painstakingly copied by hand from generation to generation on long scrolls of animal skins carefully sewn together or on papyrus rolls. As the years passed the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings

wore out and were recopied. The worn scrolls were usually buried, so that until recently available copies were not much more than a thousand years old. (With the discovery in 1947 of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the cliffs above the Dead Sea a number of much older manuscripts, written almost two thousand years ago, have come to light.) Often errors crept into the text with the copying. Texts suffered alterations by editorial revisions and additions of the copyists. Changes also occurred as the Old and New Testaments were translated from one language to another and new versions appeared. The ancient versions which were preserved have been of great value to scholars in determining the original text.

The Old Testament, written in Hebrew with a few portions in Aramaic, was preserved in the second century A.D. in the **Massora**, an authoritative Hebrew text prepared by Jewish scholars. It followed soon after the canonization of the Old Testament books. All Hebrew manuscripts after the second century were based on the Massora, which stabilized the text by introduction of a system of vowel sounds and by accent marks for punctuation.

The *Targums*, Aramaic oral translations or paraphrases of the Old Testament Hebrew text, were put into writing by the fifth century A.D.

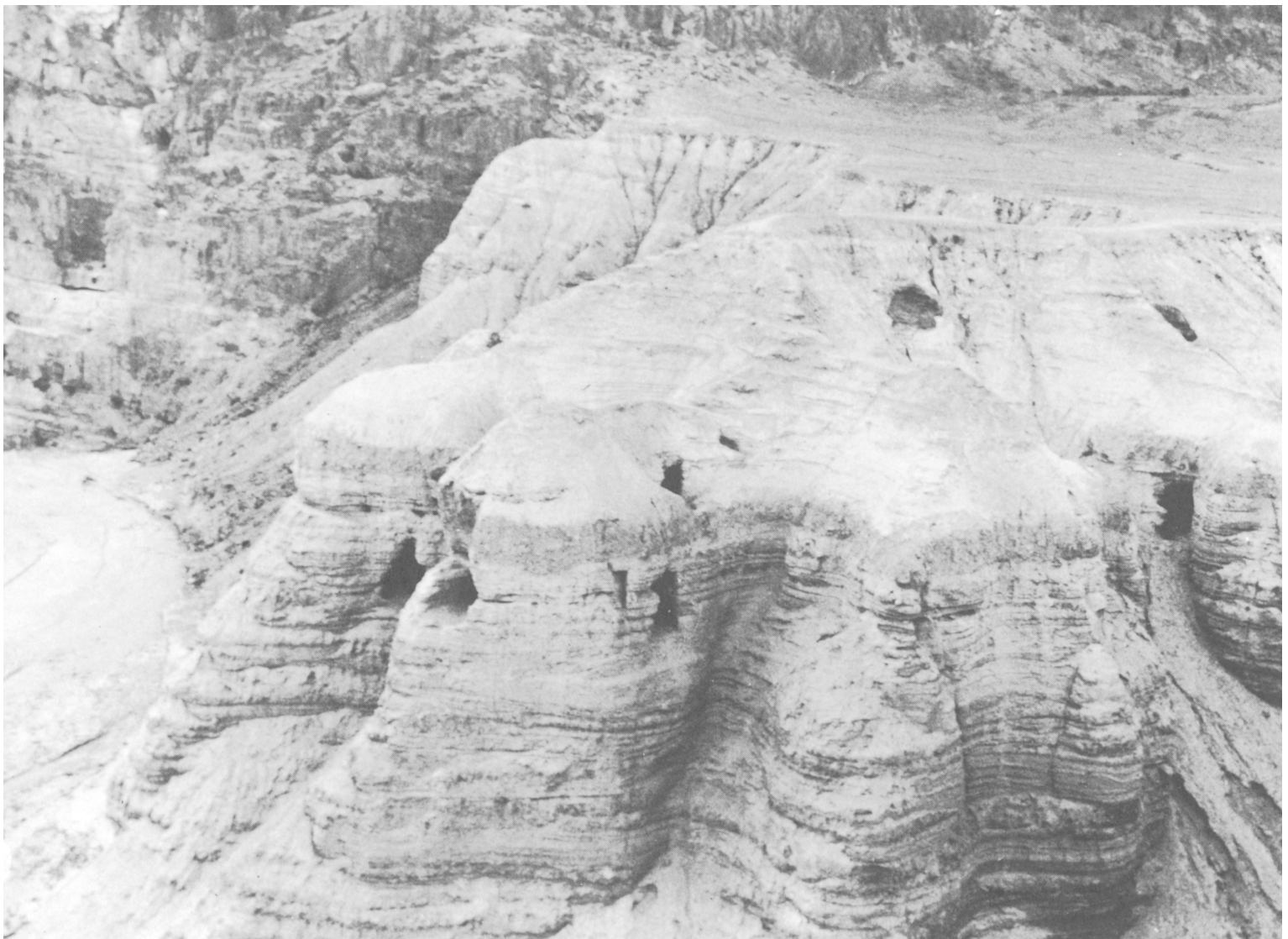
The **Septuagint**, known also as the LXX, was a celebrated Greek version of Hebrew Scripture, translated between 250 and 50 B.C. for the Jews of Alexandria and used by Jews of the Diaspora in the Mediterranean world. It was the version widely used in the early Christian Church. This oldest complete version included the Apocrypha.

The **Peshitta** was the Syriac version of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament was in close agreement with the Massoretic Hebrew text; its New Testament conformed to the Greek. Portions of the Peshitta were in circulation by the end of the second century A.D. among Syriac Christians. It underwent revision, and since the fifth century has been the national version of the Syrian Church.

The Sahadic and Bohairic versions circulated by Christians of Egypt were in Coptic. By 200 A.D. the Old Testament was translated from the LXX into the two dialects of Upper and Lower Egypt respectively; by 250 the New Testament also existed in both dialects.

An Armenian version preserved the Old Testament text from the Greek LXX and the New Testament from a Syriac text. This translation circulated in the Christian communities of eastern Asia around 400 A.D.

The first of the Old Latin versions appeared among Latin-speaking Jews of Carthage early in the third century A.D. In 385 A.D. Jerome translated the



In these caves of the Judean hills the first Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. American Bible Society.

New Testament from Old Latin into Latin with the aid of Greek manuscripts, and from 390 through 404 translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew text. This translation of Old and New Testaments was called the **Vulgate**, and became the Bible of the Western world for the next thousand years. In 1593 A.D. it became the official Latin version of the Roman Catholic Church.

