

**INTRODUCTION TO
THE BIBLE**



St. John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos receiving the revelations for the *Apocalypse*.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

THE NATURE, HISTORY, AUTHORSHIP
AND CONTENT OF THE HOLY BIBLE
WITH SELECTIONS FROM AND
COMMENTARIES ON THE VARIOUS BOOKS

With Illustrations and Maps

By

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*“For what things soever were written,
were written for our learning; that
through patience and the comfort of
the scriptures, we might have hope.”*

—Romans 15:4

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina

Nihil Obstat: Arthur J. Scanlan, S.T.D.
 Censor Librorum

Imprimatur: ✠ Patrick Cardinal Hayes
 Archbishop of New York
 August 20, 1932

Copyright © 1932 by Benziger Brothers.

Originally published in 1932 by Benziger Brothers, New York,
from which this present edition was photographically repro-
duced complete and unabridged with the addition of a few
footnotes.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No.: 90-70241

ISBN: 978-0-89555-396-6

Cover illustration: Christ teaches the people during the Ser-
mons on the Mount.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

TAN Books
Charlotte, North Carolina
www.TANBooks.com

2012

PREFACE

It is a commonplace that the reading of the Scriptures on the part of Catholics is sadly neglected. It is true not only of those who have received but an elementary education, but also of those who have gone through a secondary school and even college. The reason is not hard to find. The Catholic looks to a living Church as the source of his Religion—his teacher in faith and morals. Yet St. Peter tells us, "But sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of the hope which is in you." To give an account of this hope which is in us would seem to imply not merely a knowledge of what the Church teaches but why the Church teaches it; together with some acquaintance with the main source from which the Church draws her teaching, namely, the Bible.

Another reason for the lack of adequate acquaintance of Catholics with the Bible is that this is no longer the focal point of attack on the Church. For a time after the Religious Revolution of the sixteenth century Catholic apologists and their chief antagonists had this much in common—both recognized the Scriptures as the revealed word of God. Their quarrel was on the interpretation of the Scriptures. Today the battle has shifted to more fundamental grounds. The question at issue is the very nature of God. The tendency today is to oppose a Pantheistic to a Theistic God. On the outcome of this issue the case for revelation stands or falls. If God be but "the unifying principle in the universe"; or the *Élan Vital* of an evolutionary process; or the sum total of physical nature; or any one of a dozen modern views, then the very possibility of revelation is ruled out. For revelation presupposes a God of intelligence and free will, which, of course, these views deny.

The attacks on the traditional concept of God, and indirectly of revelation, have been made largely in the name of science and history. But it is not science and history which are at fault. It is a false philosophy which interprets them. The Catholic student who would be fortified against the errors of his age needs some knowledge of the fundamentals of science and history, and a sound philosophy for their interpretation. Once the existence of a personal God is established, the possibility of revelation follows. From the possibility of revelation to the fact of revelation is the next step. The establishment of a revelation on the part of Almighty

God should lead to a study of that revelation itself. Herein is the justification for the present volume.

For various reasons the Bible is not a book which the average student will take up and study on his own initiative. He needs to be introduced to it, to be given some general information about the Bible as a whole and the various books in particular. The author of the present volume does this in a clear and simple manner. The quotations from the Sacred Writings themselves are well chosen. The arrangement of some of these quotations in the form of verse, as for example, those from the Psalms, will reveal to the student a literary beauty which is apt to be missed in the traditional typographical arrangement of the text. The Suggestions for Study at the end of each chapter should prove a help to the teacher in assigning matter for outside work, as well as to the student who desires to expand his reading beyond the text. It is a text intended primarily for students of secondary schools, but there is no reason why it cannot equally well be used by college students. The present volume, together with the author's *Course in Religion for Catholic High Schools and Academies* and his *Church History*, supplies a body of content material upon which a splendid course in Religion can be constructed, one to challenge the interest and attention of the youth of today.

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PREFACE TO TEACHER

"Since we desire to renew all things in Christ," Pope Pius X wrote in 1907, "nothing would please us more than to see Our beloved children form the habit of reading the Gospels not merely from time to time, but every day, for in them above all we learn how all things can and must be renewed in Christ." In his encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, of September 15, 1920, Pope Benedict XV earnestly recommended the reading of the Scriptures. He wished to see a copy of the New Testament in every family, and prayed "for all the children of the Church, that, penetrated and strengthened by the sweetness of Holy Writ, they may attain to the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ."

