COURSE GUIDE

COURSE CODE: CRS211
COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE
CREDIT UNIT: 2

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INTRODUCTION

CRS211 Introduction to the Bible informs you about the basic facts of the Christian Bible. The course will introduce you to the Bible, its name, its origin You will also learn how the Bible came to be regarded as the Word of God in human language, how the truths contained in the bible are guaranteed from errors as well as the process of collection of the different books that make the Bible. In addition, you will also learn how the initial writings were composed and transmitted down through the ages, the initial versions of the books in their original language, as well as the translations into different languages. All these will help you to understand both the sacred character of the Bible as well as the importance that different faith traditions have come to attach to it.

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to provide you with a basic introduction into the Christian Bible. Among other things, the course helps you to

Appreciate the importance of the bible.

Recognise the different traditions behind its emergence.

Understand the processes that went into its composition and transmission

The above stated are the overall objectives of this course. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at the beginning of a unit. You should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In this way you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the unit. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole.

REQUIREMENTS FROM STUDENTS

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self – assessments exercises, and at points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course is a final examination. Below you will find listed, all the components of the course and what you have to do.

COURSE MATERIALS

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments

In addition, you must obtain the material. Obtain your copy. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials.

STUDY UNITS

There are ten study units in this course. Each unit should take you 2-3 hours to work through. The ten units are divided into three modules. The first two modules contain 4 units while the last contains 1 unit

Each unit includes a table of contents, introduction, specific objectives, recommended textbooks and summaries of key issues and ideas. At *interval* in each unit, you will be provided with a number of exercises or self-assessment question. These are to help you test yourself on the material you have just covered or to apply it in some way.

The value of these self-test is to help you gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. At least, on tutor- marked assignments will be provided at the end of each unit. The exercise and the tutor-marked assignments will help you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units of the course.

SET TEXTBOOKS

Aland, Kurt and Barbara (1989). *The text of the New Testament: An introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and practice of Modern Textual Criticism. 2nd ed., rev. Translated by E.F. Rhodes, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans*.B.C. Butler (1960). *The Church and the Bible:* Baltimore-London, Helicon Press.

Benjamin Beckinridge Warfield (1948). *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible,* New Jersey: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company.

Bernhard W. Anderson (1986). *Understanding the Old Testament* (fourth edition) Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Bruce M. Metzger (1992). *Text of the New Testament*. 3rd Enlarged ed. Madison, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cecil B. Murphey (1989) *The Dictionary of Biblical Literacy,* Nashville: Olver-Nelson Books.

Charles C. Ryrie (1967). *Basic Theology* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

Christian E. Hauer & William A. Young (2008). *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds* (Seventh Edition), New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.

D.A. Carson and J. Woodbridge (eds.), (1983) *Scripture and Truth*, Leicester: Inter Varsity Press.

Daniel Harrington (1990). *Interpreting the New Testament*: Collegeville, Liturgical Press.

David Scott (1984). *The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures (Revised Edition):* The Bible Institute Colportage Assoc.

Eldon Jay Epp (2002). "Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament, with an Excursus on Canon," in Porter (ed.), *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament:* Boston & Leiden, Brill Academic Publishers (45-97).

Excepts from the Preface: The British and Foreign Bible Society (1971). The Holy Bible. Revised Standard Version. Glasgow, Caledonian International Book Manufacturing Ltd.

Excerpts: *Preface, "The New International Version*". International Bible Society.

F.F. Bruce (1972). *Answers to questions*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

F.F. Bruce et al (1978). *The New Bible Dictionary*: Leicester; Inter – Varsity press.

G. D. Fee (2002). *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors,* 3rd Edition: Louisville, Kentucky, Westminster John Knox Press.

Henry Wansbrough (1999). *Jerusalem Bible.* New York: Doubleday Books.

J.D. Douglas et al (1978). *The New Bible Dictionary.* International Christian Handbook edition, Great Britain: Inter-Varsity Press.

James E. Bowley (2008). *Introduction to Hebrew Bible: A Guided Tour of Israel's Sacred Library,* New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall,

John Warwick Montgomery (1974). *God's inerrant Word:* An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

John Warwick Montgomery (1974). *God's inerrant Word:* An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture, Minneapolis Minnesota:

John Collins (2007). *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible,* (Minneapolis: Fortress press.

John Maier (ed.) (1979). *The Bible in its Literary*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Joseph Jensen (1990). *God's Word to Israel*, Collegeville: The Liturgical press.

Lawrence Boadt (1986). *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction,* New York: Paulist press.

Peter Jeffery (1995). *Christian Handbook*: *A Straight forward Guide to the Bible, Church History and Christian Doctrine,* Wales: Bryntirion press.

R. Abbas (1958). *The Nature and Authority of the Bible.* London: SU Press.

Raymond Brown (1990). *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible:* New York, Paulist.

Raymond Brown (1997). *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library) New York: Doubleday.

Rosemary N. Edet (1991). *New Testament Studies for Colleges and Universities,* Lagos.

Sid Leiman (1976). *The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*: Hamden, Connecticut, Archon.

The British and Foreign Bible Society (1971). *The Bible (Revised Standard Version)* Glasgow: Caledonian International Book Manufacturing Ltd.

The Teen Study Bible (1998). New International Version. Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation

W.H. Schmidt (1992)., *Old Testament Introduction* (translated by Matthew J. O'Connell) Bombay: St Paul's publication.

William Graham (1987). "Scripture," in *the Encyclopaedia of Religion* (ed. Mircea Eliade): New York, Macmillan.

Williams B. Eerdmans (1979). *The Bible in its literary milieu*. Mich. Wm.B. Eerdmans Publications Co.

Online Resources

"Inspiration" in Wikipedia Encyclopaedia online at www. Wikipedia org

Enns *the Inspired Revelation of God. Bible org.htm.Date excerpted 13/8/ 2009*

The Inspired Revelation of God Bible org.htm. Excerpts Enns in the Definitions of

Inspiration. Date excerpted 13/ 8/ 2009.

"Lower Criticism" in Wikipedia Encyclopaedia online available at www.wikipedia.org

ASSIGNMENT FILE

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignment will be found in the Assignment file itself and later in this course Guide in the section on assessment.

ASSESSMENT

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor-marked assignment; second, there is a written examination in tackling the assignments you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course.

The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three – hour examination. This will also count for 70% 0f your total course mark.

TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

There are fifteen tutor-marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignment. The best four (i.e. the highest four of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments form the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with TMA (Tutor-marked assignment) form to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given to the assignment file. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of extension.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination of CRS211 will be of two hours' duration and have a value of 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-mark problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignment and the comment of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignment that follow them.

Units	**Title of works**	**Duration weeks**	**Assignment**
	Course Guide		
1	Meaning and Books of the Bible	1	Assignment 1
2	Inspiration of the Bible	1	Assignment 2
3	Infallibility and Inerrancy	1	Assignment 3
4	The Formation of the Canons of the Old and New Testaments	1	Assignment 4
5	Introducing Textual Criticism	1	Assignment 5
6	Transmission of OT Texts	1	Assignment 6
7	Biblical Texts of DSS and Others	1	Assignment 7
8	New Testament Textual Criticism	1	Assignment 8
9	Ancient Language Version of the Bible	1	Assignment 9
10	English Language Versions of the Bible	1	Assignment 10

How to Get Most from This Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning. You can have and work through specially designed study material at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some readings to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate point.

Each of the study unit follows a common format. The first item is an instruction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the way you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a

habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from references/further readings.

1 Read this Course Guide thoroughly.

2. Organized a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates for working on each unit.

3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. One of the major factors that account for student's poor performance in exams and assignment reason that students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please let your tutor know before it is too late for help.

4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit,

5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the

'Overview' at the beginning of each unit, you will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.

6. Work thorough the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to your reading.

7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.

8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.

9. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group. Tutorial can also be received on e-platform. You and your facilitator could exchange e-mail message where such facilities are available to you and your facilitator.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulty, you might encounter and provide assistances to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary.

Contact your tutor if:

You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings, you have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises, you have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answer instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

COURSE CONTENT

MODULE 1. UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

UNIT 1. THE MEANING AND BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
UNIT 2. INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURE
UNIT 3. INFALLIBILITY AND INERRANCY
UNIT 4. THE FORMATION OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CANONS

MODULE 2 TEXT CRITICSM OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

UNIT 1. INTRODUCING TEXTUAL CRITICISM
UNIT 2. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
UNIT 3. THE BIBLICAL TEXTS OF THE DEAD SCROLLS & OTHERS
UNIT 4. THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

MODULE 3. THE BIBLE: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

UNIT 1. ANCIENT LANGUAGE VERSIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
UNIT 2. THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

MODULE 1. UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

UNIT 1 THE MEANING AND BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

UNIT 2 INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

UNIT 3 INFALLIBILITY AND INERRANCY

UNIT 4 THE FORMATION OF OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT CANONS

Some Basich Charts

1. The Organization of the Old Testament

Name	**Contents**			***Time of canonisation***
Torah "Instruction"	Pentateuch (5 books of Moses)			5th—4th century BC
Same as in Masoretic Text (MT) & Septuagint (LXX)	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy			
Nebiim "Prophets	(MT) Former (Earlier) Prophets LXX Historical books (includes here 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 & 2 Maccabees).	Joshua Judges 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings		3rd Century BC
	MT: Latter Prophets LXX Prophetic Books	Major Prophets 12 Minor Prophets	Isaiah (1, 2 & 3) Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	

MT: Ketubim ("Writings") **LXX: Poetic Books** **Additional LXX Books (So-called Apocrypha)** **1 & 2 Maccabees** **Baruch** **Ecclesiasticus or Sirach**	Psalms Job Proverbs		Ca. A.D. 100
	5 Megilloth	Ruth Songs of Songs Ecclesiastes Lamentation Esther	
	Daniel		
	1 Chronicles		
	2 Chronicles		
	Ezra		
	Nehemiah		

2. Principal Periods of the History of Israel
(Adapted with modifications from Schmidt, Old Testament Introduction, 10-11)

Periods	Dates	Events	Personages
1. Nomadic Antiquity	15th (?)—13th century	Promise to the Patriarchs Liberation from Egypt Revelation at Sinai	
II. Earlier Period before the State	12th-11th century	Settlement Development of the country Age of the Judges Wars of Yahweh Tribal confederation: "Amphictyony"?	
III. Period of the Monarchy	ca. 1000	Saul, David (capital at Jerusalem) Solomon (building of the temple). So-called dividing of the realm (first firm date in the history of Israel (1 Kings 12)	Yahwist?
Period of the United Kingdom	926		
Period of the divided kingdom: northern kingdom of Israel, southern kingdom of Judah			Elijah, Elisha, the Elohist? Amos (ca. 760), Hosea (ca. 750-725) Isaiah (ca. 740-700
Pressure from Arameans (esp. 850-800)	ca. 730 732	Syro-Ephraimite war against Judah (2 Kings 16:5; Isaiah 7)	
Assyrian domination (ca. 750-630)	722	Israel loses territory (2 Kings 15:29), and conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17)	
	701	Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kg 18-20=Isa 36-39; 1:4-8)	
Period of Judah	ca. 622	Josiah's reform (2 Kgs 22-23; Deuteronomy)	Jeremiah (ca. 626-586)
Babylonian domination (from 605)	597	First destruction of Jerusalem; 10 years later	Ezekiel
IV. Exile	587	Final destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (2Kgs 24-25); Jer 2:7ff)	Lamentations Deuteronomistic history (Deut-2 Kgs, ca. 560) Priestly Document Second Isaiah
V. Postexilic period	539	Babylon falls to the Persians (Isa 46f.)	
Persian domination (539-533)	520-515	Rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5-6)	Haggai, Zechariah
Hellenistic age	333 161 64	Alexander the Great (victory over the Persians at the battle of Issus); Rededication of the temple during the Maccabean revolt; Conquest of Palestine by the Romans	Chronicler's history Daniel

3. New Testament Books in chronological Order
(Adapted from Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament,* ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1997)

Name	**Author**	**Date/Place**	**Addressees**
1. Thessalonians	Paul	50-51/Corinth	Mixed Community of Jews and Gentiles in Thessalonica (50-51 2nd Missionary Journey)
2. Galatians	Paul	54-55/Ephesus—57/Macedonia	Communities around the Galatian territory (North- (50 u. 54) and South (47-48 u. 50) Galatian Hypothesis?
3. 1. Corinthians	Paul (Unity subject to controversy: some speak of A & B)	56/57 in Ephesus	Mixed Community of Jews and Gentiles in Corinth
4. Philippians	Paul	56/Ephesus, 58-60/Caesarea, 61-63/Rom (In Prison)	Community at Philippi (Miss. 50/ 2nd Missionary Journey)
5. Philemon	Paul	55/Ephesus, 58-60/Caesarea, 61-63/Rome (from Prison)	Philemon, Wife Apphia and the Community that gathers in their House
6. 2 Corinthians	Paul (Unity subject of Controversy, some speak of 2 to 5 Letters)	57/Macedonia	Same as 1 Corinthians
7. Romans	Paul	57-58/Corinth	Community at Rome (Gentiles with Jewish Majority), the community was not founded by Paul
8. 2. Thessalonians	Pseudo-Paul	Late 1st Century, Place unknown).	Most likely same as 1 Thess
9. Colossians	Paul or Timothy during Paul's lifetime or shortly after his death /**Pseudo-Paulus** (Majority of Scholars)	61-63/Rome; 54-56/Ephesus or **80s/Ephesus**	Community at Colossa (Evangelized by Epaphras)
10. Ephesiansr	Pseudo Paul	90s/Ephesus	Pauline Christians around the Mediterranean
11. Titus	Pseudo-Paul	Ending of the 1st Century in Ephesus or Macedonia	Titus in Crete
12. 1.Timothy	Pseudo-Paul	Ending of 1st Century/Ephesus	Timothy in Ephesus
13. 2. Timothy	Pseudo-Paul	Shortly after Paul's death in the 60s of 10-20 years later	Timothy in Ephesus or Troas
14. Hebrews	Unknown	80s	Christians in Jerusalem or Rome
15. 1 Peter	Peter through a Secretary or a disciple of Peter	60-63/70-90 in Rome	Communities of the North Mediterranean (evangelized from Jerusalem)
16. James	Pseudonym, an admirer of James	80-90s	Jewish Christians outside Palestine
17. Jude	Pseudonym (an admirer of Jude).	90-100/Palestine or Alexandria	Christians with influence in Jerusalem
18. 2 Peter	Pseudonym	130/Rome or Alexandria, most likely the last of all NT books (3: 1,15).	All Christians around East Mediterranean
19. Revelation	Jewish Christian Prophet called John (neither John the Apostle nor the author of the 4th Gospel)	92-96, shortly after the reign of Emperor Domitian.	Communities around Western Mediterranean
20. Markus	**Tradition**: Mark, Disciple of Peter = John Mark, the companion of Paul and Barnabas Acts	60-75 (68-73) in Rome, Syria, the Decapolis or , Galilee	

	From Content of Book: A Greek-speaking Christian who was not an eyewitness to the historical Jesus		
21. Matthew	**Tradition**: Matthew the tax collector, an apostle of Jesus. **From Content**: A Greek-speaking Christian with a good knowledge of Aramaic and Hebrew. Not a witness of the hist. Jesus but may have been a Jewish Christian.	80-90/Antioch	Mixed community of Jews and Gentiles with a very strong Jewish influence
22. Luke	**Tradition**: Luke, medical Doctor and Paul's traveling companion. **From Content**: A highly educated Greek-speaking Christian with a good knowledge of the LXX. Not an eyewitness. Some suggest that he was a convert to Judaism before becoming a Christian.	85-95	Communities in close association with all the territories covered by Paul in his missionary journeys, especially Syria and Greece.
23. Acts of the Apostles	Same as Luke		
24. John	**Tradition:** John, the Son of Zebedee and one of the twelve. **From Content**: A Christian who prefer to describe himself as the beloved disciple. Perhaps there was an editor. Certain evidences have led scholars to posit the existence of a Johannine School.	80-110. If the editor hypothesis is true, then the first draft was composed around the 90s and the final edition sometime b/w 100 &110. Place of composition: Ephesus/Syria	The Johannine Communities
25. 1 John	A Presbyter in & Member of the Johannine school.	Shortly after the 4th Gospel, i.e., ca. 100	Johannne Communities after a great Schism
26. 2 John	A Member of the Joh. School. Certainly, the author of 3 John and most likely that of 1 John.	Same	Johannine Communities to warn them of the advent of schismatic missionaries
27. 3 John	Same	Shortly after 1 & 2 John	Gaius, member of the Johannine community and a friend of the Presbyters

UNIT 1 THE MEANING AND BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is an introduction to the course and its title. Among other things, it teaches the meaning of the Bible, the names of the Books of the Bible, the classification of the Christian Bible into Old and New Testament as well as highlights the contents of each of the Testaments.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to do the followings:

Acquaint yourself with some basic information necessary for the study of the Bible.

Explain the meaning of the word *Bible.*

Identify the different ways of dividing the Old Testament (henceforth OT) books.

Explain the reason behind the emergence of the New Testament (henceforth NT) books.

Classify the NT into different genre of literature.

3.0. MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning and origin of the Bible

3.1.1. The Bible: The Name

The English word "Bible" comes from the Greek *ta biblia*, where originally it is a plural noun meaning "the Books." When this word was taken over into Latin, it became singular, the Bible. In a sense, the Greek term which denotes the Bible as a plural noun is more ad rem, since the Bible is neither a book nor the product of a single person, but a library of many individual works. As a book, it is the work of God and His Spirit. But each group or collection of books contained therein was written by ordinary human beings who left therein the imprint of their human genius as well as their human limitations. For all the reasons why the Bible has commanded and still commands the interest of many across cultures, generations and ages, the primary fact remains that it is for Jews, Christians, and to a lesser extent Moslems, a collection of God's revelation, containing as it were God's self-communication to the world he created.

The Bible is a record of God's revelations to and His relationship with human beings. In it, God reveals Himself through His actions in nature and in history. The Bible is one of the oldest books. Its oldest sections were written about 1500 years before Jesus was born. Its newest sections were written about 1900 years ago.

No one knows exactly how many people contributed to the compilation of the Bible. However, scholars attributed authorship to about forty people. And those who wrote the Bible did not claim to be the source of the ideas they wrote about. Sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly, authors assert that what they were writing really came from God. For example, the author of the Second Letter to Timothy wrote thus: *All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for re-proof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Tim 3:16-17). And from the author of 2 Peter, we read: "*First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God"* (2 Pet 1:20-21). As a book or better collection of books, the Bible has been translated into more than 2000 different languages and dialects.

3.1.2. Division of the Bible

For Christians, the Bible, as a record of God's revelation, contains both the Old and the New Testaments, while for the Jews it contains only the OT. Since the NT proclaims the life and message of Jesus Christ as "good news" for all peoples, and sees in Jesus the continuation and fulfilment of the OT hopes of a Saviour and Messiah, it is faith in this Jesus that makes the crucial difference between Jews and Christians. Both share a conviction from the OT that God has revealed himself to his people Israel. Jews, however, do not see in Jesus a binding revelation from God. Christians do. It is customary in writing about the Bible to keep the difference between the two Testaments clear so that we do not mistake the meaning of faith in the one as the same as in the other.

3.1.3. The Name Old & New Testament

The very name "Old Testament" (OT) which makes sense only in correlation with the New Testament (NT), already implies the problem of the Christian interpretation of this

body of traditions. In other words, it is the "New" Testament that makes the "Old" Testament "Old."

However, while the name is determined by Christianity's self-understanding of herself, it also has a basis within the OT. More accurately, in the prophetic expectation of what was to come (Jer 31:31ff.), there was a discussion of a 'new covenant' (Latin: *testamentum*) that would replace the one that was broken. The NT relates the prophetic promises to the future that has now made its appearance in the person of Jesus (2 Cor 3; Heb 8). But the application of the term "old covenant" or "testament" to the books of the OT is itself found in the NT itself.

Today, to respect the sensitivity of the Jews, scholars prefer to refer speak of the First and Second Covenant/Testament, without necessarily implying any hierarchy of importance or value. And with reference to the Bible, especially most OT scholars prefer to speak of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although we shall be retaining the Old/New Testament classification in this class, Boadt's note of warning is worthy of consideration:

> The term "Old Testament" cannot be used if we see it as a word that puts down the Jewish faith. But it becomes valuable when we realize that it roots all that we say about Christ in the proper and original soil of Israel's faith. Christians believe that God has spoken through Christ a new and fuller word than the *Old Testament alone* contains. But this is so only because it adds a fuller dimension to the *primary word* that God had already spoken to Israel when he made them his people and his witnesses…. It is "Old Testament" in the wonderful sense of a parent to our new, young faith in Christ."[1]

3.1.4. Chapter Divisions and Structure

The various segments of the OT originally appeared as single scrolls written in papyrus or other ancient forms of manuscripts. With time, divisions were introduced along several lines for various purposes. The Masoretic Text, for instance, was divided into sections for the purpose of liturgical reading rather than on the basis of purely literary criteria, though of course attention was paid to sense and context. Different liturgical praxis in the land of Israel and Babylonia required different lectionaries. In Palestine, Torah was read over a span of three to three and a half years, to which corresponded slightly more than 150 sections or sĕdārîm. In Babylonian communities however, the reading was completed in a year, necessitating only about fifty-four longer sections, or pārāšôt. These sections were then subdivided into short paragraphs, or pisqôt, separated by a space of at least three letters. These appear already in the Qumran biblical texts. According to a popular legend, they were introduced to give Moses time for reflection between each subsection.

The familiar chapter divisions were introduced into the Vulgate by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury (1150-1228), and began to appear in Hebrew MSS in the later middle Ages. Verse division was already in place in the Talmudic period, but verses were referred to not by number but by identifying quotes, often just a single word, known as *simānîm* (signs). Verse numbering is generally credited to the French reformer Robert Estienne, who allegedly divided the Greek New Testament into verses during a coach journey from Paris to Geneva in 1550. Three years later, he extended the system to his French translation of the entire Bible, and thereafter, it came into common use.

[1] Boadt, *Reading the OT*, 20.

3.2. The Emergence of the Old Testament Collections

The individual books of the OT had a very varied history. And it is almost impossible to say exactly when the individual stages of the collection and formation of the OT canon was concluded. A consideration of the internal witness of the OT books themselves, however, appears to favour a "progressive formation and canonization" process. Within the corpus of the writings themselves, there is both the assertion of the writers that their writings have been received from and guided by the revelatory and inspiring work of the Holy Spirit; and the assertion that what has been written was to be collected with the other books that have made a similar claim and were likewise treated as authoritative.

The first such claim appears in Exod 17:14. On the occasion of Joshua's victory over Amalek, Moses was instructed by Yahweh to "write this for a memorial in a book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." Clearly the writing was intended to be preserved "for a memorial." It also appears that what is to be written down was to be attached to a body of sacred literature already in Israel's possession, for Moses was told to write in "in the book," or scroll. On another occasion, we read of an addition to "the Book of the Law of God" in Joshua's day (Joshua 24:26). And after Samuel wrote down his words on a scroll, he too "deposited [them] before the Lord" (1 Sam 10:25). The impression is that each fresh addition to the canon was immediately deposited in the Sanctuary and thereby given its sacred and canonical status. Thus, a tradition of a growing canon was envisaged almost from the beginning of the composition of Scripture.

Later writers occasionally referred to each other's writings as being sacred and hence canonical. For example, with reference to Je 25:11, Daniel (Dan 9:2) denotes the prophetic writing of his predecessor Jeremiah as "the Scriptures… the word of the Lord." Both Isa 8:16 and Jer 36:1ff show an awareness of a written form of their prophecies almost from the beginning of their ministries. Later, Zechariah, in 520 BC, refers easily to all the "former prophets" (1:4) whose writings have a definite form and an authoritative status.

One can make bold to conclude that the statements of these OT personages, to the degree that they provided for laying up each new addition before the Lord and to the degree that they recognize the work of their colleagues and predecessors as "Scripture" or "Word of the Lord," provide for their own process of "progressive canonization."

3.3. The Divisions of the Old Testament

When we come to the division of the OT books, differences apply. While acknowledging the existence of other versions of the OT, we will concentrate on the two that is most widely known and the two that feature in the Catholic and Protestant debate: namely, the Palestinian canon or Hebrew Bible properly called, otherwise known as the Masoretic Text (abbreviated MT); and the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, otherwise known as the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX).

3.3.1. The Hebrew Bible/Masoretic Text (MT)

Traditionally, the Hebrew Bible consists of 39 books and is divided into three parts: the Pentateuch (Hebrew = ***T****orah* meaning instruction); the Prophets (Hebrew ***N****ebi'im*) and finally the Writings (Hebrew ***K****etubim*, meaning Writings). Alongside such names for the Bible as *miqra'* ("the readings", "the book to be read"), the combination of the first initial

of each of these group of writings ***TNK*** (pronounced Tanak) is still customary in Judaism as a designation for the entire bible.

1 The Torah

This first division of the "Scriptures" appeared to be formally recognized as a literary unit as far back as our records go. The sequel Genesis to Kings, even though sometimes broken into Torah and Early Prophets, was undoubtedly a stabilized written story fairly much as we now have it in the Hebrew Bible by the middle of the 6th century BC. Since that sequence of books, in contrast to all that follows in the Jewish canon, is clearly a storyline beginning with creation and ending with the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the exile, the order of the books Genesis to Kings was secured early on even when the text was written on scrolls well before the invention of the codex in the first centuries AD.

2. The Prophets

When we come to the Prophets, we notice considerable variations in categorisation. Jewish tradition gives the name "former" or "earlier prophets" to the books from Joshua, Judges, Samuel to the Kings; and "latter" or "later prophets" to the books of the so-called major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (but not Daniel) and to the book of the Twelve Prophets, which includes the prophets Hosea to Malachi originally in a single scroll.

The contrast "former-latter" or "earlier-later" can be understood either spatially, that is, simply according to the position of the books in the canon, or temporally, in accordance with the order in which the various prophets appeared, inasmuch as the "former" narrative writings include accounts of such prophets as Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha.