History of the English Bible

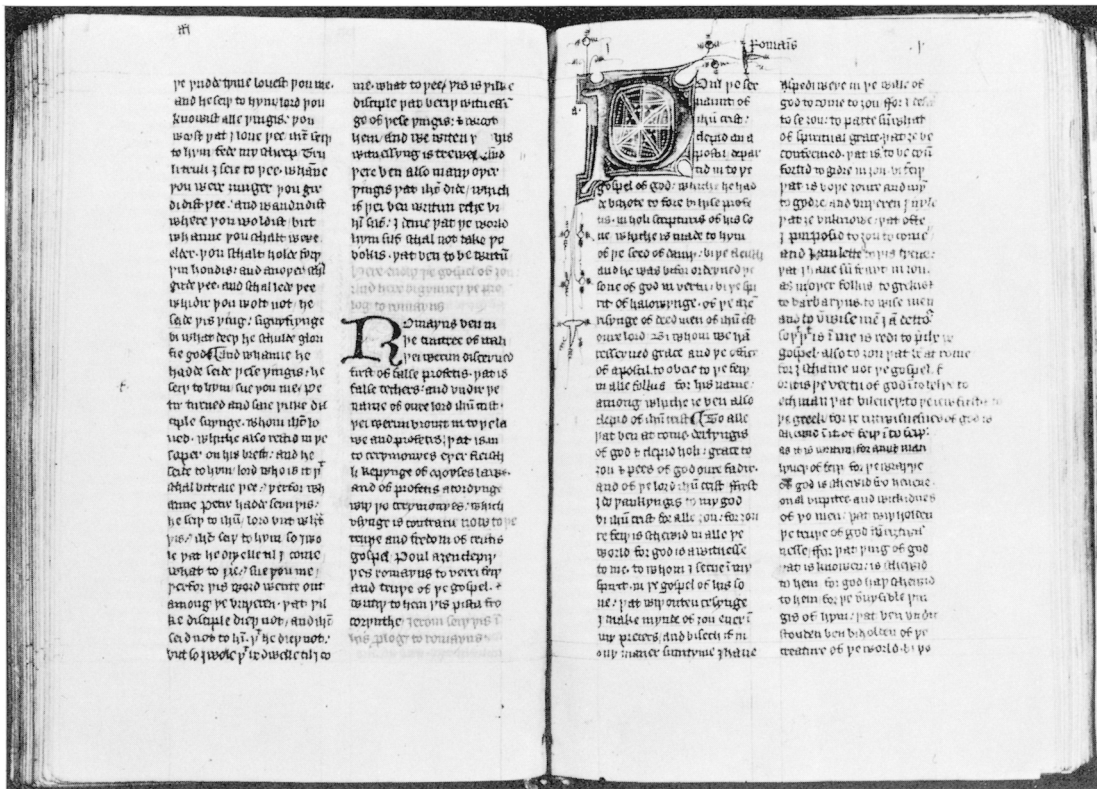
Wycliffe's Bible

Before the time of Wycliffe the only Bible England possessed was the Latin Bible, although earlier attempts had been made to translate portions into Anglo-Saxon. John Wycliffe, the English religious reformer, made the first complete English translation in 1382 (Old Testament partly the work of Nicholas de Hereford). It was an exact translation in manuscript form of the Latin Vulgate into early English, to

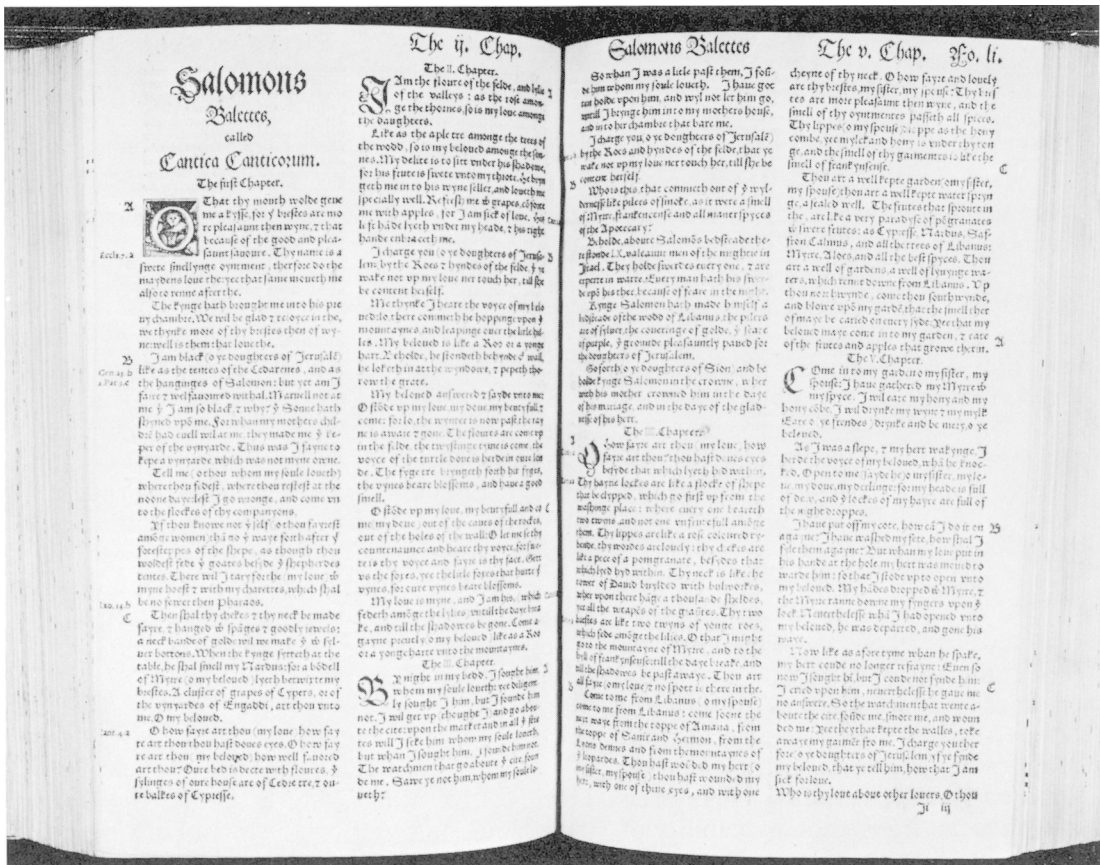
make Scripture available to the common people who could not read Latin. It had a wide circulation, but it aroused great resistance on the part of the Church and such translations were forbidden by threat of excommunication. A second improved Wycliffe version, attributed to his friend John Purvey, appeared soon after Wycliffe's death and attained wide popularity; about 140 copies have survived. An Oxford scholar of repute, Wycliffe escaped persecution, but after his death his bones were exhumed, burned, and thrown into the river Swift "to the damnation and destruction of his memory." Both his friends de Hereford and Purvey were forced to recant under torture. Parliament passed a bill making circulation of the English-language Bible a crime, and by 1401 English Bibles were ordered burned.

Tyndale's Bible

William Tyndale, an Oxford student, went to Cambridge to study Greek under the Dutch scholar Erasmus. Inspired by the revival of Greek learning and spurred by the new invention of printing,



Above: Wycliffe's Bible, 1382 A.D. This first complete English translation was handwritten and illuminated. Below: Tyndale's Version, 1535 A.D., was the first printed English Bible. Both photographs, American Bible Society.



Tyndale determined he would give a reliable English version of the Scriptures to the people in the language they could understand. Forced to flee from England he made his translation of the New Testament at Hamburg, then at Cologne. It was printed at Worms in 1525–1526 and copies were shipped to England, where it was eagerly received by the people. By 1530 15,000 copies had flooded England, but opposition by clergy and king caused them to be sought out and burned. From 1530 to 1534 Tyndale translated the Pentateuch and the book of Jonah and revised his New Testament. Betrayed by enemies, he was imprisoned near Brussels for more than a year and martyred in 1536—strangled and burned at the stake—for the work he had done. Tyndale’s translation was not from the Latin Vulgate, as Wycliffe’s had been, but from early Greek and Hebrew texts. The excellence of this translation and the simplicity and directness of its style made it the basis of many later translations. As Luther’s translation had molded the vernacular of the German people, Tyndale’s beautiful and vigorous diction shaped the English language of the Elizabethan period (1570–1610).

Coverdale’s Bible

In 1534 the mood of England began to change. A petition was made to King Henry VIII to permit the translation of the Bible into English by scholars whom he would appoint, and in 1535 Miles Coverdale’s translation from the Latin Vulgate and German versions (including Luther’s), together with Tyndale’s Pentateuch and Tyndale’s 1534 New Testament revision, gave England its first complete printed English Bible. Two new editions were published in 1537 by license of the king, and from this time the English Bible circulated freely.