There is only one effectual means of meeting the wishes of the Sovereign Pontiffs: the reading and study of the Bible must form a part of the Religion Course in our whole educational system from the grades to the college and the university. In the grades, Bible reading has for more than a generation taken the form of Bible Stories and Bible History. There is no agreement among our Catholic educators as to the form it should take in our secondary schools. Some favor the reading of the whole Bible in extracts; others prefer the reading of a certain number of books in their entirety. A combination of the two methods appears to be the best solution of the difficulty. Some books of the Bible should certainly be read and studied from beginning to end—at least one of the Synoptic Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, an Epistle of St. Paul in the New Testament, and one of the great Prophets and perhaps the Book of Wisdom in the Old Testament; the others can be left to private reading or to selective reading in class.

Before reading any book of the Bible, the student has to acquaint himself with those general notions about the Bible which are a prerequisite for the profitable reading of the Sacred Text itself. Then he needs an "introduction" to the book he is about to read. This "special" introduction must include an account of the content and structure of the book, together with an indication of its general character and aim, the main points of its teaching, the principal proofs of its canonicity, and the difficulties it offers to the reader. In the following pages an attempt has been made to furnish the student of our secondary schools as well as the gen-

eral reader with such a twofold guide to the Sacred Literature of the Old and New Testaments.

The treatment of the vast material involved has been determined by the needs of the prospective readers and the character of the different books of the Bible. It would be out of place in a manual of this kind to devote large space to the discussion of such questions as the nature and extent of Inspiration, the history of the Canon, the rules of Interpretation, the ancient and modern Versions of the Scriptures, or the relative value of the extant Manuscripts. Enough, it is hoped, has been said on these matters to satisfy the immediate needs of both teachers and pupils. The Doctrinal (Poetical) and Prophetical books of the Old Testament, because less generally known, have been treated more fully than the Historical books, with which every student is familiar from his Bible History.

Numerous selections from the various books of the Bible have been woven into the text. In order to make these selections as intelligible as possible, an effort has been made to give a brief historical setting to each. Without such extracts, any descriptive and historical account of the Sacred Books must fail of its purpose, which is to guide the student in his reading of the Bible, to show him how to read it with intelligent interest. After reading the most characteristic passages from such books as Job, the Psalms, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremias, St. Paul, the student will perhaps be led to take up the Bible itself and delve deeper into these wonderful messages of God to His creatures.

Maps, illustrations, and summaries of historical events are indispensable to a Scripture manual. Without constant reference to the maps, no one can hope to understand the historical and prophetical books, in fact, any of the books of the Old or New Testament. The illustrations have been carefully chosen to make vivid and real the facts given in the chapter in which the pictures appear. Hence they should be made the basis of actual study and included in the lesson assignments. The chronological tables should be frequently reviewed, because it is only in this way that the history can be kept clearly in mind.

We said above that some books of the Bible should be read and studied by the pupils of our High Schools as a part of their course in religion. The books most suitable for this purpose are the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, the Acts of the Apostles, and

the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. For this reason special attention has been paid in the following pages to a detailed outline and analysis of these books. By following these outlines it is possible, with careful preparation on the part of teachers and pupils, to go through each book in about fifteen or sixteen class-periods.

"Drink of the cup of the Old and the New Testament," says St. Ambrose; "in both you will find Christ." The New Testament is indeed, as an eminent Biblical scholar has well said, "the golden candlestick on which the Apostles have placed the light of the Gospel of Christ. From this candlestick it radiates through the centuries, giving Light and Life to men." But if the reading of the Scriptures is to give "Light and Life" to our generation, both teachers and pupils should often ponder the words of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*:

"Let all understand how deeply the Sacred Books should be esteemed, and with what eagerness and reverence they should approach this great arsenal of heavenly arms. For those whose duty it is to handle Catholic doctrine before the learned or the unlearned will nowhere find more ample matter or more abundant exhortation, whether on the subject of God, the Supreme Good and the all-perfect Being, or of the works which display His glory and His love. Nowhere is there anything more full or more express on the subject of the Savior of the world. As St. Jerome says, 'To be ignorant of the Scripture is to be ignorant of Christ.' In its pages His image stands out, living and breathing; diffusing everywhere around consolation in trouble, encouragement to virtue, and attraction to love of God. And as to the Church, her institutions, her nature, her office, and her gifts, we find in Holy Scripture so many references and so many ready and convincing arguments, that, as St. Jerome again most truly says, 'A man who is well grounded in the testimonies of the Scripture is the bulwark of the Church.' And if we come to morality and discipline, an apostolic man finds in the Sacred Writings abundant and excellent assistance, most holy precepts, gentle and strong exhortation, splendid examples of every virtue, and finally the promise of eternal reward and the threat of eternal punishment, uttered in terms of solemn import, in God's name and in God's own words. . . .