Worthy of note is the fact that Daniel was not included in this list as one of the prophets. Medieval Jewish tradition explained Daniel's absence from this list by implying that there were degrees of inspiration; the prophets sharing a fuller degree of inspiration ("the spirit of prophecy") than those writes who contributed to the third section, the Writings where Daniel was located.

3. The Writings

The third part of the OT canon is not a clearly defined entity in either the Jewish or the Christian tradition. The "Writings" (*Hagio-grapha*) were made to include books for which there was no place in the first two groups. For centuries the order of these works was not fixed. In the Hebrew Bible, the more extensive books—Psalms, Job, Proverbs—are usually followed by the five *Megilloth,* that is, the "scrolls" for the five annual feasts—Ruth, Song of Solomon, Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Lamentations, Esther—and finally Daniel and Chronicler's history (Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles). This order, which became the traditional order, appears to give some precedent for the threefold division of the canon, viz., the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

The term Sacred Scripture for this collection appears only in II Maccabees 8:23, in the second half of the second century BCE. The work of Jesus Sirach (about 190 BCE) gives a further point of reference. In its great 'Praise of the Fathers' (chapters 44-50), it presupposes basically the whole of the OT traditions in the form in which we have them; calling them either (1) "The Law and the Prophets, and the other books which follow after them," (2) "The Law and the Prophets and the other ancestral books," and (3) "The

Law itself and the Prophecies and the rest of the books. About 130 BCE, the grandson of Jesus ben Sirach's who translated Ecclesiasticus into Greek and added his own prologue, did not give a distinct name to this third section or give a full list of the books it contained. Rather, he speaks of the "Book of the Law, the Prophets and the other Writings.' Philo of Alexandria who died about AD 40 also spoke of "the Law, and the other Oracles uttered by the Prophets, and the hymns and the other [writings] by which knowledge and piety are augmented and perfected."[2]

3.3.2. The Septuagint (LXX)

The Septuagint, the most widely used and accepted Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, presents quite a different picture of the shape of the OT canon. It is called the Septuagint because of the legend that the Jewish colony living in Alexandria, Egypt needed a Greek translation of the Bible and got it from seventy scholars who all worked completely alone yet produced exactly identical translations. This legend has a historical point of reference in that the translation of the Pentateuch was probably in fact made by the third century BC, beginning apparently with the Torah and then the other books.

The LXX is more inclusive, since it contains in varying degrees the so-called Apocrypha (Judith, Tobit, Maccabees, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus or Sirach).

There is no tripartite division in the LXX as in the MT, suggesting that such a division was either not yet known, or more likely, not of full canonical status by the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the break of Christianity from Judaism. Rather, the LXX divides its materials thus:

The Pentateuch: Greek for "five books" (of Moses)

The Historical Books: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Maccabees, etc.

The Poetic or Wisdom Writings: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, etc.

The Prophetic Books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel plus the twelve Minor Prophets.

In the first group – the Pentateuch or five books of Moses – the Hebrew and Greek traditions have the same contents. Since the Pentateuch begins with the creation of the world and then recounts the beginnings (patriarchs, Egypt) and foundation (Sinai) of Israel, it rightly comes in the first place.

The difference sets in with the appraisal of the second group. The LXX, unlike the MT joins all the books from Joshua through 2 Kings to the Pentateuch. And to this, it adds other narrative works like Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. In this way, the entire history from the patriarchs, or even from creation, down to the postexilic period is given a certain amount of continuity. The inclusion of Tobit, Judith, and 1-4 Maccabees extended the sense of history into the Hellenistic-Roman period. Even though the Pentateuch loses something of its special character in this arrangement, its historical nature and its connection with the book of Joshua emerge more clearly, as the settlement is seen as the fulfilment of the promise made to the patriarchs and to Israel.

[2] Philo, *De Vita contemplative*, 2.475.

In addition, the LXX gives some of the MT "Writings" a separate existence as poetic books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Song), and assigns some (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther) to the historical books and others (Lamentations, Daniel) to the prophetic books.

3.3.3 The Vulgate

The Christian church adopted the LXX which also formed the basis of the official Latin translation (the Vulgate) that is attributed to Jerome under the tutelage of a Jewish rabbi in Bethlehem. While Jerome adopted the content and order of the LXX as he knew it, by translating a clearly proto-Masoretic copy of the text of the Jewish Bible, he, in large measure, brought the Vulgate into closer textual relation to what we know as the MT.

3.3.4. The Reformers' Old Testament

During the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers adopted the Hebrew canon and its 39 books as the official version of their OT. While keeping a generally LXX sense of the order of books after the Pentateuch, the Reformers limited the content of their OT to that of the Jewish canon, bracketing the deutero-canonicals or apocrypha in a kind of appendix (i.e., the hidden books, those not intended for public use in the church).

Among the books so bracketed include: Tobit, Judith, Esther (the Greek text), Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees. The Greek text of these books were not only widely used by Jews, they were also known as well by numerous "God-fearing" Gentiles who were attracted to the high moral teachings of the OT, even though they had not themselves become coverts to Judaism. One can readily understand how and why early Christianity, as it spread among Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles, employed this Greek text. In fact, the majority of OT quotations in the NT are based on this translation.

According to tradition, the determination of the books of the Hebrew canon was made about 90 CE, but there is evidence to believe that official and widespread agreement on this issue came somewhat later. Among Christians, it was apparently only in the fourth century that the issue of the canonicity of these books arose, a situation which is reflected in Jerome's denying their canonicity and Augustine's affirming it.

3.4 Emergence of the New Testament Writings

Christianity, at its inception, inherited from Judaism a rich trove of scripture, including the Law of Moses, the prophetic books, and a great variety of other writings that were authoritative for various groups of Jews. It did not, however, inherit a canon, for Judaism had not in the 1st century made a list or collection setting limits to its scripture.

The Church, in other words, does not always have the bible. What we call the NT writings were not always there from the beginning of the Church. The reason for this is obvious. Jesus did not put anything down in writing, neither of his deeds nor of his teachings. His preaching on the advent of the kingdom of God was all based on the OT.

Again, since the early Christians were eschatological in their orientation, their primary concern was to anxiously await the coming of the Lord. This can be seen in their maranatha formula prayers (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20). Such a waiting for the immediate appearance/return of the risen Lord did not give much encouragement to putting things

down in writings, since nobody will be there to read of what is written, since all will either be saved/dammed when the Lord comes.

It is therefore no surprise that the first form of written records in the NT were in form of letters. This is because the art of letter writing dovetails well with the eschatological expectation of the time, since a letter is a good tool to address immediate problems and answer pressing questions. The fact that Paul wrote the first series of letters tells us something about the emergence or coming to be of the NT writings. Paul was a travelling/wandering missionary, who travelled from place to place preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. In order to retain/maintain contact with his communities, he used this antique from of letter writing. It is in this way that the first series of NT writings emerged around the 50s and the 60s.

Once the idea of putting down things in writing was introduced, it did not take time before Christianity produced a large body of its own literature (letters, gospels, narratives of apostolic acts, apocalypses, church orders, etc.), much of which became authoritative for various Christian groups, and so came to be regarded as scripture alongside Jewish scripture.

3.4.1. The Classification of the Books of the New Testament

This is what we have come to know as the 27 books of NT which is the same for all Christian denominations. They include:

Gospels: a collection of 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John),

Letter of Paul (13 or 14 if we include the Letter to the Hebrews)

Catholic Epistles: A collection of other letters with no specific audience (1 from James, 2 from Peter, 3 from John and one from Jude).

A History of the early Church (Acts of the Apostles) and

An Apocalyptic/Prophetic writing (Revelations).

We will have opportunity to discuss them in detail as well as the process of their emergence in the unit on Canonization.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learnt about the meaning of the Bible. The word Bible is derived from the Greek word '*biblos*', which means a book. The Bible is a book about God and His relationship with human beings. You also learnt the names of the books in the Old and the New Testaments. Furthermore, we have taught you the classifications of the books of both Testaments as well.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Bible is a collection of seventy-two/sixty-six books. Forty-five/Thirty-nine, mostly written in Hebrew but some originally written in Greek are called the Old Testament. While the NT contains twenty-seven books, all written in the Greek language. They originated from different strands and traditions that spanned across a period of over 1,500 years. As a book or collection of books, the Bible is a record of God's revelation to human beings through his actions, in nature and in history. It provides information on Jewish history, life, thought, worship and religious practice during the centuries immediately prior to (OT) and immediately

after (NT) the time of Christ.

SELF–ASSESSMENT EXECISE 1

List the books of the Bible.

What do you understand by the word Testament?

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is the meaning of the phrase *ta Biblia?*
2. Account for the division of the Bible into Old and New Testaments.
3. Explain the various parts of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint (LXX).
4. Account for the variation in number between the Catholic and Protestant versions of the OT.
5. Classify the books of the NT according to the type of literature they contain

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UNIT 2 INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

CONTENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have learnt about the meaning of the Bible, the collection of the books of the Bible and classifications of the Bible into the Old and New Testaments. You also learnt that the Bible is a record of God's revelation of Himself in His relationship to human beings through his actions, in nature and in history. It is on this account that we call the Bible the Word of God, since it contains the record of the deeds by which God effected human redemption.

When we call the the Bible the Word of God, we do not mean that God actually wrote it. While having God as its author, the Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. This is why we call the Bible the Holy Bible. But how can a book or collection of books make claim to being "Holy" in the first place? Put in simple language: How can we justify the claim that in the Holy Bible, we have God's Word in Human Speech? It is this question that this unit introduces us to.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Explain the Authorship of the Bible;

Define the word *Inspiration*

Discuss the evidences of Inspiration in both the Old and the New Testaments

Explain the various theoretical positions on the how of biblical inspiration.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1: Inspiration: Meaning

Scriptural inspiration is the doctrine in Christian Theology concerned with the divine origin of the Bible and what it teaches about itself. It is understood as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness. Technically defined, it is a faith affirmation of a sort of divine influence on the writer, text, the reader, or some combination of these in virtue of which the text is rightly regarded as Sacred Scripture or Word of God.

In various passages, the Bible claims divine inspiration for itself. Jesus treats the OT as authoritative and says it "cannot be broken" (John 10:34-36). And for 2 Pet 1:20-21: "No prophecy of Scripture was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit". The same Epistle also claims divine authority for the writings attributed to Apostles (2 Pet 3:16).

Inspiration means that the human writers who wrote the Bible were guided and directed by God through the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God dictated everything to them word for word. Moses, Paul and the other writers were not mere secretaries taking down dictation, but they were men 'carried along by the Holy Spirit'. God so directed their thinking and their understanding that the message they gave was not their own invention, but a faithful expression of the mind of God. For example, Paul says: "We impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truth to those who possess the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:13).

While the Holy Spirit did not suppress the personality of the writers, H used it to fulfil His plan for humanity. The Biblical books are called inspired because they are the divinely determined products of inspired men. The Biblical writers are called inspired because they were breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers and becomes divinely authoritative. In other words, inspiration is a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God.

3.2 Theologians Definitions of Inspiration

We give below some technical definitions of inspiration according to some prominent theologians.

1. Benjamin Warfield defined *Inspiration* as a Supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness.

2. Edward Young defined *Inspiration* as superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess divine authority and trustworthiness;

3. Charles C Ryrie defined *Inspiration* as God superintends the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings;

4. Millard .J. Erickson defined *Inspiration* of the Scripture as the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God.

3.3 The Biblical facts about *Inspiration*

3.3.1: Inspiration and the Old Testament

Israel was convinced that she possessed the word of God in writing. It is hardly possible to say precisely how or when this conviction first originated. Its beginnings stretched at least as far back as the discovery of the "book of the law of the Lord" in the days of King Josiah around 621 BC (2 Kings 22-23). The behaviour of Josiah and his followers shows that they considered the book authoritative for them; the reason being the authority of the name Moses, the Prophet to whom God spoke face to face (Exod 33:11). There was, in fact, an earlier conviction that God had caused Moses to record certain events and laws (Exod 17:14; 24:3-4; 34:27), and so it may be supposed that the written texts existed and were attributed to Moses and ultimately to God's authority. We also find references to prophets writing down the word of the Lord which they had received (Isa 30:8; Jer 30:2; Hab 2:2). Such writings had a special claim to be considered sacred and to be regarded as the word of God. After the exile, we also read of the fully compiled Torah Ezra brought with him from Babylonia to Jerusalem (Neh 8:1).

By the end of the OT period, the Jews believed that they possessed sacred books written in words of absolute truth. These were books which they retained, even when to do so might mean death at the hands of persecutors (Dan 9:2; I Macc 1:59-60; 12:9). By the time the preface to Sirach was written, the three-fold division of the Jewish Canon (TNK) had already emerged; and all were in one way or the other said to have emerged through a sort of divine influence. Josephus lends credence to this view in his defence of the source he principally used in writing his first work, *The Jewish War*. For him the authors of his source, the 22 books of Jewish Scripture, were prophets inspired by God.

3.3.2: Inspiration and the New Testament

Jesus, his disciples, and those responsible for the NT in general show their full acceptance of the sacred, authoritative character of the OT. The words of the "Law and the Prophets" must be fulfilled; it was God or the Spirit who spoke through the OT writers; therefore the Scriptures cannot be broken" (Matt 5:17-18; Luke 24:26-27, 44; Mark 7:10, 13; 12:36; Acts 4:25; 28: 25). In the period immediately following the Pentecost, the early Church affirmed without question the inspiration, that is, the divine source, of "the scriptures", by which it meant the Jewish scriptures that would later be called by Christians the OT. Two passages are worth considering here.

2 Peter 1:19-21

> And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, *that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit* **(Latin: *Spiritu Sancto inspirati*)** spoke from God.

The word 'inspiration' that appears clearly in the Latin translation, refers both to the spoken as well as to the written word without distinguishing between the two. The point of this statement is to warn against individualistic, human interpretations of prophecy. The true interpretation of prophecy – so the author of the passage – must come from the Spirit of God, since the prophecies were originally spoken by the Spirit. This, of course,

does not mean that the prophets were merely passive in the process or that their natural faculties were superseded through some kind of ecstatic experience.

2 Tim 3:16

> All scripture is inspired (inspirata) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness…

What 2 Peter said of prophecies, the author of the Second Letter to Timothy extended to all scriptures, meaning the whole OT. That the entire OT is regarded as Scripture and therefore as inspired is evident in several strands of the NT. In 1 Tim 5: 18, Paul quotes from the OT passage (cf. Deut 25:4) to back up his point on paying wages to workers: "*For the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain"* (1 Tim 5:18). Jesus also cited the Scripture when he appointed and sent out the seventy evangelists into every town and place where He himself was about to come. In justifying why they should "remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide" (Luke 10:7), Jesus provided as a reason the fact that "*the labourer deserves his food"* (Matth 10: 10); a justification found in Lev 19:13 that reads: …*The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning*.

Granted, when the NT writers talk about 'the Scriptures', they are referring to the OT as we know it in substantially its present form. But when we recall that the author of 2 Peter placed the writings of Paul alongside what he calls 'the other scriptures,' by asserting that "*Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him*", he seems to suggest that Paul wrote what God has disclosed to him to write (2 Pet 3:16). In this way, he also affirms the status of the Letters of Paul as Scripture. From this, we can assume that with time there was a growing realization, among the early Christians that the NT writers were composing works comparable in character and authority with the OT Scriptures.

Although the writings of the OT as a whole (and by implication of the NT whenever this achieved the status of Scripture) are thus regarded as having a divine origin, the precise relationship between their divine origin and their human composition is not explained. As such it is difficult to see in these two passages the church's teaching on inspiration in its final development as to the relationship between the divine and human author.

However, we can make the connection from the fact that the Greek word translated into the Vulgate with "divinitus inspirata" means literally "God-breathed", a rare concept appearing only here in the whole bible. In Hellenistic religious world, this concept is used by seers, visionaries and diviners operating under divine influence. The fact that whoever operates under such influence is said to have been possessed by the divinity in question led some early church fathers to equate the human author with some instrument of some sort – a lyre, ink, and stylus or slate pencil – at the hands of the divine author.

3.4. Later Development of the Inspiration Concept

Tracing the long and complicated development of reflection on biblical inspiration in the early Church is both beyond the scope and outside the interests of this class. However, certain points in that development can serve as markers by which to map the theological territory within which a summary presentation of current position on this can be outlined.

The Council of Constantinople (381 AD) declared that the Holy Spirit had "spoken through the Prophets," and the Council of Florence (1441) acknowledged that the same

God was “author of both the Old and New Testament since the saints of both had spoken by the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.” The early Church Father also had similar convictions. One recalls, for instance, the words of St. Gregory: “Most superfluous it is to inquire who wrote these things – we loyally believe the Holy Spirit to be the author of the book. He wrote it who dictated it; He wrote it who inspired its execution” (cf. *Praefatio in Job,* n. 2). Among the popular assertions made by the Church Fathers are that God inspired the Scriptures; that they were written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit; that He used the human authors as a musician uses a musical instrument; that God spoke through them, etc. This is also the gist of the teaching on biblical inspiration as laid down by the Council of Trent (1546) and restated in Vatican 1 (1870).

3.5. The How of Inspiration: The Theory of Instrumental Causality

In the High middle ages, Thomas Aquinas compared biblical inspiration to prophetic illumination, while at the same time distinguishing between the principal and the instrumental author (auctor principalis and instrumentalis). This theory was later developed by Lagrange and Pierre Benoit.

The theory itself takes as its starting point the distinction between principal and instrumental causality. An instrument has a certain inherent power to produce the effect or accomplish the action it was designed for: a saw can cut through a log, a knife can carve the surface of wood, a brush can spread paint. An instrument, however, can do what it was designed to do only when it is applied, that is, put into operation or moved, by the user (the principal cause). An instrument is an extension of the one who wields it, and he uses it because his hand or finger could not work so well, or even at all, without it. the instrumental cause, when moved by the principal cause, is said to be elevated in that it produces an effect of an order higher than its own causality.

The effect produced by the principal cause moving an instrumental cause must be attributed to both causes, though in different ways, according to the level of causality proper to each. The painting must be attributed to both the artist and the brush. The brush strokes in a painting are the effect of the brush; but they are at the same time so much the effect of the artist and so characteristic of him that an expert can distinguish an original by a known master from a forgery on the basis of the brush strokes alone.

In an analogous way, the theory goes on to say, the Bible is the product of both God and man because God uses man as His instrument; each is totally the cause of the Bible, but on different levels of causality. God may be called the principal author, man the instrumental author. Man, elevated and moved by God, produces an effect he could not produce alone – a book which is the word of God.

While this analogy is helpful, it should not be understood mechanically. An instrument is used in a manner that accords with its nature. If it is said that God uses the human being as an instrument, it is to be understood that all those faculties proper to the human being – even to *this* human being – are brought into play. Thus God, in applying His human instrument to the task of composing a book, is said to utilise him as a creature having free will and an intellect, as a man with particular vocabulary, as a product of a particular tradition, and as a member of a particular age and culture. The writer’s free will remain intact, even though God moves him to will to write. Precisely how it is that God can move a human being to want to do something without infringing upon his free will is a

mystery; but this is true of every act that is performed under the influence of divine grace, and is not peculiar to the problem of inspiration.

Man's intellect, according to this theory, is affected by the grace of inspiration. The speculative judgement grasps the truth that God wants taught. The practical judgement decides how best to communicate it or to accomplish whatever is the end of the book to be written; this may be to exhort to good, console in time of affliction, draw others to love God, and so forth. The decision will involve the choice of the literary form to be used, and other similar matters implied in the theory of verbal inspiration.

Limitations of Instrumentality & the Social Character of Inspiration

Modern scholars feel that the theory of instrumental causality is no longer adequate to explain the inspiration of the Bible in all the complexity of its origins as we now understand them, even though it is admitted that no systematic and comprehensive alternative has been provided to take its place. Among the limitations is that when the analogy of instrumentality is pressed in all its logic, it leaves the human author not much more than a secretary. Again, the emphasis on God as literary author neglects the fact that fixation in writing may often be incidental to a far more important development in stages of oral tradition. A problem with "verbal inspiration" is raised on the grounds that content and literary conventions often did more to determine the words used than the author's choice.

Again, recent studies have revealed that materials found in the scriptures were not products of single individuals but emerged from oral traditions being handed on across several generations before they were put into writing; and that during both oral and written stages the material underwent many alterations in order to incorporate new insights into God's work. When then can we begin to talk of inspiration; only when these materials began to be written down or before? To answer this question by allusion to the distribution of the grace of inspiration to each one who contributed to the final product is somewhat mechanical and simplistic.

Karl Rahner proposed that we should understand inspiration in the NT as a grace which resides primarily in the primitive Church itself rather than in the individual authors; since these authors wrote simply as representatives of the Church. McKenzie points out that the unifying trait of the biblical literature is the recital of the saving deeds of God and the profession of faith of Israel. This recital and profession is shaped by the People of God rather than by the individual writers. What they recorded is the faith of the community, of which they are (for the most part) the anonymous spokesmen. McKenzie therefore wishes to regard the charism we call inspiration as residing in the community, and the biblical writers as spokesperson who record the faith elaborated in and by the community under the guidance of God or of His Spirit. This is a valid approach, although we need also to emphasise the role of some leaders – Moses & the prophets in the OT; apostles and elders (especially Paul) in the NT – in forming the community's faith, often against the opposition of the people as a whole.

3.5. Modern Views/Position on Inspiration

There are today different positions or views (sometimes even contradictory) on the inspiration of the bible. These views can be classified according to denominations or according to ideologies. A summary presentation of these views is given below.

3.6.1. Positions based on Denominations

3.6.1.1. The Evangelical View

Most conservative Christians accept the Bible's statements about itself. At times the traditional view of the Bible has been defined as implying that the Bible is "inerrant in the original manuscripts". However, other traditionalists have sought to guard against the inference that the Bible would be read as intended if measured by modern scientific values, ways of describing things, or conventions of precision, and prefer the terminology of 'biblical infallibility". On particular issues, these preferences of description represent sharp disagreements about particular approaches to interpretation.

Some evangelical Protestants have sought to characterise the conservative or traditional view as verbal plenary inspiration in the original manuscripts, by which they mean that every word (not just the overarching ideas or concepts) is meaningfully chosen under the superintendence of God. These Christians acknowledge that there is textual variation, some of which is accounted for by deviations from the autograph. In other cases, two biblical accounts of apparently identical events and speeches are reported to somewhat different effects and in different words, which this view accounts for by holding that the deviations are also inspired by God.

This view has been criticised as tending toward a dictation theory of inspiration, where God speaks and a human records his words, but the traditional view has always been distinguished from the dictation theory, which none of the parties regard as orthodox. Instead, these Christians argue that the Bible is a truly human product and its creation was superintended by the Holy Spirit, preserving the authors' works from error without elimination their specific concerns, situation, or style. This divine involvement, it is suggested, allowed the biblical writers to reveal God's own message to the immediate recipients of the writings, and to those who would come later, communicating God's message without corrupting it.

3.6.1.2 The Catholic view

As summarised by Karl Keating, the Roman Catholic apologetic for the inspiration of the bible first considers the scriptures as a merely historical source, and then, attempts to derive the divinity of Jesus from the information contained therein, illuminated by the tradition of the Catholic Church and by what they consider to be common knowledge about human nature. After offering evidence that Jesus is indeed God, they argued that His Biblical promise to establish a church that will never perish cannot be empty, and that promise, they believe, implies an infallible teaching authority vested in the Bible's own doctrine of inspiration is in fact the correct one.

3.6.1.3 The Modernist view

The Modernist doctrine of inspiration rejects the Bible's own claims for itself. Instead, in this view, other authorities must be established and utilized to determine the validity and truthfulness of the Bible. One such approach is that of Rudolf Bultmann, who argued that Christians must seek to "demythologize" the Bible by removing the layers of myth to get to the underlying historical facts; so that belief in the historical Jesus can be a very different thing from belief in the Jesus of Christian theology.

3.6.1.4 The Neo-orthodox doctrine

The Neo-orthodox doctrine of inspiration is postulates by saying that the Bible is the word of God, but not the words of God. It is only when one reads the text that it becomes the word of God to the person. This view is a reaction to the Modernist doctrine, which, according to the neo-orthodox view, eroded the value and significance of the Christian faith, and simultaneously a rejection of the ideal of textual inerrancy. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner were primary advocate of this doctrine.

3.6.2. Positions based on Modern Scholarship

3.6.2.1. Extreme Scepticism

According to some, inspiration is a pious theological belief that has no validity. Much NT criticism that emerged in Germany at the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century as a reaction to traditional Christian theology operated under this assumption. This reactive factor is still to be reckoned with even today, for some scholars and teachers counteract biblical literalism by debunking any special religious status for NT writings. For them, NT Christianity should be judged only in terms of its sociological import as minor religious movement in the early Roman Empire.

3.6.2.2. Too Unscholarly a View

Without committing themselves to any view positive or negative about inspiration, many interpreters would regard references to it as totally inappropriate in a scholarly study of the Scriptures. The fact that both Testaments were produced by believers for believers and were preserved by believers to encourage belief is not a factor that should enter into interpretation. When passages with theological imports present difficulties, proponents of this view disallow any appeal to inspiration or any other religious factor (e.g., church tradition) in their interpretation. Whether by intention or not, this attitude has the effect of making a doctrine of inspiration irrelevant.

3.6.2.3. The Literalist Attitude

This is at the other end of the spectrum and consists of biblical interpreters who would make divine inspiration so dominant a factor that the limitations of the human writers become irrelevant. God, they claim, knows all things and God communicates through the Scriptures; therefore the Scriptures respond to problems of all times, even those that the human authors never thought of. This stress on inspiration is often correlated with a sweeping theory of inerrancy whereby biblical data relevant to scientific, historical, and religious issues are deemed infallible and unquestionable. Practically, then, all biblical literature is looked on as historical; and apparent contrarieties, such as those between the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke must be harmonized.

Biblical literalism, since it makes everything divine, supplies a false certitude that often unconsciously confuses the human limitation with the divine message. A literalist interpretation destroys the very nature of the Bible as a human expression of divine revelation. We must understand that only human beings speak words. Therefore the valid description of the Bible as “God’s Word” refers to both the divine element (“God’s”) and the human element (“Word”).