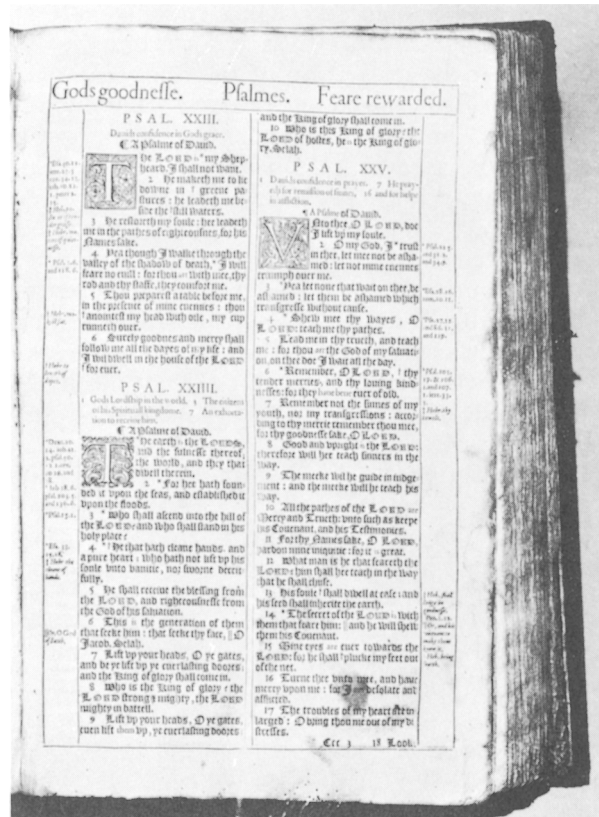
Matthew’s Bible

This was a composite edition produced in 1537 by Thomas Matthew (whose real name is believed to have been John Rogers), a close associate of Tyndale. It included Tyndale’s Pentateuch, the Joshua to II Chronicles left in manuscript form by Tyndale, and his revision of the New Testament, as well as Coverdale’s translation from Ezra to Malachi.

Through the remainder of the sixteenth century a number of Bibles appeared. The *Great Bible* (1539), so named because of its size, was a revision of Matthew’s Bible and was appointed for use in every parish church. The *Geneva Bible* (1560) was a revision of the Great Bible and the first English text to number chapters and verses; it attained a great popularity. The *Bishop’s Bible* (1568) was an inferior edition published by a group of noted bishops and other clergymen to replace the Geneva Bible. Seeing the desirability of having a translation for English Roman



Above: Facsimile page from Gutenberg Bible (Latin), 1450–1455 A.D. Below: King James Bible, 1611. Both photographs, American Bible Society.



Catholics, Catholic scholars of the English college of Douai, Flanders, produced a New Testament which was published in 1582 at Rheims, France, and an Old Testament in 1609 at Douai, hereafter known as the *Rheims and Douai Bible*.

The Authorized Version (AV) or King James Bible, 1611 Because of imperfections and disagreements of existing translations, a new version was undertaken by England's best scholars, an idea enthusiastically supported by King James I. Forty-seven Biblical scholars were commissioned to produce a version acceptable to Puritan and Anglican Protestants. Other scholars throughout the land were invited to give assistance in cases of special difficulty. It was not a new translation but one that deliberately drew on the best of every preceding English version as well as foreign translations. The result was that from its inception it held first place among all versions by reason of its beauty of language and intrinsic merit. It was destined to leave an indelible imprint on English religion and to become a standard for English literature.

Revised Version (RV or ERV)

For two hundred fifty years the King James Version stood alone. Then began a whole new era of textual criticism. Progress had been made in Hebrew and Greek learning and scholars now had ready access to a newly discovered and more reliable Greek text than that on which the Authorized Version was based.

In 1870, at the instigation of the Convocation of Canterbury of the Church of England, Hebrew and Greek scholars, in two companies of twenty-seven each, undertook a revision. One company, working forty days a year for ten years, translated the New Testament, which was published in 1881; the other company worked on the Old Testament a total of 792 days during fourteen years, and in 1885 the entire Bible was published. The English language had undergone many changes since the Elizabethan period and numerous words had taken on different meanings. Thus into the Revised were incorporated the advancing results of scholarship.

In close relation to the English Revised Version was the *American Revised Version (ARV)*, published in 1901. Since the turn of the twentieth century various Bibles have appeared, many of them in modern English: *The Twentieth Century New Testament*, 1902; Weymouth's *The New Testament in Modern Speech*, 1903; Ferrar Fenton's *The Holy Bible in Modern English*, 1903; Moffatt's *A New Translation of the Bible*, 1922; Smith-Goodspeed's *The Bible, An American Translation*, 1931; Ogden's *The Bible in Basic English*, 1949; Charles K. Williams' *The New*

Testament, A New Translation in Plain English, 1952; *Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible (RSV)*, 1952; J. B. Phillips' *New Testament in Modern Speech*, 1958; *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1966; *The New English Bible*, 1961–1970; *The New American Bible*, 1970, a new translation for Roman Catholics; *The Anchor Bible* (thirty-eight-volume translation and commentary), publication begun in 1964.

Design and Scope of the Bible

The sixty-six books of Christian Scripture are knit together by the central theme of God's purpose of redemption for the family of mankind through His Son Jesus Christ. Prophet, priest, historian, statesman, king, reformer, poet, psalmist, seer, apostle alike contributed to the wealth of this material. The Bible is the record of God's love for man seen in a threefold aspect—God's self-revelation, the Messianic idea, and the history of redemption.

1. Its pages begin with the doctrine of God as Creator of the universe and man, and reveal progressively the fullness of God's nature, will, and kingdom. It is the voice of God saying, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Is. 44:6).

2. God's redemptive plan for a mankind in need of salvation is developed in the Messianic idea. This idea is first seen in the promise of a Redeemer in the "seed" of the woman: "I [God] will put enmity between thee [the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The Messianic line began with Seth, Adam's third son, and became definitive in the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, with Israel, and with the royal line of David, to be made fully manifest in Jesus, son of Mary. All of the Old Testament leads forward to the advent of the Messiah, "the anointed"; after his coming everything is a working out from his life, his teachings, and his Church.

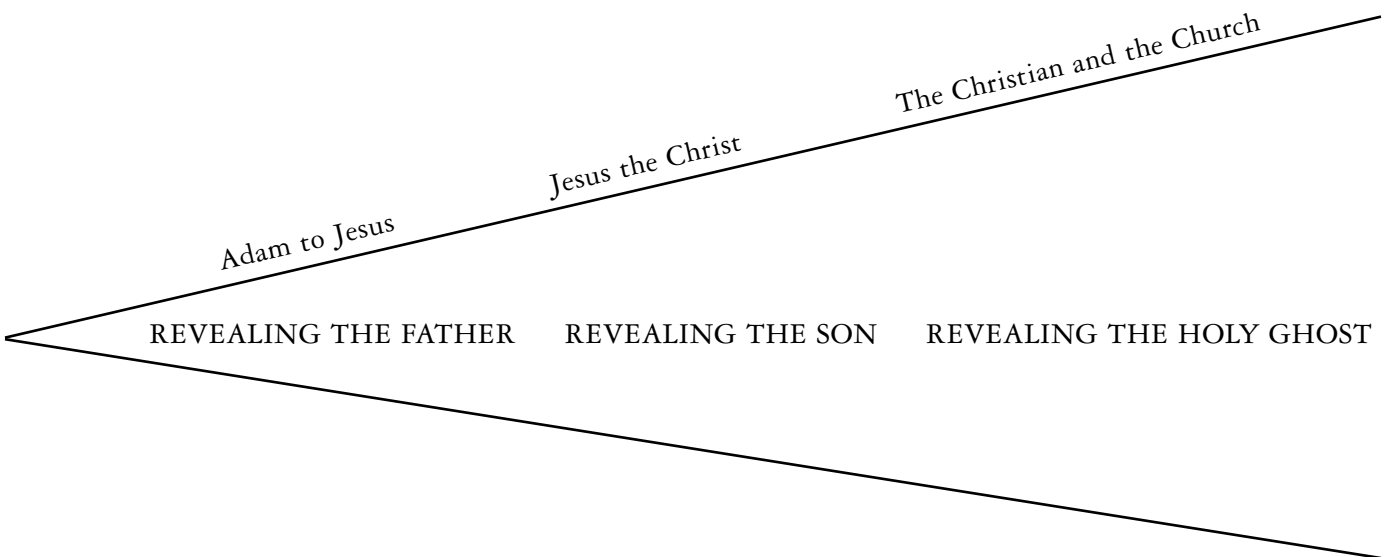
3. The history of redemption is one of the principal themes of the Biblical system. The Bible records the redemption of the Children of Israel through God's covenant, as developed in the Law and the Prophets; and the redemption of all men through Jesus Christ, his gospel, and his Church; and closes with the visions of the Apocalypse which prophesy

the final triumph of the kingdom of God and His Christ.