"For the saving and for the perfecting of ourselves and of others there is at hand the very best help in the Holy Scriptures, as the

Book of Psalms, among others, so constantly insists; *but those only will find it who bring to this divine reading not only docility and attention, but also piety and an innocent life.* For the Sacred Scripture is not like other books. Dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of the deepest importance, which in many instances are most difficult and obscure. To understand and explain such things there is always required the 'coming' of the same Holy Spirit; that is to say, His light and His grace; and these, as the Psalmist so frequently insists, are to be sought by humble prayer and guarded by holiness of life."

JOHN J. LAUX

COVINGTON, KY.

Feast of St. James

July 25, 1932

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INTRODUCTION TO
THE BIBLE

PART I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HOLY SCRIPTURE

I. HOLY SCRIPTURE: DEFINITION AND DIVISION

1. Holy Scripture is the collection of books written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and acknowledged by the Church as the word of God.

This collection of books is called *Holy Scripture* or *Holy Writ* (Rom. 1, 2) because it is holy in its *content*, in its *purpose*, and in its *origin*. It is also called the *Bible*, that is, "the Books," from the Greek *biblia* (1 Mach. 12, 9; Eccclus., Prol.). Holy Scripture is eminently *the Book*, the Book of Books.

The Bible is not the oldest book in the world. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians possessed a rich literature long before the first books of the Bible were written. But no book has been so widely diffused or has exercised such a far-reaching influence on the religion, morality, and civilization of mankind as the Bible. It was the first book to appear in print (Gutenberg Bible, *ca.* 1450); before the end of the fifteenth century it was reprinted more than a hundred times, and today it is spread over the whole world in more than three hundred translations. Millions of copies of the Bible are sold every year.

2. Of the seventy-two books of the Bible, forty-five were written before the time of Christ. They describe God's dealings with men and His revelations to them before the coming of Christ and are called the books of the **Old Testament**. The other twenty-seven books were written after the time of Christ. They record the revelations which we have received through Christ and His Apostles and are called the books of the **New Testament**.

The word *Testament*, in this connection, does not mean a written document wherein a person provides for the disposition of his property after his death, but a *covenant*, agreement, or compact. The dealings of God with His chosen people are called in Scripture the "covenant or testament of God with man." By metonymy the records containing the agreement between God and the Israelites through the Patriarchs and Moses, and the final pact between God and His creatures through His Son Jesus Christ, came to be known as the *Old* and the *New Testament*.

2 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HOLY SCRIPTURE

II. DIVINE ORIGIN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE: INSPIRATION

1. The books of the Bible are not like other books. All other books are the products of human intelligence. They are man's word to man. The books of Holy Scripture were not composed by mere human industry. The Holy Ghost took such an active part in their composition that He is their real Author. Their human writers acted under the guidance of God. Hence, though written by men, and in human language, the books of the Bible are the **Word of God**.

This mysterious working together of God and man, of divine grace and human liberty, in the composition of the books of the Bible is called **Inspiration**. The Church has not defined where the one factor ceases and the other begins.

Holy Scripture itself in several places refers to the divine factor, that is, the *divine impulse and direction*. Thus, we read in Isaias: "And the Lord said to me: Take thee a great book and write in it with a man's pen" (8, 1). And in the Book of Wisdom: "God hath given to me to speak as I would and *to conceive thoughts worthy of those things that are given me* (7, 15).

In other places it speaks just as emphatically of the human factor, the *human effort* that went into the composition. St. Luke writes in the prologue to his Gospel: "It seemed good to me, *having diligently attained to all things from the beginning*, to write to thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mayest know the verity of those words in which thou hast been instructed" (1, 3-4).

2. **How God inspired the sacred writers** is explained by Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*: "By supernatural power God so moved and impelled them to write, He was so present to them, that they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth the things which He ordered, and those only." This explanation distinguishes three main elements in inspiration:

a) God so influenced the *minds* of the sacred writers that they first *rightly understood* all, and only, the things that He wanted written.

b) He so influenced their *wills* that they determined *faithfully to write* down these things.

c) He so influenced them that they *aptly and inerrantly expressed* these things in writing.

From what has been said, it is clear that a book is either inspired or not inspired *whilst it is being written*. If it was not inspired whilst it was being written, no subsequent approval either by God Himself or by the Church can make it an inspired book. Such a book would not be the word of God, but the word of a human being.