3.6.2.4. The Centrist View or Attitude

The best answer to fundamentalism is not skepticism, but an appreciation of the divine and the human in revelation, with an invitation to take the human seriously. This is what scholars who take the centrist position on inspiration try to do. The majority of teachers and writers in the NT area are found in this category. Not only do they accept inspiration, they also deem it important for the interpretation of Scripture.

However, they do not think that God's role as author removed human limitations. Indeed, they affirm with the literalists that the God who providentially provided Israel a record of salvific history involving Moses and the prophets also provided for Christians a basic record of the salvific role and message of Jesus. But unlike the literalist, they equally affirm that those who wrote down the Christian record were time-conditioned people of the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE, addressing audiences of their era in the worldview of that period. They did not know the distant future. Although what they wrote is relevant for future Christian existence, their writing does not necessarily provide ready-made answers for unforeseeable theological and moral issues that would arise in subsequent centuries. God chose to deal with such subsequent problems not by overriding all the human limitations of the biblical writers but by supplying a Spirit that is a living aid in ongoing interpretation.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not because God wrote them but because His Holy Spirit breathed into the minds of the human authors what God wants to be put down for human salvation. The human authors themselves were not mere copiers or stenographers mechanically putting down in paper what God literally dictated. Rather, they retained their human capacities and capabilities while at the same time reflecting the mind of the divine author.

Evidences of the divine inspiration of the Bible abound in the Bibe itself in both the Old and the New Testaments as we have seen above. But exactly how this takes place is among the mystery of WHO God is and HOW He chooses to communicate Himself and His will to human beings. This mystery is what is discussed under the theme of Inspiration. While several attempts have been made to explain how this took place, each has its deficiencies and defects. But taken together, they help shed light on why we could really call the Bible God's Word in Human Language. And it is because of this that it is still the Holy Book of a lot of religious traditions that find in it the primary deposit of their faith.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt that in the Bible God puts His Word into the mouth the human authors to communicate to His human creatures. You have also learnt that the hagiographers did not write the words out of their own volition, but each wrote as he/she was directed by the Spirit of God. You will ever find in their language one uniform definition of their office, and of their inspiration. They speak; but it is no doubt their voice that makes itself heard but the voice of God.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Cite instances in the Bible that testify to its divine origin.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. What do you understand by the term *Inspiration* as discussed in this unit?

2. Comment on the following views on inspiration: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and Neo- orthodox

3. Name the various attempts by scholars to explain the how of inspiration and point out their deficiencies.

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UNIT 3: INFALLIBILITY AND INERRANCY OF THE SCRIPTURE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt that all Scriptures is inspired by God and profitable for teaching and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete and be equipped for every good work. You have also learnt that writers of the books of the Bible were inspired by the Spirit of God. In the NT, Jesus and his followers treated the OT as authoritative. Peter, for instance, claims that "no prophecy of Scripture was produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1: 20-21). The same Epistle speaks of the divine authority for the Apostles (2 Pet 3: 2) and includes Paul's letters as among the Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16).

What has all this to say about the veracity and authority of the claims made in the Bible? This is the question that we will try to answer in this unit on inerrancy and infallibility.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Define inerrancy and infallibility as they apply to the scriptures

Discuss the strength and weaknesses of the different views on infallibility and inerrancy of biblical truth claims.

3.0: MAIN CONTENT

3.1: Meaning of Infallibility and Inerrancy.

The notion of infallibility and inerrancy are often used interchangeably but they are not necessarily the same. Though they are, on etymological grounds, approximately synonymous, they are used differently. Infallibility refers to the incapability of erring in judgement or failing to bring true and correct judgments to adequate expression and is more properly applied to author of the Sacred Book. Inerrancy, in turn, has to do with the freedom from error that infallibility guarantees and is more properly predicated of the text. *Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so

safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe and reliable guide in all matters. Similarly, *inerrant* signifies the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistakes and so safeguards the truth that the Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions.

It has been traditional in Catholic (and most Protestant) circles to hold that the inerrancy of the Bible is a necessary consequence of its inspired character: if the Bible is the word of God, it is necessarily without error. But does inspiration imply infallibility, and what exactly is meant by infallibility and inspiration anyhow? Here, we touch upon an issue that constitutes the major difference between the fundamentalists and the progressives with regard to the Scripture.

3.2: Different Views on Infallibility and Inerrancy

3.2.1. The Fundamentalists' Option

Infallibility and inerrancy as essential notes of scripture are integral to a fundamentalist position that understands scripture to have originated miraculously (e.g., by divine dictation or verbal inspiration). As such, Scripture contains propositional revelation that makes an absolutely authoritative claim upon and constitutes the unique and absolute norm of faith. Christians who champion this cause believe that because a statement is made in the Bible, God's inspired Word; it must be true and reliable. They also argue, in defence of their belief that since God is the God of truth, whatever he says in the Bible must be true; hence the Bible must be infallible and inerrant.

The primary objection to the fundamentalist notion of inerrancy is that it is an indefensible claim in view of the evident factual inconsistencies Bible itself. In the first chapter of Genesis, for example, the animals are created before mankind; whereas in the second chapter they come after the first man. There is an obvious discrepancy here, but it is equally obvious that the author or editor who put these two accounts together did not consider that important nor contrary to the truth he was intent on teaching, that namely, which relates to God's activity as creator. Again, the Bible supposes a geocentric universe, and the notorious condemnation of Galileo was occasioned by the belief that the heliocentric theory he advocated must therefore be false.

Another major objection to this understanding of inerrancy is not empirical but theological, namely, that attributing inerrancy to the Bible constitutes a kind of biblical Docetism. It is analogous to such Christological assertions claiming that Jesus had all possible knowledge, even those not yet discovered in his days; or that he only appeared to die but could not really do so because he did not really have a material or physical, therefore, mortal nature. Such an understanding of inerrancy in the Bible would constitute a denaturing of the symbolic medium of revelation into a thin disguise for an overpowering divine presence that alone is real. As an offshoot of fundamentalism, it is an attempt to bend Jesus to religious security. According to Raymond Brown: "Fundamentalism is saying, 'you really don't have to think – this ancient document or statement is your answer, all set for you.' In the case of Bible fundamentalism, the Word of God is so much stressed that one forgets that human beings wrote the Bible and human beings received it."[3] A theology of symbolic revelation, by contrast, affirms the reality of

[3] Raymond Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible* (New York: Paulist, 1990), 43-48; 137-142.

the symbolic medium and takes completely seriously the consequences of its reality for the occurrence and nature of revelation.

3.2.2. The Progressive Understanding

Among the so-called progressives – we are using this for want of a better concept – there exists different attitudes on inerrancy depending on where one stand on the inspiration spectrum. Some would dispense altogether with inerrancy as a wrong deduction from the valid thesis that God inspired the Scriptures. Others share the view that however much we insist that the Bible contains the Word of God, the Bible does contain errors and contradictions (and as such constitutes an insuperable barrier to any claim that the Bible is infallible or inerrant). As a result, they look for some other view of the inspiration of the Bible which will help them resolve this difficulty.

One such view is that inspiration produces an inerrancy affecting religious issues but not science or history. For them therefore, all theological stances in the Scriptures would be inerrant. Still others, recognizing the diversity within the Scriptures even on religious issues, would maintain only a limited theological inerrancy.

While each of these views has a point or two to its favour, the sometimes unchristian and unbiblical rift that exists between them does not move us forward in the discussion. On this account, some scholars have suggested a shift of focus in approaching the question of the effects of inspiration. They see a problematic in a quantitative understanding of inerrancy that limits it to certain passages or certain issues in the light of the fact that inerrancy flows from inspiration that covers all Scriptures. As such, they advocate for placing more emphasis on a qualitative understanding whereby all Scripture is inerrant to the extent that it serves the purpose for which God intended it.

3.2.3. A More Balanced Scholarly Position

The crucial point here is the concept of what God wished to be written. If we look again at 2 Tim 3:16, we find that the stated purpose of the Scriptures is to provide the instruction that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, and this is then detailed in terms of teaching, reproof, correction and training which enable the man of God to be fully equipped for every good work. The purpose of God in the composition of the Scriptures was to guide people to salvation and the associated way of life.

From this statement we may surely conclude that God made the Bible all that it needs to be in order to achieve this purpose. It is in this sense that the word ‘infallible’ is properly applied to the Bible; it means that it is ‘in itself a true and sufficient guide, which may be trusted implicitly.’ We may therefore suggest that ‘infallible’ means that the Bible is entirely trustworthy for the purpose for which God inspired it.

Closely connected to this is the issue of the limits of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation. It is necessary to interpret a text properly, to know its correct meaning, before asserting that what a text says is true or otherwise.

A key hermeneutical principle taught by the Reformers is the analogy of faith, which demands that apparent contradictions be harmonised if possible. If a passage appears to permit two interpretations, one of which conflicts with another passage and one of which does not, the latter must be adopted. Probably the most important aspect of this approach is the understanding of inerrancy in terms of truth and falsity rather than terms of error. It has been far more common to define inerrancy as “without error,” but

a number of reasons are preserved for relating inerrancy to truth and falsity. To use "error" is to negate a negative idea.

So to understand inerrancy that takes into account the purpose for which God inspired the Scriptures ("for the sake of our salvation") limits the guarantee against error to it, and offers a much more defensible position than the originally proposed assertion that the Bible is free from error "in every field, religious or profane." Nevertheless, this assurance of truth is of great importance, for the Bible has always been authoritative and normative for Christians in those things which are taught "for the sake of our salvation."

The effect of drawing out the significance of inspiration in this way is to shift the focus of discussion from the truth of biblical claims to the Bible's adequacy for what God intends it to do. Thus, we find that by so doing we have opened up the possibility of a fresh approach to the Bible which may prove to be illuminating. Accordingly, we may note that a concern for the truth of the Bible in every part may be too narrow and even inappropriate. Properly speaking, 'true' and its opposite, 'false' are qualities of statements or propositions which convey factual information. But the concept of truth is a complex one that is not easily applicable to every part of the Bible. More than asking of every statement contained in the Bible whether it is true or false, we should be asking in what ways the Bible need to be true in order to fulfil its God-intended purpose, and if it is in fact true in these ways.

3.3. The Bible and Science

The first effect of advances in science seemed to be a blow at biblical truth and authority. For this reason, the early reactions of believers sometimes took the form of a rejection of scientific findings (as in the condemnation of Galileo or the hostility towards the theory of evolution), on the one hand; or of concordism (the attempt to show that the Bible says the same things as science, on the other. However, it was soon seen that both these positions were untenable, and the answer was found in a more nuanced understanding of biblical truth. The biblical authors, as we now realise, were children of their own times and shared the pre-scientific worldview of their contemporaries. Many of their statements are therefore incorrect from a modern scientific point of view.

To admit this is not to reject the authority of the Bible, for such inaccuracies were no part of what the biblical authors intended to teach "for the sake of our salvation." God could have prevented such misstatements only by giving a countless series of revelations. But this was not done because it was not necessary for the ends for which God inspired the Bible.

While it would be wrong to limit biblical truth simply to "matters of faith and morals", it is clear that science is not what the biblical authors were concerned about. How surprised we would be if the Bible began with the periodic table of elements! Such information is not unimportant, but to give it in the Bible would not advance the cause of salvation history. The Biblical authors frequently betray the naïve pre-scientific conceptions of their day; it is one of the tasks of interpreters to seek beneath these conceptions what is being taught "for the sake of our salvation."

3.4. The Bible and Progressive Moral Development

One last word should be said concerning certain "moral" imperfections that appear in the bible, especially in the OT (but also noticeable in the NT) that appear obvious in the light

of more advanced morality. Here reference is not being made to the serious failings of great biblical figures or personages. In recounting such things, the Bible is simply being truthful and realistic; the wonder of God's work is seen more fully when we recognise that it has been accomplished through the fragile clay of human nature.

Rather, what we mean are cases in which biblical authors take for granted that God approves of things which our informed conscience tells us must be condemned. The OT writers even present them as commands in the mouth of God. Typical examples include God's command to Abraham to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice (Gen 22) or His command to the Israelites to wipe out their entire enemies (Josh 6:16-21; 8:2; 1 Sam 15:1-3).

Suffice it here to cite the famous remark of Bishop Butler that all revelation of God to man is "a divine self-disclosure within human experience, and therefore subject to the limitations of the human recipient…. If it is a revelation directed towards action, it will take form and shape in the conscience of the recipient and will be to some extent limited by his existing moral nature."[4] Difficulties concerning biblical truth will only be laid to rest through a more accurate determination of the author's end; and this can often be obtained through the study of the literary form of the individual piece.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The belief in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scripture flows directly from the claim that it was divinely inspired. In the Holy Scripture, God communicated to human beings through human beings the truth that he meant for their salvation. As long as these truths are communicated by God, they are free from error and as such can be trusted and used to instruct the person of faith in things that lead to salvation.

5.0. SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that because the bible was inspired by God, it teaches infallible truths that are free from error. You have also learnt how different scholars and faith-traditions understand and use the two concepts of infallibility and inerrancy. When all is said and done, the concept of divine inspiration and the associated concepts of infallibility and inerrancy of Holy Scripture may be in the end a matter of faith. But for this to be a most reasonable faith, we still have to confront the questions raised by modern biblical criticism. Can we really maintain the entire trustworthiness of the Bible in the teeth of biblical criticism? That remains the question that we all have to ponder. It is not enough to rule biblical criticism out of court because of its sceptical conclusions.

SELF STUDY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Distinguish between the two concepts of Infallibity and Inerrancy.

6.0. TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Give the strengths and weaknesses of the three views on Infallibility and Inerrancy of the Scripture
2. How can the claim of Inerrancy be reconciled with modern science?

[4] B.C. Butler, *The Church and the Bible* (Baltimore-London: Helicon Press, 1960), 71.

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UNIT 4: FORMATION OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS' CANONS

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt that because the Scripture and the writers of the books of Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, the truth that they communicated are free from error and reliable and profitable for teaching and for training the man/woman of God in righteousness that they may be complete and be equipped for every good work. You have also learnt the meaning of infallibility and inerrancy and how these apply to scientific truths and progress in moral developments.

In this unit, you will learn about the coming to be of the Old and New Testament Canon. Canon, you will learn, is the list of books which the Church uses in the public worship. For example, at worship time, the Apostolic Church used some OT passages as Scripture which contain the oracle of God. The books in the Canon are acknowledged as inspired Scripture for faith and practice by the Christians. We shall trace the growth of a concept of a canon and the Canon itself, the development of the canons of the Old and New Testament as well as the earliest collections of both.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Explain the meaning of the canon concept.

Describe the development of the Bible Canon

State how Old and New Testaments came into being

Give a list of the earliest collections of both Old and New Testament canons

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The Bible has little to say about the process of the collecting the various canonical books. However, this should not surprise us, since the writings were accepted by God's people as they were received. But, we are given some idea of the gradual development of the canon.

The writings of Moses were immediately accepted and laid the groundwork for a collection of authoritative writings to which prophetic works were added. The Torah were stored in the tabernacle beside the Ark of the Covenant (Deut 17:18f). They were read in the hearing of all Israelites (Deut 31:11). Some future kings had a copy of them in order that they might base their decisions on them (18:15-19). On the other hand, Moses did predict that future prophets would arise to speak God's word among the people of Israel (Deut.18:15-19). In addition to this, he gave instructions for judging the prophets in order that false ones be exposed and rejected (Deut 13:15). Besides, other writers, such as Joshua and Samuel also added their oracles to prior ones that were written by Moses as they were inspired by God. All these steps were taking by these writers as they were inspired by God.

In this unit, we shall examine how these steps were formalized to the extent that we have today a collection that could be refered to as a Canon of the Bible.

3.1. Understanding the Canon Concept

Etymologically, the word canon comes from the Greek *kainow*, itself derived from a Semitic root (Hebrew *qaneh*), where it means essentially a pipe or a tube. In profane Greek, it is used to designate a curtain rod, a bedpost, and a stick kept for drawing a straight line. By extension, it came to mean "rule" or "standard," a tool used for determining proper measurement such as level, plumbline, ruler or rod used in architecture. In the course of time, it then took on metaphoric meanings, becoming as it were a technical term employed in different fields of life to mean model, standard, paradigm, boundary, chronological list, and tax or tariff schedule. It did not take time before the word assumed multiple meanings, denoting sometimes the standard for evaluating the authenticity of faith, and sometimes referring only to certain aspects of the church's life.

Of all the NT authors, only Paul employed the *kanon* concept, a concept that with time came to play an immense role in the history of Roman Catholicism. Even in Paul, the meanings of the word vary from context to context. Sometimes, it refers to rule or standard (Phil 3:16; Gal 6:16); and at other times, to limit (2 Cor 10:13, 15-16). Especially as used in the Galatian test, *kanon* seems to have the same sense that it does in classical Greek: namely, a measuring standard. Thus, Paul could write to the churches of

Galatia: “Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule (***to kanoni tou***), upon the Israel of God.”

With this concept, Paul summarizes not only the content of his letter, but also his entire teaching and preaching about the essence of the Christian life. The salvation/justification through the Cross removes the person, who opens him/herself to it, from the sphere of the world and its concepts and standards and places him/her in a new creation. The individual operates in a sphere of reality with different standards and different concepts.

It is in this connection and with this meaning in view that the word canon occurred for the first time in the vocabulary of the early Christians. It describes the simple criterion, according to which Paul judges whether somebody belongs to Christ or not, whether one belongs to the Israel of God in a radically new way that admits of no earthly differences, a criterion that determines whether Paul can, in all sincerity, offer him/her the promise of God’s peace and mercy. It is only here that the word *kanon* was employed in the entire NT in the sense of the norm for the authenticity of one’s claim to being a Christian.

Philo of Alexandria seems to have been the first to use the term to indicate the collection of books normative for faith, in contrast to other works which may be useful for edification but are not considered normative in the above sense. Ever since then, the word has come to be used with reference to the corpus of scriptural writings that is considered authoritative and standard for redefining and determining “orthodox” religious beliefs and practices. Books not considered authoritative and standard are often called “non-canonical” or “extracanonical.”

When the term began in the 4th century AD to be applied to Christian writings, it was with the sense of “list:” a document was said to be “in the canon” or canonical if it was “on the list” of those writings which were read or were permitted to be read in Christian assemblies of worship. This entry consists of two entries: one covering the canon of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., the Christian “Old Testament”), and another covering the specifically Christian writings comprising the “New Testament.” When used of the Scriptures, therefore, the word “canon” designates the collection of books which the Church accepts as inspired. Since no scientific or other merely human investigation can determine inspiration, this can be known only by the authority of God made known through the teaching authority of His Church.

From this assertion arise two questions. First, the historical question: which books have been recognised as canonical by the Church and when were they so proclaimed? Second, the theological question: how can the inspired character of these books be recognized by the Church?

The first question, that is, of the official list of books included in the Bible, was not finally settled by the Roman Catholic Church until 1546, when the Council of Trent established the forty-five books of the OT and the 27 books of the NT as the inspired contents of the Bible. These books however had long been universally recognized as canonical. The authoritative pronouncement of Trent had only the character of a reaffirmation in the face of the doubts raised by the Reformation concerning some of these books. The official consensus within the Church that Trent reaffirmed had not been arrived at easily, however, and it will be necessary to investigate the steps by which it was reached.

3.2. Canon and Scripture

It is necessary at this stage to distinguish between canon and scripture. Obviously, "canon" presumes "scripture," that is, the recognition of certain writings as possessing peculiar status or importance. "Scripture" means "texts that are revered as especially sacred and authoritative."[5] "Canon," however, is a matter of a definitive, closed list of such texts. Thus, the availability of scripture does not imply a canon, but a canon presupposes scripture and delimits its scope. The existence of scripture as well as canon implies the existence of a religious community that accords status and authority to certain texts. It goes without saying that the community in question believes that such status and authority actually belongs to and adhere in the text because of its subject matter, God in relation to human beings.

Long before the expression "canon" and "canonical" were invented, the NT was using the word "Scriptures" to denote those books that were sacred (Matt 21:42; John 5:39; Acts 18:24). Books so identified were accorded a certain objective sacred quality which differentiated them from all other non-sacred books. According to the Talmud, the phrase "defile the hands" was used by the Jewish community in connection with these sacred books. Hence, anyone who approached or touched them had to undergo certain ritual of hand washing similar to what the High Priest does prior to his putting on and after taking off the holy garments of his office on the Day of atonement (Lev 16:24).

3.3. The Canon of the Old Testament

The individual books of the OT had a very varied history. This includes the formation of wider complexes like the great collection which comprised the Pentateuch and the historical books which follow, or the collection of the prophetic books. In this way there came into being a collection of writings which were recognized as 'canonical.'

The three great parts of the Jewish Canon – the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings – were accepted as authoritative and became relatively fixed in that order: the Law (1.e., the Pentateuch during the 4th century BC; the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings) and the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets) around 200 BC; and the Writings (Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1-2 Chronicles) possible as early as 100 BC. These are the books accepted as inspired by believing Jews.

3.3.1. How the Old Testament came into being.

Historically, the sense of the beginnings of the canon is found in Exod 24:7 where Moses takes the 'Book of the Covenant'. Another passage that has to be mentioned in this unit is Neh 8:8 in which Ezra "read from the book of God, clearly". Ezra did not simply read the law but he accompanied it with an interpretation (which would be about 444 BCE). A writing that originated in the Hellenistic period and dated around 100 CE speaks of how Ezra, was supernaturally empowered to recall the Scripture, writing out the books in forty days (Ezra 14:14). Likewise, 2 Macc 2:13 says that Nehemiah was also responsible for the collection of some sacred books that comprised the OT.

[5] William Graham, "Scripture," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion (ed. Mircea Eliade,* New York: Macmillan, 1987) 13. 133.

3.3.2. How Prophets Testified of the Spirit that makes them speak

In the Scripture passages below, you will find in their language a unanimous agreement among the prophets as to their understanding of their office and of their inspiration. They are the ones speaking, no doubt, because it is their voice that makes itself heard; but they speak of God. It is no doubt their lips that moved; but their words are not only theirs; they are, at the same time, the words of God.

Among the phrases associated with the prophets are the followings: "*Hear the word of the LORD*" **(**Isa 28:14); *"The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me, his word is upon my tongue"* **(**2 Sam 23:2); "*Thus says the LORD*" (Jer 9:22). Others include: "*Son of man, go get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them"* (Ezek 3:4); "*The word of the LORD that came to Hosea"* (Hos 1:1);. *"The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi"* (Mal 1:1), etc. Such a figure of speec h is not only continued with the later prophets: "*In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Hagai the prophet to Zerubabel* (Hag 1:1), it is also continued even in the NT. Testifying to the deeds associated with their preaching of the risen Lord, Peter says with reference to the God of Jesus: "*Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 4:24-25).

What all these quotations make clear is that in the language of the Scriptures, the prophesies of the men of God are the words of God that he put into their mouths to speak to their people.

3.3.3. Historical Source

Historical data reveals little information about the actions of the synods or of other authoritative bodies with regard to the formation of the OT Canon. This is because such authoritative bodies do not have any great share in its formation. The Bible derives its authority neither from ecclesiastical statements nor from any human authority.

3.3.4. The Bible self-authenticating its divine authority

The Bible is self-authenticating and as such radiates its divine authority itself. Through the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, human beings receive an eye which enables them to catch this light. This is because the Holy Spirit has given us testimony in our hearts that the Word of God comes from God to us in the universe.

Although it is the Church that has acknowledged these books as being inspired by God, yet it is neither the Church Council nor any other human authority that has canonized the OT books. For these books possessed and exercised divine authority before the decision of the Church or other bodies accepting them as divine authority for believers.

3.4. Variations of the Old Testament Canons

It is impossible to say exactly when the individual stages of the collection and formation of the OT canon came to a conclusion. It may be regarded as certain that the Jewish Canon was definitively fixed before the end of the 1st century CE., though it is likely that the process was practically complete as much as two centuries earlier. Below are among the earliest collections of the OT canon.

3.4.1. The Canon of the Old Testament According to Josephus

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. 37- 100 C) appears to be the earliest extra-biblical witness on the contents and limits of the OT canon. In his response to the anti-Semite Apion, he wrote:

> We do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time.
>
> Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as King of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of events of their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for conduct of human life.
>
> From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier prophets, because of the failure of exact succession of the prophets.[6]

From this quotation, it can be inferred that for Josephus the qualifications needed in a book for it to become part of the canon is that it had to have been composed during the period between Moses and Esdras; in other words, a *terminus ad quem* was set for the composition of books which were divinely inspired and therefore eligible to enter the canon with the reign of Artaxerxes 1 of Persia in the fifth century BCE. The number 22, it has been observed, has been connected with the fact that there were also twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

From later Christian testimony which consistently referred to the same twenty-two book-count, it is possible to reconstruct a list of those twenty-two books and to show that the list corresponds to the thirty-eight books of our present-day OT; the reason is that Josephus' figure is arrived at by a different calculation and excludes the Song of Song. At a glance, Josephus list includes

5 BOOKS OF MOSES	13 BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS	4 HYMNS AND PRECEPTS
1. Genesis	1. Joshua	1. Psalms
2. Exodus	2. Judges-Ruth	2. Proverbs
3. Leviticus	3. (1 & 2) Samuel	3. Song of Solomon
4. Numbers	4. (1 & 2) Kings	4. Ecclesiastes
5. Deuteronomy	5. Isaiah	
	6. Jeremiah-Lamentations	
	7. Ezekiel	

[6] Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.8.38-41

	8. The Twelve (the minor Prophets)	
	9. Daniel	
	10. Job	
	11. (1 & 2) Chronicles	
	12. Ezra-Nehemiah	
	13. Esther	

3.5.1. The Great Synagogue Hypothesis

A sixteenth-century Jewish teacher named Elias Levita (d. 1549 CE) proposed that Ezra and his associates, the men of the Great Synagogue established the correct text, the correct number, and the arrangement of the books of the Bible. But the problem with this proposal is that neither Scripture itself nor history gives us any warrant for linking Ezra or a "Great Synagogue" (a conclave that undertook an alleged canonical agenda not supported by Nehemiah 8) to the closing of the canon. The majority of scholars today deny the existence of such a body of men as the Great Synagogue with appropriate authority to fix the number or order of the books that would be the standard for faith and practice in the believing community.