Three major elements within Scripture itself bear witness to its divine inspiration. The first is **monotheism**. In the almost completely polytheistic world of the Israelite the concept of only one God, invisible Spirit, was a startling idea that was to permeate human consciousness as enlightened thought advanced in the knowledge of this One God. The second element is **unity**. Although the books of the Bible were written during a period of approximately fifteen centuries and by many authors, they maintain

the unity of its grand theme of redemption. The third element that gives proof of divine influence is **prophecy**. The Old Testament contains Messianic promises and prophecies fulfilled centuries later in a way no prophet of himself could have foreseen. David, a thousand years before the Messiah, made prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus; Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah more than seven hundred years before Jesus' Advent; so did Jeremiah, Daniel, and many of the Minor Prophets.

The threefold aspect and progression of the divine plan:



SCOPE OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

Although the Bible as we think of it today has come to us in one volume, it is really a library of sixty-six books. There are five divisions in the Old Testament and five in the New. The Old Testament records the history and spiritual development of the Children of Israel in their preparation for the reception of the Messiah; the New Testament records the outgrowth of Jesus' life and gospel, and the establishment of his kingdom. The whole is an expanding revelation.

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| OLD TESTAMENT | | | | | NEW TESTAMENT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Preparation for Coming of the Messiah | | | | | Christ's Advent | Promulgation of the Gospel | | | | Consummation of Kingdom | | | | | | | | | |
| | | PROPHECY (17) | | | | | EPISTLES (21) | | PROPHECY (1) | | | | | | | | | | |
| LAW (5) | | HISTORY (12) | | POETRY (5) | | Major Prophets | | Minor Prophets | | GOSPELS (4) | | HISTORY (1) | | Pauline | | General | | Revelation | |
| Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy | | Joshua Judges Ruth I Samuel II Samuel I Kings II Kings I Chron. II Chron. Ezra Nehemiah Esther | | Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon | | Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel | | Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi | | Matthew Mark Luke John | | The Acts of the Apostles | | Romans I Corinthians II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I Thessalonians II Thessalonians I Timothy II Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews | | James I Peter II Peter I John II John III John Jude | | Revelation | |

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Five Divisions: LAW, HISTORY,
POETRY, MAJOR PROPHETS, MINOR PROPHETS

Pre-Mosaic Period
Adam to Joseph

Israel in Egypt
1880–1450 B.C.*

Exodus
1450 B.C.

Wilderness Wandering
1450–1410 B.C.

THE FIVE BOOKS OF THE LAW (PENTATEUCH)

| <u>GENESIS</u> | <u>EXODUS</u> | <u>LEVITICUS</u> | <u>NUMBERS</u> | <u>DEUTERONOMY</u> |
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| <p>Genesis sets forth the basic structure of the whole Bible and sounds its keynote of salvation:</p> <p>–God and His creation</p> <p>–A second account of creation; the beginning of the moral history of mankind</p> <p>–The divine plan of redemption (3:15)</p> <p>History from Adam through patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—God’s covenant with Abraham and his seed</p> | <p>Israel’s bondage in Egypt</p> <p>Call and commission of Moses</p> <p>Exodus of Israel from Egypt</p> <p>At Mount Sinai God’s covenant is made with Israel—Moses is given the Decalogue, also civil and ceremonial laws to govern Israel as a nation</p> <p>The erection of the Tabernacle</p> <p>Israel (“my firstborn”) is chosen to the worship of the One God</p> | <p>Development in detail of Mosaic legislation—specific precepts of worship to be followed by the priests, Levites, and the people</p> <p>Sacrificial and priestly types of religious worship by which Israel is to establish her communion with God</p> <p>These Levitical laws are to govern the nation throughout its history and to consecrate Israel to God</p> <p>The keynote of the book is the word <i>holy</i></p> | <p>The first numbering of the Children of Israel at Sinai</p> <p>Their journey to Kadesh-barnea—twelve spies search out the land of Canaan for forty days—Israel fears to go forward</p> <p>Forty years of wandering in the wilderness</p> <p>Valuable training of the nation in observance of its civil and religious institutions</p> <p>Second numbering of the people in plains of Moab</p> | <p>The addresses of Moses and the restating of the Law to a new generation of Israel about to enter the land of Canaan</p> <p>Moses reviews the vital lessons of the past forty years and magnifies God’s unceasing goodness to Israel</p> <p>Moses urges upon Israel proper measures of protection for the future: gratitude for God’s mercy, obedience to the Law, separateness, and abstinence from idolatry</p> |

Israel’s preparation for its Messianic mission:

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| <p>Here appears the first promise of the Redeemer, and with the turning of men to God (4:26) begins their preparation for the reception of God’s revelation of Himself.</p> | <p>Worship of the One God (monotheism) is a developing step in the great work of redemption—a redemption not for the Israelites alone, but for all men.</p> | <p>Israel (chosen of God to bring forth the Messiah) is to be a holy people set apart to the service of God—“Holiness is separateness. . . .”</p> | <p>Israel is found wanting in faith and courage. The forty years of wandering constitute a period of needed discipline to learn reliance upon God.</p> | <p>Renewed emphasis is placed upon obedience to the Law—a matter of life and death—for Israel must be prepared to maintain its part of the covenant with God.</p> |
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*Exodus 12:40 reads: “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.” The LXX adds “and in the land of Canaan” after “Egypt,” thus beginning the 430-year period from Abraham’s entrance into Canaan and reducing Israel’s sojourn in Egypt to 215 years.

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Continued)

| | | | |
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| <p>Conquest of Canaan 1410–1370 B.C. Under Joshua and elders</p> | <p>Period of Judges <i>ca.</i> 1370–1028 B.C. Fifteen judges</p> | <p>Reign of Saul 1028–1013 B.C. Israel's first king</p> | <p>Reign of David 1013–973 B.C. 7½ years over Judah 33 years over the United Kingdom</p> |
|---|---|--|---|

THE TWELVE BOOKS OF HISTORY

| <u>JOSHUA</u> | <u>JUDGES</u> | <u>RUTH</u> | <u>I SAMUEL</u> | <u>II SAMUEL</u> |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>The entrance of the Children of Israel into Canaan, the promised land, under Joshua, successor to Moses</p> <p>The conquest of Canaan takes place under Joshua's leadership and in accord with God's directing—Israel must earn its heritage</p> <p>Division of the land among the twelve tribes with exception of tribe of Levi</p> <p>Joshua's final counsels—calls to remembrance God's mercies—exhorts Israel to "cleave unto the Lord"</p> | <p>History of the Israelites under fourteen judges, from Othniel to Eli</p> <p>Israel's repeated desertion of its religious principles brings about oppression after oppression by its enemies—Israel "went a whoring after other gods . . . they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in. . . ."</p> <p>When Israel "cried unto the Lord," judges were raised up one by one to deliver a repentant people</p> | <p>This book is believed to be connected historically with the period of the judges, although written at a later date</p> <p>Ruth, a young Moabitish widow, forsakes her homeland to follow her mother-in-law Naomi to Judah—she chooses to worship the God of Israel</p> <p>Ruth becomes the wife of Boaz of Bethlehem, and through her son Obed becomes an ancestress of David—her name appears in the genealogy of Jesus</p> | <p>Closing period of Judges and transition to Hebrew monarchy</p> <p>Samuel, fifteenth judge, is dedicated when still a child to the service of God—he is established as a prophet—founds first groups for religious instruction</p> <p>Israel demands a king—Saul becomes its first king—Saul's presumption and disobedience cause his rejection</p> <p>Samuel anoints the shepherd David to be king—David's rise and Saul's fall</p> | <p>David becomes king of Judah, reigns seven and a half years with his capital at Hebron</p> <p>David becomes king of all Israel (United Kingdom), reigns thirty-three years with his capital at Jerusalem</p> <p>David centralizes religious worship in Jerusalem (Zion)</p> <p>David's sin with Bathsheba—his deep repentance</p> <p>God's covenant with David and his house: "thy throne shall be established for ever"</p> |