3. Inspiration Covers the Whole Bible in All Its Parts. It extends to everything written down originally by the sacred author. "It is absolutely wrong," says Leo XIII in the Encyclical quoted above, "and it is forbidden either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of the Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred. . . . The system of those who limit divine inspiration to matters of faith and morals cannot be tolerated."

Inspiration does not, however, prevent the sacred writer from describing happenings in the world of nature in terms current at his time. God did not explain to him the mysteries of nature. "They [i.e., the sacred writers] described and dealt with things in more or less figurative language, or in terms which were commonly used at the time, and which in many instances are in daily use at this day even by the most eminent men of science" (Leo XIII). The same cannot be said of historical facts: these must be true if stated as facts.

4. Inspiration Is Not Dictation. Inspiration does not mean that every word in the Bible was originally dictated by the Holy Ghost. Such *verbal inspiration* would make the sacred writer a mere amanuensis. There would be no room for personal style and language, or for mental individuality. If God dictated every word of the Scriptures, how could we explain the differences in thought and language between Isaias and Ezechiel, or the different wording in the four accounts of the Last Supper in the Gospels?

5. Only the Original Text of the Bible Is Inerrant. What has been said about the inerrance of the Bible refers only to the original text of the inspired writings. Later on, those who copied the original text sometimes made mistakes; these changes are not the work of the inspired writers and hence would not be inspired and might contain mistakes. But the fact that such faulty transcriptions were made, says Leo XIII, must not be too easily presumed. However, unless there is a divinely appointed guardian of

4 GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO HOLY SCRIPTURE

the sacred text, there is no positive assurance that in the course of time it would not be badly corrupted even in very important matters.

6. The Fact of Inspiration is vouched for, above all, by the infallible authority of the Church. The Councils of Florence (1439) and Trent (1545-1563) call God the Author of both Testaments,



After a painting in this church

A SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAJOR and in 1870 the Vatican Council declared that the books of the Bible, “having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have God for their Author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself.”

Christ and His Apostles confirmed the universal belief of the Jews that the *Old Testament is a divine document*: “And Jesus began to say to them: This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears” (Luke 4, 21). “If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead” (*Ib.* 16, 31). “The Scripture must needs be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas” (Acts 1, 16). “Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1, 21).

The *Inspiration of the New Testament Books* is proved by the unanimous testimony of Christian antiquity. St. Peter had already placed the Epistles of St. Paul on a level with the "other Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3, 16). The Fathers of the Church, from Clement of Rome to Gregory the Great, teach that the Scriptures were written by the Holy Ghost and hence are the "letter of God to men" (St. Macarius the Great); that the divine authorship extends to every part of the Bible, even, according to some Fathers, to the very words (St. Irenaeus); that in the Holy Scriptures "God speaks to men in a human manner" (St. Augustine); that both the Old and the New Testament are divinely inspired teaching (Acts of the Martyr Speratus); that whoever does not regard the Scriptures as the word of God is to be looked upon as an unbeliever (Eusebius of Caesarea). St. Augustine sums up the constant teaching of the Church in the following words: "To the books of Scripture I have learned to pay such reverence and honor as most firmly to believe that none of their authors has committed any error in writing. If in these books I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I will have no doubt that it is only the manuscript which is faulty, or the translator who has not hit the sense, or my own failure to understand" (Letter 82).

7. Internal Features Cannot Prove the Fact of Inspiration.

Internal features, such as the beauty, sublimity, and moral charm of the content, or the narration of miracles and prophecies, cannot establish the fact of Inspiration. The *Books of Chronicles*, for example, cannot be called beautiful, and no one would say that there is sublime "moral charm" in *Esther*.

The question is sometimes asked: Were the sacred writers conscious of being inspired? Inspiration may have taken place with such naturalness and gentleness that the authors were not conscious of it. Still, such passages as Acts, 15, 28; 1 Thess. 2, 13; 2 Pet. 3, 16 seem to indicate that the Apostles were conscious of divine guidance in their writings as well as in their words. The Prophets also appear to have been aware of being inspired.

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE SCRIPTURES

1. The purpose for which the Sacred Books were written is clearly stated by St. Paul. Writing to his disciple Timothy, he says in reference to the Old Testament: "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct

in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work" (2 Tim. 3, 16-17). And to the Romans he says: "What things soever were written were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (15, 4).

2. The Bible is therefore a religious book. It is to serve for our religious instruction and edification. In all questions of faith and right living it is "a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths" (Ps. 118, 105). In a beautiful chapter of the *Imitation of Christ* the Ven. Thomas à Kempis tells us how closely the Holy Scriptures are bound up with the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Christian:

Two things do I feel to be exceedingly necessary to me in this life, without which this miserable life would be intolerable to me.