3.5.2. The Fixation of the Canon according to Fourth Esdras

Another tradition preserved in the pseudepigraphical book of IV Esdras 14:18ff supposes that all the sacred books were burnt or lost during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, causing Ezra and his five companions rewrite them in forty days and forty nights. According to this view, it was Ezra then who caused to be written, by dictating them to assistants, all the writings which are preserved in the Hebrew canon today. He did this about thirty years afterwards, i.e., about 557, following a divine vision which commanded him to act in this way the twenty-four canonical books corresponding to the twenty-four priestly divisions in Israel.

4 Esdras list had the following order: the five of the Pentateuch; the 8 of the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets); and the 11 of the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemia, and Chronicles). The figure 24 does not differ much from that of Josephus. As a matter of fact, the difference is accounted for by assuming that Josephus combines Ruth with Judges, Lamentations with Jeremiah, while IV Esdras probably regards Ruth and Lamentations as separate books. In addition to these canonical books, Ezra and his colleagues were also credited with the authorship of other seventy secret books intended for the wise.

This theory also suffers from the same problem as the first, as it is completely unsubstantiated by any external historical data. If it has any historical basis, it may refer to the composition of the apocalyptic and pseudepigraphical books, only some of which have come down to us and even then only in a variety of translations.

3.5.3. The So-Called Council of Jamnia/Jabneh/Javneh

Another view, once popular but increasingly losing support in recent times has it that the closing of the Palestinian canon took place around the turn of the century. Jewish traditions mention assemblies, one of which is said to have met in Jerusalem around 65 CE, i.e., before the final destruction of the capital in 70 CE, and another at Jabneh (Greek Jamnia) around 90, i.e., before the last rebellion of Bar Kochba in 132-135. According to this opinion, it was at Jamnia that the issue of the issue of the final canon of the OT was discussed and settled.[7]

In recent times, however, the existence of these assemblies has been seriously challenged, since evidences for them were purely circumstantial. Among the reasons given for this rejection is that Jamnia gives no evidence of settling or even discussing the question of the canon. Even if there were gatherings similar to a council, what was discussed was the interpretation of Song of Solomon, Esther and Ecclesiastes. Even these discussions were not binding, for they returned to the same questions a century later.[8] Moreover, the discussion arose because the canonical status of these two books was already assumed. As a matter of fact, "the Jamnia hypothesis", concluded Jack P. Lewis, "appears to be one of those things that has come to be true due to frequent repetition of the assertion rather than to its being actually supported by the evidence."[9] P. Schäfer, a student of the Jewish canon is more direct in his rejection of this hypothesis: "The widespread theory that the canon was finally established by a 'synod' in Jammnia (Jabneh) about AD 100 is historically incorrect."[10]

3.5.3. The Septuagint

After the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek became the common language in much of the Near East, even in the large Jewish colonies which had grown up in Palestine, in Egypt and elsewhere. Because Hebrew, in which most of the Jewish Scriptures had been written, was no longer familiar to these Jews, a Greek translation of their sacred books was needed. Around the middle of the 3rd century BC, the Pentateuch was translated, and at various times other books of the OT also found their way into Greek. Much of this work was done at Alexandria. The collection of the Greek translations of the Jewish Scriptures was called the Septuagint (LXX).

The name itself derives its name from a Legend contained in the ***Letter of Aristeas***, a pseudepigraphic Jewish writing composed in Greek towards 100 BCE. According to this legend, on the orders of King Ptolemy II (285-246 BCE), the Torah (Pentateuch) is said to have been translated in seventy-two days by seventy-two scholars (six from each of the 12 tribes). These seventy-two scholars were lodged on the island of Pharos so that they could be free to work without interruption and had all the material they needed at their disposal. A later elaboration of this legend has it that after intensive labour, each in utter isolation, the translators arrived at an identical translation. These amplifications were meant to demonstrate the inspired character of the translation as well, and this argument

[7] Edward Robertson, „Jamnia", Encyclopadea Britannica (1970), 12:87.
[8] Cf. Sid Leiman, *The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1976), 121-124.
[9] Jack P. Lewis, "What Do We Mean by Jabneh?" in *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (1964), 132.
[10] See his "Die sogennante Synode von Jabne. Zur Trennung von Juden und Christen im ersten/zweiten Jh.v.Chr." in *Judaica* 31, (1975), 54-64, 116-124)

is indirectly put forward towards the end of the Letter when it is said that anyone who alters the text in any way, by either addition or subtraction, is accursed – a formula used exclusively for works considered to be divinely inspired.

There is little to suggest that the LXX views the Pentateuch (Torah) as a separate entity. Rather it was primarily considered history in the same sense as the books that followed. There is no tripartite division in the LXX as in the MT, suggesting that such a division of the Pentateuch was either not yet known, or more likely, not of full canonical status by the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the break of Christianity from Judaism. Rather, the LXX tends to put the historical books together in the order 1-4 Kingdoms (Samuel-Kings), Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther. Apart from the variation in order of books, the LXX also included some writings that were never part of the Hebrew collection. Some had originally been written in Hebrew (Sirach, 1 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith), while others had been composed in Greek (Wisdom, 2 Maccabees). The term deutero-canonical books was adopted in the 16th century to refer to these books.

It is difficult to know exactly what authority was attributed to the deutero-canonical books by the Greek-speaking Jews. These books are never cited by Jews with the technical formula "It is written…" Nevertheless, there were widely known and highly esteemed. Sirach was frequently quoted by the rabbis, and fragments of Sirach and Tobit have been found at the Qumran. Passages from some of them (Sirach, Wisdom, 2 Maccabees) are alluded to by NT writers.

3.5.6. The Christian OT Canon

The LXX collection made by the Greek-speaking Diaspora was taken over by the early Church as well as additions to Daniel (3:24-90; 13; 14) and to Esther. In so doing, it was following the lead given by the apostles and other NT writers. Not only did they borrow from deutero-canonical books, they usually employed the LXX. The early Christian writers (with few exceptions) generally cited the deutero-canonical books as Scripture and listed them among the books of the Canon.

The LXX also formed the basis of the official Latin translation (the Vulgate) that is attributed to Jerome under the tutelage of a Jewish rabbi in Bethlehem. St. Jerome himself referred to the deutero-canonical books of the LXX as "Apocrypha" – a term intended to suggest a mysterious origin and not a spurious character. And while he adopted the content and order of the LXX as he knew it, by translating a clearly proto-Masoretic copy of the text of the Jewish Bible he in large measure brought the Vulgate into closer textual relation to what we know as the MT.

In agreement with St. Augustine, the Council of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 419) listed the deuteron-canonical books in the Canon. Since these were local councils, their decisions were not binding for the universal Church. But they did help to settle the matter. The Council of Florence published the same Canon in 1441. Since the time of the Reformation, the Hebrew canon has been the Bible of the Protestant churches. While keeping a generally LXX sense of the order of books after the Pentateuch, the Reformers limited the content of their OT to that of the Jewish canon. This rejection goes back to Luther who denied the inspirational character of these books, even though he considered them useful for reading and so included them in an appendix to the Bible. Luther followed St. Jerome's lead in calling these books Apocrypha, a term regularly used for them by Protestants.

In 1546 at the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the deuteronomical/apocryphal books to be sacred and canonical and to be accepted "with equal devotion and reverence". At the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther did not regard these books as Scripture but as "useful and good for reading". In his German translation of the Bible, he accepted the view of Jerome denying their canonicity and placed them at the end of the Old Testament with the superscription "Apocrypha".

Catholics speak of these books as "deuterocanonical" to indicate that their canonical status as Scripture was settled later than that of the protocanonical books; others usually refer to these books as Apocrypha. Protestants generally continued this practice in their translations of the Bible into such languages as Swedish, Norwegain, Danish, Stovenian, French, Spanish and English. Among Christians who do not accept these books as Scripture, there is, however, widespread agreement as to their importance in providing much valuable information on Jewish history, life, thought, worship, and religious practice during the centuries immediately prior to the time of Christ. Accordingly, they make possible a clearer understanding of the historical and cultural situation in which Jesus lived and taught.

3.5.4. The Dead Seas Scroll and the OT Canon Discussion

Like in all other areas of biblical scholarship, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls between `947 and 1961 north of Wadi Qumran and the NW of end of the Dead Sea has caused a review of answers formerly given to questions relating to the canons of Judaism and Christianity and denominations and groups within them. All of the literatures emanating from the Qumran caves seem to have originally been part of a denominational, theological library belonging to a single Jewish group which treasured them in the period between its founding in the middle of the 2nd century BCE until its disintegration and dispersion at the hands of Roman troops in the spring of 68 CE.

All of the discoveries from all of the areas noted date from before the development of codices; all of it, with the very few exceptions of writing on ostraca and wood, was found or was originally in scroll form whether written on leather or papyrus and in one case on copper. This makes the question of the shape of the canon at Qumran, even indeed in Judaism during the time of the writing, copying, and reading of the scrolls, difficult to discern; among the primary reason why decisions on the shape of the Jewish canon precisely during the period of the scrolls remain very difficult to answer.

Of particular interest to the canon discussion is the fact that every book of the Jewish Bible with the single exception of Esther has been identified among the scrolls and fragments from the eleven Qumran caves. Equally interesting is the fact that the Qumran library contained much in the original languages of what are called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha as well as literary works heretofore unknown. While it is simply not possible to be sure how many of these were considered canonical in function in the thinking of the Qumran faithful, the discovery of such a library that includes the six extra books found in the Catholic Old Testament has gone a long way to debunk the myth that these books invented by Catholics as a justification for some of their doctrines, since the Qumran community itself was destroyed long before the advent of Christ and Christianity

3.5. The Canon of the NT

At its inception, Christianity inherited from Judaism a rich trove of scripture, including the Law of Moses, the prophetic books, and a great variety of other writings that were authoritative from various groups of Jews, but it did not inherit a canon, for Judaism had not in the 1st century made a list or collection setting limits to its scripture. Christianity, in turn, produced a large body of its own literature (letters, gospels, narratives of apostolic acts, apocalypses, church orders, etc.), much of which became authoritative for various Christian groups, and so came to be regarded as scripture alongside Jewish scripture.

But Christianity did not for a long time attempt to create a canon. It was not until the end of the 2nd century did Christians begin to take an interest in defining the scope of authoritative Jewish writings and thus begin to think in terms of an OT. And it was not until the 4th century did Christians begin to draw up lists of authoritative Christian writings and thus attempt to form a "New Testament" canon, the extent of which was not fully agreed even in the 5th century. Hence during most of its first four centuries, the Church had scripture, but no set canon.

Three factors must be born in mind in any attempt to reconstruct the history of the process of NT canon.

1. The actual use of early Christian documents by Christian writers of the 2nd through the 5th centuries, noting the frequency and manner of their citations and inferring the value they attached to them.

2. Explicit discussions and judgments by individual writers or ecclesiastical councils about the authority of various documents and

3. The contents and arrangements of ancient manuscripts, together with the various aids they include.

All of these, however, must be evaluated in the light of what is otherwise known about the history of the early Church, of which the history of the canon is part, and to which it is deeply indebted.

3.5.1. The History of Component Collections

The NT canon is not so much a collection of individual documents as it is a collection of collections. its major components are a collection of gospels, a collection of letters of Paul, a collection of "catholic epistles," Acts and Revelation. Each of these smaller collections had its own distinctive history, and must be treated individually.

a.The Letters of Paul

Paul's letters are the earliest surviving Christian writings and the earliest to be collected. Thanks to his missionary activities, Paul was reputed over a wide area, and it did not take much time before his letters claimed the authority of an apostle of Christ. By the early 2nd century, Paul's letters had been gathered up and were known as a group by Ignatius, Polycarp and the author of 2 Peter (cf. 3:15-16).

The earliest known form of the collection of Paul's letters contained 10 letters, omitting the Pastorals. This collection seems to have been available in two different editions, one with the letters arranged by decreasing length, giving the order Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians (+ Philemon); and the other,

apparently attempting to order the letters chronologically, giving the order Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians (= Laodiceans), Colossians, (+ Philemon), Philippians. The latter order is attested for Marcion (ca. 140 AD). The collection of 10 letters was eventually superseded by a collection of 13 letters, the Pastorals being added. And it is this sequence that came to be adopted in today's New Testament.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which even the early Church doubted was written by Paul, nevertheless came ultimately to be attached to the collection of Pauline letters, ordinarily at the end, after the personal letters. This document had been respected and used in the Egyptian church from early time, and it appears within the Pauline collection (standing second after Romans) in the earliest extant manuscripts of Pauline collection P^{46} (which has an Egyptian provenance). In the Western church, however, Hebrews had little popularity, and its authority did not become established there until the 4th century.

b. The Gospels

From the beginning, Christianity attributed the highest authority to "the Lord," preserving in memory and transmitting by word of mouth accounts of his teachings and acts. The earliest gospels are partial deposits of this oral tradition, but the oral tradition was so rich in content and established by custom that it persisted well beyond the first written gospels and was respected, and often preferred to written accounts, until about the middle of the 2nd century. Drawing on it, gospels continued to be written during the 2nd century.

The composition of written gospels was an effort, on the one hand, to collect and codify Jesus-traditions, but, on the other hand, to also interpret them for particular situations. No less than the letters of Paul, the gospels are occasional documents, composed in and directed to specific local Christian groups, and so each has a distinctive character. Accordingly, it was at first customary for a given Christian community to know and use only one such document.

The history of gospel literature in the 2nd century was governed by two opposing tendencies. (1) The desire for a comprehensive and theologically adequate gospel led to a proliferation of such writings. (2) The desire for a single, self-consistent gospel worked to reduce the number, either by advocating one gospel against others or by conflating several such documents into one.

The prime example of this last tendency is the *Diatessaron* of Tatian (ca. 170 CE), which ingeniously weaves together in one narrative most of the contents of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and adds some elements from oral tradition. This effort symptomizes the problem posed by multiple gospels, and shows also that although the gospels were very much valued for their contents, they had not acquired sacrosanct status as individual texts. Their texts were not beyond alteration in the earlier 2nd century either, as significant additions were clearly made to Mark (the various longer endings after 16:8) and John (chapter 21 and 7:53-8:11).

Justin Martyr (ca. 150) is the first Christian writer to show a knowledge and appreciation of several gospels, which he called "memoirs" of the apostles. But he seems not to have known John, and draws often on oral tradition or on other gospels not known to us and so did not invest exclusive authority in the gospels that ultimately became canonical. As a matter of fact, John was little known or used by 2nd century Christian writers, except among Gnostics, who valued it highly. This may explain its unpopularity, but perhaps the

strongest reservations about John arose from recognition of its extensive differences in outline, substance, and style from other, more popular gospels. Rather than try to reconcile these, it was easier to neglect John altogether.

The collection of four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) which came to be incorporated in the canon arose only near the end of the 2nd century, and first in the Western church. Irenaeus (ca. 180) had to argue inventively for it, while in the Eastern Church much use was still being made of other gospels. This collection was a compromise among the competing tendencies, resources, and needs of earlier usage, and struck a balance between an indefinite plurality of gospels and exclusive use of one gospel.

The collection as such was thought of and entitled as *the gospel*, and each member of the collection was known as the gospel *according to* its putative author. In this "fourfold gospel" the tension between plurality and unity was not resolved, but was perpetuated in manageable form. It is notable that the Gospels acquired their scriptural standing as a group and not individually, and that religious authority was vested in their collective witness.

The collection of four gospels rapidly gained acceptance, and seems to have been broadly established by the middle of the 3rd century, but its arrangement varied for some time. The Western church preferred the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark; thus giving precedence to the two gospels supposedly composed by apostles over those supposedly composed by disciples of apostles. The Eastern Church sponsored the order Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; possibly intending a chronological arrangement. The adoption of the Eastern order by Jerome for the Vulgate led to its subsequent dominance also in the West.

c. The Catholic Epistles

The third collection of the NT canon was the latest to coalesce. Of the various documents in this collection, only 1 Peter and 1 John had much currency in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. The rest (James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude) had only local and regional use, and in spite of the claims of some of them, there was no early or strong acknowledgement of their apostolic authorship, and so they remained obscure and questionable well into the 4th century. It is from Eusebius that we first hear of "Catholic Epistles" (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.25) as a group of 7 letters, and such a collection probably arose only in the 3rd century. It may have been formed in an effort to document a common witness of primitive apostles, perhaps especially of the "pillar apostles (cf. Gal 2:9), and to balance the imposing collection of Paul's letters.

d. Acts and Revelation

Although the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostle were composed as two volumes of a unitary work, they were earlier separated and had distinctive subsequent histories. Acts came into general usage later than Luke. Justin Martyr is the first to show any knowledge of it, but it was only near the end of the 2nd century that real importance began to accrue to Acts, possibly as a result of conflicts with Marcionite and Gnostic groups. Acts served to underline the view of mainstream Christianity in the late 2nd century that the apostles acted and taught with authoritative consensus, and that Paul was at one with the collective apostolic witness. Thus Acts became useful in documenting the concept of apostolic tradition. The position of Acts among other documents in early canon lists and manuscripts varies considerably. It is often placed with the Catholic Epistles (before or

after), often with the Pauline letters (before or after), and sometimes with the four gospels (always afterwards).

The Revelation to John had a controversial career in the ancient Church. In the Western Church, it was well received and by the end of the 2nd century was widely cited as scripture. It was also current and respected in the East in the 2nd century, but was generally interpreted allegorically. In the 3rd century, however, a dispute arose in Egypt as to whether the book should be read literally or allegorically. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, defended the allegorists' view, and was led by many acute observations to deny the apostolic origin of the book. Subsequently, Eastern Christians tended to reject Revelation. Even in the West the authority of Revelation came into dispute because of its use by Montanists, and the authenticity and authority of Revelation (as well as the gospel of John) were strongly questioned by the Roman churchman, Gaius, in the early 3rd century, but without much effect on Western usage. The full recognition of Revelation in the East did not come about until the late 4th century and even then with the understanding that it was to be interpreted in non-millennial terms.

e. Other Writings

Even though the NT canon came to be constituted mainly by bringing together smaller collections that had evolved in the first three centuries, it must be emphasized that the history of the canon was selective as well as collective, and that the canon which finally emerged contained only a fraction of Christian literature that had been produced in the early period. Many other writings (gospels, acts, letters and apocalypses) achieved wide currency and attained the status of scripture in some areas without in the end becoming canonical. So far example, the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* were scarcely less popular than the Revelation to John in the 2nd century. Similarly, the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* were reckoned no less authoritative than any other gospel. Again, the letters known as *1 Clement* and *Barnabas* were esteemed and quoted as scripture by many; the *Acts of Paul* also was held in high regard in some areas, as well as the manual of church order known as the *Didache.* But any or all of these, and perhaps some others, might have been included in the canon but for various reasons were not.

The *Gospel of Thomas* demands greater attention here because of the increased importance it is assuming in biblical scholarship today, especially in supplying seemingly historical facts about Jesus and the early church that sometimes predate the accounts of our canonical gospels. No doubt *Thomas* presents itself as an authoritative work. It is intended to be scriptural in that sense. Yet *Thomas* differs sharply from the canonical gospels in ways that are not only obvious but significant. *Thomas* is not a narrative; and as such could not be construed as continuing the biblical story. One might object that *Thomas* is wisdom, a biblical genre, the wisdom of Jesus, not narrative. Yet, not only is scripture not cited in *Thomas,* there is no indication that any scripture is presupposed. There is no presumed scriptural story for which *Thomas* could present itself as the next chapter. *Thomas* was composed not for biblical religion – as were the other gospels – but, so to speak, for another, new, esoteric religion. It presupposes neither the biblical narrative of the Hebrew Scripture nor the narrative of Jesus' ministry.

3.5.2. Why a NT Canon?

As with the OT, the coming to be of the NT canon took some time (though not as long as that of the OT) and has to be seen within the historical context of the church of the post

apostolic period. The authors of NT writings no doubt would have had no inkling that their writings would become part of something called the NT or the Christian Bible to be read side by side with the Scripture which they knew and used. The various documents that now make up the NT were composed in various places by different individuals for a variety of purposes over at least the first century of the Church's experience. Some, like Paul's authentic letters, generally acknowledged to be the means of his apostolic presence among his churches, in which they would have been read aloud (1 Thess 5:27; 2 Cor 10:9-10), were very early recognized as authoritative documents. 2 Peter 3:15 suggests that they were regarded as scripture before there was a NT. Others, like Revelation, were alternately included and excluded from official lists in various places over a fairly extended period. This raises the question of why such body of books were needed and how the books that were, by the fifth century, accepted as canonical came to be accepted, that is, what criterion of acceptance was and how it was applied.

Early Christian communities, no doubt, depended, for their preaching and teachings, on most of the collections considered above: namely, the letters of the apostles, the words of the Lord orally transmitted from generation to generation, the different gospels and other forms of writings. But it did not take time before these materials – written or oral – came under heavy threat as to their authenticity and validity. Even if there is no ground to doubt the authenticity of those letters that have apostolic signatures attached to them, the written records of the deeds and sayings of the Lord and of the first disciples, several other materials in circulation at the time, especially the Apocrypha (Apocalypse of Henoch, the Ascension of Moses and Isaiah, the Kerygma of Peter as well as the Gospel of Thomas (and many others) were dubious enough as to raise doubts as to their authenticity as a measuring rod for faith.

This threat was heightened by the heresy of Marcion, who among other things, sought to sanitize the sacred tradition from anything Jewish. Not only did Marcion questioned and rejected the inspired character of the entire OT, he also sanitized what came to be recognized as the NT. Under a heavy Gnostic influence, he gave prime of place to the writings of Paul – some of which however he rejected, made a selective adoption of the gospels, basing his selective acceptance on whether the text has something to do with or to say about the OT creation God whom he rejected as a God of Violence and Vengeance, in favour of the NT God of Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness.

Confronted with such a threat, the emergence of the NT canon and its official recognition and adoption becomes more of a rescue mission, an effort to preserve and protect the deposit of the Christian faith and tradition from error. The need to preserve the deposit of the Christian faith led to a process of sifting and separating genuine materials from questionable ones, a process of control and collection that began towards the end of the second century and continued in the official decisions of the various synods at Rome (382), Hippo (392) and Carthage (397-419).

3.5.3. The Criteria for Adopting a Book/Writing as Canonical

The importance of the NT canon for the Church can never be overemphasized. With the NT canon, the Church established the authoritative perimeter of the content of its Sacred Writings and dogmatically affirms the content so identified and so differentiated as containing the standard and deposit of faith in the Church. Though it was indebted to historical forces, the formation of the canon was not haphazard. The Church also

reflected critically on its literature and, in setting certain documents apart as peculiarly authoritative, it invoked various principles or criteria.

3.5.3.1. Apostolic Authority

The canon itself was established by the working of tradition in a variety of forms. **Apostolic authority** or authorship in some sense of the word (not in our modern sense of authorship) emerged as one of the leading criteria. It suffices for inclusion into the canon that a book or writing dates back to a tradition associated with an apostle, a student/disciple of an apostle, or with other witness to the tradition whose rank in the early church is similar to that of an apostle. These writings were regarded as replacements of the apostles themselves, as a re-presentation of the singular and unrepeatable apostolic authority.

However, the ancient Church did not claim that every authoritative document was written by an apostle, but it did consider that canonical writings should come from the earliest times of the church. Neither was apostolicity the only criterion; nor was it sufficient, in and of itself, for admitting Writing into the canon. Were it so, then such writings that make claim to apostolic authority (for example the Gospel of Peter or Thomas written around the second century CE) could have made their way into the canon.

3.5.3.2. Universality/Catholicity

To be admitted into the canon, a book must be extensively used in the liturgy of some or virtually all communities. That is to say, it must be catholic (***Catholicity)*** in nature as in use. Even if it is not currently being used in all communities, it must be a book that could be used by all in the Church, one that has a relevance to the universal church. This criterion embodies the Church's preference for broadly accessible and pertinent documents as opposed to esoteric ones. But this preference did not, obviously, exclude documents originally addressed to strictly local churches or even to individuals. It was rather a matter of their availability and their usefulness to the whole Church.

3.5.3.3. Orthodoxy

Another criterion considered in admitting a book into the canon is ***Orthodoxy*****:** conformity with the regula fidei (the norm or standard of faith). That is to say, the book must be relied upon by those charged with the care of the communities for preaching and teaching of the faith. This is understandable. No book or writing should be accepted as canonical – as a measuring rod for faith – that does not conform to the accepted teachings of the church or in the least that does not contradict such teachings.

This criterion, however, presupposes that the Church has other sources, independent of the books contained in the canon, of determining what conforms to or constitute the regula fidei; i.e., a traditional summary statement of the basic Christian confession. It also presumes that the true faith of the Church could be known independently of Scripture. Hence there was no idea that Scripture was the sole repository of authoritative teaching. Rather, the authority of the Scripture could be gauged against authoritative unwritten tradition.

3.5.3.4. Traditional Usage

Another criterion is that of ***traditional usage***, that is, whether a writing had been employed from an early time and in most churches, and the importance of the community or communities where the books or writings originated and where they were being used as well as the acts of local synods and councils. Pride of place were given to the local communities of Antioch in Syria (Matthew), communities around the Asian Minor and Greece (Pauline Letters, the Johannine Corpus and most likely Luke and Acts) and Rome (Mark and the Letter to the Hebrews).This principle came strongly into play only in the 3rd and 4th centuries when the Church had a retrospect in promoting the authority of various documents before it was articulated as a principle of canonicity.

While all of these criteria were important, none is definitive in determining inclusion/exclusion. Thus, while the letters of Paul were no doubt apostolic in origin, they lack in Catholicity since they were essentially addressed to particular communities, sometimes to tackle problems and issues peculiar to those communities. On the same vein, what the letter to the Hebrews lacks in apostolic authority, it complements in the importance of the community and in the universality of the issues it addresses. The same also goes for the letters of Jude and 2 Peter that could not boast of emerging from a community of repute, although they address issues of universal concern and import. All these go to show that the inconsistencies that were at play in establishing and applying these criteria.