Preparation for mission:

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Israel warned utterly to eschew all idolatry and all contact with the idolatrous Canaanites, else they shall be "scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land."</p> | <p>Israel, failing to cleave to the One God and to obey His commandments, corrupts itself among the pagan people of Canaan, is disciplined repeatedly for apostasy, and yet is shown God's mercy again and again.</p> | <p>Amid the conflicts and distresses of the long period of the judges, the enduring values of family life, love, fidelity, and true worship of God are clearly seen, with their recompense and full reward.</p> | <p>Israel's determination to have "a king to judge us like all the nations" disavows and rejects God's divine sovereignty. This choice is to bring centuries of corrupt worldly government, unrest, and suffering.</p> | <p>David, loving God and acknowledging God's sovereignty over Israel, shows true kingship, a kingship that is blessed of God by His covenant. Israel thus gains national unity and a higher conception of righteousness.</p> |
|--|---|---|--|--|

Reign of Solomon
973–933/32 B.C.

Divided Kingdom
933/32 B.C.
Kingdom of Judah
Kingdom of Israel

Captivities
722 B.C.—Israel
into Assyria
586 B.C.—Judah
into Babylon

Restoration of Judah
536 B.C.—return
under Zerubbabel
458 B.C.—return
under Ezra

I and II KINGS

History from death of David to Judah's captivity

Reign of Solomon—the building and dedication of the Temple

Division of the kingdom—contemporary history of the two kingdoms Israel and Judah

Apostate Israel rapidly sinks into corruption—idolatrous Judah experiences periods of reformation

Israel carried captive to Assyria—Jerusalem falls, Judah carried captive to Babylon

I and II CHRONICLES

History from death of Saul to the captivity of Judah

The chronicler, writing from the viewpoint of the restoration of Judah, chooses events which teach religious lessons—supplements history of I and II Kings—deals wholly with Kingdom of Judah and the Davidic line

Genealogies place special emphasis upon Judah, Levi, and the house of David

Religious importance of Jerusalem and of Levitical order are accented

EZRA

Close of the Exile of Judah and beginning of the Restoration

First return: a remnant of the people of Judah (Jews) returns to its own land led by Zerubbabel (of the Messianic line)

The Temple is rebuilt (Second Temple) with the encouragement of the prophets

Second return: an other Jewish remnant returns to Judah led by Ezra, scribe and priest

Ezra inaugurates a religious reformation in Judah and enforces the law of Moses

NEHEMIAH

A continuation of book of Ezra

Nehemiah's first journey to Jerusalem from Persia (445 B.C.)—rebuilds the wall—acts as governor for twelve years—corrects social and religious abuses

Ezra instructs people in the Law—renewal of the covenant—purification of Temple worship

Nehemiah's second journey to Jerusalem—he institutes radical reforms—Nehemiah and Ezra zealously consolidate the Jewish religious system

ESTHER

Events recorded are believed to have transpired between first and second expeditions of Jews to Jerusalem

Concerns crisis in history of those Jews who choose to remain in the Persian Empire

Esther, a Jewess, becomes queen—Haman, the king's favorite, conspires against the Jews throughout the Empire—Esther courageously intervenes to save her people from extermination

Feast of Purim instituted to commemorate this deliverance

With building of Temple Israel rededicates itself to God, but materialism soon leads away from pure worship. Unity is disrupted by discontent and the kingdom is divided. Accumulation of sins brings enslavement.

Judah, having learned in captivity a purer monotheism, now returns to former inheritance in Palestine in order to proceed to fulfill the high purpose for which God has chosen it: to bring forth the Messiah.

A record of action! In two instances a faithful willing remnant of Judah rises up and prayerfully journeys to Jerusalem, in each case thankful for God's mercy in the renewed opportunity to prove itself worthy.

Judah's one high purpose must be the rebuilding of holy Jerusalem and the establishment of a pure monotheism. Persistent watchfulness and stern discipline are required to maintain Israel's ancient covenant with God.

God's people, wherever they may be and under whatever circumstances, are always under His providence. The enemies of God's people, hateful in intent, are turned back from their wicked purposes and punished.

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Continued)

These poetical writings were collected and edited in their final form during the post-exilic age, prior to the second century B.C.

THE FIVE BOOKS OF POETRY

| JOB | PSALMS | PROVERBS | ECCLESIASTES | SONG OF SOLOMON |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p>A dramatic poem—its subject, Why do those who are righteous suffer affliction?</p> <p>Job, a devout patriarch, is visited with afflictions, against which he rebels as undeserved—his three friends debate with him, ascribing his suffering to sin, but Job maintains his righteousness—through magnifying God's greatness and wisdom Job ceases to contend with the Almighty—human reason is subordinated—he is humbled and restored</p> | <p>A collection of lyric poetry which mirrors the spiritual riches of Israel's religious experience—these songs of praise, prayer, penitence, and thanksgiving echo the deep longings and aspirations of the heart in its search for God—in sublime language God is exalted as sovereign Creator and His works are magnified</p> <p>Some of these devotional hymns prophesy the nature and redeeming work of God's Messiah</p> | <p>Proverbs treats of the excellent and eternal wisdom of God, with Him "from the beginning, or ever the earth was," and sets forth practical moral and spiritual maxims for guidance in daily conduct</p> <p>"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" keynotes the book—wisdom is exalted as an essential of life, attainment of which leads to godliness, preservation, stability, and well-being</p> | <p>Its subject: the search for the value and purpose of human life</p> <p>Weighing thoroughly the transitory values of worldly wisdom, pleasure, labor, riches, power, and life itself, the Preacher deduces that "all is vanity"</p> <p>He infers that human life has value only as man remembers his Creator, and he concludes: "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment. . . ."</p> | <p>Also known as Canticles (from Vulgate)—a love poem or collection of love poems of singular beauty</p> <p>Biblical scholars hold varying opinions concerning the kind of love of which it speaks—it has been interpreted in three ways: literally, typically, and allegorically</p> <p>The Jews held that it alluded to the love between God and His chosen people, while early Christians applied its allegorical meaning to Christ and his Church</p> |

The Period of the Prophets

The period of the writing prophets, major and minor, is without parallel in religious annals. The prophets made a lasting impress upon their nation, politically, socially, and religiously. Their message was twofold: for their day and situation, for all time and world salvation. They developed for the Hebrew mind a vastly higher and more spiritual conception of the nature of God—of His justice, righteousness, mercy, and unfailing love to His covenant people—than had ever been known before. Coming in a period of declension and apostasy, the prophets held aloft a spiritual standard for Israel, severely condemning the gross iniquity and flagrant disobedience of their people. Foreseeing the burden of captivity, they comforted them with promises of a restored remnant and future glory. Woven throughout their prophecies are the hopes and expectations of Israel for a Messianic King, salvation for the Gentiles (the nations), the Day of the Lord, and the establishing of God's kingdom on earth.

The books of the prophets do not extend history in point of time, but are contemporary with the latter Old Testament books of history, i.e. from Second Kings through Esther.