Whilst I am detained in the prison of this body, I confess that I need two things—namely, food and light.

Thou hast therefore given to me, who am so weak and helpless, Thy Sacred Body for the refreshing of my soul and body, and hast set Thy word as a lamp to my feet.

Without these two I could not properly live; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and Thy Sacrament the bread of life.

These may also be called the two tables, placed on this side and on that, in the treasury of Thy holy Church.

One table is that of the sacred altar, bearing the holy bread, that is, the precious Body of Christ, the other is the table of the divine Law, containing holy doctrine, teaching the true faith, and leading steadfastly onwards even to that which is within the veil, where the Holy of Holies is.

Thanks be unto Thee, O Lord Jesus, Light of Light everlasting, for that table of holy Doctrine which Thou hast furnished unto us by Thy servants the Prophets and Apostles and other teachers . . . (Bk. IV, ch. 11. See also Bk. I, ch. 5).

3. We shall look in vain in the Scriptures for instruction in the physical or natural sciences, such as astronomy, geology, physics, or biology. "The earth He has given to the children of men" (Ps. 113, 16). In regard to all these things the sacred writers spoke as children of their time, and in a language which their fellowmen could understand. They used the things of physical nature merely to explain and illustrate the mysteries of God.

IV. THE CANON OF THE BIBLE

1. The Church alone, assisted by the Holy Ghost, the Author of the inspired books, has the right and the power to decide which

books do or do not belong to Holy Scripture. This decision is signified by the reception of a book into the **Canon of the Scriptures**.

The Canon is the collection of books acknowledged by the Church as inspired. The term "canon," that is, "rule" or "standard," is given to the list of Scriptural books because they contain the rule of faith and life prescribed for us by God. Hence, to call a book *canonical* is to declare that it belongs to the Bible, because it is inspired or of divine origin, and to distinguish it from all non-Biblical or *profane* books, as well as from the so-called *Apocrypha*.

During the two centuries before Christ and the early centuries after Christ, a number of books were composed which, though of purely human origin, claimed to be divinely inspired. These books were later called **Apocrypha**, which means "hidden," because they were excluded from the readings during divine service. The Apocrypha contain mostly pious and harmless legends, but sometimes show heretical tendencies. The apocryphal books are very numerous. The Old Testament Apocrypha pretend to come from certain Old Testament authors, such as Henoch, Solomon, David, Baruch, and Esdras, or deal with them. The favorite themes of the New Testament Apocrypha are those parts of the life of Christ and of His Apostles of which the canonical Gospels or Acts give no detailed account.

Protestants improperly apply the term Apocrypha to the Old Testament books not contained in the later Jewish canon, but received by the Catholics under the name of deuterocanonical books (*See below*).

2. According to the repeated official decrees of the Church, especially that of the Council of Trent, the Bible contains seventy-two books, of which forty-five belong to the Old Testament, and twenty-seven to the New Testament.

Many of the books of the Bible relate facts and events, and for this reason they are called **historical** books; others teach doctrine and give wholesome admonitions for leading a holy life, and are therefore called **doctrinal** (didactic) books; others, again, are the work of Prophets, and are on that account called **prophetic** books. The Old Testament contains twenty-one historical, seven doctrinal, and seventeen prophetic books; the New Testament, five historical, twenty-one doctrinal, and one prophetic book.

In the following list of the books of the Bible, the names occurring in the Protestant Bible follow in parenthesis whenever different from those of our Douay Bible:

OLD TESTAMENT

a) HISTORICAL BOOKS

Genesis	Ruth	1 Esdras (Ezra)
Exodus	1 Kings (1 Samuel)	2 Esdras (Nehemiah)
Leviticus	2 Kings (2 Samuel)	Tobias
Numbers	3 Kings (1 Kings)	Judith
Deuteronomy	4 Kings (2 Kings)	Esther
Josue (Joshua)	1 Paralipomenon	1 Machabees
Judges	(1 Chronicles)	2 Machabees
	2 Paralipomenon	
	(2 Chronicles)	

b) DOCTRINAL BOOKS

Job	Ecclesiastes
Psalms	Canticle of Canticles (Song of Solomon)
Proverbs	Wisdom
Ecclesiasticus	

c) PROPHETICAL BOOKS

Isaias (Isaiah)	Joel	Habacuc (Habakkuk)
Jeremias (Jeremiah)	Amos	Sophonias
Baruch	Abdias (Obadiah)	(Zephaniah)
Ezechiel (Ezekiel)	Jonas (Jonah)	Aggeus (Haggai)
Daniel	Micheas (Micah)	Zacharias (Zechariah)
Osee (Hosea)	Nahum	Malachias (Malachi)

NEW TESTAMENT

a) HISTORICAL BOOKS

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts of the Apostles

b) DOCTRINAL BOOKS OR EPISTLES

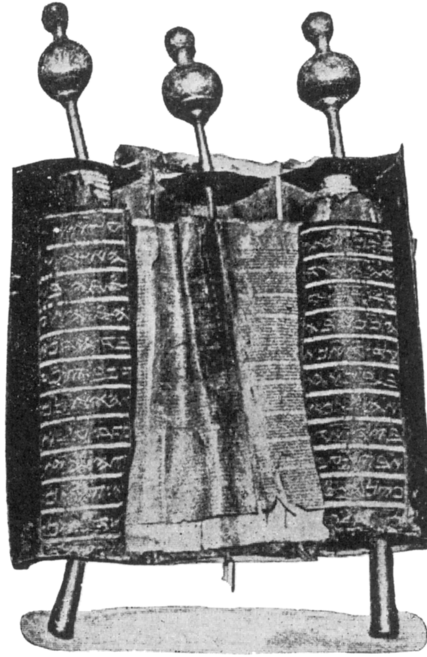
Romans	1 Thessalonians	James
1 Corinthians	2 Thessalonians	1 Peter
2 Corinthians	1 Timothy	2 Peter
Galatians	2 Timothy	1 John
Ephesians	Titus	2 John
Philippians	Philemon	3 John
Colossians	Hebrews	Jude

c) PROPHETICAL BOOK

Apocalypse (Revelation)

3. At the close of the second century before Christ, probably all the Old Testament books mentioned in the list of the Council of Trent were recognized by the Jews as canonical. At this time there

was probably one official collection of books for all the Jews, for those living in Palestine and speaking the Hebrew language, as well as for those scattered throughout the Greek-Roman world and speaking the Greek language. During the last century before Christ



SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH ROLL

and the first century after Christ, the Jews of Palestine eliminated a number of books from the existing collection as not in harmony with the Law of Moses and as of doubtful inspiration. These books are: *Tobias*, *Judith*, *Wisdom*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch*, 1 and 2 *Machabees*, and parts of *Esther* (10, 4 to 16; 14) and *Daniel* (3, 24-90; 13, 14). Later on, these books were called *deutero-canonical*, that is, "belonging to the second canon," because they are found only in the Christian canon; the others were called *proto-canonical*, that is, "belonging to the first canon," because they have been retained both in the Jewish and the Christian canon.

Luther rejected the deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament because they contained too many things that conflicted with his own false teachings, e.g., the words of 2 Mach. 12, 46: "It is

a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." All Protestant sects have followed Luther in his rejection of the deutero-canonical books. The Protestant Canon of the Old Testament is identical with the present Jewish Canon.

4. Seven Books of the New Testament, viz., the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Epistle of *St. James*, the Second Epistle of *St. Peter*, the Second and Third Epistles of *St. John*, the Epistle of *St. Jude*, and the *Apocalypse* of *St. John*, were not universally accepted in the early Church as canonical. Their inspiration was disputed by some Fathers of the Church and defended by others. But before the end of the fourth century the canonical character of all the books of the New Testament was admitted both in the Eastern and the Western Church.

Luther rejected *Hebrews*, *James*, *Jude*, and the *Apocalypse* for dogmatic reasons. He called the Epistle of St. James a "straw epistle" because it contradicted his teaching on justification by faith alone. Later on, these books were accepted by the Protestants. Hence, in regard to the New Testament there is no difference between the Catholic and the Protestant Canon.

Many books referred to in the Old and New Testaments and written by men who seem to have been inspired are lost. St. Paul mentions two Epistles written by him to the Corinthians and one to the Laodiceans (Col. 4, 16), which are no longer in existence.

V. THE LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

1. The languages in which the books of the Bible were originally written are the *Hebrew*, the *Aramaic*, and the *Greek*.

a) **Hebrew** is a Semitic (from Sem, one of Noe's sons) language spoken by the original inhabitants of Chanaan and transmitted by them to Abraham and his descendants. The Golden Age of Hebrew literature falls in the reigns of David and Solomon.

b) **Aramaic** is a branch of the Semitic, and was spoken in Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and the neighboring countries. It is also called Syriac and, incorrectly, Chaldaic. Hebrew was gradually superseded by Aramaic in Palestine after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and after the third century before Christ was a dead language, which was used only in the Jewish liturgy. Our Blessed Lord spoke Aramaic during His earthly life. There are a few Aramaic words in the Gospels, e.g., *talitha qumi*, *kepha*, *abba*.

c) **Biblical Greek** is not the classical Greek taught in our high schools and colleges, but a Greek dialect which, after Alexander the Great, spread over the whole civilized world. It is also called the *Koine* (common).