It is very surprising to observe that while the inclusion of a book in the canon entails an affirmation that it is inspired, inspiration was not a criterion for the book's inclusion. The reason for this is obvious. In the first place, there is apparently no way to identify the characteristic of inspiration, in order to establish (or to discredit) a book's claim to be included in the canon or to establish definitively that no books other than those in the canon are divinely inspired. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the Church claims inspiration as characteristic of all dimension of her life and tradition, part of which is the Holy Writing. Since inspiration as a concept is larger than and extends far beyond the written tradition, it could not have served as a criterion for distinguishing and separating books that were composed within and by the Church itself.

3.5.4. Early Collections of the NT Canon

3.5.4.1. The List of Muratorian Fragment

The earliest documented list of the NT canon is contained in the so-called Muratorian Fragment (named after Lodovico Antonio Muratorio (1672-1750) who discovered the fragment in Milan's Ambrosian Library in 1740). The date and provenance of this fragment are in debate; with the claim made that it was written towards the end of the second century CE in Rome.

The document is fragmentary and badly translated into Latin, but lists the following books as canonical: the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the 13 letters of Paul (excluding Hebrews); Jude, 1 and 2 John; the Wisdom of Solomon; the *Apocalypse of John;* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The omission of most of the "Catholic Epistles like James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John is notable, and so is the inclusion of the *Wisdom of Solomon* in the list of Christian books. The *Shepherd of Hermas* is rejected because it is late. Writings emanating from Gnostic, Marcionite or Montanist circles are rejected

outright. We have here, then, a list of 24 documents accepted for reading in the church, including two that did not finally become canonical, but excluding five that did.

3.5.2.2. The Testimony of Eusebius

In his *Church History,* written in the first decades of the 4th century, Eusebius variously comments on the uses made of early Christian writings by previous Christian figures. In *Hist. Eccl.* 3.25 he provides a summary list of these writings in three categories: (1) acknowledged books, i.e., those accepted without qualifications; (2) disputed books, i.e., those whose genuineness or authority is questioned; and (3) heretical works, i.e., those that are firmly rejected. The acknowledged writings include four gospels, Acts, the (14) letters of Paul, 1 John and 1 Peter. He also allows that Revelation *may* be placed in this group "if it seems desirable." The disputed books are James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, the *Acts of Paul,* the *Shepherd of Hermas,* the *Apocalypse of Peter,* the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache.* He also allows that Revelation *may* be classed among these books "if this view prevails," and notes that some would place the gospel of the Hebrews also in this category. Rejected books are the gospels of Peter, Thomas, and Matthias, among others, and the Acts of Andrew, John, and others. The acknowledged books, then, are 21 (22 with Revelation), and the disputed books are 10 (11 with Revelation). This list must reflect what Eusebius took to be the situation obtaining in his time and among the churches of his acquaintance. The ambiguity about Revelation was felt widely in the East, and surely also by Eusebius himself.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The establishment of the canon set in motion the hermeneutical dialectic between scripture and tradition. Although it was the Church that acknowledged the canonical status of these books and recognized them, these books, once so-recognized, possessed and exercised divine authority in and of themselves. Again, once the canon was established, the Church was no longer dealing with a collection of documents but with a single "book", a unity that became the whole in terms of which each part, no matter where, when, or by whom composed, had to be interpreted. In other words, the real meaning of each book was affected by its inclusion in the whole that the Church recognized as scripture. And dialectically, the meaning of the whole was influenced by the interpretation of each part.

These books, once they have been recognized as canonical, became the norm of tradition in its oral, written, liturgical, and other forms; while the tradition continued to function as the context for the interpretation of these scriptures. In summary, the establishment of the canon, including the composition of its books, their unification into a single book, and their recognition as inspired scripture, was a work of tradition. The scripture thus traditionally established became the norm of ongoing tradition, which nevertheless, remains the indispensable context of the Bible's interpretation.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning of the word canon, the process of the coming to be of both the Old and New Testament Canons, the earliest collections of these canons as well as the criteria used in admitting books into the NT Canon. We have also seen how, despite the fact that human beings played a role in the process of canonization, the Bible, once canonized, is self- authenticating and radiates its own divine authority.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Account for the beginning of the Old Testament canon

In what order were the books of the OT recognized as part of the OT Canon?

Arrange the Canon of the NT according to the nature of the literature that it contains.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Briefly explain the meaning of the word canon.

What were the early collections of the OT Canon? Describe 3 in details.

What is the contribution of the discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls to the OT Canon debate?

Why was it necessary to come up with a Canon of the NT?

What were the criteria for adopting a book into the NT Canon.

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MODULE 2 THE OLD TESTAMENT: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

UNIT 1. INTRODUCING TEXTUAL CRITICISM

UNIT 2. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

UNIT 2. THE DISCOVERY OF THE DEAD SCROLLS

UNIT 3. THE LATER MASORETIC TEXT AND ITS USES IN THE NT

UNIT 1 INTRODUCING TEXUAL CRITICISM

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt the processes that went into the formation of the Old and New Testament canons as well as the earliest collections of these canons. In this unit, you will be introduced to various steps that Text Criticism employs to guarantee that what comes down to us today is the most original text of the biblical books.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Learn about Text Criticism

Account for the existence of Textual Variants

Discuss the factors that go into determining the authenticity of a Manuscript.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1. The Rationale for Text-Critical Studies

In our attempts at interpretation of the bible, we always seek to explain the meaning of words, phrases, and ideas of the scriptural text in their nearer and wider context. The question that we forget to ask or that we simply presume is whether or not what we have is the original text of the passage. That such a question must be asked – and answered – before one explains the meaning of the text arises out of two circumstances: (a) none of the original documents of the Bible is extant today and (b) the existing copies differ from one another.

The reason for this is not far-fetched. Until the invention of the art of printing, the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible were transmitted in scrolls manuscripts copied with human hands. Unfortunately, we have no manuscripts of a biblical book written directly by its author. The texts that we do possess derive from the originals (or autographs) through a number of intermediary copies and the often equally old translations. The stock

of manuscripts of the NT we have today spans through the long period from 130 to 1500 CE. Of these, the most meaningful and most ancient consist of papyrus stemming from the 3rd century and the great Codex of the 4th century. In addition to these direct and original copies of the Greek NT, we also have the indirect witnesses – mostly in form of equally old translations – in the writings of the early Church fathers.

As is often the case with each copying, the possibility and indeed the likelihood of mistakes or alterations entering into the manuscript tradition grow. It is the job of textual criticism to seek to produce a text as close to the original as is humanly possible.

Technically defined, textual criticism is "the science and art of assessing the transmission of the biblical text by (1) evaluating its variations, alterations, and distortions, and then attempting its restoration – its earliest recoverable forms – and (2) seeking to place variants within the history and culture of the early Church, both to determine the age, meaning, and motivation of variants, and to extract from them some knowledge of the development and character of early Christian theology, ecclesiology, and culture."[11]

Doing such a text critical analysis is imperative for biblical exegesis on historical, theological and hermeneutical grounds:

a) Since the original texts of the bible are no longer extant, the must be reconstructed from later traditions handed on in manuscripts, lectionaries, citations and translations.

b) If biblical exegesis is all about the interpretation and understanding of the texts, then there is need to work out what the biblical author himself wrote and transmitted in distinction to secondary materials that were accidentally added to these in the long history of textual transmission.

c) Finally, there is also a hermeneutical interest, the need to get as closest to the original text as possible, since only this can offer a better access to the theology of the biblical writer.

The requirement for pursuing these goals are essentially twofold: (1) familiarity with the textual transmission process, including the full range of scribal habits and other phenomena of textual variations that influenced it, and (2) knowledge of both the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that preserve and transmit to us the OT and NT text-forms, and especially with reference to the NT, also of the early versions that delivered these Christian writings to non-Greek-speaking areas. Meeting the first prerequisite will require, in turn, the formulation of criteria for isolating the most likely original readings, while acquaintance with the thousands of manuscripts will require grouping them in some fashion according to shared characteristics.

Textual criticism is obviously a very technical enterprise involving the personal inspection of manuscripts written in Hebrew, Greek and other ancient languages. A detailed discussion would be out of place in this class. It suffices for us to grasp that textual critics must weigh the external evidence of the manuscripts, explain rationally whatever variant readings occur, and consider the context, language, and style of the document in arriving at their decision about the form of the original text.

[11] Eldon Jay Epp, "Textual Criticism in the Exegesis of the New Testament, with an Excursus on Canon," in Porter (ed.), *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, 45-97 (51-2).

3.2. The Fact and Origin of Textual Variants

The first question facing the textual critic is this: Are there ancient variant readings? A variant reading is an instance in which two or more manuscripts differ regarding the form of a text. A modern editor is therefore forced to choose between readings by printing one as part of the text and relegating the other (or others) to the foot of the page. Among the major obstacles encountered in textual criticism is what an author describes as stemming from "an embarrassment of riches. There is too much material available for quick and simple decision…"[12]

Speaking specifically about the NT, the Greek manuscripts alone run between 5,000 and 5,500 in number; and of these, at least one fragment P^{52} dates as early as only a generation after the date of composition, while others date from around 200 into the third century. One inventory (now several years old) counted over 85 papyri, 268 majuscules, 2, 792 minuscules, and 2,193 lectionaries. To complicate matters further, some manuscripts are bilingual, mainly Greco-Coptic and Greco-Latin, while others are palimpsests – manuscripts, usually parchment, recovered from a parchment reused by scrapping of the original text and writing on the newly prepared surface.

3.3. The Reason for Textual Variations

Given the vast breadth, depth and complexity of manuscript materials, the quantity and variety of witnesses and the complicating factors connected with the transmission of the biblical texts, one can expect a fairly large number of ancient variant readings. Most of the divergences arose from quite accidental causes, such as mistaking a letter or a word for another that looked like it or intended as when a scribe consciously act to improve on the quality of a text.

The textual critic's first step is simply to describe the situation, that is, the nature of the variants, the number of witnesses for the different readings and the age and quality of the manuscripts in which they appear.

3.3.1. Unintentional Scribal Alterations

Anyone with an experience of handwriting or typewriting knows how unconscious mistakes can occur, and most of the same kinds of errors that we make are to be found in the ancient biblical manuscripts. Unintentional scribal alterations comprise what are often characterized as errors of the eye, of the ear (if copying by dictation), and of the memory or (unthinking) judgment. These include:

1. Confusion of letters or letter combinations having similar appearance (or sound)
2. Mistaken word division (since uncial manuscripts, including the papyri, were written without spaces or punctuations)
3. Misread abbreviations or contractions
4. Interchanges in the order of letters or words
5. Substitution of a more familiar word for a less familiar one
6. Omission of one word when it occurred twice, or skipping material between two similar words or letter-group (haplography)

[12] Harrington, *Interpreting the New Testament*, 16.

7. Repetition of a letter, word or passage when the eye returns to a place already copied (dittography).
8. Careless spelling and failure to correct such errors and
9. Unconscious assimilation to similar wording in a parallel passage or lection or harmonization with wording in the immediate context.

3.3.2. Intentional Scribal Alterations

We speak of intentional scribal alterations when scribes intentionally and consciously deviates from the original manuscripts with a view of correcting or improving on it. This can take the following forms:

1. Changes in grammar, spelling (often proper names) and style.
2. Conscious harmonization with parallel passages (often in the Synoptic Gospels, in OT quotations, or in lectionaries), motivated perhaps by the wish to present the 'complete' text.
3. Clarification of geographical or historical points (e.g. time or place; or authorship of OT quotations).
4. Conflation of different readings in two or more manuscripts known to the copyist.
5. Addition of seemingly appropriate material (such as expanding 'Jesus' to Jesus Christ or to the 'Lord Jesus Christ') and
6. Theological or ideological alterations, often small changes in the interest of supporting accepted doctrine, especially issues of Christology, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, asceticism, etc.

3.4. The Criteria that Guide Text-Critical Decisions

Having considered how ancient variant readings can arise, the next task of the text critic is to explore the reading that is demanded by the context, language, and style of the document. Arriving at a correct decision on this is not a purely external procedure divorced from literary appreciation. On the contrary, such decisions depends very directly on acquaintance with these scribal habits as they functioned in the copying process, for textual critics move from this knowledge to the formulation of internal criteria that will assist in distinguishing the most likely original reading among those in a given variation unit.

3.4.1. The Internal Criteria

The criteria in this category are called 'internal' because they relate to factors or characteristics within the text itself. They include:

1. The Criterion of Local Genealogical Method: a variant's fitness to account for the origin, development or presence of all other readings in the variation-unit. Such a variant logically must have preceded all others that can be shown to have evolved from it.

2. Priority to Shorter Readings: A variant's status as the shorter/shortest reading in the variation-unit. This assumes that where no convincing mechanical or conscious explanation is forthcoming, one must reckon that the usual human tendency is to expand the text rather than shorten what has been written. So, if the aim of textual criticism is to determine what the original author said, then following the shorter reading will probably help in achieving that goal in the absence of any other rational

explanation. This criterion, which initially enjoyed wide approbation among scholars, is now being debated.

3. A Variant's status as the harder/hardest reading in the variation-unit. The preference for the most difficult reading is also based on a common human tendency – the tendency to simplify what seems complicated or foreign. Like no above, this too is only a general rule, and in any individual case the 'longer' or the 'smoother' reading may well be the correct one.

4. A variant's conformity to the author's style and vocabulary. The original reading is likely to follow the author's style as observed in the bulk of the writing.

5. A variant's conformity to the author's theology and ideology. The original reading is likely to display the same convictions or beliefs found in the bulk of the work.

6. A variant's conformity to Koine (rather than Attic) Greek. Scribes show a tendency to shape the text being copied to the more elegant Attic Greek style.

7. A variant's lack of conformity to parallel passages or to extraneous items in the context generally. Scribes tend, consciously or unconsciously, to shape the text being copied to familiar parallel passages in the Synoptic Gospels or to words or phrases just copied.

8. A variant's lack of conformity to OT passages. Scribes, who were familiar with the OT, tend to shape their copying into the content of familiar passages.

9.A variant's lack of conformity to liturgical forms and usages. Scribes tend to shape the text being copied to phraseology in the familiar liturgical expressions used in devotion and worship.

The judicious application of these criteria to competing readings within each variation units fulfils a major but single part of the twofold methodological process for decision-making: treating phenomena within the transmitted text. The externals of the matter, the manuscripts themselves as artefacts and as an entity or whole, also deserve some attention.

3.4.2. External Criteria

These criteria are called external because they relate to the nature of the manuscripts, e.g. date and provenance, as something 'outside' or separate from the texts they enshrine. External criteria involve considerations bearing upon the following:

1. The date and character of the witness. In general, earlier manuscripts are more likely to be free from those errors that arise from repeated copying. As a result, a variant supported by the earliest manuscripts, or by manuscripts assuredly preserving early texts is likely the most original.

2. A Variant's support by the 'best quality' manuscripts. Manuscripts evidencing careful copying are less likely to have been subjected to textual corruption or contamination, and manuscripts that frequently and consistently offer readings accredited as most original thereby acquire a reputation of generally high quality.

3. The geographical distribution of the witnesses also plays a role in establishing its originality. A variant supported by manuscripts with the widest geographical

distribution is most likely the most original. This is because readings attested in more than one locality are less likely to be accidental or idiosyncratic.

4. A variant's support by one or more established groups of manuscripts of recognized antiquity, character, and perhaps location, that is, of recognized 'best quality.' Not only individual manuscripts, but families and text-types can be judged as to age and quality.

No doubt, nobody should expect that all of these criteria be applicable in every case. The textual critic must know when it is appropriate to consider one kind of evidence and less to another. But as a general rule, the most original is likely that reading that emerged through the application of the greatest number of these criteria (internal as well as external). Since textual criticism is an art as well as a science, it is inevitable that in some cases different scholars will come to different evaluations of the significance of the evidence.

4.0. CONCLUSION

As we apply the entire text-critical endeavour to the textual variants of each Old and New Testament writing, we will discern multiple voices within the fabric of the text – voices of an ancient author; of the oldest attainable text; of a harmonistic amplifier; of a grammarian of stylist seeking improvement and possible of an editor or possibly a revisionist responsible for compositional levels that may lie behind some of our present writings. Discerning a particular voice is not easy. But each attempt is enlightening about the richness, the diversity, and the dynamism of the community and her authoritative collection of ancient writings.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to how textual criticism helps us to determine how we can arrive at the closest text to the original manuscripts. You have also learnt of the reasons why texts vary and the the criteria employed by scholars in evaluating the authenticity of each of the variants.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What is the rationale for embarking on a text-critical analysis of the Biblical Text?

Distinguish between intentional and unintentional reasons for scribal variations.

Discuss in details 3 each of the internal and external criteria to be considered in make text-critical decisions.

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On – Line Resources

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UNIT 2. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

1.0. INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you were introduced to the rudiments of Textual Criticism, including the rationale, the tools and the criteria that textual critics employ in plying their trade. In this unit, you will be introduced to various steps that were taken by scholars to preserve the original text of the OT in the early time. While the OT texts were written mostly in Hebrew between 900 and 125 BCE, until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered after World War 11, the oldest extant Hebrew transcription of the OT was the Cairo codex of the prophets, dated 895 CE. Recently, translations of it were based on fourth and fifth century Greek versions, the oldest in any language.

However, the reading of the Dead Sea Scrolls makes clear that these texts which were written in Masoretic (Hebrew) between 100 BCE 125 CE were less "corrupt": that is, they have fewer errors of transmission than the Greek uncial manuscripts. Roberts claimed that the Dead Sea Scrolls have caused a revolution in OT textual criticism.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Identify the texts that were written in Hebrew between 900 – 125 BCE

Discuss how OT texts provide the raw materials for textual criticism.

Discuss the various modes of transmission of OT Manuscripts (MSS).

3.0MAIN CONTENT

3.1. Text and Versions of the Old Testament

The primary aim of textual criticism as it applies to the OT is to provide a text in the form intended by its author. Here, the rule is that the greater the age of a document, the greater is its authority. There may be cases, however, where this does not hold. For example, of two Manuscripts, the older may have been copied from a recent and poor source, while the newer goes back to a very much earlier and better one. The history of a document must be taken into consideration before a verdict can be given on readings.

Documents are exposed to the ravages of time and frailty of human nature. It is the latter that gives rise to most of our problems. Despite these, you should know that errors are bound to occur in any of the writings of scribes. We have seen the most common of these errors in the last unit.

The comparative study of texts can help towards the elimination of corruptions. Here numerical preponderance is not decisive: several representatives of the same archetype count as only one witness. The form of textual transmission is best depicted as a genealogical tree; the facts of the genealogical relations can be applied to the assessment of evidence for any given reading. The documentary evidence for the text of the OT consists of Hebrew Manuscripts from the 3rd century BCE to the 12th century CE and ancient versions in Aramaic, Greek, Syriac and Latin.

3.2. The Jews and Written Records

History has shown that before the birth of Moses, there exist the North Semitic script. From 3100 BCE onwards, writing was a hallmark of civilization and progress throughout the Ancient Near East. In the second millennium BCE, there were several experiments which led to the development of the alphabet, with a consequent general increase in literacy. Although as yet few documents have been found in Palestine itself before the exilic period when compared to the many thousands from the neighbouring territories, it is reasonable to assume that its proximity to other cultural centres enabled it to share the art of writing throughout all periods. Also, as it has been indicated by the commonest words for writing (Heb. Katab: Aram. Ketab; G.K. Grapho) occurring more than 450 times in the Bible. The art of writing has been known among the Hyksos c.1700 BCE.

While Moses was at Egypt, it was assumed that he was familiar with Egyptians writing and literary methods. Moses was also assumed to have been familiar with cuneiform, for Akkadian was already in use from the 15th century BCE onwards as a diplomatic language in Egypt, as shown by the El-Amarna letters. The Bible made us to understand that Moses was literate. For the Bible states, *Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the Lord…* (Num 33:3). The culture of writings by various people who have similar cultural background with the Hebrews was known from the fourth millennium. At that period, people were trained as scribes and as expert copyists. But under Moses, the Hebrews were less scrupulous in transmission of their texts than the Egyptians and Assyrians.

Let us further examine another source used by the Hebrews in preserving their text. Josephus summed it up thus: “We have given practical proof of our reverence for our

own Scriptures. Although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable: and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. Time and again enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres, rather than utter a single word against the laws and the allied documents" (Against Apion, 1, pp.179 f., Loeb Edition).

The Biblical writers were very careful then not to add or subtract any letter from the Hebrew Bible. For the Bible itself also testified to this in several books. For example, Deut 4:2, says: "*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. …Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word*" (cf. Jer 26:2).

As one can deduct from the aforementioned Bible passages, it seems that Jews has never abandoned the above principles in obeying the LORD, even in writings.

The question now is, how come about writers who keep on re-writing the same words of the Bible missed out some words or added their own words in to it? If it could be proved that the Jews took a recession of the Hebrew text of the OT about 100 CE, then it would be a bit difficult to defend the principle of agreement between the texts of the Biblical scrolls from Qumran and the MT. Probably, many of the divergences in texts may be due to the practice of employing the same scribes to copy both biblical texts and Targums. Hence the scribes of the Targums were used to paraphrasing the text, a laxity that could subconsciously have easily affected the copyists.

3.3. The Transmission of the Text

Measures for the preservation of the text must have already been in use in the pre-Christian era, for in the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah (e.g. plate xxix, lines 3 and 10) dots are used over doubtful words, just as is done later by the Massoretes. In NT times, the scribes are too well established to be a recent innovation. It was doubtless due to their activity that terms such as "jot" and "title" (q.v.) owed their currency. The fact that "jot" was then the smallest letter indicates that the "square" characters were in use.

The Talmud states that these scribes were called ***sopherim*** because they counted the letters in the Torah (Qiddushin 30a). Since their intensive pre-occupation with the text of Scripture qualified them as exegetes and educationists, the transmission of the text ceased to be regarded as their primary responsibility.

3.4. The Contribution of the Massoretes

The writing of the consonants only was sufficient as long as Hebrew remained a spoken language. Where a word might be ambiguous 'vowel –letter' could be used to make the reading clear. These 'vowel indicators' were in origin residual; they arose through 'waw' and 'yod' amalgam-consonantal identity; but they continued to be written, and in time came to be treated as representing vowels. Their use was then extended to other words where etymologically they were intrusive. Their insertion or omission was largely discretionary. It was not until about the 7th century of our era that the Massoretes introduced a complete system of vowel signs.

The Massoretes (lit. 'transmitters') succeeded the old scribes (sopherim) as the custodians of the sacred text. They were active from about 500 to 1000 CE. The textual apparatus introduced by them is probably the most complete of its kind ever to be used. Long before their time, of course, others had given much thought to the preservation of the purity of the text. Rabbi Akiba, who died about 135 CE, was credited with the saying: "The (accurate) transmission is a fence for the Torah". He stressed the importance of preserving even the smallest letter. In this he was by no means the first, as the statement in Matt 4:18 shows: "For truly, I say to you, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished".

The Massoretes introduced vowel-signs and punctuation or accentual marks into the consonantal text. Three systems of vocalization were developed: two supralinear (Babylonian and Palestinian) and one infralinear. Except for one sign, this system, called the Tiberian, supplanted the other two, and is the one now used in Hebrew texts.

As it was the resolute purpose of the Massoretes to hand on the text as they had received it, they left the consonantal text unchanged. Where they felt that corrections or improvements should be made, they placed these in the margin. Here the preferred word and the one which they intended to be read (called the *Qere,* "that which is to be read') was placed in the margin, with its vowels placed under the consonants of the word in the inviolable text (called the *ketib,* 'the written'.) It is possible that the form given in the margin (*Qere')* was a variant reading. The view held in some quarters that the scribes or Massoretes boggled at giving variant readings, and in fact deliberately suppressed them, is contrary to what we know of the actual practice of the copyists.

The Massoretes retained, for instance, certain marks of the earlier scribes relating to doubtful words and listed certain of their conjectures (*sebirin*). They used every imaginable safeguard, no matter how cumbersome or laborious, to ensure the accurate transmission of the text. They collected any peculiarities in spelling or in the forms or phrase that occurred; and their lists finally included all orthographic peculiarities of the text.

3.5 The Massorah

The textual notes supplied by the Massoretes are called the Massorah. The shorter notes placed in the margin of the codices are referred to as the Massorah parva. They were later enlarged and arranged into lists and placed at the top or bottom of the page. In this form they were called Massorah Magna. The notes provide the results of their analysis of textual peculiarities.

Among the names of Massoretes known to us is that of Aaron ben Asher, who was active in the first half of the 10^{th} century CE. Five generations of his family seem to have worked on the Hebrew text, and under Aaron the work reached a definitive stage. The best codex of this school is thought to be the one found in Aleppo, and now in Israel. No facsimile of it has yet been produced. Another noted family of Massoretes was that of ben Naphtali, one of whom was apparently contemporary with Aaron ben Asher. The differences between them in their treatment of the text were largely confined to matters of vocalization. The 'Reuchlin' codex in Karlsruhe is the representative of the ben Naphtali approach.

3.6 The Standard Text

The text edited by Jacob ben Chayyim for the second rabbinic Bible published by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1524-5 came to be accepted practically as the standard text. The text was eclectic in character, and scholars have been aware for some 250 years that it could be improved. It is important, however, that M.D. Cassuto, a scholar who probably had a finer sense for Hebrew than any other in this field and who had an unrivalled knowledge at first hand of the Aleppo Ben Asher codex, evidently saw no reason for preferring this to the Ben Chayyim text, which he has retained for his fine edition of the Hebrew Bible (Jerusalem, 1953).

The non-expert might easily be misled by the somewhat hyperbolic language used of the extent of the differences to be found in the various Manuscripts. They relate mostly to matters of vocalization, a not altogether indispensable aid in Semitic languages. Linguistically considered they are largely irrelevant minutiae, at the most of diachronistic interest. Belief in the golden age of the phoneme dies hard. It ranks with the naivete that believes 'honour' is better spelling than 'honor'. Vocalization in a Semitic language belongs primarily to orthography, grammar and to exegesis; and only to a limited extent, to textual criticism. There never was an original vocalized text to restore.

3.7 The Hebrew Masoretic Text

The traditional view of the Hebrew transmission was that the textual minutiae of Law as the most significant part of the Scriptures were fixed for all time under the influence of Rabbi Aqiba (c. 55-137 CE). The standardisation of the remainder followed soon afterwards, to produce the official Masoretic text. Beginning from that period, all manuscripts were scrupulously transcribed according to the archetype, and scrutinised by official scribes, so that a correct transmission was assured. Rabbinic evidence, it was said, supported this reconstruction.