Isaiah
Pre-exilic
740–701 B.C.
To Judah

Jeremiah
Pre-exilic
626–585 B.C.
To Judah

Ezekiel
Exilic
592–570 B.C.
To Judah

Daniel
Exilic
606–536 B.C.
To Judah

THE FIVE BOOKS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS

| ISAIAH | JEREMIAH | LAMENTATIONS | EZEKIEL | DANIEL |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Isaiah prophesies during critical period when Assyria is invading Palestine</p> <p>His stern denunciations of Judah’s moral and religious declension—his prophecies against heathen nations—sublime prophecies of the coming Messiah and his work</p> <p>Prophecies of restoration, redemption, and future glory of Israel—the Messianic salvation is to include the Gentiles</p> <p>(Chs. 40–55 attributed to Second Isaiah, 540 B.C.; chs. 56–66 to Third Isaiah, 450 B.C.)</p> | <p>Jeremiah prophesies prior to the fall of Assyria and during rise of Babylonian Empire</p> <p>Warnings and admonitions to a backsliding and rebellious Judah</p> <p>Prophecies: concerning the fall of Jerusalem; seventy years’ captivity in Babylon, and the restoration; concerning the Messiah, the Branch; and his kingship over all the earth</p> <p>King and people persecute Jeremiah—his unceasing labors to reform and save Judah</p> | <p>Written anonymously but attributed by tradition to Jeremiah—a lamentation over fall and desolation of Jerusalem and the ravaging of the city by the Babylonians</p> <p>The sins of the nation are the totality of the sins of its people, and its judgment has come</p> <p>He weeps for the suffering, humiliation, and reproach of Judah—grieves for beloved Jerusalem now violently stripped of its sanctuary, its beauty, and its joy</p> | <p>Ezekiel, captive in Babylon, labors among his people in exile</p> <p>His messages are inspired visions, apocalyptic in form</p> <p>He foretells the certain and direful fall of Jerusalem, the result of Judah’s sins</p> <p>After the fall of Jerusalem he comforts and sustains Judah with predictions of restoration and of future glory—faithful to his high office as watchman, he zealously holds before his people the high destiny of a united Israel</p> | <p>This book is in two parts:</p> <p>Personal history of Daniel in captivity—he and his companions, uncompromisingly loyal to the worship of the One God and subjected to severe trials of their faith, are miraculously protected</p> <p>Daniel’s apocalyptic visions of world powers (“the times of the Gentiles”) extending to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom—his prophecies of the great tribulation and “the time of the end”</p> |

The Developing Conception of God and of Man’s Obligation to Him:

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|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>To Isaiah God is “the Holy One of Israel,” its “Maker,” and Zion is the place of His habitation. He defines Israel’s true mission. Through Israel is to come Messiah, and through Messiah is to come redemption for all nations.</p> | <p>Israel must thoroughly amend its sinful ways and to this end it suffers chastisement. Jeremiah foresees the new covenant when God’s law shall be written in the heart and shall bring individual responsibility.</p> | <p>Jeremiah takes the first step in the repentance of his people when in “godly sorrow” he weeps over their sins and mourns over Jerusalem. Out of affliction must come genuine contrition and true reformation.</p> | <p>Ezekiel defines the individual’s responsibility to God. Man must stand wholly upon the merit of righteousness. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.”</p> | <p>Holding to a pure monotheism, these representative captives endure fiery trials. Their God is acknowledged by the heathen as supreme, as “the living God,” whose kingdom shall be unto the end.</p> |
|---|---|--|--|--|

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Continued)

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|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Hosea Pre-exilic 750–735 B.C. To Israel | Joel Post-exilic ? ca. 500 B.C. ? | Amos Pre-exilic ca. 760 B.C. To Israel | Obadiah Exilic 586 B.C. (?) | Jonah Pre-exilic 780 B.C. (?) To Israel | Micah Pre-exilic 738–700 B.C. To Israel and Judah |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|

THE TWELVE BOOKS OF THE MINOR PROPHETS (termed Minor because of smaller literary output)

| HOSEA | JOEL | AMOS | OBADIAH | JONAH | MICAH |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>The tragedy of Hosea's marriage to an unfaithful wife is made a parable to teach adulterous Israel, seeking other lovers</p> <p>As Hosea's love remains constant for his adulterous wife, so God's love remains unchanged for apostate Israel</p> <p>Reconciliation to God is promised to Israel after the expiation of its sins</p> | <p>Judah has fallen away from its communion with God (daily sacrifice has ceased [1:9])—Joel sees a national calamity, a devastating plague of locusts, as an instance of divine judgment and as a foreshadowing of the terrible Day of the Lord—he calls Judah to repentance</p> <p>He comforts Judah with the promise of God's temporal and spiritual blessings</p> | <p>Amos of Judah prophesies in Israel—vainly he rebukes the rich for oppressing the poor, and calls for social justice</p> <p>Foretells the captivity of Israel for incorrigible wickedness</p> <p>Punishment shall not be turned away from the nations which continually transgress</p> <p>God has set His "plumbline" of justice in the midst of them</p> | <p>The occasion of Obadiah's prophecy is the cruelty of the Edomites, descendants of Esau, against the house of Jacob at a time of Judah's helplessness</p> <p>He prophesies total destruction of Edom because of its participation in and exultation over Judah's downfall</p> <p>Edom's strong confederacy shall be of no avail—Edom shall suffer a like cruelty—God will deliver Judah</p> | <p>Jonah is sent to Nineveh, capital of Assyria, to proclaim God's judgment against it</p> <p>Fearing God will spare this wicked city, Jonah disobediently flees by ship—thrown into the sea, is swallowed by a great fish—by prayer is miraculously delivered—he then preaches to Nineveh and its people repent</p> <p>Through the object lesson of a gourd, God teaches him the worth of human life</p> | <p>Micah's twofold message:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pronounces judgment upon Samaria and Judah—denounces rulers who oppress and pervert justice 2. Prophesies restoration and a hope in the Messiah: "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land"—God's unceasing kindness requires more than burnt offerings—God delights in mercy |

The Developing Conception of God and of Man's Obligation to Him:

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|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>God is still mercifully maintaining His tender loving relationship with faithless Israel and His love will redeem: "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."</p> | <p>Sin brings upon itself a devastating divine judgment, yet God is gracious and merciful, ready to deliver those who call upon His name. "Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting. . . . And rend your heart, and not your garments. . . ."</p> | <p>The One God is a God of holiness and of righteousness whose justice is impartially exercised upon all nations. "Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."</p> | <p>The covenant people are assured continuance and deliverance in the midst of trial and suffering. "Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."</p> | <p>Israel's narrow conception of God—as the God of the Hebrews only—gives place in a degree to a broader conception of His universal love. The repentant of every nation are seen as the object of divine mercy and benevolence.</p> | <p>The moral essence of prophetic religion: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"</p> |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|

Nahum
Pre-exilic
615 B.C.
To Judah

Habakkuk
Pre-exilic
600 B.C.
To Judah

Zephaniah
Pre-exilic
627 B.C.
To Judah

Haggai
Post-exilic
520–518 B.C.
To restored
Judah

Zechariah
Post-exilic
520–518 B.C.
To restored
Judah

Malachi
Post-exilic
ca. 432 B.C.
To restored
Judah

NAHUM

Nahum prophesies the fall of Nineveh—he gives a vivid picture of the wickedness, drunkenness, whoredom, and idolatry of this Gentile city—for this burden of sin and apostasy the city incurs God’s severe judgment

“The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. . . . Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. . . .”