2. Nearly all the books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew. In Aramaic were written portions of the Book of Daniel (2, 4-7, 28) and 1 Esdras (4, 8-6, 18; 7, 12-26), a verse in Jeremias (10, 11), the last six chapters of Esther (10-16), all of Tobias and Judith, and the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Book of Wisdom, 2 Machabees, and all of the New Testament, excepting Matthew, were written in Greek.

The present division of the Bible into chapters can be traced back to Cardinal Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228). Our verse-division was introduced by the Parisian printer Robert Etienne (Stephanus) in the year 1551. These divisions, being faultily made, are often anything but a help to a better understanding of the text.

VI. THE OLDEST MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE

1. No **Autographs** (originals written by the hands of the inspired writers) of the books of the Bible have come down to us. This is due partly to the perishable material (papyrus) used by the writers, partly to the fact that the Roman emperors decreed the destruction of the sacred books of the Christians (Edict of Diocletian, A.D. 303).

Tertullian says that the originals of the Epistles of St. Paul were still preserved in his day in Thessalonica. "The alleged autographs of St. Mark in Venice and Prague belong to the realm of legend" (Schumacher, *Handbook of Scripture Study*, Vol. I, p. 14).

2. We possess very *ancient copies* of all of the books of the Bible. These copies are called **Biblical Manuscripts** (handwritings). The oldest Hebrew manuscript, dating from the tenth century, was found in the Crimea in 1839. It contains only the later Prophets. Other Hebrew manuscripts were found among the Jews in China and on the coast of Malabar. Of the Greek manuscripts the following are the most important:

a) The **Sinaitic Manuscript** belongs to the fourth century. Constantine Tischendorf discovered it in 1859 in the Monastery of St. Catharine on Mt. Sinai. Tischendorf believed that it was one of the fifty precious Bible manuscripts which, as the Church



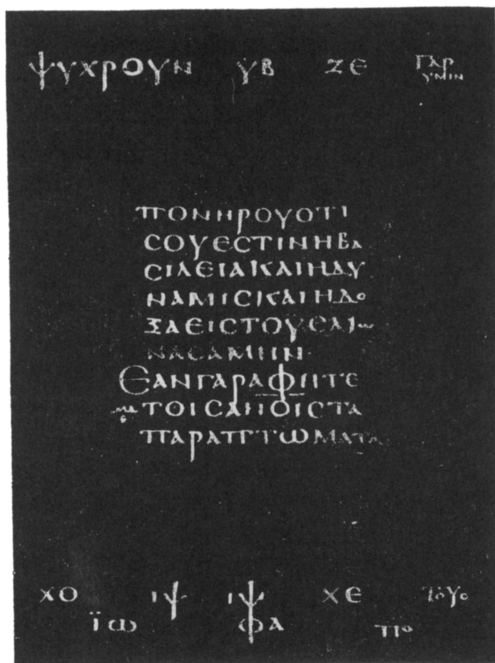
CODEx SINAITICUS—4TH CENT.



CODEx VATICANUS—4TH CENT.

historian Eusebius tells us, were made by order of Constantine the Great for the churches of Constantinople. It contains the greatest part of the Greek translation of the Old Testament and the whole of the New. The Sinaitic MS is in St. Petersburg (Leningrad).

b) The **Vatican Manuscript** in the Vatican Library at Rome also dates from the fourth century and is believed to have been



CODEx ROSSANENSIS, MATT. 6, 13.

The oldest pictorial MS. of the Gospels. It is written in silver on purple vellum.

brought to Rome by St. Athanasius the Great in 342. It contains the whole Bible with only a few gaps. A beautiful facsimile edition in six volumes was published in 1868 at the expense of Pius IX.

c) The **Alexandrine Manuscript**, which contains practically the whole Bible, belongs to the fifth century. It was discovered on Mt. Athos and is preserved in the British Museum in London.

d) The **Parisian Manuscript**, which also belongs to the fifth century, contains the greater part of the New Testament and some

fragments of the Old Testament. It is a *Palimpsest* (re-written) manuscript, some writings of St. Ephraim having been written across the Biblical text, which had been more or less erased, but is still legible.

All these manuscripts, and very many later ones, are written on parchment or vellum (made of the skin of sheep, goats or calves in so-called *uncial* (capital) letters—small letters were not used till the tenth century—and bound in book form (*codex*, pl. *codices*). The words are not separated and, as no punctuation marks are employed, it is sometimes hard to distinguish the interrogative from the declarative sentences.—A few fragments of the New Testament written on papyrus and potsherds of clay (*ostraca*), the writing material of the poor, have been recently discovered in Egypt.

VII. THE MOST IMPORTANT VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

1. The Books of the Old Testament were translated from the original Hebrew into Greek long before the time of Christ, and those of the New Testament from the Greek original into Latin, Syriac, and other languages no later than the second century after Christ.

2. The most important translations are the Greek *Septuagint* (LXX) and the Latin *Vulgate*.

a) The **Septuagint** translation of the Old Testament was made in the third century before Christ to meet the religious needs of the Jews of Alexandria in Egypt.

In the year 320 B.C., Ptolemy Lagi, the Macedonian King of Egypt, captured Jerusalem and carried off 200,000 Jews to Egypt. The captives settled in Alexandria and the neighboring districts. Many of their countrymen followed them into voluntary exile. The Alexandrine Jews gradually lost all knowledge of their Hebrew mother tongue and adopted the Greek language. If they wished to practice their religion, a Greek translation of the Bible became a necessity.

During the reign of Ptolemy Soter (305-285 B.C.) the five Books of Moses were translated into Greek, as the legend has it, by seventy or seventy-two learned Jews from Jerusalem, whence the name *Septuagint*, that is, "the work of the Seventy" (Latin, *Septuaginta*). The name *Septuagint*, though it applies, strictly speaking, only to the Books of Moses, was afterwards extended to include the other books of the Old Testament as they were translated during the next hundred years. At about 130 B.C., when Sirach translated the Book of Proverbs (*Ecclesiasticus*) of his

grandfather into Greek, most of, if not all, the Old Testament Hebrew books had been translated.

Through the Septuagint translation, which is, on the whole, very faithful and reliable, many Greek-speaking pagans obtained a knowledge of divine revelation and were thus prepared for the



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ST. JEROME IN HIS STUDY

preaching of the Gospel. The Apostles made use of the Septuagint in their preaching and writing, thus consecrating it, as it were, for all time.

b) The **Vulgate** is the most famous Latin translation of the Bible. It is almost exclusively the work of St. Jerome, who undertook it at the request of Pope Damasus (366-384).

Up to that time there had been several Latin translations in use, of which the so-called *Itala* was the most popular. The *Itala* version was made from the Greek and dates back to the second century. The whole New Testament and some parts of the Old Testament of the *Itala* have been preserved. The Scripture texts in the Missal are mostly taken from it.

Because the Itala was unsatisfactory in many respects, Pope Damasus asked St. Jerome, who was then acting as his secretary, to revise it. Before the Pope's death (384) St. Jerome published a revised text of the four Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Psalms. Later on, during his retirement in Bethlehem, he translated the whole of the Old Testament, with the exception of a few deuterocanonical books, from the Hebrew and the Greek.

The translation of Jerome became by degrees the only Latin version of the Bible used in the Western Church, and for this reason it was known as the *Vulgate* (Lat. *vulgata*, "disseminated"). In its fourth session the Council of Trent declared the Vulgate to be the *authentic* (official) Latin version, and the one to be used in public in the Western Church. The Council does not prefer the Vulgate before the original texts or the ancient versions, such as the Septuagint, that had always been in use in the Church. The sense of the decree is, "that the Vulgate is in *substantial* conformity with the original sacred text particularly in its expression of those truths of faith and morals which contribute in any way to the knowledge of God as man's supernatural end, and of the means of attaining that end."

The decree of the Council does not imply that the editions of the Vulgate then in use were absolutely free from error. As a matter of fact, it ordered that a corrected edition should be published as soon as possible and henceforth used as the official text of the Bible. This revised text appeared in 1592 under Pope Clement VIII. Since 1907 a commission of Benedictine monks has been at work preparing a new edition of the Vulgate. Thus far, only a few books of the Old Testament have been published (Vatican Press).

3. Other Translations of the Bible.—A Gothic translation of the Bible was made in the fourth century by Ulfilas, an Arian bishop of the Goths (d. 383). This Gothic Bible, the earliest literary document in any Teutonic language, has been preserved in part in the famous *Codex Argenteus*, the "Silver Manuscript," thus called because it is written in silver and gold ink on purple vellum. It was discovered in Werden on the Ruhr (Germany), and after many wanderings found a home in the university library of Upsala in Sweden.

4. Our English translation of the Bible is known as the **Douay Version**, because it was prepared at the English College of Douay