On four occasions in rabbinic writings, scholars are told with a few variations, that three scrolls of the Law, with minor textual divergences, were deposited in the Temple court; and that in each case of divergence, the rule is that t the majority reading was always regarded as authoritative. The fact that the legend is set in the Temple area indicates that discussion about text standardisation goes back at least to the period before 70 CE, the date of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Again, it is stated that Rabbi Aqiba studied each instance of the use of the grammatical particles and based his exegesis on their usage, and this, it is argued, must surely represent a definitive phase in the standardization. The fact that the comment is derived from the Babylonian Talmud (Shebu'oth 26 a), a standard rabbinic work redacted in the sixth century, shows that the rabbinic tradition was soundly based.

During the past hundred years, the tradition has been challenged, and counter-challenged. At present, experts who can rightly claim outstanding authority are not only contradictory but often mutually exclusive in their testimony. The present survey cannot pretend to offer a verdict on either side, but rather, by means of introducing an independent perspective, seeks to tell the story as a whole with a reasonable sense of proportion.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Text and versions provide the raw materials for the discipline known as textual criticism. The textual minutiae of law were fixed from time to time as the needs arose by scholars and it was led by Rabbi Aquiba c. 55 -137 CE. The Standardisation follows and it led to the production of the official Masoretic text. The standardisation of the text is dated around 70 CE.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Jews written records indicated that before the birth of Moses, there was civilization in the Ancient Near East. Moses received his education in Egypt. He used the knowledge he acquired there to write the Torah. God told him to preserve His words in the Scripture for the generations of the people of Israel. Moses was warned not to add nor take away any iota out of such words.

In the process of copying the Scripture for the process of preserving for later generations, mistakes were made either through omissions of some words or copying them wrongly. These created problems for the Massoretes who tried to trace the original manuscripts in order to put things straight in adherence to God's injunction against tampering with His oracles. For this reason, scholars till date continue to scrutinise the various texts at their disposal in order to maintain the original words that were used in the Hebrew Bible.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why is it important to trace the origin of a manuscript?

6.0. TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the Massoretes' role in the transmission of the OT Texts.

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UNIT 3 THE BIBLICAL TEXTS OF THE DEAD SCROLLS & OTHERS

CONTENTS

1.0 INRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have learnt about some textual notes that were supplied by the Massoretes and how they were used in text that is generally accepted as a standard text for use in the Church. In this unit, we shall continue our discussion of the textual studies. You will learn more on how scholars arrived at the discoveries of more textual variants from various sources, most especially from the Qumran Essenes and the Targums, which they used in writing many versions of the Bible that are now in circulation today.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Explain the roles of some scholars in the preservation processes of the text of the Bible

Discuss how scholars arrived in the final conclusion of the fairly accepted manuscript

Explain the importance of the DSS and the Targums in the Old Testament text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Dead Sea Scrolls' Manuscripts

Some biblical Manuscripts were discovered in caves around Wadi Qumran towards the northwest of the Dead Sea in 1947. The discovery of these manuscripts has changed the research method of the OT text by tracing it back to several years before the actual time which the Masoretic apparatus was noticed. The initial and accidental discovery of some manuscripts by an Arab shepherd in one of the caves in the area led to the searching of all available caves in the area that eventually led to discovery of large quantities of biblical and non-biblical material.

You should note that the originally discovered manuscripts included one complete manuscript of Isaiah and another manuscript that contains about one – third of the same book. The later recovery brought light to every piece or fragments of every book of the Bible excluding the book of Esther. Furthermore, you should be aware that there are some biblical fragments that differ from the standard text more in the nature of variant readings. But, with fragments, it is not so easy to evaluate the importance of such alterations. However, their differences could be due to inferior copying; and due to the scanty samples of a scribe's work, it is impossible to pass judgment on his abilities.

Where, however, the material is sufficiently copious, as the one found in the book of Isaiah or scrolls, the divergences from the Masoretic text are not substantial. Again, given the promiscuous collection of biblical, semi- biblical, and non-biblical Manuscripts (MSS) that have to be sorted and reconstructed, mistakes are inevitable. Although claims are made for evidence of different recessions, the evidence for such claims remain tenuous with fragments. As there were translations of the LXX into Aramaic, there is no *a priori* reason why the same could not have been done for current Hebrew text. It is all a little reminiscent of the controversy over the Samaritan Pentateuch when it first became known.

The Dead Sea biblical MSS presented to us initially was about a thousand years earlier than our oldest MSS, thus they take us behind the alleged suppression of all divergent texts in 100 CE. According to the Talmud, an attempt was made to provide a standard text with the help of three Scrolls formerly belonging to the Temple, by taking in cases of disagreement the reading that had the support of two (TJ, Ta'anith iv, 2; Sopherim vi, 4; sipre 356). The findings have helped to relegate questions of vocalisation to their proper sphere, that of orthography and grammar; and have deprived us of much of the work done in the field of Masoretic studies by providing us with MSS much older than any one at our disposal.

The Isaiah MSS provide us with a great variety of scribal errors, but all of them familiar to textual criticism. We find examples of haplography, dittography, harmonization (i.e. alteration to something more familiar), confusion of letters, homoeoteleuton, line omission, and introduction into the text of marginal notes. The great significance of these MSS is that they constitute an independent witness to the reliability of the transmission of our accepted text. There is no reason whatever to believe that the Qumran community would collaborate with the leader in Jerusalem in adhering to any particular recession. They carry us back to an earliest point on the line of transmission, to the common ancestor of the great Temple scrolls and the unsophisticated

scrolls from Qumran.

The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls provide a suitable starting point, because they provide actual specimen texts from the time before Aqiba's "standardized" text form. But the fact that there are two distinct groups of "Dead Sea" biblical texts is highly important. On one hand, we have the texts from Qumran which are sectarian and probably from the pre-Christian and early Christian era; and on the other hand, we have the texts from Murabba'at and Masada, which represent the orthodox rabbinic transmission from the second century CE

The latter are less well known to average reader, but for the present survey, they demand a pride of place. It is beyond dispute that they form part of the literary remains of the Jewish army in the bar Kochba revolt in 132-35 CE, the last vain attempt to oppose Roman domination.

While all the texts are not available for general scrutiny, it is reported that they contain fragments from the three sections of rabbinic scriptures, the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, and are identical with the text which became recognized as standard. Rabbi Aqiba was directly involved in the revolt, and as a result, it is reasonable to assume that the standardized text was available before his period.

3.2 The Cairo Genizah

The MSS discovered from 1890 onwards in the Genizah of the Old Synagogue in Cairo are of considerable importance for the vocalized text. Genizah was the depository for scrolls no longer considered fit for use. The lack of uniformity in variations and the virtual absence of variations from the consonantal text show that the vocalization was considered of secondary importance. Among the fragments of biblical MSS from this Genizah are some with supralinear vowel – signs. In the collection were also quantities of fragments of Targum and of rabbinic literature. Some of the MSS may be older than the 9th century.

3.3 The Hebrew Pentateuch of the Samaritans

The Hebrew Pentateuch preserved by the Samaritans is unquestionably derived from a very ancient text. The Samaritans, probably the descendants of the mixed population of Samaria, the result of a partial deportation of Jews followed by the plantation of foreigners by Sargon in 721 BC (cf. 2 Kings 17:24; 24:15-16), were refused a share in the rebuilding of the Temple by the Jews returning under Ezra and Nehemiah. The breach which followed (probably in the time of Nehemiah, c. 445 BCE) led to the establishment of a separate Samaritan cultic centre at Mt. Gerizim, near Shechem (now Nablus). Therewith all official and religious contacts between the two communities virtually ceased, and the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch, in their hands when this occurred, was henceforth transmitted without interference from or collaboration with Jewish scribes. The copies of this Pentateuch, therefore, are descended from an archetype not later than the 5th century BCE, and thus provide an independent check on the trustworthiness of the Hebrew transmission.

At that earlier period, it was not exclusively Samaritan, as some typically "Samaritan" manuscripts of the Pentateuch have been found in the Qumran caves alongside those which exhibit the traditional Jewish text, "known to exist".

The first copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch got to Europe in 1616 through Pietro della Valle, and it was published by J. Morinus, who assumed that it was superior to the MT. This seems to be the case with every new discovery of documents, prompted either by a preference for the LXX or an innate hostility to the traditional Jewish text. There was in this instance another motive at work: the desire on the part of certain scholars to weaken the position of the Reformers in their stand for the authority of the Bible. Gesenius, perhaps Germany's greatest Hebrew scholar, brought this barren controversy to an end and demonstrated the superiority of the MT.

While it is true that in some 1,600 places the Samaritan agrees with the LXX, the disagreements are equally numerous. It is not easy to account for the agreements. One possibility is that when corrections had to be made in the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch, an Aramaic Targum was used (the Samaritan dialect and Aramaic are practically identical, and the Samaritan version, that is, the translation of the Pentateuch into Samaritan, in places agrees verbatim with the Targum of Onkelos).

There are numerous traces of the influence of the Aramaic Targums in the LXX. For many of the variants a simple explanation can be given: the attempt to show that God had chosen Gerizim. After the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5, the Samaritan inserts the passage Deut 27:2-7. with 'Mount Ebal' replaced by 'Mount Gerizim', and Deut 11:30 changes 'over against Gilgal' into 'over against Shechem'.

You should be aware of the reason why variants occur and that is due to a misunderstanding of grammatical forms or syntactical constructions. Others consist of gratuitous additions from parallel passages. Some stem from dialect influence. Many arise from their effort to remove all anthropomorphic expressions. There is no evidence that the Samaritans ever had a body of trained scribes, and the absence of any proper collations of MSS, as attested by the numerous variations, is not compatible with any serious textual knowledge. Neither do the deliberate changes or superfluous additions distinguish them as conscientious custodians of the sacred text. Therefore, its variants must be treated with extreme caution.

3.4 The Abihu's MS (Manuscript)

Abihu was a great – grandson of Aaron (1 Chron 6:3). Scholars claimed that he wrote the oldest MS (Manuscript). However, this claim lacks substantiation. This is because the MS itself that was written on thin vellum is not uniformly old; for the oldest part of it looks like the one from the end of Numbers onwards. The script is an old one and it is similar to that found on Maccabean coins, but the occasional confusion of letters such as *d and* r, which should not normally be confused in this script, may well show that the script is not really archaic but only archaistic. Specialist opinion would assign this scroll to the 13th century CE or not much earlier than its alleged discovery by the high priest Phinehas in 1355.

3.5 Targums

The word *targum* is Hebrew, but not found in the OT. It is an Aramaic paraphrase, or interpretative translation, of some part of the OT. After the Babylonian captivity, Aramaic gradually came to replace Hebrew as the native tongue of the Jewish people, and so their understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures diminished. As Scripture grew more and more important in Jewish society, it was considered a guide to faith and there was

the need to translate it for the man in the street to understand. So, in the synagogue began the practice of following the reading of the Law with an oral Aramaic translation of it.

The development of the synagogue and its ritual was slow, and it is impossible to establish a certain date for its commencement. But it is possible that we find its inception in Neh 8:8, where the word 'clearly' may mean 'with interpretation'. This custom was established before the birth of Christ. The translator was known as 'methurgeman', and his paraphrase as 'targum'. The Targum were oral in their origins. And when it was read to him, the uninformed worshipper might have invested the translation with the same authority as Scripture itself. But it need not be doubted that there were fairly fixed traditions; and when at length they were committed to writing there must have been plenty of traditional material to be utilized.

One of the written Targums is the book of Job that existed in the 1st Christian century. We also have extant Targums of all the OT texts with the exception of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah. There are many uncompleted Pentateuch, such as Targum Onkelos and two 'Jeremiah' or Palestinian Targums. In the Palestinian Targums, we have the book of Prophets that includes Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Apart from the above named Targums, we have Targum Jonathan ben Uzzieh named after an author that lived in the first century BCE. One of the Jerusalem Targums on the Pentateuch was mistakenly given the name of Jonathan ben Uzziel during the 4th century; and till date, it is still referred to as 'Pseudo-Jonathan.

Targum Jonathan ben Uzzieh is easier in interpretation than 'Pseudo–Jonathan. However, scholars have observed that 'Pseudo–Jonathan uses popular stories that had grown up around biblical persons and events. For instance, in it, you find the following changes in biblical names: Shinar (Gen 11:2) becomes Babel (that is Babylon). Again, figurative language is explained with explanatory additions where essential and attempts are made to weed out Anthropomorphisms. For instance, in Gen 1:26, man was created in the image of angels, not of God; and actions on God's part were attributed to the 'Word of God', or the 'Glory of God', or some other things.

The usefulness of Targums: The Targums are useful for the light they throw upon Jewish traditional interpretations, especially methods of interpretation. For example, a story in Isaiah was paraphrased in the Targum Jonathan thus: The 'suffering Servant' was called the Messiah, while other sufferings are perhaps removed or transferred to the people of Israel or to her enemies. This passage could be identified with the same made by Jesus Christ. However, to him, the sufferings were essential for the Servant and for the Messiah's mission and ministry.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The biblical Manuscripts were discovered in caves around Wadi Qumran in 1947. The original manuscripts that were discovered include a complete manuscript of Isaiah. Texts from Qumran were of a pre- Christian era.

The Murabba'at and Masada represent the Orthodox rabbinic transmission from the second century CE. The Cairo Genizah text was discovered in 1890.

The Hebrew Pentateuch preserved by the Samaritans is derived from the ancient text

Abihu's M S is regarded as the oldest text among others. It is ascribed to a great-grand son of Aaron. The first copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch reached Europe in 1616. Targums are Aramaic paraphrase of the OT and contain popular stories that had grown out of biblical persons and events.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that the Biblical Manuscripts discovered in various caves around Wadi Qumran towards the northwest of the Dead Sea in 1947 constitute an independent witness to the reliability of the transmission of the accepted texts. You have also learnt that the Hebrew Pentateuch preserved by the Samaritans is derived from the ancient text and that it reached Europe in 1616. You have also learnt that the Targums were oral in origins before the came later to be written.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Account for the discovery of the early text of the Hebrew Scripture

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. How does the discovery of the DSS affect the OT textual transmission debate?

2. Discuss the contributions of the Samaritan Pentateuch to the search for the original MSS.

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UNIT 4. THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt of the manuscripts of the OT that were transmitted by the Qumran Essenes and other Jewish sects.

In this unit, we shall introduce NT text criticism and some manuscripts and witnesses that have formed the raw materials for the judgement of the textual critics. You will also be introduced to the major classifications of NT MSS.

2.0. OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Discuss variant of uncials

Explain the meaning of uncials

Discuss the miniscules

State the usefulness of Lectionaries to the critics

Discuss the role of the early church fathers in the text families of the manuscripts

Discuss the importance of the ancient versions in the textual criticism of both the Old Testament and the New Testaments.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

Table 1. Statistical analysis of the Text-types and Manuscripts

Number	Name	Description	Material	Age
88	Papyri	𝔓 + zahl	Papyrus	Until the 8th century
274	Majuscule (Kapital letters)	A, B, C, etc. 01, 02, 03....	Parchment	4 - 9 century
c. 2800	Minuscule (small letters)	1,2,3...	Parchment	9 – 15 century
c. 2100	Lectionaries	11, 12, 13...	Parchment	

Table 2: Common Majuscule according to Nestle—Aland

Symbol	Name*	Symbol	Name	Symbol	Name
ℵ01	Sinaiticus	A 02	Alexandrian	B 03	Vaticanus
C 04	Emphraemi Syri Rescriptus	D 05	Bezae Cantabrigiensis	D 06	Claromontanus
E 07	Basilensis	E 08	Laudianus	F 09	Boreelianus
F 010	Augiensis	G 011	Seidelianus I	H 013	Seidelianus II
H 014	Mutinensis	H 015	**Coislinianus**	K 017	Cyprius
K 018	Mosquensis	L 019	Regius	L 020	Angelicus
M 21	Campianus	N 022	Petropolitanus Purpureus	O 23	Sinopensis
P 024	Guelferbytanus A	P 025	Porphyrianus	Q 026	Guelferbytanus B
R 027	Nitriensis	S 028	Vaticanus	T 029	Borgianus
U 030	Nanianus	V 031	Mosquensis	W032	Freerianus
X 033	Monacensis	Y 034	Macedoniensis	Z 035	Dublinensis
Γ 036	Tishendorfianus	Δ 037	Sangallensis	Θ 038	Coridethianus
Λ 039	Tishendorfianus III	Ξ 040	Zacynthius	Π 041	Petropolitanus
Σ 042	Rossanenensis	Φ 043	Beratinus	Ψ 044	Athous Lavrensis
Ω 045 without Names, 046 – 0274 without Symbol und Names					

**All the major majuscules begin with the name Codex...*

3.1. The Classification of NT Manuscripts

NT manuscripts are classified according to content, style of writing or the material in which the manuscript is preserved. The most common method of classification is through a combined classification into Papyri, Majuscules/Uncials, Minuscules and Lectionaries and the readings from the early church fathers. Worthy of note, however, is the fact that both Papyri and Parchment manuscripts are also written in Majuscules and that Papyri could also be found among the lectionaries.

3.1.1: Papyri

Before the introduction of parchment and the manuscripts, writings were done on papyrus, hence the name papyri – the plural form of papyrus. The Papyri are fragmentary manuscripts from the second and third centuries. They constitute the oldest extant form of NT manuscripts and are, both for their great antiquity as for their good textual quality, of immense importance to the NT text critic. The oldest extant NT manuscript is P^{52} containing the test of John 18: 31-33, 37-38 and dated to the second quarter of the second century CE. Papyri are designated by the letter p (often in a black letter script) and a superscript letter. Thus p^{13}, p45, p46, p47, p66, p72, p74, and p^{75} are among the most important papyri.

As new papyri continue to be discovered, new numbers are added to the series (thus the lower the number, the earlier a papyrus was probably found). Presently, the number of known papyri is about one hundred. However, some papyri have more than one number, as different portions came to light at different times. So the actual number of manuscripts in a class will generally be slight less than the nominal number. The following are descriptions of papyri considered very relevant.

3.1.1.1 Chester Beatty Papyrus 1 (p^{45})

This is a third century papyrus of the Gospels and Acts, but now very defective. Thought for a time to have a "Caesrean" text, however, Hurtado has given strong evidence against this, and Colwell has shown that the text has been extensively rewritten and often shortened. The text as it stood before this editing may have been Alexandrian.

3.1.1.2 Chester Beatty Papyrus ^{11} (P^{46})

This is a papyrus of the Pauline Epistles (with assorted lacunae; the beginning of Romans, all of 2 Thessalonians including Hebrews are missing, probably it never contained the Pastoral Epistles. It is dated around 200, though much earlier dates have been suggested. The text is rather free, particularly in Romans, and contains a lot of singular readings. It stands closer to Vaticanus than any other manuscript: but, the two perhaps form their own text – type or sub text – type.

3.1.1.3 Chester Beatty Papyrus ^{111} (P^{47})

This is a third century papyrus of the Apocalypse, containing (with lacuea) 9:10-17:2. The text is closest to Sinaiticus; it is considered to be more "wild" and less valuable than the mainstream Alexandrian witnesses Alexandrinus and Ephraemi Rescriptus.

3.1.1.4. The Ryland Papyrus (p^{52} or ^{457})

This is the oldest papyrus fragment of the New Testament. It is about two inches square in size and contains a portion of John 18: 32 -23 and 37-38 one on either side. Presently it is at the John Ryland Library at Manchester. It is often dated at the first half of the second century.

3.1.1.5. Bodmer Papyrus 11 (p^{66})

This is a fourth century papyrus containing various non-Biblical works, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. P72 is the only papyrus to contain biblical books without lacunae.

3.1.1.6. Bodmer Papyri VII, VIII (^{P72})

This is probably a third or fourth century papyrus containing different non- Biblical works, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. It is the only papyrus to contain biblical books without lacuae. In Petrine Epistles its text appears good and early, being closest to Vaticanus. In Jude the text has been regarded as "wild ", this is not unusual for manuscripts of Jude, which was not highly esteemed in the early church.

3.1.1.7. Bodmer Papyri XIV, XV (^{P75})

This is an early third century papyrus of Luke and John, containing the majority of Luke 3 and John 15. The text is regarded as extraordinarily good and carefully written. It is very close kin of Vaticanus, though not a direct ancestor.

3.1.2. Majuscules/Uncials

The majuscules are Greek manuscripts written entirely in capital letters and coming from the fourth to the tenth centuries. They are usually written on the Parchment that emerged in the 2nd century as an alternative material for writing and was in competition with the Papyrus until late into the Middle Ages. In textual criticism they are represented by what is called a sigla (the identification mark) which are the capital Latin letters. When these letters are fully assigned up to **z**, the Greek alphabets were used in addition. However, one of them, the codex sinaiticus is designated with the first Hebrew letters (aleph). The official number of extant NT majuscules is 274. The following are examples of some the codices considered to be very important.

3.1.2.1. Codex Sinaiticus (^{01})

The 01 Codex Sinaiticus or Sinai manuscript designated by the Hebrew letter *aleph* comes from the middle of the fourth century and contains the OT as well as the NT and some of the Apostolic Fathers in Greek. It was discovered by Constantine Tischendorf convert of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. He got the first leaves of this 4th century manuscript in 1884. In 1859, he was given the remaining leaves of the manuscripts. It is called sinaiticus to designate its place of origin. It was sold to British museum by the Russian government for 100,000 pounds. Out of the 346 leaves of sinaiticus, 147 contain the text of the New Testament which is almost completely preserved. In addition to the New Testament it also preserved the Epistle to Barnabas and the Sheperd of Hermes. This text has greatly influenced the decisions of the scholars of the New Testament textual criticism because it was seen as a neutral text. It has to be noted that

there are certain corrections of a later date on this codex and these corrections showed the influence of the text type that was current in Caesarea.

Codex sinaiticus is textually very good (although only one of the three scribes was an accurate speller, and this one wrote only a handful of leaves in the New Testament). In the gospels it is generally Alexandrian (although the text is something else, perhaps "western", in the first third of John). It is considered second only to ^{P75} and B as a representative of this type. The same is true in Acts and the Catholic Epistles. In Paul, where the textual character of B changes somewhat, sinaiticus is actually the best Alexandrian witness. In the apocalypse, it is somewhat different; it belongs with ^{P47}, with a text considered inferior to A C.

3.1.2.2. Codex Alexandrinus (A^{-02})

The A 02 Codex Alexandrinus or Alexandrian manuscripts, designated by the letter "A", originated from the fifth century. This manuscript was sent to the king of England in 1628 by Cyril Lucar, the patriarch of Constantinople. It is in the British museum to date. It also contains the two letters of Clement of Rome. This is the first of the great uncials to come to the attention of European Scholars. It once contained the entire Old and New Testaments. In its current state, most of Matthew and smaller portions of John and 2 Corinthians are missing. In the gospels, such manuscript goes primarily with the Byzantine text, although it has a number of non-byzantine readings, most of which are also found in good manuscripts such as B. In the Acts and Epistles, the text is well written, mostly Alexandrian with only a few Byzantine and mixed readings. In the Apocalypse (along with C) is considered the best surviving witness.

3.1.2.3. Codex Vaticanus (B - ^{03})

The B 03 Codex Vaticanus, the Vatican manuscript customarily designated by the symbol „B"is an uncial of the fourth century (perhaps copied about AD 350). It is widely regarded as the most important surviving Biblical manuscript and contains the OT (except the books of Maccabees) and most of the NT in Greek . The final pages of the manuscript have been lost, taking with it Hebrews 9: 14 –end, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and probably the Apocalpse.

This manuscript lies in the Vatican Library, hence the name Vaticanus. In the gospels in particular, Codex Vaticanus, is considered almost to define the Alexandrian text, since the Alexandrian is considered the best text by implication of the original text. Both Westcott and Hort, and United Bible Societies editions are strongly dependent on it. Codex Vaticanus retains its high quality in the Acts and Catholic Epistles. Its nature in Paul is uncertain. Some scholars, such as Hort viewed it as mostly Alexandrian with some Western mixture. But, it appears that it actually belongs in its group with P^{P45}

3.1.2.4. Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (Cor ^{04})

This is a 5th century MS of Old and New Testaments re- used the 13th century for the works of Ephream the Syrian in Greek translation. It is the most important NT palimpsesi (that is, a writing material on parchment or tablet that has been used more than once having its earlier writings washed off). It originally contains the whole Greek Bible; about three- fifths of the NT and fragments of the OT survived. The upper writing is a series of sermons by the Syrian Father named Ephraem. It was known as rescriptus, meaning written over because of the sermons written over the original Bible manuscript.

It presents a Greek text on the left page, a Latin on the right, and contains an incomplete text of the Gospel and Acts with a few verses of 1 John.

It is in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris. By the application of chemical reagents and the dint of painstaking labour, Tischendorf was able to decipher the most totally obliterated underwritings of the palimpsest. Only 64 leaves are left of the OT and 145 of the NT. It contains portions of every book except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John. The codex was perhaps written in Egypt.

The Codex Ephraemi text varies. For instance, in the Gospels, it is a mixture of Alexandrian and Byzantine elements, though some parts are more Byzantine than others. In Acts, it is somewhat more Alexandrian. In Paul it is almost purely Alexandrian, being very nearly as good as Alexandrinus, probably, not quite as pure as in the Catholic Epistles. However, it appears to indicate a mixture of Alexandria and family 1739 readings, with more of the latter than the former. In the Apocalypse it stands close to Alexandrinus, and is one of the best manuscripts of the book.

3.1.2.5. Codex Bezae (D-^{05})

Codex Bezae is a 6th century Greco-Latin text. It was named after the Reformed scholar named Theodore Beza, who gave the manuscript to the University of Cambridge in 1581. It is also known as the Codex Cantabrigiensis. It contains most of the text of the four Gospels and Acts of Apostles with a small fragment of John. The unusual feature of the codex is the presentation of both Greek and Latin writings on the left and right respectfully. The Latin text is of both Old Latin translations which were used in the Vulgate while the Greek is the Western text type. This manuscript is characterised by many additions and some significant omissions in the text of the Gospels and divergences in reading in Acts from the other manuscripts that it has been assumed that it derived from a second edition and not by the author himself. However, the ancient Syrian translation of the Gospels agrees with the Western readings as they appear in the Codex Bezae.