HABAKKUK

Habakkuk is shown of God that the Chaldeans will be used to refine Judah—observing that the iniquity of Chaldea far exceeds that of Judah, he is sorely perplexed

From his watchtower he sees, through prayer and faith, a vision of the ultimate triumph of God’s purposes—beholding God’s omnipotence, he dedicates himself in trust and joy

ZEPHANIAH

As the crisis of Judah’s captivity approaches, Zephaniah, a contemporary of Jeremiah, thunders the terrible judgments of God, first upon Judah and Jerusalem, then upon heathen nations—he vividly portrays the awful Day of the Lord

He prophesies of a pure remnant whose reproach for sin has been removed and who will not see evil any more—God rejoices over it

HAGGAI

In four short discourses Haggai rebukes the remnant, now returned to Jerusalem, for neglecting the rebuilding of the Temple—rouses them to build, prophesying the greater glory of this second Temple—and shows the disastrous results of their delay upon the nation’s interests

Pronounces God’s blessing upon Zerubbabel’s work

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah encourages the remnant to rebuild the Temple.

Through a series of visions he portrays Zerubbabel’s Temple as a type of Christ’s Church, and restored Jerusalem as a type of spiritual Zion

Far-seeing in his vision, he foretells both advents of the Messiah King, first in rejection, second in power

MALACHI

Malachi upholds the civil, social, and religious reforms of Nehemiah and stresses a strict observance of the Mosaic Law

He, like Zechariah, foresees both advents of the Messiah

Old Testament history closes with Malachi’s inspired prediction of “the Sun of righteousness [which shall] arise with healing in his wings. . . .”

The unrepentant, who heed not God’s redemptive mercies but go their way unchecked, have passed the point of correction. Their sin is ripe for destruction. “There is no healing of thy bruise. . . .”

“The just shall live by his faith.” As God in His goodness has delivered His people in times past, so He will always deliver them. Though the vision tarry, Israel must wait in faith and rejoicing.

God is seen as the God of the universe. None shall escape His judgments. Yet His love rests upon men. He will “turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.”

The first responsibility of the restored remnant is to rebuild God’s temple inwardly and outwardly. Recipients of His blessing must not permit selfish personal considerations to be of first importance.

“Be ye not as your fathers. . . .” Israel is to build from the basis of higher ideals and more spiritual types. “Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH. . . . Even he shall build the temple of the Lord. . . .”

Last of O.T. prophecy. Israel’s centuries of preparation are moving toward their climax and fulfillment. Now Israel stands waiting for the Messiah—for the promised “messenger of the covenant.”

New Testament Literature

“All experience comes to be but more and more the pressure of Christ’s life upon ours.”—Phillips Brooks

The Old Testament does not become obsolete in the light of the New, but one finds in the New the fulfillment of the Old. In the former God’s revelation came through His servants and prophets; in the latter it came through His Son. Under the Old Covenant there were many mediators, under the New Covenant only one.

The New Testament is especially important to Christians, recording as it does the life of our Lord. It strikes a responsive chord in the soul because it attests the immortality of man and marks the way of hope and full salvation. It was written by those whose lives had been transformed by this Life and whose faith rested on a living Lord. The Church itself produced the New Testament within the first century A.D. for its Christian community. Those who come to it in faith find in its pages that same transforming Spirit and power. Dr. James Moffatt, whose translation of the Bible into modern English is one of the most meaningful, describes the New Testament as “the literature of a Life which disturbs whatever is lifeless.”

The New Testament was written in Hellenistic Greek (*koine*). Its twenty-seven books fall naturally under five general headings: Gospels, History, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, and Revelation.

1. The Four Gospels are the records of Jesus’ life as the Son of man and as the Son of God. The first three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—deal chiefly with Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, often giving the same events, in the same order and in the same words. Therefore they are termed the Synoptic Gospels. The Abingdon Bible Commentary says that these three begin on the plane of human history, the fourth on the heights of divine reality. John’s Gospel differs markedly in emphasis from the Synoptics; it does not duplicate but supplements their biographies, giving

Jesus’ ministry in Judaea and his important visits to Jerusalem and choosing sayings and incidents which present the divine aspect of the Master’s character and the profound theology of his teachings. John alone gives the great discourses in which Christ revealed himself as “the bread of life,” “the light of the world,” “the good shepherd,” “the way, the truth, and the life,” “the true vine.”

2. The book of Acts records the history of the spread of Christ’s gospel and the growth of the Apostolic Church. Numerous churches were founded and firmly grounded as the “good news” of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was preached to the Jews of Palestine under the faithful supervision of the Twelve, and as it was carried to the Gentiles of Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome through the great missionary labors of Paul.

3 and 4. Hand in hand with the organization of the visible Church came the formation of Christian doctrine as its members were instructed in the rudiments of the gospel. This doctrine is preserved in the unique body of literature of the Pauline and General Epistles. The Pauline Epistles (fourteen in number, if Hebrews is included) were written primarily to individual churches. In them Paul formulated and expounded the fundamental doctrines of redemption, reconciliation, justification by faith, grace, and salvation. They guided and guarded the Christian and the Church amid persecution and heresy, and laid the foundation of Christian conduct and fellowship. The seven General Epistles, so-called because written to churches in general, gave comfort in trial, warning against heretical teachings, and admonitions concerning Christian duty and practice.

5. Revelation is a book of prophecy, a Christian apocalypse, written to encourage a persecuted Church to endure. It portrays the glory and power of Christ at his Second Advent and depicts the mighty conquest of good over evil, culminating in the final supremacy of God’s kingdom.

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Five Divisions: GOSPELS, HISTORY,
PAULINE EPISTLES, GENERAL EPISTLES, PROPHECY

Written before
70 A.D. (61/62?)

Written before
70 A.D. (57?)

Written before
70 A.D. (61/63?)

Written
ca. 80–90 A.D.

Written
ca. 63 A.D.

THE FOUR GOSPELS

HISTORY

MATTHEW

A life of Jesus Christ written for Israel, primarily for those who had a knowledge of the Old Testament covenant and of the Messianic prophecies

This Gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant of kingship

KEYNOTE: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
Mt. 4:17; 10:7

“In Matt. God says to us, ‘Behold thy King’ (Zech. ix. 9).”*

MARK

A life of Jesus Christ written for Gentiles, primarily for Romans unfamiliar with Hebrew Scripture, customs, and religious expectations

Presents Jesus as Son and Servant in his ministry of power, vividly portraying his mighty deeds—it early served as source material for Matthew and Luke

KEYNOTE: “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. . . .”
Mk. 10:45

“In Mark He says, ‘Behold My Servant’ (Isa. xl. 1).”*

LUKE

A life of Jesus Christ written for Gentiles of the Greek-speaking world—the most complete and orderly history of the Four Gospels

Presents Jesus as the Son of man in his humanity and divinity, emphasizing his compassionate ministry and his universal mission of salvation

KEYNOTE: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Lu. 19:10

“In Luke He says, ‘Behold the Man’ (Zech. vi. 12).”*

JOHN

A life of Jesus Christ written for the Church—it supplements history of the Synoptic Gospels and interprets the deep spiritual meanings of his mission

John presents Jesus as the Son of God, “the only begotten of the Father,” laying stress on the divinity of his words and works

KEYNOTE: “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”
Jn. 1:4

“In John He says, ‘Behold your God’ (Isa. xl. 9).”*

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A history of early Christianity from founding of the Church at Pentecost through Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome (30–63 A.D.)—written by Luke—marks the dispensation of grace in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon men

It alone records the work of the twelve apostles and the missionary labors of Paul as Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome

As the Son and his “acts” fill the Gospels, glorifying the Father, so the Holy Spirit fills the “acts” of the apostles, glorifying both the Father and the Son

*E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, p. 159.

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Continued)

Written at Corinth
58 A.D.

Written at Ephesus
57 A.D.
Written in Macedonia
57 A.D.

Written at Corinth
57 A.D.

Written at Rome
62/63 A.D.

Written at Rome
62/63 A.D.

THE THIRTEEN EPISTLES OF PAUL AND THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

ROMANS

Foremost of all Paul's writings—his subject is "the gospel of God" and the power of that gospel to save both Jew and Gentile

A clear exposition of basic Christian doctrines: redemption and salvation through Christ Jesus to a whole world under sin; justification by faith, not by the Law; the Christian's position under grace

God's promises to both Israel and the Gentiles are shown to be in agreement

I and II CORINTHIANS

The Corinthian church, founded by Paul, was composed of Jewish and Gentile converts—in his absence there arose immoralities, divisions, and factions—false teachers attempted to Judaize the church—Paul's apostolic authority was repudiated

He vehemently justifies his apostleship—the church sorrows to repentance—with tender concern he exhorts to Christian conduct, discipline, and love—acts to correct church problems

GALATIANS

The churches of Galatia, founded by Paul, were being drawn away from the pure gospel by Jewish zealots who pressed Judaic practices upon Gentile converts

He defends the gospel he teaches as the true gospel—asserts his apostleship as of Christ

He sets forth the doctrines of justification by faith and of adoption or spiritual sonship, and contrasts the weakness and bondage of the law with the power and liberty of the gospel

EPHESIANS

The theme is the Church in its glory and fullness

Paul reveals the deep "mystery" of Christ's Church whereby those united in godly love constitute the "members of his body" over which Christ is head its members are exhorted to walk worthy of their spiritual calling to the end that the Church may be edified, to put off "the old man" and to put on "the new man," to prove faithful and strong in Christian warfare

PHILIPPIANS

In this tender, affectionate letter Paul assures the church in Philippi that his present afflictions, instead of retarding his mission, are furthering the gospel of Christ—with unrestrained love he rejoices in the spiritual victory, dominion, and peace which he has attained in Christ

He presses upon Christians the necessity of working out their own salvation, holding before them anew Christ Jesus' perfection

The Christian's walk toward the goal of perfection:

Paul urges all men to be Christlike, to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," for the power and grace of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" makes them free from "the law of sin and death."

The apostle's love for Christ finds expression in a patient, solicitous ministry of reconciliation, correcting errors that lead away from the gospel of Christ. He charges all to be "as the ministers of God."

Paul reminds the followers of Christ that, having received the gift of grace by faith, they are already justified and should henceforth show forth not the lustful works of the flesh but the pure fruits of the Spirit.

Paul earnestly beseeches every Christian, a member by God's grace, to grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," and thus to show forth the glory and unity of Christ's Church on earth.

By the example of Paul, this faithful apostle, still striving in humility to attain perfection and the power of Christ's resurrection, Christians are persuaded to be "thus minded" and to surrender all for Christ.

Written at Rome
62/63 A.D.

Written at Corinth
52/53 A.D.

Written in Macedonia
66/67 A.D.
Written at Rome
67/68 A.D.

Written in Macedonia
66/67 A.D.
Written at Rome
62/63 A.D.

Written from Italy
65/68 A.D.

COLOSSIANS

**I and II
THESSALONIANS**

**I and II
TIMOTHY**

**TITUS and
PHILEMON**

HEBREWS

Paul writes to guard the church against false philosophies and mysticism which are perverting the true gospel

Shortly after the founding of the Gentile church of Thessalonica these two Epistles were written to confirm the faith of its new converts and to instruct and comfort them regarding the resurrection of the dead, the Second Coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord (the Day of Christ)

Paul lovingly instructs Timothy, a co-worker in the faith, "how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" as a good minister of Jesus Christ, and thus by the example of godliness profit the churches—gives careful directives for the safeguarding of the churches against heresies—deals with the qualifications of ministers, with church organization and discipline

Having placed Titus, a co-worker in the gospel, in charge of the church in Crete, Paul sets forth for him the qualifications of those occupying office within the church, that they may be found faithful and blameless

This epistle addressed to Hebrew Christians was written anonymously—Pauline in spirit, it is attributed by many scholars to Paul

Christ's pre-eminence in the universe and in the Church is set forth, "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell"

Paul exhorts them to patience regarding Christ's coming, explaining that "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition [antichrist]" must first be revealed

Paul's solemn charge to Timothy to uphold sound doctrine

Philemon is a personal letter from Paul concerning Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, whom Paul has converted—Paul tactfully requests Philemon's loving reception and forgiveness of Onesimus

It sets forth the preeminence of Christ, our "great high priest" and "mediator of the new covenant," and his atoning work as contrasted with the Levitical priesthood and ceremonialism of Mosaic Law—Christ's one perfect sacrifice gives man access to God "by a new and living way"

Men need no other gospel than that of Christ Jesus, for in Christ alone is redemption and reconciliation

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Paul's prayer is that every man come to perfection. Having himself experienced the working of the "indwelling Christ," he comforts Christians with "this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Christians are reminded that they "are all the children of light, and the children of the day," and are urged to the unwearied practice of Christian virtues, patient waiting, watchfulness, and well-doing.

Paul charges the Christian through Timothy to be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Paul charges the Christian through Titus to follow sound doctrine and to maintain good works "in this present world."

Christians are encouraged to hold fast the faith unto the fullness of Christ's coming. "Having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . ."

Paul pleads for the practice of Christian brotherhood, forgiveness and love.

DIVISIONS AND BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (Continued)

Written
ca. 61 A.D.

Written ca. 62 A.D.
Written ca. 66 A.D.

Written
ca. 90 A.D.

Written
ca. 66 A.D.

Written
ca. 96 A.D.

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

PROPHECY

JAMES

The author has been identified as “the Lord’s brother” and a pillar of the church in Jerusalem—the Epistle is addressed to Jewish Christians throughout the Roman Empire

It emphasizes simple fundamental Christian ethics and practical application of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, a fulfilling of “the royal law” of love with regard to trial, temptation, faith, righteous works, respect of persons, government of the tongue, effectual prayer

**I and II
PETER**

Peter, cherishing his association with the Master, gives witness to the sufferings and glory of Christ—calls the Christians of Asia Minor to witness and to suffer for Christ

Peter, like Paul, is aware of his coming martyrdom—he desires his own firsthand knowledge of Jesus Christ to become known to all Christians in order to safeguard them from “damnable heresies”—he nourishes faith in Christ’s Second Coming

**I, II, and
III JOHN**

First John is a pastoral letter solicitous of “my little children” in the world—its keynote is “love,” and its message the sacred obligations of love—a warning against the spirit of antichrist “already . . . in the world”

Second John is a brief exhortation to abide in Christian love and doctrine

Third John is a brief personal letter commending Gaius’ Christian hospitality to itinerant ministers

JUDE

Jude pours into a brief letter a powerful message of warning that Christians safeguard themselves against false and ungodly teachers who are corrupting the pure gospel delivered them by the apostles—he calls such wicked teachers “filthy dreamers,” “clouds . . . without water, . . . trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead. . . .”

He foresees a terrible punishment of the ungodly, but a saving of those who are constant in faith

REVELATION

The Revelation of Jesus Christ recorded by John—message of encouragement in time of severe persecution of Christians within Roman Empire—given to the seven churches of Asia but embracing the church universal

Written in apocalyptic language, it is couched in a series of visions which portray the struggle between good and evil, culminating in the final overthrow of evil and the triumph of God’s kingdom—depicts the coming of Christ in glory

The Christian’s walk toward the goal of perfection:

James exhorts to active evidence of Christian profession, “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”; to long patience; and to the bridling and taming of the tongue, an “unruly” little member.

Peter sounds a deep note of encouragement and comfort to the Christian facing suffering or persecution. “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. . . .”

With simplicity and clarity John defines love: the love of the Father for His children, their love for the Father, and brotherly love one for another. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. . . .”

Jude counsels the Christian to eschew false teachings, to contend earnestly for the faith and to be constant in it, “building up yourselves on your most holy faith . . . Keep yourselves in the love of God.”

John beholds and foretells the full salvation of the righteous, the perfect union of God and man, and the fulfillment of the covenant. God and His Christ are seen to be supreme “as in heaven, so in earth.”