Codex Bezae is the most controversial text of all New Testament manuscripts. It contains most of the Gospels and Acts; however, many pages have been lost. The pages contained the Johannine Epistles, but there were probably other writings as well, and it is not certain what they were. However, there are debates on such writings among scholars ,for instance, some of them accept that there is similarity in the Greek and Latin side of D and (denoted D and d respectively) and have been edited in order to agree among themselves. On the other hand, there is no consensus among many scholars whether it was the Greek that was made to conform to the Latin or vice versa. Although, it appears that it is very close to the 'Western' witnesses, such as the Old Latin versions and Fathers such as, Irenaeus. Apart from this, it also has important differences. For instance, D is the only manuscript to transfer Matthew's genealogy of Jesus into Luke 3: 23f. This transfer is obviously the result of rewritings. Thus, scholars regarded as the serious problem in that D is the only substantial Greek witness to the "Western" text of the gospels. However, some scholars want you to take caution while reading it because they do not have support from a large number of Latin witnesses.

3.1.2.6. Codex Claromontanus (Dp^{-D2})

This codex has to be distinguished from Codex Bezae which is classified as D;

hence it is called Dp or ^{D2}. It contains only the Pauline epistles including Hebrew. It is also a bilingual Greek and Latin manuscript having the Greek on the left and the Latin on the right. It was written in the 5th century and it is also a representative of the Western text

3.1.2.7. E-^{07}

This is an uncial of the ninth century, containing the gospels with minor defects. It is recognized as the only earliest full-blown witness to the Byzantine text.

3.1.2.8, Codex Laudianus (E or^{08})

This is a sixth century uncial of Acts. It is a Greek/Latin diglot, with the two languages in very narrow parallel columns on the same page. This manuscript was almost certainly consulted by Bede in his commentary on Acts. It is largely Byzantine, but also has many "Western" readings (some perhaps from the Latin, but not all) and some Alexandrian readings.

3.1.2.9. Codices Claromontanus, Boernerianus, Augiensis (G Paul or^{012}; F Paul or ^{010})

This is a group of Greco–Latin MSS, the former of the 6th, the two later belong to the 9th century, containing uncials of Pauline Epistles. F has the Latin (a mixed Old Latin/Vulgate text) in a facing column; G has a Latin interlinear that appears based on an Old Latin text but which has been conformed to the Greek. Both appear to derive from a common ancestor at a distance of no more than two generations. This common ancestor lacked Hebrews and probably had some other gaps that appear in both manuscripts. The text of the two sister uncials is "Western," with perhaps more minor alterations in the text than even D/^{06}. Of the two, F is the more attractive and legible, but G is more complete and seems to have preserved the ancestral text better.

3.1.2.10. Codex Regius (L/^{09})

This is an eighth century uncial of the Gospels with some slight gaps It is most Alexandrian of the late uncials, falling closer to Vaticanus than to Sinaticus. The combination of Vaticanus and Regius was considered very strong by Hort .Regius is mostly Byzantine in the early parts of Matthew, but Byzantine readings are rare in Mark through John.

3.1.2.11. P/^{025}

This is a ninth century uncial palimpsest of the Act, Epistles, and Apocalypes. P is almost purely Byzantine in Act, and has the "Andreas" text in the Apocalypse. In Paul and the Catholic Epistles, however, there were many Alexandrian readings among the Byzantine.

3.1.2.12. Codex Washingtonianus (the Freer Codex) (W^{032})

This is a fifth century uncial of the Gospels, with some slight lacunae. W is uncial of Gospels with some slight lacaunae. W is unsual in that its text is heavily "block mixed": Byzantine in Matthew, "Western" and/or "Caesarean" in Mark; Byzantine and Alexandrian in Luke, mostly Alexandrian in John. Its early date makes it important, but the student should always be sure to know what to expect from it in any particular

passage.

3.1.2.13. Codex Koridethian (or ^{038})

This is an uncial of the gospels with missing parts of the first five chapters of Matthew. Its date is uncertain since there are no other manuscript which use the same writing style. It was apparently written by a scribe unaccustomed to Greek, probably a Georgian. The MS copied by him was apparently a later uncial of the 10th century.it seems to have been written by a scribe who had very little knowledge of Greek. It contains the earliest and most important witness to the so-called "Caersarean" text, although in fact it has many Byzantine readings as well.

3.1.2.14. Codex Euthalianus (H Paul or ^{015})

This is a 6th century MS, much of which is fragmented and scattered, containing the Pauline Epistles connected, with a MS in the library of Pamphilus of Caesarea. These MSS give the varying text–types existing in the 4th century; it is around these that debate has centred in the last hundred years and on these MSS that critical texts have been based. As an exploratory investigation, this is justifiable; but, as more recent discoveries have shown, the complexity of the data is greater than this procedure would imply.

3.1.3. Minuscule

The minuscule manuscripts distinguish between large and small letters and were written in a running hand or cursive style representing a style of writing that began to dominate by the eleventh century. They are recognised by the script in which they are written since they can be on either parchment or paper. The earliest minuscules date from the ninth century (overlapping the last uncials), and continued to be written up to, and even after the appearance of the first printed New Testament in 1516. The greater majority of NT manuscripts are the Minuscule, and the oldest of these, 461 is dated to the 9th century. It is estimated that approximately 2800 NT manuscripts in minuscule are extant today.

For the most part, the minuscules are marked not only by their script but by the presence of accents, breathings, word spacing, paragraphs and punctuation the absence of these made the early uncials so hard to read. Minuscules are given simple numbers, from ^{1} on up to the current total of about ^{2850}. Some of these minuscules have been grouped into text families. We shall discuss some of these minuscules below.

3.1. 3.1. Minuscule 1

This is a minuscule of the twelfth century, containing the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse. In the Acts and Epistles, the text is mostly Byzantine, however, in the Gospels it is the head of the family known as the Luke Group and it symbolized by F^{1}. This also contains $^{118,\ 131,\ 205}$ (a probable descendent of ^{209}), the closest relative of ^{1}. The Luke Group is often listed as "Caesarean," though the group seems slightly closer to the Alexandrian text than the other witnesses to this type.

3.1. 3.2. Minuscule 13

This is a minuscule of thirteenth century; it contains the Gospels with some lacumae. It is the best-known member of the family known as the Ferrar Group and it is symbolised by F13. F13 contains 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, and 1709. This group is listed as "Caesarean," although it has more Byzantine readings than the Koridethi Codex or Family 1

3.1.3.3. Minuscule 33

This is a minuscule of the ninth century. It contains the entire New Testament except the Apocalpse (with some small gaps in the gospels and many places where the wet weather has made the manuscript difficult to read). It is known as "the Queen of the Minuscules," and generally worthy of the title. In the Gospels it is Alexandrian, though with much Byzantine mixture.

The Byzantine mixture is less in the rest of the New Testament; in Paul it is second only to Sinaiticus as an Alexandrian witness (except in Romans. which has a Byzantine text written by another hand).

3.1.3.4. Minuscule 81

This is a minuscule of the year 1044. It contains the Acts (with lacunae) and Epistles. It is regarded as having the best text of Acts among the minuscules. Besides, it agrees with the Alexandrian text, though with somewhat more Byzantine mixture and a few more late readings than the Alexandrian uncials.

3.1.3.5. Miniscule 892

This is a minuscule of the ninth century, and it contains the Gospels with some insertions from a later hand. Though 892 is a minuscule, it was copied from an uncial, and still displays some of the characteristics of its parent, (that is, the same page breaks). Minuscules 892 are perhaps the most Alexandrian of all Gospels. However, there is a significant Byzantine element in it. The supplements which occupy most of the second half of John are almost purely Byzantine.

3.1. 3.6. Minuscule 1175

This is a minuscule of the eleventh century. It contains the Acts and Epistles (with significant lacunae in the final part of Paul.). It is considered one of the best most Alexandrian minuscules, but with a curiously mixed text. The text of Romans and the Johnannine Epistles are Byzantine. The rest of the Epistles are Alexandrian with some Byzantine readings. Acts contains mostly pre- Byzantine. However, the amount of "Western" influence seems to vary from insignificant to rather large.

3.1. 3.7. Minuscule 1241

This is a minuscule of the twelfth century. It contains the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse, but with some lacunae and assorted supplements. It has been carelessly copied with many peculiar reading as a result. A curiously mixed text, mostly

Byzantine though with some Alexandrian readings in Matthew and Mark; probably the most Alexandrian minuscule witness to Luke; Alexandrian and Byzantine mixed in John; mostly Byzantine in Acts; mostly Byzantine in Paul, but with supplements containing some earlier readings; highly valuable in the Catholics, where it goes with ^{1739}.

3.1. 3.8. Minuscule ^{1739}

This is a tenth century minuscule of the Acts and Epistles, complete except that the first chapter and a fraction of Acts come from a later hand. It is the single most important minuscule known. It contains a very old text which is not part of the Alexandrian text and so has great value in its own right.

3.1.3.9. Minuscule ^{2138}

This is a minuscule of the year 1072; it contains the Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypse. Minuscule 2138 is of value only in the Acts and Catholic Epistles. It is the earliest member of a fairly large group of manuscripts (for example ^{614} in the Acts and Catholics, 630 in the Catholics, and ^{1505} in the Acts, Paul, and Catholics) which contain a text neither Alexandrian nor Byzantine.

3.1.4. Lectionaries

The fourth class of Greek manuscripts, the lectionaries, contain selections from biblical texts used in liturgical contexts. They are written in both uncials (about 270) and minuscule hands and on both parchment and paper and date from the fourth century on (though only ten originated before the 8th century.

Lectionaries are quite numerous (about 2300 are now known), but most of them are late and fairly standardized. Lectionaries are designated by a script letter / followed by a number (for example' ^{547} is the relatively well-known "Ferrar Lectionary", so-called because its text resembles that found in the group of manuscripts called Family ^{13}). To this point, they have not been very carefully studied, and they are rarely used in textual criticism.

Besides the wealth of Greek materials available to the NT textual critic, there are also important ancient translations into Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Armenian, Slavonic, Gothic, etc. Some of these versions may depend upon a Greek text earlier than any presently existing Greek manuscript, and so they can be very important in arriving at a text-critical decision. The writings of the Fathers of the Church need also to be taken into account. The fathers were primarily interpreters of the biblical tradition, and they can provide precious indications about the form of the biblical text in certain locales from a time when we have no direct manuscript evidence.

3.2. The Origin of the Local Text-types

In the earliest days of the Christian church, after an apostolic letter was sent to a congregation or an individual, or after a gospel was written to meet the needs of a particular reading public, copies would be made in order to extend its influence and to enable others to profit from it as well. The establishment of new congregations also went hand in hand with the effort to provide them with copies of the Scriptures in the form

which was current in that area. So, it happened that in no distant time, local texts developed in and around major cities such as Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Carthage or Rome. As additional copies of the Scriptures were made, the number of special readings and renderings would be both conserved and to some extent increased, so much so that eventually a type of text grew up which was more or less peculiar to that locality. Thus emerged what is technically referred to as textual families, that is, groups of manuscripts that are dependent on each other and whose family tree is reconstructable as well as local texts. The increased need to supply more local churches with manuscripts after the explosion that followed the conversion of Emperor Constantine in the 4th century brought with it the increase in influence of those manuscripts that increasingly gained acceptance in the Roman Church. Among the most common text types in the history of text critical research include:

3.2.1. The Alexandrian (Neutral) Text-type (Nestle H)

This is usually considered to be the best text and the most faithful in preserving the original. It consists of Papyri P $^{66.75}$ dating back to the second century; the Codex Vaticanus B, codex Sinaiticus (a), Codex Alexandrinus (A) (Acts of the Apostles) contained in parchment manuscripts dating from about the middle of the 4th century, as well as in the Coptic. Characteristics of the Alexandrian text are brevity and austerity. That is, it is generally shorter than the text of other forms, and it does not exhibit the degree of grammatical and stylistic polishing that is characteristic of the other text types. This text type is called Alexandrian primarily because it was the type used by the Alexandrian Fathers Clemen, Origene, Dionysius and Cyril of Alexandrian. It was called Neutral by Westcott and Hort who held it as an unrevised Text.

3.2.2. The Western Text

This text type, at home in Italy and Gaul as well as in North Africa (especially in Egypt) can be traced back to the second century. It was used by Marcion, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertulian and Cyprian. The most important Greek manuscripts that present a Western type of text are P^{38} P,^{48} codex Bezae (D) of the fifth century (containing Gospels and Acts); codex Washingtonianus (W) of the late fourth or early fifth century (containing Mark 1:1-5:30), as well as the old Latin translation. The chief characteristic of the Western readings is fondness for paraphrase. Words, clauses, and even whole sentences are freely changed, omitted or inserted. Sometimes, the motive appears to be harmonization, while at other times it was the enrichment of the narrative by the inclusion of traditional or apocryphal materials. The problem is more acute in the book of Acts where the Western text is almost 10% longer than the form which is commonly regarded to be the original text of that book.

3.2.3. The Koine- Byzantine Text

This is the latest of the several distinctive text types of the text of the NT, with almost all of its manuscripts dating as late as the 7th and 8th century AD. It is characterized chiefly by lucidity and completeness. The framers of this text sought to smooth away any harshness of language, to combine two or more divergent readings into one expanded reading (conflation) and to harmonize divergent parallel passages. This text type is generally regarded as an end-product of a recession process that was begun in Antioch and completed in Constantinople and was widely in circulation during the reign of the

Byzantine Empire. Among the most important manuscripts of this text type is codex Alexandrinus (A) (especially the Gospels).

The wide spread and establishment of the Byzantine text from the fourth century onwards is due to the central and dominating position that Byzantium, that is, Constantinople played in the Eastern Roman Empire after it became Constantine's capital in 334. The text form which was used in the Constantinopolitan church, from the time of Chrysostom (347 -407), was disseminated from there over Greek- speaking Christendom. But, scholars claimed that there was no evidence of its being used earlier, either in manuscripts or in translations made from Greek into other languages or in Biblical quotations by Christian writers. It is a well edited fourth century text, drawing upon several types of text which were in circulation earlier. Before the centralising influence of Constantinople, there were types of Greek text associated with a number of cities and regions, such as Alexandria, Caesarea, Antioch and the West. The Alexandrian text is represented by the Sinaitic and Vatican codices. By the time Coptic version of the New Testament was being prepared, this text represented the nearest attainable approach to the original text, and in adopting it the Revisers gave the English – speaking world the most reliable text of the New Testament that was then accessible. Westcott and Hort, exaggerated the archaic status of the Alexandrian text, which they called the "Neutral" text, considering that it represented the apostolic text with practically no deviation. The Alexandrian text was edited about the beginning of the third century according to the best traditions of Alexandrian philological scholarship. On the other hand, we have other types of text in circulation, in Egypt and other places. How do we know the original text? In order to know this, a different methodology must be adopted. However, the most part of King James Version represents one text –type, the Byzantine, as also does the Revised Version, that is, the Alexandrian, such later version, as the R.S.V., and N.E.B. use wide varieties of texts.

3.2.4. Caesarean Text

This most likely originated in Egypt and is attested by $P^{45\ +37}$ and the codex Koridethi (□□. It was supposed to have been brought by Origenes to Caesarea from Alexandria where it was used by Eusebius and others. From Caesarea it was carried to Jerusalem, where it was used by Cyril. According to some scholars, it is an Eastern text, dating from the early part of the third century, and is characterized by a distinctive mixture of Western readings and Alexandrian readings. Among its characteristics is a striving after elegance of expression, a feature that is especially typical of the Byzantine text type.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The manuscripts of the NT were transmitted in various stuffs and means. The papyri were written earlier than the uncials in terms of being written but were later discovered. They were written on papyrus, a form of early plant that was not durable. They were written mostly in capitals.

The minuscules were written in running hands or the cursive style and were found on either papyrus or parchment. They contained breathing marks, punctuation and other divisions that distinguish them from the uncials. The lectionaries were also of the manuscripts used by textual critics. During the religio licita, the use of parchment became the vogue in writing the manuscripts of the New Testament replacing the papyri

that till then have been the major means of transmiting manuscripts of the biblical books. For it was more durable than the papyrus. Constantine Tischendor discovered Codex Sinaiticus on Mount Sinai. Codex Alexandrinus was discovered by Cyril Lucar. Codex Vaticanus is widely regarded as the most important New Testaments palimpsesi written on the Tablet. Codex Bezae was discovered by Theodore Beza.

In addition to the codexes, there were also other manuscript types that include miniscules, lectionaries and translations. There were also different variations of these manuscripts depending on the localities in which they were found. While variations in manuscripts are usually un-intended, some variations were also intentionally introduced by the scribes or copiers for obvious theological reasons. In the course of text-critical studies, some criteria have also been evolved in assessing the originality and fidelity of these manuscripts to the original texts.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have been exposed to the many stages the manuscripts of the NT have been before the beginning of textual criticism to determine how we can arrive at the closest text to the original manuscripts. In addition to the initial papyri, you have learnt of the uncials/majuscles, so called because they are parchment manuscripts written in capital letters and made popular in the period of Constantine, the Emperor of Rome. You have also learnt of other forms of manuscripts like miniscules and lectionaries. While codex Vaticanus is the most important NT manuscript on account of the number of books of both the Old and New Testament it contains, Codex Bazae is the most controversial in terms of the the books it omits and the mixture of contents of books. You have also learnt of the local variations of these manuscripts, the reason why they vary in content, as well as the criteria employed by scholars in evaluating the authenticity of each of them.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give brief description of the great uncial.

Give the names of some papyri, majuscles and miniscule

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

What is the rationale for embarking on a text-critical analysis of the NT?

Discuss the major difference between the uncials/majuscles and Minuscules.

Discuss the context and content of each of the following manuscripts: The Papyri, Codex Sinaticus (^{01}), Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Bezae (D -^{05})

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MODULE 3. THE BIBLE: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

UNIT 1. VERSIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

UNIT 2. ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

UNIT 1. VERSIONS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

1.0 INRODUCTION

In the last module, you have learnt how the manuscripts of the OT and NT were copied and transmitted by the different religious groups within first century Judaism, including the emerging Christian community.

In this first unit of the last module, you will begin to study the versions of both the Old and the New Testaments. You will learn about the Septuagint and its subsequent versions that are more closely related to the Masoretic text such as the Targums, the Samaritan recession, Syriac Peshitta and the Arabic version. You will also learn that the Syriac version is the oldest translation of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as about the view of scholars concerning its disputed origin.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

Identify the origin of the Septuagint

Learn about the versions of the OT discovered in the DSS

Learn about other versions of the OT apart from the LXX

3.0. MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Septuagint

As reflecting one form of Hebrew text in the third and second centuries BCE, the LXX is a witness of high values. The officers of Antiochus destroyed the copies of the Law at Judaea during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. But when the persecution was over and religious liberty was regained, it was necessary to seek copies of the text from other places, especially from Mesopotamia that was the settlements of the Jews. Among the recovered texts were many copies of Hebrew scripture that represented both the ancestor of the later MT and other form of text which the LXX translators had before them and which have been in circulation from the last two or three centuries BCE.

In the history of the Church the most relevant of the Version of the OT has been the Septuagint. It assumed priority as early as the first century. It was used by Paul when he wrote to the churches and on the whole, it was the rendering used for the Gospels in their present form. However, the Orthodox Judaism either refused to recognise it from initial stage or quickly expunged it from among its Scriptures. But there are few indirect indications of its existence in some of the rabbinic works. As a result, the history of its transmission must be regarded as largely independent of the Masoretic text except that from time to time, relevant attempts were made by Christian Fathers to achieve its alignment with the more fixed and in a sense, more authentic Hebrew text.

It has been noted that sometimes, when an OT passage is cited from the Hebrew text such words slightly differ from the original text. What explanation do we make of this? In some places, the LXX perhaps represents a Hebrew text varying slightly from that which has come down to us. Thus, when the last clause of Isa 28:16 is quoted in the NT (Rom 9:10-11; 1 Peter 2:6); it appears with the verb "shall not be put to shame", following the LXX which reflects Hebrew *yebosi*, instead of "shall not make haste", which is the reading of the Masoretic Hebrew *yahish.* It is then the province of textual criticism to decide, if possible, what the original Hebrew wording was - either one or the other of these, or *yahil*, implied by other versions, such as the N.E.B. "Shall not waver".

However, there are places where the LXX gives an interpretation of a Hebrew expression instead of a literal rending of it. For example, the LXX translator of Psa 40:6 no doubt, read the words "ears hast thou digged for me" in his Hebrew text just as we do. However, he knew that the "digging" or hollowing out of ears is part of the process of forming a complete body; therefore, since the part implies the whole, he reproduced the clause by the Greek words, "a body hast thou prepared for me." Where a NT writer quotes such an interpretation, he adopts it as being the true interpretation of the original. This is manifestly so when the LXX wording of Psa 40:6 was cited in Heb 10:5ff. The author of the Hebrews here applies the text to the body which Christ received at His incarnation and which He offered up once for all (Heb 10:10).

3.2. Manuscripts discovered from the pre-Christian & early Christian era.

The recent discovered manuscripts from the pre- Christian and early Christian times provide pointers for the early history. The manuscripts include *John Rylands Papyrus 458* from the second century BCE and *Papyrus Fouad 266* in Cairo from the late second or early first century BCE, both of which contain fragments of Deuteronomy. Their main

importance is that on the whole they confirm the implications of the Letter of Aristeas, and the testimony of Philo and Josephus that by the second century BCE the Greek rendering of the Torah or Law was not only complete and uniform but was also well distributed throughout the Hellenistic Diaspora and in Palestine. On the other hand, scholars who have collated the Rylands papyrus are not wholly agreed on its affinities (for instance Kahle argues that it is related to one of the recensions, namely the Lucianic).

3.3. Manuscripts discovered from the Qumran caves

Some manuscripts discovered from caves one, four, five, and six in the Qumran and said to come from the biblical texts in Hebrew were reported to relate to the parent text of the LXX historical books. Specific interest is attached to Samuel fragments from cave four because the text- form shows more obvious affinities with the LXX than do the others. Although, it has long been agreed upon by scholars that the parent text of the LXX version of Samuel contained recessional divergences from the MT text, the extent of recension has been debated. Scholars who compressed it argued that many of the textual differences only reflect Hellenistic tendencies, while others claimed that they were derived from actual Hebrew variants. The recent discovery actually supports the second alternatives, and it may be assumed that since the rendering of Samuel is demonstrably a fairly literal translation of its Hebrew parent text, the presence of interpretation elsewhere at least in the historical books should be admitted based only on where no other explanation is possible.

However, the problem of Greek – Hebrew relationship is not thereby disposed of for though the presence of interpretation in the Septuagint is certain, its nature and its extent are debated. It is probable that during the third century BCE, a rendering of the Torah or Law in *koine* Greek was produced by a duly commissioned body of Jerusalem (orthodox) Jews for apologetic purposes and for liturgical use in the synagogues of the Hellenistic Diaspora.

This agrees with the historical presentation of the Letter of Aristeas, whose interpretative elements bear typically Jewish characteristics with such items as found in the Aramaic Targums. Also, the LXX rendering of the historical books may well be a true rendering of a Hebrew parent text, agreed in a different recession from the MT. But scholars claimed that some legendary features in the MT Samuel–Kings had been rationalised and the persons of the kings idealised, all under the influence of Greek interpretation. However, it seems that there are discrepancies between Samuel–Kings and Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible. The question is further complicated by traces of multiple translators as well as divergent parent text.

Despite this, we cannot deny the Hellenistic influence. This is because it is very difficult to explain away such obvious interpretative elements as the polemic against Hellenistic heathenism in the Greek Isaiah – a text whose parent Hebrew is almost identical with the MT. Likewise Proverbs and Job can be regarded as a fruitful source of Hellenistic hermeneutics, and even the comparatively literal rendering of Ecclesiastes betrays occasional Hellenism. But this theory has evoked opposition, based on the view that the only satisfactory key to the Version is Jewish (orthodox) hermeneutics.

You should note that the controversy is centred on the nature of the Greek texts and the early textual transmission of the Version. Kahle opined that at the period of pre-

Christian era, there were many Greek rendering of the OT and that the only thing Aristeas described was the standardization rather than the rendering of the Torah or Law text in Greek. But the other books were later standardised by the Christian Church and the name Septuagint having lost favour among the Jews, was given to it for convenience. However, it appears the evidence of Philo and Josephus and the statement in the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus seemed that there was no authorised L X X text before the second century C E. Despite this, the traditional view is presently defended by some scholars and it has the implicit approval of the editors of modern critical texts of the Septuagint. But this does not deny the existence of variant Greek texts in the pre- Christian era, for in the NT itself, though the quotations are mainly Septuagint, other renderings were considered as exemplified in Theodotionic readings in the Book of Revelation and others.

3.4. The Syriac Version

The Syriac Version is the oldest among the Hebrew Scriptures. The version was used by the Syriac Church. It is known as Peshitta or 'simple' translation. We have no direct information of the author or the date of the translation. Even scholars claimed that since the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia (428), full details of its provenance were unknown. However, scholars were able to trace the internal evidence that tells us about its origin. They were able to observe its linguistic affinities between the Palestinian Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation of the Pentateuch. For instance, the name 'Syriac' that is often given to Christian Aramaic is an E Aramaic language. This P. Kahle drew light on the possible origin of the version. The linguistic traces of W. Aramaic in a version which in E Aramaic dialect discloses some acquaintance with a Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. Likewise, A. Baumstark indicated the direct agreement of the Peshitta text of Gen 29:17, that reads: "*And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."*

This with a Genizah text and the Palestinian Targum as against Targum Onkelos and Pseudo- Jonathan suggest that the Peshitta Pentateuch originated in an E Aramaic district which had some relationship with Jerusalem. The monarchy house of Adiabene, a kingdom established between the two rivers Zah, east of the Tigris, was converted to Judaism around 40 CE. Children of the ruling house were sent to Jerusalem for their education. Likewise, some members of the ruling house were also reported to be buried there. The religion of Judaism spread among the people of Adiabene, and they needed the Hebrew Scriptures in a language they could understand, such as Syriac. Therefore, it has been assumed that parts of the Syriac OT, especially the Pentateuch were introduced into the Adiabene kingdom in the middle of the 1st century. Besides, it was noticed that the Palestinian Targum that was written in the W. Aramaic dialect of Judaea and was in use at the period in Palestine. Therefore, we assume that such dialect was translated into the Aramaic dialect spoken in the Adiabene kingdom by the royal family.

According to Baumstark, the date of the original text of Syriac version is dated far beyond the Palestinian Targum. Besides, the Palestinian style that is ambiguous is not found in the Syriac Bible. Likewise, the oldest fragment that is kept of the Targum consists part of Exodus 21 and 22 and does not have ambiguous expression, while the Syriac version of Exodus 22 verses 4 and 5 follows the usual Jewish interpretation. Therefore, it has been assumed that this fragment represents an older kind of the

Targum than that which might have been sent to Adiabene kingdom. On the other hand, it has been observed that there exist two texts of the Peshitta Pentateuch in the early period. One was more of literal translation of the Hebrew and the other a rendering closely related to the Palestinian Targum. However, many scholars believed that the literal translation is earlier on the ground that the Syriac Church Fathers Aphrahar and Ephraem used a text which followed the Hebrew more closely than the text in common use in the 6th century.

Scholars keep on asking how this translation came to be recognised as the official OT Scriptures of the Syriac Church. Besides, if we accept the literal translation as the work of Jewish translators, made for the Jewish society, it would appear that this translation was taken over by the Syriac Church. The Church probably made an improvement in the style. For this fact, the text was accepted as standard around the 5th century C E. Scholar also assume that the Syriac Church had taken root in the district of Arbela, the capital of Adiabene, before the end of the 1st century, and in the course of the 2nd century Edessa, east of the Upper Euphrates, was the centre of Mesopotamian Christianity.

At the beginning of the 4th century, the Christian religion was pronounced the official faith of the Roman Empire and codices of the LXX were produced. B.J. Roberts in his work, "The Old Testament Text and Version (1951) states, 'It is reasonable to suppose that a similar development was taken with the Peshitta version. Thus, it is held that an attempt was made to revise the Syriac version in order to bring it more into harmony with the LXX. It took place shortly after the NT Peshitta was revised, but it is obvious that the recession was not carried out in the same way for all the sacred books. Thus, the Psalter and the Prophetic books, because of their relatively greater importance for the NT, were more carefully collated with the Greek version. Job and Proverbs, on the other hand, were scarcely touched and the same may be said to be true, but to a lesser degree, of Genesis'.

Along the same line, F. Buhi states that 'the Peshitta owned its origin to Christian efforts: in part older individual Jewish translations were utilised, in part the remainder was commissioned to Jewish Christians for translation'. This is possible because the Syriac Christians included a large Jewish congregation. Concerning the influence of the LXX on the Peshitta, W.E. Barnes states 'The influence of the Septuagint is for the most part *sporadic*, affecting the translation of a word here and of a word there. The Syriac translators must indeed have known that their knowledge of Hebrew was far in advance of the knowledge possessed by the Septuagint, and yet the stress of Greek fashion had its way now and again. The Syriac scribes, on the contrary, were ignorant of Hebrew and ready to introduce readings found in a Greek version or recommended by a Greek Father. So, the Peshitta in its later text has more of the Septuagint than in its earlier form. It is only in the Psalter that any general Greek influence in a new characteristic is to be found. That characteristic is dread of anthropomorphisms from which the Syriac translators of the Pentateuch were absolved.

At the end of the first quarter of the 5th century, there arose a division among the adherents of the Syriac Church. This led Nestorius and his followers to withdrew eastwards. However, he was excommunicated from the bishopric of Constantinople in 431 and he took with him the Peshitta Bible. The Church demolished their school at Edessa in 489. As a result, the Nestorians fled to Persia and established a new School at

Nisibis. The two sects of the Church kept their own Bible texts. However, from the 13th century when Bar-Hebraeus was the head of the Church, others have been distinctive Eastern and Western. But the Eastern and Nestorian texts have undergone fewer revisions based on Hebrew and Greek versions on account of the different location of the Church.

Other Syriac translations were made at an early date. However, there remains no complete Manuscript evidence. Fragments exist of a Christian Palestinian Syriac (Jerusalem) translation, a version of the Old and New Testaments dating from the 4th or the 6th centuries. This was made from the LXX and intended for the religious worship of the Melchite (Palestinian-Syriac) Church. It is written in Syriac characters, and the language is Palestinian Aramaic. Philoxenus of Mabbug commissioned the translation of the entire Bible from Greek (c. 508 CE), but of this, only a few fragments remain, containing portions of the NT and Psalter. Baumstark states that the extant remains are confined to fragments which are based on a Lucianic recension of the text of Isaiah. These belong to the early 6th century CE.

Another Syriac version of the OT was made by Paul, Bishop of Tella in Mesopotamia, in 617 and 618. This follows the text of the Greek and also keeps the Hexaplaric signs in marginal notes. Readings are given from Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. As this is really a Syriac version of the LXX column of Origen's Hexapla, it is known as the Syro–Hexaplaric text, and it is a valuable witness to the Hexaplar text of the LXX.

3.5 The Latin Versions

The Latin version of the Scriptures called the "Old Latin", which originated in North Africa, was in common use in the time of Tertullian (AD 150) of this there appear to have been various copies or recessions made. The version made in Italy, and called the Itala, was reckoned the most accurate. This translation of the OT seems to have been made not from the original Hebrew but from the LXX. This version became greatly corrupted by repeated transcription, and to provide remedy, Jerome (329 -420 CE) was requested by Damascus, the bishop of Rome, to undertake a complete revision of it. It met with opposition at first, but was at length, in the seventh century, recognized as the "Vulgate" version. It appeared in a printed from about 1455 CE, the first book that was ever issued from the press. The Council of Trent (1546) declared it "authentic". It subsequently underwent various revisions, but that which was executed (1592) under the sanction of Pope Clement V111 was adopted as the basis of all subsequent editions. It is regarded as the sacred original Bible in the Roman Catholic Church. All modern European versions have been more or less influenced by the Vulgate. This version reads *ipsa* instead of *ipse* in Gen 3:15, "shall bruise thy head".

3.6. Other Ancient Versions

Other Ancient Versions which are of importance for Biblical critics, but which we need not mention particularly include the Ethiopic, in the fourth century from the LXX; two Egyptian versions of about the fourth century: the Memphilitic circulated in Lower Egypt, and the Thebaic designed for Upper Egypt, both from the Greek; the Gothic, written in the Germen language, but with the Greek alphabet by Uiphlas the Armenian, (died about 388 CE) of which only fragments of the OT remains; the Armenian, about A.D. 400; and the Slavonic in the ninth century for ancient Moravia.

Other ancient versions, as the Arabic, the Persian, and the Anglo- Saxon, are worthy to be mentioned.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the history of the Church, the most important of the Versions is the Septuagint. Paul adopted it his letters to the Churches. John Rylands papyrus 458 and papyrus Found 266 were discovered in Cairo at the early century BCE. Manuscripts one, four, five and six were discovered from the Qumran caves. They were traced to the biblical texts in Hebrew. During the third century BCE, a rendering of the Torah in koine Greek was produced by a commissioned body of Orthodox in Jerusalem. The main purpose of it was for use in apologetic and for liturgical use in the Synagogues of the Hellenistic Diaspora. Other versions of the OT were also seen, among which is the Syriac Version that ranks as the oldest of all OT versions available to modern scholars. In addition, we have also the Latin Vulgate that provided the basis for the many English translations that we shall see in the next unit.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

Septuagint versions were considerably favoured by the early Church.

Paul made used of such versions in his writings.

John Rylands papyrus 458 and papyrus Found 266 were discovered in

Cairo at early century BCE.

At the third century BCE. a rendering of the Torah in koine Greek was produced by a commissioned body of Orthodox in Jerusalem for liturgical use in the synagogues of the Hellenistic Diaspora.

Other available versions of the OT include the Syriac version and the Latin Vulgate.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the roles of two scholars in the discovering of the Septuagint.

Comment on the version that was used by the Jewish Christian around 4^{th} century.

Account for the use of Judaea dialect in the kingdom of Adiabene.

6.0 TUTOR- MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Comment on the following Versions of the OT

1. The Syriac Versions
2. The Latin Versions
3. Other Ancient Versions

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UNIT 2. THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have learnt about the versions of the Bible in ancient languages. This includes the LXX, the Syriac as well as the Latin version also known as the Vulgate. In this unit you will learn about the emergence of the English versions. In addition to the King James, Authorised and Revised Standard Versions, we shall also focus on another interesting area of the version tagged the New International Version. You will be exposed to the works of over a hundred scholars that used Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts to translate the The *New International* version that is now in use.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the emergence of the English versions of the bible.
- Learn about the roles played by scholars in the compilation of the New International Version
- State the texts that were used to translate The New International Version
- Name denominations that selected scholars to work on The New International Version

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The history of English versions began with Wycliffe. Portions, however, of the Scriptures were rendered into Saxon (as the Gospel according to John by Bede, 735 CE) and also into English (by Orme, called the "Ormulum") containing a portion of the Gospels and of Acts in the form of a metrical paraphrase toward the close of the seventh century. While all these existed long before Wycliffe, it is to him that the honour belongs of being behind the first rendition of the whole Bible into English (c. 1380 CE). This version was made from the Vulgate and renders Gen 3:15 after that version, "She shall tread thy head".

3.1. The Authorized Version

The work of John Rogers, the first martyr under the reign of Queen Mary was properly the first Authorized Version. Henry V111 ordered that a a copy of it should be made available for every Church. This took place in less than a year after Tyndale was martyred for the crime of translating the Scriptures. In 1539 Richard Taverner published a revised edition of Matthew's Bible. The Great Bible, so called from its great size, called also Cranmer's Bible, was published in 1539 and 1568. In the strict sense the "Great Bible" is the only Authorized Version, for the Bishop's Bible and the present Bible (AV) never had the formal sanction of royal authority. Next in order was the Geneva version (1557 -1560); the Bishop's Bible (1568). We also have the following: the Rheims and Douai versions, under Roman Catholic auspices (1582-1609), the Authorized Version (1611), and the revised version of the New Testament in 1880 and of the Old Testament in 1884.

3.2. The King James Version

The King James Version had to compete with the Geneva Bible in popular use; but in the end it prevailed, and for more than two and a half centuries no other authorized translation of the Bible into English was made. The King James Version became the "Authorised Version" of the English-speaking people, and this despite its many defects.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of Biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts older than those upon which the King James Version was based exposed these defects. This calls for revision of the English translation. The task was undertaken, by authority of the Church of England, in 1870. The English Revised Version of the Bible was published in 1881-1885; and the American Standard Version, its variant embodying the preferences of the American scholars associated in the work, was published in 1901. The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying. It was essentially the Greek text of the New Testament as edited by Beza (1589), who closely followed that published by Erasmus (1516-1535) based upon a few medieval manuscripts of the tenth century.

Beza had access to two manuscripts of great value, dating from the fifth and sixth centuries, but he made very little use of them because they differed from the text published by Erasmus. Presently, there are more ancient manuscripts of the New Testament that are authentic sources to seek the recovery of the original wording of the Greek text. However, the evidence for the text of the books of the New Testament is clearer and authentic than for any other ancient book, both in the number of extant

manuscripts and in the nearness of the date of some of these manuscripts to the date when the book was originally written. The revisers in the 1870's had most of the evidence that we now have for the Greek text, though the most ancient of all extant manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were not discovered until 1931. But they lacked the resources which discoveries within the past eighty years have afforded for understanding the vocabulary, grammar and idioms of the Greek New Testament. An amazing body of Greek papyri which was unearthed in Egypt in the 1870's contain private letters, official reports, wills, business accounts, petitions and other such trivial, everyday recordings of the activities of the people.

The year 1859 witnessed the appearance of the first of Adolf Deissmann's studies of these ordinary materials. He proved that many words which had hitherto been assumed to belong to what was called "Biblical Greek" were current in the spoken vernacular of the first century CE. The New Testament was written in the Koine, the common Greek which was spoken and understood practically everywhere throughout the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era. This development in the study of New Testament Greek has come since the work on the English Revised Version and the American Standard Version was done, and at many points sheds new light upon the meaning of the Greek text.

3.2.1. Reason for the revision of the King James Version

A major reason for the revision of the King James Version, which is valid for both the Old and the New Testaments, is the change since 1611 in English usage. Many forms of expression have become archaic, while still generally intelligible – the use of "thou", "thee", "thy", "thine" and the verb endings –est and "–edst", "much that", "because that", "for that", "unto", "howbeit", "peradventure," "holden", "aforetime," 'must needs", "would fain," "behooved", "and to you –ward." Other words are obsolete and no longer understood by the common reader. The greatest problem, however, is presented by the English words which are still in constant use but now convey a different meaning from that which they had in 1611 and in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures; but now, having changed in meaning, they have become misleading. They no longer say what the King James translators meant them to be. Thus, the King James Version uses the word "let" in the sense of "hinder," "prevent" to mean "precede," "allow" in the sense of "approve," "communicate" for " share," "conversion" for "conduct," "comprehend" for 'overcome," "ghost," for "spirit," "wealth" for "well-being," "allege," for "prove," "demand" for "ask," and "take no thought" for "be not anxious".

3.3. The Revised Standard Version

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible is an authorised revision of the American Standard Version published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611. The first English version of the Scriptures made by direct translation from the original Hebrew and Greek, and the first to be printed was the work of William Tyndale. He met bitter opposition. He was accused of wilfully perverting the meaning of the Scriptures, and his version of the NT was ordered to be burnt as "untrue translations". He was finally betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and in October 1536, was publicly executed and burned at the stake. Yet, Tyndale's work became the foundation of subsequent English versions, notably those of Coverdale, 1535;

Thomas Matthew (probably a pseudonym for John Rogers), 1537; the Great Bible, 1539, the Geneva Bible 1560; and the Latin Vulgate by Roman Catholic scholars, published at Rheims. The translators who made the King James Version took into account all of preceding versions; and comparison shows that it owes something to each of them. It kept felicitous phrases and apt expressions, from whatever source, which had stood the test of public usage. It owed most, especially in the New Testament, to Tyndale.

3.3.1. The reason for setting up committee for the Revised Standard Version

The Revised Standard Version of the Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, was published on September 30, 1952, and has met with wide acceptance. In 1959, a committee was set up to revise the King James Version. But they were given certain principles to guide them during the process in connection with a study of criticisms and suggestions from various readers. As a result, a few changes were authorized for subsequent editions, most of them corrections of punctuation, capitalisation or footnotes. Some of them are changes of words or phrases made in the interest of consistency, clarity or accuracy of translation.

The Revised Standard Version Bible Committee is a continuing body, holding its meetings at regular intervals. It has become both ecumenical and international, with Protestant and Catholic active members, who come from Great Britain, Canada and the United States. The second Edition of the translation of the New Testament (1971) profits from textual and linguistic studies published since the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was first introduced in 1946. Many proposals for modification were submitted to the Committee by individuals and by two denominational committees. All of these were given careful attention by the Committee. Two passages, the longer ending of Mark (16: 9-20) and the account of the woman caught in adultery (John 7: 53 8:11), are restored to the text, separated from it by a blank space and accompanied by informative notes describing the various arrangements of the text in the ancient authorities. With new manuscript support, two passages, Luke 22:43-44, is placed in the note, as is a phrase in Luke 12:39. Notes are added which indicate significant variants, additions or omissions in the ancient authorities (Matt 9:34; Mark 3:16; 7:4; and Luke 24:32, 51).

Among the new notes are those giving the equivalence of ancient coinage with the contemporary day's or year's wages of a labourer (Matt 18: 24, 28; 20:2). Some of the revisions clarify the meaning through rephrasing or reordering of the text. Such passages are: Mark 5:42, Luke 22:29-30; John 10:33; 1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 5:19; Heb 13:13). Even when the changes appear to be largely matters of English style, they have the purpose of presenting to the reader more adequately the meaning of the text. The following passages are examples: Matt 10:8; 12:1; 15:29; 17:20; Luke 7:36; 11:17; 12:40; John 16:9; Rom 10:16, 1 Cor 12:24; 2 Cor 2:3; 3:5, 6. The Revised Standard Version Bible seeks to preserve all that is best in the English Bible as it has been known and used over the years. It is intended for use in public and private worship, not merely for reading and instruction.

3.4. The Newly completed International Version

The New International Version is a completely new translation of the Holy Bible made by over a hundred scholars working directly from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic

and Greek texts. The revision began 1965 when, after several years of exploratory study by committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals, a group of scholars met at Palos Heights, Illinois, and agreed that there is the need for a new translation of the Bible in contemporary English. This group though not made up of official church representatives, was trans-denominational. Its conclusion was endorsed by a large number of leaders from many denominations who met in Chicago in 1966. Responsibility for the new version was delegated by the Palos Heights group to a self-governing body of fifteen, the Committee on Bible Translation made up, in most part, of biblical scholars from colleges, universities and seminaries. In 1967 the New York Bible Society (now the International Bible Society) generously undertook the financial sponsorship of the project, which made it possible to enlist the help of many distinguished scholars.

The fact that participants from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand worked together gave the project its inter-national scope. That they were from many denominations – including Anglican, Assembles of God, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Church of Christ, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and other churches – helped to safeguard the translation from sectarian bias. This composition helps to give the New International Version its distinctiveness. The translation of each book was assigned to a team of scholars. The Intermediate Editorial Committees revised the initial translation, with constant reference to the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. Their work then went to one of the General Editorial Committees, which checked the detail and made another thorough revision. This revision in turn was carefully reviewed by the Committee on Bible Translation, which made further changes and then released the final version for publication. In this way, the entire Bible underwent three revisions, during each of which the translation was examined for its faithfulness to the original languages and for its English style.

3.4.1. Discussion regarding the meaning of texts

All these involved many thousands of hours of research and discussion regarding the meaning of the texts and the precise way of putting them into English. It may well be that no other translation has been made by a more thorough process of review and revision from committee to committee than this one. From the beginning of the project, the Committee on Bible Translation held to certain goals for the New International Version: that it would be an accurate translation and one that would have clarity and literary quality and so prove suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorising and liturgical use. The Committee also sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English.

In working toward these goals, the translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form. They believe that it contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, that it sheds unique light on our path in a dark world, and that it sets forth the way to our eternal well-being. The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers. They weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.

At the same time, they have striven for more than word-for-word translation. Because

thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modifications in sentence structure and constant regard for the contextual meanings of words.

3.4.2. The Submission of Version Consultants

A sensitive feeling for style does not always accompany scholarship. Accordingly, the Committee on Bible Translation submitted the developing version to number of stylistic consultants. Two of them read every book of both Old and New Testaments twice –once before and once after the last major revision – and made valuable suggestions. Samples of the translation were tested for clarity and ease of reading by various kinds of people –young and old, highly educated and less educated, ministers and laymen. Concern for clear and natural English – that the New International Version should be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated – motivated the translators and consultants. At the same time, they tried to reflect the differing styles of the biblical writers. In view of the international use of English, the translators sought to avoid obvious Americanisms on the one hand and obvious Anglicanism on the other. A British edition reflects the comparatively few differences of significant idiom and of spelling. As for the traditional pronouns "thou", "thee" and "thine" in reference to the Deity, the translators judged that to use these archaisms (along with the old verb forms such as "doest," and "wouldest" and " hadst") would violate accuracy in translation. Neither Hebrew, Aramaic nor Greek uses special pronouns for the persons of Godhead. A present–day translation is not enhanced by forms that in the time of the King James Version were used in everyday speech, whether referring to God or man.

For the OT, the standard Hebrew text, the MT as published in the latest editions of Biblia Hebraica, was adopted. Because the Dead Sea Scrolls contain material bearing on an earlier stage of the Hebrew text, they too were consulted, as were the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes. Sometimes a variant Hebrew reading in the margin of the MT was followed instead of the text itself. Such instances, being variants within the Masoretic tradition, are not specified by footnotes. In rare cases, words in the consonantal text were divided differently from the way they appear in the MT, as footnotes indicate. The translators also consulted the more important early versions – the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the Vulgate; the Syriac Peshitta; the Targums; and for the Psalms the juxta Hebraica of Jerome. Readings from these versions were occasionally followed where the MT seemed doubtful and where accepted principles of textual criticism showed that one or more of these textual witnesses appeared to provide the correct reading. Such instances are footnoted. Sometimes vowel letters and vowel signs did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original consonantal text. Accordingly, some words were read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated by footnotes.

The Greek text used in translating the NT was an eclectic one. No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the NT. Where existing manuscripts differ, the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of NT textual criticism. Footnotes call attention to places where there was uncertainty about what the original text was. The best current printed texts of the Greek NT were used. There is a sense in which the work of translation is never

wholly finished. This applies to all great literature and uniquely so to the Bible.

3.4.3. The Endless Work of Translation

In 1973, the NT in the New International Version was published. Since then, suggestions for corrections and revisions have been received from various sources. The Committee on Bible Translation carefully considered the suggestions and adopted a number of them. These were incorporated in the first printing of the entire Bible in 1978. Additional revisions were made by the Committee on Bible Translation in 1993 and appear in printings after that date. As in other ancient documents, the precise meaning of the biblical texts is sometimes uncertain. This is more often the case with the Hebrew and Aramaic texts than with the Greek text. Although archaeological and linguistic discoveries in this century aid in understanding difficult passages, some uncertainties remain. The more significant of these have been called to the reader's attention in the footnotes.

In regard to the divine name YHWH, commonly referred to as the Tetragrammatons''', the translators adopted the device used in most English versions of rendering the name as: "Lord", for which small letters are used. Wherever the two names stand together in the OT as a compound name of God, they are rendered "Sovereign Lord".

Because for most readers today, the phrases "the Lord of hosts" and "God of hosts" have little meaning, this version renders them "the Lord Almighty" and "God of hosts". These renderings convey the sense of the Hebrew, namely, "he who is sovereign over all the 'hosts' (powers) in heaven and on earth, especially over the hosts' (armies) of Israel".

For readers unacquainted with Hebrew, this does not make clear the distinction between Sabaoth ("hosts" or " Almighty") and Shaddai (which can also be translated "Almighty"), but the latter occurs infrequently and is always footnoted. When Adonai and YHWH Sabaoth occur together, they are rendered 'the Lord, the Lord Almighty."

As for other proper nouns, the familiar spellings of the King James Version are usually spelled in this translation with "ch", except where it is final, and are usually spelled in this translation with "k" or "c", since the biblical languages do not have the sound that "ch" frequently indicates in English, for example, in chant. For well-known names such as Zechariah, however, the traditional spelling has been indicated. Where a person or place has two or more different names in the Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek texts, the more familiar one has generally been used, with footnotes where needed.

3.4.4. Method of achieving clarity by the translators

To achieve clarity, the translators sometimes supplied words not in the original texts but required by the context. If there was uncertainty about such material, it is enclosed in brackets. Also, for the sake of clarity or style, nouns, including some proper nouns, are sometimes substituted for pronouns, and vice versa. And though the Hebrew writers often shifted back and forth between first, second and third personal pronouns without change of antecedent, this translation often makes them uniform, in accordance with English style and without the use of footnotes.

Poetical passages are printed with indentation of lines and with separate stanzas. These

are generally designed to reflect the structure of Hebrew poetry. This poetry is normally characterised by parallelism in balanced lines. Most of the poetry in the Bible is in the OT; and scholars differ regarding the scansion of Hebrew lines. The translators determined the stanza divisions for the most part by analysis of the subject matter. The stanzas therefore serve as poetic paragraphs.

The footnotes in this version are of several kinds, most of which need no explanation. Those giving alternative translations begin with "Or" and generally introduced the alternative with the last word preceding it in the text, except when it is a single word alternative. In poetry quoted in a footnote, a slant mark indicates a line division. Footnotes introduced by "Or" do not have uniform significance. In some cases, two possible translations were considered to have about equal validity. In other cases, though the translators were convinced that the translation in the text was correct, they judged that another interpretation was possible and of sufficient importance to be represented in a footnote.

In the NT, footnotes that refer to uncertainty regarding the original text are introduced by "some manuscripts" or similar expressions. In the OT, evidence for the reading chosen is given first and evidence for the alternative is added after a semicolon (for example: Septuagint; Hebrew father). In such notes, the term "Hebrew" refers to the Masoretic Text.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is very interesting to learn about various translations of the Bible Versions in this unit. We owe it as a duty to always remember Tyndale and his work in the process of translation of the Bible into King James Version which led to his being martyred. For his work became the foundation of subsequent English versions, especially, those of Coverdale, 1535. However, a time came when scholars felt the need for the version to be revised in other to meet the modern age spoken English language among the English–speaking nations. Those that were concerned set up committee to meet their demands. This gave birth to the Revised Standard Version that is widely accepted for devotion and common readings in the societies.

To better arrive at a better translation that should be acceptable across denominational lines, some scholars worked on the translation of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts to compile the New International Version for the use of the public. The translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's word in written form. They believe that it contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity that sheds important light on the part of dark world.

5.0 SUMMARY

Both King James and the Revised Standard Versions of the Scriptures, contain the Old and New Testaments. They are used for devotion and worship by the English–speaking nations in the world. It is very important that Christians continue to remember the role of the martyred Tyndale in making the Bible accessible to the English–speaking nations in the world.

In 1967 the New York Bible Society generously undertook the financial sponsorship of a translation project aimed at coming up with a more acceptable English translation of the

Bible. This made it possible to enlist the help of many distinguished scholars. The fact that participants from the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand worked together gave the project its international scope. The translation of each book was assigned to a team of scholars. This revision in turn was carefully reviewed by the Committee on Bible Translation which made further changes and then released the final version for public use.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1.Write briefly on William Tyndale.
2.Discuss the defects of "The King James Version".

6.0 TUTOR –MARKED ASSIGNMENT.

1.State the main reason for the revision of the King James Version
2.Discuss the processes used by scholars to arrive at the final stage of the New International Version.

7.0 REFERENCES /FURTHER READINGS

Excerpts: *Preface,"The New International Version*". International Bible Society.

The Teen study Bible (1998) New International Version. Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation