



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: CTH 211

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE



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**COURSE
GUIDE**

**CTH 211
INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

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INTRODUCTION

CTH 211 Introduction to the Bible is a 2-credit unit course. It will be available to all students who are taking a degree in theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of the Christian faith.

The course consists of 15 units which involves fundamental issues (like the Bible as a book of God's revelation of Himself to man; biblical revelation; various views regarding biblical inspiration; history of canonicity; historical texts and history of versions of the Bible). The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasises the need for tutor-marked assignments. Detailed information on tutor-marked assignments is found in a separate file which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS COURSE

The overall aim of **CTH 211** is to introduce you to the basic issues in the Bible as a book of God's revelation of Himself to mankind on the earth, history of texts and versions of the Bible. The Bible is the major source used to formulate and study Christian theology and it is also a source through which God disclosed Himself to mankind. As a result, it becomes important to know how God inspired some prophets and Apostles to write the Word of God.

Your understanding of this course will equip you into explaining the seeming discrepancies in the various versions of the Bible and it will also help you to begin the study of the Bible critically and this will ultimately lead to an enriched study of the Bible.

COURSE AIMS

The aim of this course is to give you an understanding of the books of the Bible. It is aimed among others to:

- Introduce you to the Bible as a book of God's revelation of Himself to mankind.
- Lead you to examine various views of scholars regarding biblical inspiration.
- Expose you to some of the manuscripts of both the Old and New Testaments that form the raw materials for textual critics.

- Explain the history of canons in the Bible; history of texts and history of the versions of the Bible.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. 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.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- state the meaning of the Bible
- describe inspiration of the Word of God
- narrate the history of the development of the Canons of Bible
- explain the textual transmission of the Word to mankind
- discuss various versions of the Bible

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at certain points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course, there 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 File
5. Presentation Schedule

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

STUDY UNITS

There are 14 study units in this course broken into three modules of 5 units respectively. They are follows:

Module 1 The Meaning and books of the Bible

Unit 1	The Meaning and Books of the Bible
Unit 2	Inspiration
Unit 3	History of the Old Testament Canon
Unit 4	Inspiration of the New Testament
Unit 5	Development of the Canon of the New Testament

Module 2 The Old Testament: Texts and Versions

Unit 1	Textual Transmission
Unit 2	The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls
Unit 3	The Latter Massoretic Text and its Uses in the New Testament
Unit 4	The Manuscripts of the New Testament
Unit 5	Codex Texts

Module 3 Papyri and Versions

Unit 1	Papyri
Unit 2	Versions
Unit 3	The Syriac and Other Versions
Unit 4	The New International Version

The first five units examine the meaning and books of the Bible, inspiration, history of the Old Testament Canon, inspiration of the New Canon of the New Testament. The next five units addresses textual transmission, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, The Latter Massoretic Text and its uses in the New Testament, The Manuscripts of the New Testament and the Codex Texts.

The final four units address the Papyri versions, The Chester Beatty and related Papyri, and lastly the new international version.

Each unit contains a number of self – tests. In general, these self- tests questions you on the material you have just covered or requires you to apply it in some ways thereby helping you to check your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor-marked assignments these exercises will assist you to achieve the stated learning objectives of individual units and the course.

SET TEXTBOOKS

These textbooks are recommended for further reading in addition to your course materials in order to help you in your study.

Beckwith, R. (1985). *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*. London: WM B Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Boer, H. R. (1981). *The Bible and Higher Criticism* Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing.

Bruce F. F, (1972). *Answer to Questions*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Douglas, J. D (Ed.). (1978). *The New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester Inter-Varsity Press.

Gausson, L. (1960). *The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*. Chicago: the Bible Institute Colportage. London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Maier, J. & Tollers, V. (nd). (Eds). *The Bible in its Literary Milieu*. Michigan,

Metzger, B. M. (1992). *The Text of the New Testament* (3rd ed.). Madison, Bryn Irion Press.

Montgomery, J.W. (Ed.). (1974). *God's Inerrant Word: An International Symposium on the Trustworthiness of Scripture*. Minnesota: Minneapolis Publishing Company.

Robert M. Grant (1963). *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*: New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Robert, S. (1983). *Is the Bible Reliable?* (Second edition) William B Eerdmans Publishing Company.

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 assignments will be found in the assignment file itself and later in this course guide in the section on assessment.

The presentation schedule included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor- marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

ASSESSMENT

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor-marked assignments; 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 two- hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS (TMAs)

There are 15 TMAs in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best three (i.e. the highest three of the four marks) 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 from 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. In case you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The final examination of CTH 211 will be of a two-hour 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- marked 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 assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

COURSE MARKING SCHEME

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

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

ASSESSMENT	MARKS
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count as 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

COURSE OVERVIEW

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

Table 2: Course Overview

Module/ Unit	Title of Work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)
Module 1	The Meaning and Books of the Bible		
Unit 1	The meaning and books of the Bible		
Unit 2	Inspiration		
Unit 3	History of the Old Testament Canon		
Unit 4	Inspiration of the New Testament		
Unit 5	Development of the Canon of the New Testament		
Module 2	The Old Testament: Texts and Versions		
Unit 1	Textual Transmission		
Unit 2	The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls		
Unit 3	The Latter Massoretic Text and its uses in the New Testament		
Unit 4	The Manuscripts of the New Testament		
Unit 5	Codex Texts		

Module 3	Papyri and Versions		
Unit 1	Papyri		
Unit 2	Versions		
Unit 3	The Syriac and other Versions		
Unit 4	The New International Version		

HOW TO GET THE 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 read and work through specially designed study materials 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 reading to do, the study units tells you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in- class exercise, your study units provides exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction 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 time 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.

READING SECTION

Remember that your tutor's job is to help you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this Course Guide thoroughly.
2. Organise 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 chose 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. The major 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 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 through 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 guide 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 start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to space your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking. Do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. 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 the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this course guide).

TUTOR AND TUTORIALS

There are eight 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.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance 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 and 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 answered 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 gain a lot from participating in discussions actively.

SUMMARY

CTH 211 intends to introduce you to *Introduction to the Bible*. On completing of this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

1. What is the meaning of the Bible?
2. What is the relationship between God and man?
3. What are the roles of the prophets to their communities?
4. What is canonisation?
5. What is a manuscript?
6. What is Text?
7. Explain some Versions of the Bible.

Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Christian Theology is an exciting study. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

MODULE 1 THE MEANING AND BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Unit 1	The Meaning and Books of the Bible
Unit 2	Inspiration
Unit 3	History of the Old Testament Canon
Unit 4	Inspiration of the New Testament
Unit 5	Development of the Canon of the New Testament

UNIT 1 THE MEANING AND BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
3.1	The Meaning and Origin of the Bible
3.2	The Collection of Books in the Bible
3.3	The Classifications of the Old Testament
3.3.1	The Law
3.3.2	The Prophets
3.3.3	The Writings
3.4	The New Testament
3.4.1	Apocalyptic – Prophetic Book
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0	References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This module as observed above introduces you to the course and its title. It contains names of the books in the Bible. You will also learn about the origin of the Bible. The Bible, as a means through which God reveals Himself to mankind in the universe will also be discussed.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the meaning of the word *Bible*
- identify the three divisions of the Old Testament books
- list the classifications of the New Testament books
- describe the relationship between God and mankind.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Meaning and Origin of the Bible

The word Bible is derived from the Greek word *biblos*, which means a book. However, when we refer to the collections of all books that comprises the Bible we call them *biblia* meaning *books*.

The Bible is a book about God and His relationship with human beings. In it, God revealed 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 40 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, one of the writers, Paul, 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 Timothy 3:16-17).

Another writer, Peter wrote, *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 Peter 1:20-21). Likewise, other Bible writers confirmed the statements of Paul and Peter, but we shall not discuss them here. The Bible is a book that has been translated into more than 2000 different languages and dialects.

3.2 The Collection of Books in the Bible

The collection of the books in the Bible has been ascribed to those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. To many people, the writings of men such as Paul and Peter were sacred. They understood these writings as originating from God Himself. Some of these people dedicated themselves to collecting, arranging and preserving the scriptures that existed in their day.

The Jews collected 39 books known as the Old Testament, while the collection of 27 New Testament books has been ascribed to some disciples of Jesus Christ and Paul the Apostle.

The books of the Bible are divided into two sections. These are the Old Testament and the New Testament.

3.3 The Classifications of the Old Testament

The Old Testament contains 39 books. The Jews called them *The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings*.

3.3.1 The Law

The Law is the name given to the five books of the Old Testament. The Law is the revelation of God's will for His people. Another name for this part of the Old Testament is the Pentateuch. This name is derived from the Greek language and means 'the Five Scrolls'.

The five books of the Bible which belongs to the Torah are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Their titles have been taken from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament. Genesis means 'origin, birth, or source', and the title was taken from Genesis 2.4 in the Septuagint. Exodus means 'going out, departure' and was taken from Exodus 19.1.

Leviticus comes from a Greek adjective formed from the name Levi, the priestly tribe of Israel. Numbers comes from the Latin translation of the Greek title, which was 'Arithmoi; this refers to the two censuses of Israel which are recounted in the book. Deuteronomy comes from the Greek word for 'Second Law', and was probably taken from Deuteronomy 17.18, which reads in English 'a copy of this law'.

The titles of the individual books are quite appropriate, because they tell us something about what is written in each of them. For example, the following verses tell us from each of the books the kind of writing found in the Torah:

In THE BEGINNING GOD created the heaven and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. And God said,

“Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kinds. And God saw it was good. And there was evening and it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds the air and over every living thing that moves upon

the earth,” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

..... And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation (Genesis 1. 1---2.) In the passages quoted above we learnt about the story of creation of the universe that is recorded by the writer of the book of Genesis. Furthermore, the writer of the book of Exodus also wrote: When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done that he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, and took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the people of Israel as they went forth defiantly. The Egyptian pursued them, all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army and overtook them encamped at the sea, by P-ha-hi’roth, in front of Ba’al-zephon. When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were in great fear. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD; and they said to Moses, “Is I because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be still.” They said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go on dry ground through the sea. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.” Then the angel of God who went before the host of Israel moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness; and the night passed without one coming near

the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down upon the host of the Egyptians, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel; for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians." (Exodus 14:5-25).

The book of Exodus tells us how God fought for the Israelites and guided them to pass through the sea during exodus. Moreover, in the book of Numbers, the Lord also commanded Moses to number the people of Israel. This the author of Numbers wrote:

And the LORD said to Moses, "Number all the first-born males of the people of Israel, from a month old and upward, taking their number by names. And you shall take the Levites for me –I am the LORD –instead of the first –born among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the people of Israel, as the LORD commanded him. And all the first- born males, according to the number of names, from a month old and upward as numbered were twenty- two thousand two hundred and seventy-three. And the LORD said to Moses, "Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine; I am the LORD. And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy – three of the first – born of the people of Israel, over and above the number of the male Levites, you shall take five shekels specie; reckoning by the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs, you shall take them, and give the money by which the excess number of them is redeemed to Aaron and his sons." So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those redeemed by the Levites; from the first – born of the people of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty –five shekels, reckoned by the shekel of the sanctuary; and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

In addition to the above passages, God also told Moses to write statutes and ordinances for the people of Israel to keep when they get to the Promised land in the book of Deuteronomy. The author of the book wrote: *"These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be*

careful to do in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live upon the earth. "You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree, you shall tear down their alters, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Ashe'rim with fire; you shall hew down the grave images of their gods, and destroy their name out of the place. You shall not do so to the LORD your GOD. But you shall seek the place which the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there; thither you shall go, and thither you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock; and there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall not do according to all that we are doing here this day, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the LORD your God gives you. But when you go over the Jordan, and live in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you live in safety, then to the place which the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, thither you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you vow to the LORD.

The five books called Torah gives an account of Israel from the Creation of the world, through God's calling of Abraham and his heirs, to the exodus from Egypt, the divine revelation at Mount Sinai, and preparations for entering the promised land. These writings were probably brought to Jerusalem by Ezra in the period following the exile for instructing the people of Israel. The books were accepted as holy writings by the Hebrews.

3.3.2 The Prophets

These consist of two groups of books which are placed side by side in the Hebrew Bible. First, there are those known as the *former prophets*. They are Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings. Secondly there are the *latter prophets*. These are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the book of the twelve prophets, containing: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

The prophets played an important role in shaping the course and context of Israelite history and religion. This is because the prophets were

actively involved in the political, religious and economic life of the nation of Israel. And it was through the prophets that God disclosed his intention and will to the people in politics, business and interpersonal relationship. This therefore placed ancient Israelite prophets in a strategic position. Let us examine briefly some roles of the prophets in Israel. An Israelite king never waged war without having a prophet beside him. For instance, we see that the part played by prophets is made clear in 1 Kings 20, a dramatic episode belonging to the almost hundred year war between the Northern Israelite and Syria. The Syrian leader besieged Samaria and boasted to his northern Israelite opponents that the rubble of Samaria would not be sufficient “to fill the hollow – hands of all the people who follow me.” The situation seemed hopeless. The numerical superiority of the Syrian was indisputable. Then, surprisingly, a prophet came to the king of Israel:

Have you seen all this great roving pack? Behold I will give it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

In this oracle, the prophet described the situation as it was. But he evaluated it in a new way. What the Aramean king proudly described as “people, a well- disciplined army” became for the prophet what he contemptuously described as a great noisy pack. After this unexpectedly favourable message, the Israelite king asked about the strategy to be employed. This was given and the Israelite army, though inferior in number, inflicted a severe defeat on the Syrians. Prophet Isaiah was also actively involved in the prosecution of the Syro-Ephraimite war and the Assyrian campaign. When king Ahaz was confused not knowing what to do, he consulted Isaiah, who gave assurance that the Syro-Ephraimite alliance would not last (Isaiah 7). Also when king Sennacherib of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, Isaiah was actively involved by giving assurance to the Israelite king and his people, that the Assyrians would surely be defeated by Yahweh (Isaiah 39). Jeremiah, during Nebuchadnezzar’s attack on Jerusalem, was also active in giving direction on what to do to prevent an impending doom. But his advice fell on deaf ears. Though his suggestion was resented, it was at their peril (Jeremiah 42). The prophets also acted as social reformers. For example, at the time prophets emerged on the scene, Israel and Judah had undergone drastic development in economics and sociology. The state with its taxation and its civil service had brought about a further disintegration of the old social order in Israel. In this connection, the transference of the focal point of the economy to the towns was a particular blow. The great landowners who were living in the towns gained control over the village people, and the result was a severe social injustice. Because of the burden of taxation, the peasants who were economically weak, were no longer able to maintain their land. This is because the ownership of land was of a small number of capitalists

town-dwellers. The village people became increasingly poor (Isaiah 5:8, Micah 2:1f). The prophets condemned in clear terms those who exploited and despised the poor, “Your houses are full of what you have taken from the poor”. You have no right to crush my people and take advantage of the poor (Isaiah 3:14-15). “They sell into slavery honest people who are unable to pay their debts, poor people are sold for the price of shoes (Amos 2:6 cf.8: 4-8).

“You make unjust laws that oppress my people --- prevent the poor from having their rights....” (Isaiah 10: 1-2, Jer. 22: 3).

This condemnation of unjust legislators is matched equally by strong words against unjust judges: “You persecute good people, take bribes and prevent its poor from getting justice in the courts (Amos 5:12). Furthermore, the prophets also acted as political activists in Israel. This is because they were actively involved in the political life of Israel as a nation. They helped especially in the period of monarchy to shape the course of Israel’s history. In the annals of monarchy in the Old Testament, the prophets took active part in the appointment and deposition of kings. In Yahweh’s name they designated candidates for the throne and saw to it that they were deposed again if necessary. Because of an infringement of the rituals of the holy war, the same Samuel who nominated the Saul to be king with the words, “Yahweh has anointed you over his people” also had him removed with the following words, “the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to one who is better than you”.

The next king, David, is fortunate because after the Bathsheba episode the same Nathan who, after the conquest of Jerusalem, had promised him that his dynasty would be eternally established on the throne, only threatened him: “The sword shall never depart from your house (II Samuel 7: 10-12). Besides, the prophets did merely help to put their respective rulers on the throne, and threaten them later with the end of their government but saw to it (at least Samuel and Ahijah did) that an active opposition, bent on revolution, soon appeared on the scene. Samuel anointed David immediately after the dispute with Saul. Elijah encouraged Jeroboam to rebel. Even Nathan’s speech attacking David indirectly promoted Absalom insurrection. Moreover, the end of Omri’s dynasty was the responsibility of Prophet Elisha. He was the one who accomplished the task of cleansing the political terrain that had long been defiled by this dynasty (2Kings 9:10). The prophets as religious thinkers sought a new direction for the understanding and worship of Yahweh the King of Israel. As we have viewed the roles of the prophets in Israel above, you could observe that their functions varied but very important in the lives of the people. Therefore, the writers of the

Scripture deem it essential to include these books for instructing the generations of Israel.

These books came to be regarded as scriptures in about 200 BC. However, these books were too late for the Hebrews to accept them, but early enough for them to be included without major changes in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, which was prepared between 250BC and 100BC.

3.3.3 The Writings

The following are the books known as writings in the Old Testament: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1Chronicles and 2 Chronicles. All the Old Testament books were originally written in the Hebrew language. Let us discuss briefly the history of these writings in order for you to know their contributions in the life of Israel.

Psalms

The book of Psalms is like a present day hymn book because it contains poems written at different times. Scholars differ in their ideas about the dates when various Psalms were written. Some believe that many of them were written before the exile of the Israelites; others believe that almost all were written after the exile. Most of the Psalms are headed 'A Psalm of David', but though David many have composed some of them, there are many which he could not have written. Some of them, for instance, mentioned the temple, which had not been built in David's time (e.g. Psalms 5:7; 68.29). The Psalms which referred to an Israelite king as a living person must have been written before the exile (e.g. Psalms 2: 6; 45:1), Psalm 137 clearly comes from the time of exile itself, and Psalm 126 belongs to the period after the exile. Whatever the date of the individual Psalms, the collecting together of Psalms to form one book was a long process which largely took place after the exile, and was perhaps not completed until about 100BC.

Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is in fact a collection of what is known as Wisdom Literature. This sort of writing was used to pass on, from one generation to the next, information about the best way to live happily and peacefully with one's neighbours. However, we do not know exactly when the collection in the Bible was put together, and it contains material from different times and sources. It could not have reached its present form earlier than 400BC, and may not have done so before 150BC. The first verse of the book named Solomon as the author.

Job

The people of Israel treasured stories about righteous men. One of these men was called Job (Ezekiel 14:20). In the book of Job, the story of Job is used as a starting point for discussion of the sufferings of righteous men. According to the book, Job lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1), which was probably Edom (Lam. 4:21). He was a very rich farmer with herds and lands of his own (Job 1:3). He was happily married, and had a large family for whom he cared deeply (1:5). Suddenly he faced the loss of all his wealth, his children, and most of his servants (1:13-19). He himself contracted a serious disease (Job 1:5). In the book, the whole discussion of suffering is presented as a debate between Job and his friends, and towards the end of it, as a debate between Job and God. The original writer of the book of Job is unknown. However, if the book of Job was written under the influence of the ideas of Ezekiel, but without any influence from the ideas of Deutero-Isaiah, then it was probably written during the exile.

3.4 The New Testament

The Books of the New Testament are grouped into three categories. They are:

- (1) Gospel/History
- (2) Letters and
- (3) Prophecy.

Gospel/history

The books listed under Gospel/history are: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.

Matthew

Matthew appears in all the lists of the twelve apostles. He is described as 'the tax-collector' Jesus found him sitting at the tax-office and bade him to follow Him (Matt.9:9). Matthew wrote the book for the statement of Papias attested that Matthew 'compiled the oracles' in Hebrew. This was taken by the early Church as evidence that Matthew was the author of the Gospel which had been handed down as 'according to Matthew'.

Mark

The record of our Lord's ministry, the shortest and simplest of all the Gospels, was traditionally compiled by John Mark of Jerusalem, who at different times was a younger companion of Paul, Barnabas, and Peter.

Luke and Acts

The teaching of the early Christian tradition says that our third Gospel and the Acts were written by a Greek-speaking Gentile who was an educated physician and fellow-traveler of Apostle Paul with the name Luke. The author was a humble and disciplined writer, who kept himself in the background, and let all the light fall on the great theme of his two-fold books, namely the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Saviour and that Jesus chose, equipped, and used His apostles, especially Paul, to proclaim the gospel throughout the then known world.

John

John the son of Zebedee was the author of the Gospel of John.(John21:24). He was very close to Peter. His mother's name was Salome. John was a cousin of Jesus on his mother's side. His parents were well-to-do, for his father, a fisherman, had 'hired servants' (Mark1:20), and Salome was one of the women who 'provided for Jesus out of their means' (Lk.8:3). John was often identified with the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist whom he directed to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Letters

Books listed under letters are Romans, 1Corinthians, 2Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1Timothy, 2Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1Peter, 2 Peter, 1John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.

Through these letters Paul communicated with the believers. In such letters, Paul's feelings were expressed to the recipients, for example in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul gave a long greeting, followed by reasons for his desire to visit the Roman Church. (Romans 1: 1-15). Paul made the Gentiles and Jews to know that they were equally guilty in face of God's righteousness. (Romans1:18, 3-v.20). However, God has nevertheless dealt with this situation. He has provided a propitiatory sacrifice in Christ (Romans 3:21-26).

Revelation

In revelation God tells men about Himself- who He is, what He has done, and is doing, and will do, and what He requires them to do. Christ told His disciples all things that He heard from God and promised them the Holy Spirit to complete His work of instructing. (Jn.12:12ff). The Revelation book begins with a vision of the risen Lord, who gives

messages to seven churches, those in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, a group of cities in the Roman province of Asia. The messages rebuked these churches where they have failed and encouraged them on the path of Christian service. Then came visions of God and of the Lamb and the seven seals, seven trumpets with a vision recorded after each trumpets is sounded. (Rev. 1: 3-22, 4: 1-14, 6; 1-17, 8; 1, 2-9, 11; 15-19). John then recorded various wonders in heaven, a woman bringing forth a man child, and opposed by Satan (Rev. 12: 1-18), beats opposing themselves to God, the Lamb on Mount Zion and His followers (Rev.12; 1-17,16: 1-20).

The author tells us that his name was John, and he described himself as God's 'servant', as one of the 'prophets' and as 'your brother; and companion in tribulation' (Rev.1:1, 22: 9).

3.4.1 Apocalyptic – Prophetic Book

The following books are grouped under the prophetic book: 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, formed part of the Septuagint Greek text and were interspersed among other books of the Old Testament.

This Greek text was not only widely used by Jews but was known as well by numerous " God- fearing" Gentiles who were attracted to the high moral teachings of the Old Testament, even though they had not themselves become converts 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 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are based on this translation.

At the period Jewish leadership officially adopted the traditional 39 books of the so-called "Hebrew Canon" is not known; nor is there agreement as to exactly what criteria were used in determining the canon. According to tradition the determination of the books of the Hebrew canon was made about A.D. 90, but there is evidence to believe that official and widespread agreement on this issue came somewhat later.

Among Christians it was apparently only 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.

In 1546 at the Council of Trent the Roman Catholic Church officially declared these 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 scriptures 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”.

Protestants generally continued this practice in their translations of the Bible into such languages as Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Slovenian, 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.

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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

List the books of the Bible.

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 names of the books in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Furthermore, we have taught you the classifications of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this unit, you have also learnt about the Apocrypha book.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Bible is a collection of 66 books. Thirty –nine of them are called the Old Testament. They were written in the Hebrew language. While the New Testament contains 27 books, they were written in the Greek language. They were written by about 40 men over a period of 1,500 years. These books revealed God in actions, nature and in history. You

have also learnt about Apocrypha books. These books provide information on Jewish history, life, thought, worship and religious practice during the centuries immediately prior to the time of Christ. Roman Catholic Church accepted these books as sacred and canonical books for devotion and reverence at the council of Trent in 1546.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Account for the divisions of both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
2. What is the meaning of the word *Biblia*?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 **INSPIRATION**

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Inspiration
 - 3.2 Theologians Definitions
 - 3.3 The Biblical Facts about Inspiration
 - 3.4 The Breadth of Inspiration
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 - 3.6 All the Prophetic Utterance are given by God
 - 3.7 Who are those Holy Men?
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about the meaning of the Bible, the collection of 66 books of the Bible and classifications of the Bible into the Old and New Testaments. You have learnt that the Old Testament is written in Hebrew language while the New Testament is written in Greek language. You also learnt about the Apocrypha books.

Apocrypha books provided information on Jewish history, life, thought, worship and religious practice during the centuries leading to the time of Jesus Christ. The books are useful among the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. In this unit, we shall introduce you to the Bible as an inspiration Word of God.

The Biblical books are known as inspired Word of God. They are also divine products of inspired men. For example, it is assumed that Moses wrote down some instructions which God gave him to the people of Israel to obey as they left Egypt for Canaan. Likewise, Paul wrote 13 Epistles to various Churches. In it, he instructed them with the words of God. The Biblical writers are called inspired men of God.

When we say that the Bible is the Word of God, we do not mean that God actually wrote it. He is its Author, however, the Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- explain the authorship of the Bible
- identify the authority of the words of the prophets
- define the word Inspiration
- state the roles of the prophets to their communities.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Inspiration

Inspiration is defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given divine trustworthiness. The Apostle Paul tells us that *All scripture are inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16). When we speak, we breathe, this shows that our breath is in the words that we say and it enables them to give expression to our thoughts. Likewise, the breath of God is in every word of Scripture.

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 merely 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*” (1Corinthians 2:13).

Although every word of the Bible is God-breathed, it is expressed through various men with different styles and thoughts. You should know that the Holy Spirit did not suppress the personality of the writers, but used it to fulfill His plan for mankind. The Biblical books are called inspired as the divinely determined products of inspired men. The Biblical writers are called inspired as 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. Through the Spirit of God, their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.

3.2 Theologians Definitions of Inspiration

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 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*

In the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Paul tells us that “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16).

Apostle Paul was said to be a man authenticated by signs and wonders in 2 Corinthians 12:12. It reads, *The signs of a true apostle were performed among you in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works*. He is recognised as a writer of Scripture.

2 Peter 3:16 declares the Scripture to be the product of the out-breathing of God. In other words, the passage tells us that God breathed out the Scripture, while human authors wrote the texts of the Scripture. However, the Bible originates as an action of God who breathed it out. Peter affirmed Paul’s writings as Scriptures. ... *Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him*.

The quotation means that Paul wrote what God has disclosed to him to write. In addition, “Scripture is even used of a specific New Testament passage and sometimes to a large portion of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5 : 18, Paul quotes from the Old Testament passage to back up his point on paying wages to workers.(Deuteronomy 25:4). ... *for the*

scripture says, “ *You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,*” and “*The labourer deserves his wages* (1 Timothy 5: 18).

Jesus also cited the Scripture when He appointed seventy evangelists and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where He himself was about to come. He further told them to remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages ... (Luke 10:7).

In addition, Jesus quoted the Scripture when he sent out his twelve disciples on a mission: *For the labourer deserves his food* (Matthew 10: 10). The support for a workman is also found in Leviticus 19:13. It reads: ...*The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.* Mankind in the universe often fulfills the Word of the Scripture quoted above by paying wages to their workers.

3.4 The Breadth of Inspiration

In the letter which Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church, he made it known to them that he had received the Spirit from God to do things. *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by the Spirit, interpreting Spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2: 12-13).

In the above quoted passage, we could understand that it is through God’s revelation that we know of the things of God, things which mankind cannot know by human wisdom. The revelation of God comes to man in specific words which He utters to mankind. For instance, God revealed to Paul a man who was caught up into paradise (11Corinthians 12: 1-4). This means that Inspiration is beyond the words of the Bible.

3.5 The Divine Power of God to Mankind

2 Peter 1: 3-4 says: *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these You may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partaker of the divine nature.*

In these passages, we learnt that God has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. We also learnt that life and godliness come through the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, but such knowledge comes through the Word, the precious promises. In essence

then, this indicates to us the breadth of what God's Word covers, "everything pertaining to life and godliness."

3.6 All the Prophetic Utterance are given by God

Apostle Peter in his second Epistle, expresses himself thus: *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 from God* (2 Pet 1:20-21). The following lessons are derived from the above passage:

1. Scripture is a written revelation.
2. These words did not come through the impulsion or the will of man.
3. It was by the *Holy Ghost* that those holy men wrote and spoke; their writings are called by the name "*prophecy*".

3.7 Who are those holy men?

The holy men are the prophets whom God charged with the interpretation of His oracle or committing them into writing for mankind in the universe. For example, God said to Moses, *Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.* Furthermore, the Lord God said to Moses to choose his brother Aaron to be his prophet unto Pharaoh, *... you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.* (Exodus 4: 11-16).

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the Scripture, God shows the prophets things which were previously hidden from them. God bringing into the open things which before were hidden from them. God caused and enabled them to see what hitherto they could not see. God took them into His confidence and shared His secrets with them. God found them ignorant, and gave them knowledge. If God had not chosen to reveal His oracles to writers of the Word they would never have known anything about Him.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have learnt that God put His Word into the mouth of each prophet to speak to those whom he has sent them. Prophets do not speak words out of their own but as they are directed by God. You will ever find in

their language one uniform definition of their office, and of their inspiration. They spoke; but it is no doubt their voice that were heard but that of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss briefly the definitions of *Inspiration* as discussed in this unit.
2. Give examples of the oracles of the prophets which portrays them.

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UNIT 3 HISTORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
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 - 3.2 How Old Testament came into Being
 - 3.3 How the Prophets Testified of the Spirit that Makes them Speak
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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt that all Scripture are inspired by God and profitable for teaching and for training in righteousness that man 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 this unit, you will learn about the etymology of the Canon, its mean, the role of Ezra and Nehemiah in the process of Canonisation of the Old Testament.

The Bible has little to say about the process of the collecting the various canonical books. However, this should not surprise you, since the writings were accepted by God's people as they were received. No council was necessary to make them canonical. But, we are given some ideas 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 was 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 into the priors ones that were written by Moses as they were inspired by God. All these steps were taken by

these writers as they were inspired by God. In the previous unit, you have learnt the following facts: Inspiration is the doctrine of Christian Theology that concerns the divine origin of the Bible. You have also learnt about the inspiration views of Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and Neo-Orthodox.

In this unit, we shall examine the New Testament Canon. Canon is the list of books which the Church uses in the public worship. For example, at worship time, the Apostolic Church used some Old Testament 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.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the development of the Bible Canon
- state how Old Testament came into being
- explain how the prophets testified of the Spirit that makes them speak
- explain the historical source
- describe the Bible as self-authenticating its divine authority.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Development of the Bible Canon

The word “Canon” etymologically means cane or reed. In early Christianity “Canon” referred to a list of books approved for public reading. However, books not on the list were referred to as ‘apocryphal’ --- meaning they were for private reading only. Under Latin usage from the fourth century on, Canon came to stand for a closed and authoritative list in the sense of rule or norm. In other words, the word Canon denotes the correct list of the Holy Scriptures or the collection of books so listed. Writers of the fourth century AD used it for the collection of Holy Scriptures, to which some books properly belong, and others do not.

The Greek word *kanon*, which is of Semitic origin (originally meant measuring-instrument, and later it was used in the metaphorical sense of ‘rule of action’ as well. The word “Canon” found its place in ecclesiastical parlance. At first it denoted the formulated creed, especially the symbol of baptism or the Church’s doctrine in general. It was used also to indicate Church regulations of a varied nature, as well

as simply in the meaning of “list”, “series.” Not till the middle of the 4th century does it seem to be applied to the Bible. In Greek usage, “Canon” seems at first to have denoted only the list of holy writings, but in Latin it also became the name for the Scripture is the rule of action vested with divine authority. When we use the term “Canon of the Old Testament” we thereby denote that the Old Testament is a closed collection of writings inspired by the Spirit of God, that they have a normative authority, and are held as the rule for our faith and life. The word “Canon” is derive from a plant named “reed”. The plant is used for various things. For instance, it is a ruler for measuring and ruling the column of a line. The word “Canon” also means rule or standard. While its secondary meaning is the list of books. The lists of these books are acknowledged by the Church as inspired Scripture for faith and practice. The books are in three groups:

(1) History books

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.

(2) Letters

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

(3) Prophecy

Revelation.

3.2 How the Old Testament came into being

Historically the sense of the beginnings of the canon is found in Exodus 24:7 where Moses takes the ‘Book of the Covenant’. Another passage that has to be mentioned in this unit is Nehemiah 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) the law was regarded as Scripture.

Hellenistic period dated 100CE speaks of how Ezra, supernaturally empowered to recall the Scripture, writing out the books in forty days. (Ezra 14:14). Likewise, 2 Maccabees 2:13 says that Nehemiah was also responsible for the collection of some sacred books that comprised the Old Testament.

The books of the Old Testament were inspired by God. The Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of people, after which they came to accept these books as the Word of God and submitted to His divine authority. God's providence extended over the origin of the separate books, as well as over their collection; it is because of this that the number of Old Testament books is what it is, no more and no less. This is the plain truth regarding the Canon of the Old Testament and its origin. However, it stands to reason that the mere ascertaining of this is not sufficient. When God brought the Canon into being, He used men as His instruments; man's actions and man's reflections have performed their functions in the whole process.

3.3 How Prophets Testified of the Spirit that Makes Them Speak

In the scripture passages below, you will find in their language one uniform definition of their office, and of their inspiration. They speak, it is, no doubt, their voice that makes itself heard; but of God; it is no doubt their lips also that often moved; but their words are not only theirs; they are, at the same time, the words of God. Let us examine some of their prophetic oracles that were spoken by them.

Hear the word of the LORD, (Isaiah 28: 14), The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me, his word is upon my tongue (2Samuel 23: 2), Thus says the LORD (Jeremiah 9:22). Son of man, go get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them. (Ezekiel 3:4) THE word of the LORD that came to Hosea (Hosea 1:1). The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi (Malachi 1:1).

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 Haggai the prophet to Zerubabel (Haggai 1:1). 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).

In conclusion, you will notice from all these quotations that it remains established that in the language of the scriptures the prophecies of the men of God are the words of God put into their mouths. This, they spoke to the people.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

All the prophetic utterances are given by God. Discuss.

3.4 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 Old Testament 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.

3.5 The Bible Self-Authenticating its Divine Authority

The Bible is self-authenticating radiating its divine authority itself. Through the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit, human being received an eye which enables him or her 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 the Church has acknowledged the Canon of these books as being inspired by God, yet it is neither the church council nor any other human authority that has canonised the Old Testament books. For these books has possessed and exercised divine authority before the decision of the Church or other bodies accepting them as divine authority for believers. This we shall examine in this course. But the Church did recognise them as books that were inspired by God and exercise them as divine books.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Account for the beginning of the Old Testament canon.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The word canon denotes the correct list of the Holy books so listed. The books of the Old Testament were inspired by God. But, the Holy Spirit worked also in the hearts of the people of God so that they came to accept these books as the Word of God and submitted to their divine authority.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Bible is self- authenticating radiating its divine authority itself. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, humans received it as their authority. Although the church has acknowledged the canon of these books as being inspired by God, yet it is not the church council or any other human body that has canonised the Old Testament books. For these books has possessed and exercised divine authority before the decision of the church accepting them as divine authority for believers.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Briefly comment on the process of the Old Testament canon.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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Online Resources

“Inspiration” in Wikipedia Encyclopedia online at www.wikipedia.org

UNIT 4 INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Inspiration of the New Testament
 - 3.1.1 Evangelical View
 - 3.1.2 Catholic View
 - 3.1.3 Modernist View
 - 3.1.4 Neo-Orthodox Doctrine
 - 3.2 Inspiration, Authority, Infallibility, Inerrancy and New Testament Criticism
 - 3.3 The Earliest Era
 - 3.4 The Investigation of New Testament Canon
 - 3.5 The Use of Ethical Values by the Church
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt that the law was regarded as Scripture. Besides, you also learnt how Ezra was empowered to recall the Scripture which he wrote out within 40 days. You also learnt that Nehemiah was also responsible for the collection of some books that comprised the Old Testament. In short, the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of the people of God to accept sacred books as the Word of God which is now known as the Old Testament Canon. This indicates that the Bible derives its authority neither from ecclesiastical statements nor from any authority but from itself.

In the New Testament, Jesus treats the Old Testament as authoritative. He said that it cannot be broken. For instance, Peter 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 Peter 1: 20 -21). The Epistle also speaks of the divine authority for the Apostles (2Peter 3: 2) and includes Paul’s letters as being counted with the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).

In this unit, you will learn more about the Bible as a mean of inspiration of God to mankind.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the various views on inspiration
- define inerrancy
- define infallibility
- describe the supposed negative impact of the New Testament criticism on the inspiration and consequently on infallibility and inerrancy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Inspiration of the New Testament

Scriptural inspiration is the doctrine in Christian Theology concerned with the divine origin of the Bible and what it teaches about itself. The word inspiration means God – breathed (2 Timothy 3: 16 -17).

All scriptures are given by inspiration of God, And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

In various passages, the Bible claims divine inspiration for itself. In the New Testament, Jesus treats the Old Testament as authoritative and says it “cannot be broken” (John 10:34 -36) and 2Peter claims that “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” 2Peter 1: 20- 21). The Epistles also claims divine authority for the Apostles (2 Peter 3: 16).

Furthermore, theological conservatives sometimes argue that Biblical inspiration can be corroborated by examining the weight of the Bible’s moral teaching and its prophecies about the future and their fulfillment. Other scholars maintain that the authority of the Church and its counsels should carry more or less weight in formulating the doctrine of inspiration. Those Christians who receive the Bible as authoritative generally accept that the Bible is breathed out by God, in some sense because the Bible itself explicitly states this. But, different groups understand the meaning and details of inspiration in different ways. Let us now consider some views of people on the use of the Bible as inspiration Word of God.

3.1.1 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. At times 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.

3.1.2 The Catholic View

As summarised by Karl Keating, the Roman Catholic apologetic for the inspiration of the first able considers the scriptures as a merely historical source, and then, it attempts to drive 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.

3.1.3 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 utilised to determine the validity and truthfulness of the Bible. One such approach is that of Rudolf Bultmann, who argued that Christians must seek to "demythologise" 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.

3.1.4 The Neo-Orthodox Doctrine

The Neo-orthodox doctrine of inspiration is postulated 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, Neo-orthodox proponents argue, 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 advocates of this doctrine.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the various views of inspiration.

3.2 Inspiration, Authority, Infallibility, Inerrancy and New Testament Criticism

The question of authority is central to any theological undertaking. Since Protestant theology has located authority in the Bible, the nature of biblical authority has been a fundamental concern. Thus Reformation passed to its heirs the belief that ultimate authority rests not in reason or a Pope, but in an inspired Scripture. Thus, within conservative Protestantism the question of inerrancy has been much debated. The two words most often used to express the nature of scriptural authority are "inerrant" and "infallible". Though these two terms are, on etymological grounds, approximately synonymous, they are used differently. In Roman Catholic theology "inerrant" is applied to the Bible, "infallible" to the Church, particularly the teaching function of the pope and magisterium. Since Protestants reject the infallibility of both the pope and the church, the word has been used increasingly of the Scriptures. More recently "infallible" has been championed by those who hold to what is called "limited inspiration" but what today is better called limited inerrancy. They limit the Bible's inerrancy to matters of faith and practice, particularly issues bordering on salvation.

Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly relates to doctrine or ethics or the social physical or life sciences. Further, inerrancy applies equally to all parts of the Bible as originally written. This means that no present manuscript or copy of Scripture, no matter how accurate, can be called inerrant.

This definition also relates inerrancy to 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. Moreover, 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 definition is its definition 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.

The major problem that most fundamentalists and conservatives have concerning New Testament criticism has to do with their concept of inspiration. For example, for many who do accept the mechanical view of inspiration (that is, God literally dictated the words of the New Testament to the writers), New Testament criticism is nothing but a direct affront on God. This is because as far as these people are concerned because God is the author of the New Testament books, they cannot contain any error (this view led to the doctrine of infallibility and inerrancy) in whatever form. To corroborate this view on New Testament criticism, A.B. Philips says that “Redaction, form, and source criticism have also fallen under heavy fire because many Evangelicals assert that these methods are built upon a belief that Scripture is errant”.

3.3 The Earliest Era

During the early time of Christianity, the Good News was taught verbally by Jesus Christ and His disciples in Palestine. All the messages were not written down at the early time perhaps due to the oral traditions in which Scriptures were taught and passed on from generation to generation. Such Scriptures were the passion, resurrection, life and teaching of Jesus. However, a time came when some scribes began to put down some teachings about Jesus. These books were very many in circulation that there is a need to separate the genuine ones from the rest for use in public worship. As a result, list of books were considered for use in public worship, teaching and for corrective measure in the

Church. For this reason, 27 books were selected. However, you should be aware that it was God who oversaw the collection of the Canon of the New Testament by providence and gave them to us. It was not the Church. Besides, it was God who decided the Canon not men. This providence does not mean that Church leaders were inspired in their selecting the Canon, only that God had his eye on the Scriptures the whole time and brought about His will to form the New Testament as we have it today. This of course does not mean that there was direct inspiration in the many men who were part of the process, just that God, in his providence, achieved His goal of a 27 books Canon. For example, the late 4th Century Councils that drafted the lists of 27 books were merely rubber stamping what had long been the universal standard for the majority of Christians. By 100 AD, all 27 books of the New Testament were in circulation and all but Hebrews, 2 Peter, James, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation were universally accepted. We shall deal with the process which they all took before the final acceptance as canon for the Church in this unit.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What do you understand by “infallibility”?

3.4 The Investigation of New Testament Canon

The earliest point at which we can take up the investigation is in the data provided by the New Testament itself. The apostolic Church was not without Scripture. The church looked for its doctrine from the Old Testament at the beginning. For example, the Church traced the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Abraham to David, Jacob the father of Joseph who was the husband of Mary, whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. (Matthew 1: 1-16). The Church was not without using the Scripture before approving the 27 books as Canon. Scholars claim that Hebrew text was used in the church worship. Apocrypha such as 1 Enoch were also used in some circles. Whether the term “Canonical” should be applied here is subject to debate. This is because during the period in question, the Jewish Canon was not yet fixed. Besides, scholars who had assumed that some lists of books were fixed for church use, claim that the canon was molded by anti-Christian controversy, in addition to other factors. On the other hand, other scholars suggested that the Church used some of its own peculiar traditions in worship. For example, at the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s death was “proclaimed” probably in word. For example,

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).*The account of the

Lord's Supper itself is regarded as derived "from the Lord", a closely guarded tradition.

3.5 The Use of Ethical Values by the Church

The Church also used ethical value utterances in the service. *To the married I give charge, not I but The Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not divorce his wife* (1Corinthians 7: 10). The words of the quoted passage were rules and regulations that Jesus Christ Himself set down for Christians to emulate or obey in order to guide their marital lives. It is not the Church that laid down the marriage ethical conduct for the couple, but Jesus Christ. Therefore, one could say that the New Testament Canon began with Jesus Christ the founder of the Church. Likewise, Paul himself also laid down rule that would guide the conduct of the single person in the Church. It runs:

... concerning the unmarried I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trust worthy, I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is (1 Corinthians 7:25).

Furthermore, the author of Acts also reminds us of the command of Jesus Christ to the Church which is to care for the poor. It reads,

In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35).

This passage is also an allusion to a laid down rule which Jesus urges the Church to abide with. Therefore, when we consider the moral teachings which Jesus taught the Church, then one can say that the New Testament Canon was established by Jesus Christ and not the Church who only follow it to achieve spiritual growth.

Another fact for us to consider in the book of letters has been probably inspired by the Holy Spirit to some extent, is 1Corinthians 15: 3-4. It reads:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures...

In this text, Paul made it known that death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was written in the Scriptures. So, he taught the Corinthians what he had read in the Scriptures. This indicates that the stories of Christ's death and resurrection were found in the Scriptures that were widely in circulation and used by Christians in the early period before Paul's writings to the Churches. For this reason, we could say that the Canon of the New Testament began before the era of the Apostle Paul.

In addition, the quoted passages also indicate that the Church had preserved its traditions of the passion, resurrection, life and the teaching of Jesus for generations in both oral and written forms. The passages below also make this statement clear.

You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him and we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead (Acts 10: 36-41).

These passages actually indicate that the sayings, doings, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were taught by his disciples to the Church in oral forms and perhaps later written in documents for the Church use.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Comment on the use of ethical values in the early Church service.
- ii. List the books which the early Church used to teach moral value in marriage.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have been given a brief introduction to the concept of inspiration. There are four major views on inspiration, namely: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and the Neo-Orthodox views.

You have also learnt the consequent doctrines of authority, infallibility and inerrancy that grew out of inspiration and the dangers that New Testament criticism is thought to have on these issues of grave concern to the fundamentalists and the conservatives.

5.0 SUMMARY

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

- Inspiration is the doctrine of Christian Theology concerned with the divine origin of the Bible.
- There are the following views on inspiration: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and the Neo-orthodox views.
- The Roman Catholic Church upholds the doctrine of verbal inspiration.
- Modernist view as exemplified by R. Bultmann seeks the demythologisation of the Bible for the purpose of separating the historical Jesus from the Jesus of Christian theology.
- The Protestant Evangelicals limited the theory of inspiration and inerrancy to the original manuscripts of the Bible.
- The Neo-Orthodox view rejected the Modernist view because it eroded the value and significance of Christian faith.
- The discipline of New Testament criticism has grave implications for the inspiration, authority, infallibility and inerrancy of the New Testament.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the passages that were used by the early church in the pre- canonical era.
2. Comment on the following views on inspiration: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and Neo-Orthodox.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Lists of the New Testament Canon
 - 3.2 The Earliest Era
 - 3.3 The Investigation of New Testament Canon
 - 3.4 The Use of Ethical Values by the Church
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have learnt the following facts: Inspiration is the doctrine of Christian Theology that concerns the divine origin of the Bible. You have also learnt about the inspiration views of Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and Neo-Orthodox.

In this unit, we shall examine the New Testament Canon. Canon is the list of books which the Church uses in the public worship. For example, at worship time, the Apostolic Church used some Old Testament 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.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss oral tradition in the pre-Canonical era.
- state the lessons that were taught by the Church.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Lists of the New Testament Canon

The word “Canon” is derive from a plant named “reed”. The plant is used for various things. For instance, it is a ruler for measuring and ruling the column of a line. The word “Canon” also means rule or standard. While its secondary meaning is the list of books. The lists of

these books are acknowledged by the Church as inspired Scripture for faith and practice. The books are in three groups:

(1) History books

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts.

(2) Letters

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

(3) Prophecy

Revelation.

The earliest era

During the early time of Christianity, the Good News was taught verbally by Jesus Christ and His disciples in Palestine. All the messages were not written down at the early time perhaps due to the oral traditions in which Scriptures were taught and passed on from generation to generation. Such Scriptures were the passion, resurrection, life and teaching of Jesus. However, a time came when some scribes began to put down some teachings about Jesus. These books were very many in circulations that there is a need to separate the genuine ones from the rest for use in public worship. As a result, list of books were considered for use in public worship, teaching and for corrective measure in the Church. For this reason, 27 books were selected. However, you should be aware that it was God who oversaw the collection of the Canon of the New Testament by providence and gave them to us. It was not the Church. Besides, it was God who decided the Canon not men. This providence does not mean that Church leaders were inspired in their selecting the Canon, only that God had his eye on the Scriptures the whole time and brought about His will to form the New Testament as we have it today. This of course does not mean that there was direct inspiration in the many men who were part of the process, just that God, in his providence, achieved His goal of a 27 books Canon. For example, the late 4th Century Councils that drafted the lists of 27 books were merely rubber stamping what had long been the universal standard for the majority of Christians. By 100 AD, all 27 books of the New Testament were in circulation and all but Hebrews, 2Peter, James, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation were universally accepted. We shall deal with the process which they all took before the final acceptance as canon for the Church in this unit.

The Investigation of New Testament Canon

The earliest point at which we can take up the investigation is in the data provided by the New Testament itself. The apostolic Church was not without Scripture. The church looked for its doctrine from the Old Testament at the beginning. For example, the Church traced the genealogy of Jesus Christ from Abraham to David, Jacob the father of Joseph who was the husband of Mary, whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ (Matthew 1: 1 -16). The Church was not without using the Scripture before approving the 27 books as Canon. Scholars claim that Hebrew text was used in the church worship. Apocrypha such as 1 Enoch were also used in some circles. Whether the term “Canonical” should be applied here is subject to debate. This is because during the period in question, the Jewish Canon was not yet fixed. Besides, scholars who had assumed that some lists of books were fixed for church use, claim that the canon was moulded by anti-Christian controversy, in addition to other factors. On the other hand, other scholars suggested that the Church used some of its own peculiar traditions in worship. For example, at the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s death was “proclaimed” probably in word. For example,

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). The account of the Lord’s Supper itself is regarded as derived “from the Lord”, a closely guarded tradition.

The use of ethical values by the Church

The Church also used ethical value utterances in the service. *To the married I give charge, not I but The Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not divorce his wife (1 Corinthians 7: 10).*

The words of the quoted passage were rules and regulations that Jesus Christ Himself set down for Christians to emulate or obey in order to guide their marital lives. It is not the Church that laid down the marriage ethical conduct for the couple, but Jesus Christ. Therefore, one could say that the New Testament Canon began with Jesus Christ the founder of the Church. Likewise, Paul himself also laid down rule that would guide the conduct of the single person in the Church. It runs:

... concerning the unmarried I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trust worthy, I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is (1 Corinthians 7:25).

Furthermore, the author of Acts also reminds us the command of Jesus Christ to the Church to care for the poor. It reads,

In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:35).

This passage is also an allusion to a laid down rule which Jesus urges the Church to abide with. Therefore, when we consider the moral teachings which Jesus taught the Church, then one can say that the New Testament Canon was established by Jesus Christ and not the Church who only follow it to achieve spiritual growth.

Another fact for us to consider in the book of letters has been probably inspired by the Holy Spirit to some extent, is 1Corinthians 15: 3-4. It reads:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures....

In this text, Paul made it known that death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was written in the Scriptures. So, he taught the Corinthians what he had read in the Scriptures.

This indicates that the stories of Christ's death and resurrection were found in the Scriptures that were widely in circulation and used by Christians in the early period before Paul's writings to the Churches. For this reason, we could say that the Canon of the New Testament began before the era of the Apostle Paul.

In addition, the quoted passages also indicate that the Church had preserved its traditions of the passion, resurrection, life and the teaching of Jesus for generations in both oral and written forms. The passages below also make this statement clear.

You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him and we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people

but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead (Acts 10: 36 -41).

These passages actually indicate that the sayings, doings, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ were taught by his disciples to the Church in oral forms and perhaps later written in documents for the Church use.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Comment on the use of ethical values in the early Church service.
- ii. List the books which the early Church used to teach moral value in marriage.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from this unit indicates that the development of the New Testament Canon could also be traced to the books of the Old Testament. Besides, one could also say that it continues with the teaching of Jesus Christ, while Paul and Peter transferred its teachings to the Church.

5.0 SUMMARY

The development of the Canon started through oral teachings by Jesus Christ Himself. The early Church adapted the oral traditions into spreading the teachings that is contained in what later form some of the books in the Canon.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the passages that were used by the early church in the pre-canonical era.

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MODULE 2 THE OLD TESTAMENT: TEXTS AND VERSIONS

- Unit 1 Textual Transmission
- Unit 2 The Discovery of the Dead Scrolls
- Unit 3 The Latter Massoretic Text and its Uses in the New Testament
- Unit 4 The Manuscripts of the New Testament
- Unit 5 Codex Texts

UNIT 1 TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Text and Versions of the Old Testament
 - 3.2 The Jews Written Records
 - 3.3 The Transmission of the Text
 - 3.4 Massoretes
 - 3.5 The Massorah
 - 3.6 The Standard Text
 - 3.7 The Hebrew Massoretic Text
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt that inspiration is the doctrine of Christian Theology concerned with the divine Scripture. You also learnt about the following views on inspiration: Evangelical, Catholic, Modernist and the Neo- Orthodox. Besides, you were taught that the Neo- Orthodox view rejected the Modernist view for it eroded the value and significance of Christian faith.

In this unit, you will be introduced to various steps that were taken by scholars to preserve the original text of the Old Testament in the early time. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew c. 900 -125 BC. However, until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered after World War 11, the oldest extant Hebrew transcription of the Old Testament was the Cairo codex of the prophets, dated A.D. 895. 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 Massoretic (Hebrew) between 100 B.C. and A.D. 125 were less “corrupt”. That is, they have fewer errors of transmission than the Greek uncial manuscripts. Roberts claimed that the Dead Sea Scrolls caused a revolution in Old Testament textual criticism. For this fact, it seemed that the original authors and its transmission process will have a major effect on future translations.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the texts that were written in Hebrew c. 900 – 125 BC;
- discuss how the text of the Old Testament provides the raw materials for the discipline called textual criticism;
- discuss the authenticity of a manuscript.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Text and Versions of the Old Testament

The Old Testament text and versions provide the raw materials for the discipline called textual criticism. The primary aim is to provide a text in the form intended by its author. You should note 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 other 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. Among such errors are haplography, that is, failure to repeat a letter or word; dittography, which means repeating what occurs only once; false recollection of a similar passage or of another manuscript; homoeoteleuton (omission of a passage between identical words); line omission (omission), sometimes through (homoeoteleuton); confusion of letters of similar form; insertion into body of text of marginal notes. 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 Old Testament consists of Hebrew Manuscripts from 3rd century BC to the 12th century AD and ancient versions in Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, and Latin.

3.2 The Jews Written Records

History has shown that before the birth of Moses, there existed the North Semitic script. Around c. 3100 BC onwards, writing was a hallmark of civilisation and progress throughout the Ancient Near East. In the second millennium BC 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 centers 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.1700BC.

While Moses was at Egypt it has been 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 BC 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...* (Numbers 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 being 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 theaters, 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, Deuteronomy 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. (Jeremiah 26:2). As one can deduce 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 proved that the Jews took a recession of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament about AD 100, then it would be a bit difficult to defend the principle of agreement between the texts of the Biblical scrolls from Qumran and the Massoretic text. 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; this laxity could subconsciously easily affect 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 Massorettes. In New Testament 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 Massorettes

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’ amalgamatsonantal 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. Consequent

variants have no significance. 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 AD 500 to 1000. 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 AD135, 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 Matthew 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 vocalisation had been 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 word preferred and which they intended to be read (called the *Qere*, “that which is to be read”) was placed in the margin, but its vowels were 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. The middle letters in a book was counted and its middle letter was given. Similarly with the words, the middle word of the book was noted. They collected any peculiarities in spelling or in the forms or phrase occurred. Among the many lists they drew up is the Old Testament. 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 10th century AD. 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 formerly in Aleppo, 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 vocalisation. 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 a 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 vocalisation, 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'. Vocalisation in a Semitic language belongs primarily to orthography and grammar, and to exegesis, and only to a limited extent to textual criticism. There never was an original vocalised text to restore.

3.7 The Hebrew Massoretic 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. A.D. 55-137); and the standardisation of the remainder followed soon afterwards, to produce the official Massoretic 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 in each case of divergence ruled that the majority reading was 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 A.D. 70, 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 standardisation. 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

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

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. A.D. 55 -137. The Standardisation follows and it led to the production of the official Massoretic text. The standardisation of the text is dated around 70 AD.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Jews written records indicated that before the birth of Moses, there was civilisation 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. At the processes of copying the Scripture by other scholars in order to preserve it for their generations, many of them made omissions of some words. While others who tried to correct their manuscripts probably added or by omission forgot to include some letters or words. These created problems for the Massorettes who tried to trace the original manuscripts in order to put things straight hence they have been warned by God not to tamper with His oracles. For this reason scholars continue to scrutinise the various texts at their disposal in order to maintain the original words that were used in the Hebrew Bible.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the Hebrew Massorettes that you know.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 THE DISCOVERY OF THE DEAD SCROLLS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - 3.2 The Cairo Genizah
 - 3.3 The Hebrew Pentateuch of the Samaritans
 - 3.4 The Abihu's MS (Manuscript)
 - 3.5 The Samaritan Pentateuch
 - 3.6 Targums
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you have learnt about some textual notes that were supplied by the Massoretes and they were used in writing the Rabbinic Bible that is accepted as a standard text for use in the Church. In this unit, we shall continue our discussion of the textual studies. This will help you to know how scholars arrived at the discoveries of more textual from various sources 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 Targums in the Old Testament text.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

The biblical manuscripts were discovered in caves around Wadi Qumran towards the northwest of the Dead Sea in 1947. The recovery of these manuscripts has changed the research method of the Old Testament text by tracing it back to several years before the actual time which the

Massoretic apparatus was then noticed. However, the discovery of some manuscripts by an Arab shepherd in one of the caves in the area led to the search of others caves in the region by Massorettes. The searching of all available caves in the area led to discovery of several or 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. Due to the scanty samples of a scribe's work, it is impossible to pass judgment on his abilities. On the other hand, where the material is sufficiently copious, just as the one found in the book of Isaiah or scrolls, the divergences from the Massoretic text are not substantial. Besides, a promiscuous collection of biblical, semi-biblical, and non-biblical MSS (Manuscripts) bristles with so many difficulties in sorting and reconstructing that mistakes are inevitable. Although claims are being made for evidence of different recessions, but with fragments the evidence remain tenuous. 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 (manuscripts) prevented to us initially was about a thousand years earlier than our oldest Manuscripts, thus they take us behind the alleged suppression of all divergent texts in AD 100. 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 Massoretic studies by providing us with MSS (Manuscripts) 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, harmonisation (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 "standardised" 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 form 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 A.D.

The latter are less well known to average reader, but for the present survey they demand pride of place. It is beyond dispute that they form part of the literary remains of the Jewish army in the bar Cochba revolt in A.D. 132-35, the last vain attempt to oppose Roman domination. Not all the texts are available for general scrutiny, but 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 recognised as standard. Rabbi Aqiba was directly involved in the revolt, and as a result, it is reasonable to assume that the standardised 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 vocalised 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 vocalisation 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 BC) 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 BC, and thus provide an independent check on the trustworthiness of the Hebrew transmission.

3.4 The Abihu's MS (Manuscript)

Abihu was a great-grandson of Aaron (1Chronicles 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 AD or not much earlier than its alleged discovery by the high priest Phinehas in 1355.

3.5 The Samaritan Pentateuch

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 Massoretic text. 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 Massoretic text. On the other hand, it is true that in some 1,600 places the Samaritan agrees with the LXX, but 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 Deuteronomy 27: 2- 7. with 'Mount Ebal' replaced by 'Mount Gerizim', and Deuteronomy 11:30 changes 'over against Gilgal' into 'over against Shechem'. You should be aware 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.

3.6 Targums

The word *targum* is Hebrew, but not found in the Old Testament. It is an Aramaic paraphrase, or interpretative translation, of some part of the Old Testament. 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 therefore impossible to establish a certain date for its commencement. But it is possible that we find its inception in Nehemiah 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', his paraphrase a 'targum'. The Targums were oral in their origins; had it been read to him, the uninformed worshipper might have invested the translation with the same authority as Scripture itself, it was felt. 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 utilised. One of the written Targums is the book of Job; it existed in the 1st Christian century. Targums are extant covering all the Old Testament between them, except for 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; these include Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Apart from the above named Targums, we have Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel. The author lived in the first century BC. One of the Jerusalem Targums on the Pentateuch was mistakenly given the name of Jonathan ben Uzziel during the 4th century; and up to date it is referred to as 'Pseudo- Jonathan. Targum 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 biblical names, Shinar, (Genesis 11:2), becomes Babel (that is Babylon). In this type of Targum, figurative language is explained with explanatory additions where essential. But in it, Anthro-morphisms are weeded out; so that man was created in the image of angels, not of God (Genesis 1:26); and actions on God's part are 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

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

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 discovered at the pre- Christian era.

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

The Hebrew Pentateuch preserved by the Samaritans is derived from the ancient text Abihu's ms 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 Old Testament. They are popular stories that had grown out of biblical persons and events.

5.0 SUMMARY

The Biblical Manuscripts were discovered in various caves around Wadi Qumran towards the northwest of the Dead Sea in 1947 by Massorates. The MSS constitute an independent witness to the reliability of the transmission of the accepted text.

The Hebrew Pentateuch preserved by the Samaritans is derived from the ancient text. It reached Europe in 1616. Scholars claimed that Abihu's Manuscript was the oldest of all manuscripts.

The Targums were oral in origins. But, later the texts were written. Among such texts is the book of Job.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Account for the discovery of the early text.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Who are Massorates?
2. Discuss the works of Massorates.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Douglas, J.D. *et al.* (1979). *The New Bible Dictionary*. Bungay, Suffolk: Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Ltd.

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

UNIT 3 THE LATER MASSORETIC TEXT AND ITS USES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Uses of the Septuagint by the New Testament Writers
 - 3.2 The Quoting of the Old Testament in the New Testament
 - 3.3 The Date of the Earliest known Copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch
 - 3.4 The “Received Text”
 - 3.5 The Circulation of Byzantine Text
 - 3.6 Ephraemi Rescriptus 5th –MSS 10th Century
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt that the biblical manuscripts were discovered in caves around Wadi Qumran in 1947. You also learnt that the oldest text Abihu is ascribed to a great-grand son of Aaron. The original manuscripts that were discovered include the manuscripts of Isaiah. You have also learnt that the Hebrew Pentateuch that was preserved by the Samaritans is derived from the ancient text.

In this unit, we shall learn about the various texts of the New Testament. We shall also discuss the date and places of writings of these texts. Besides, we shall discuss the period when various Hebrew Texts were destroyed and how the same texts that were destroyed were seen in other places, such as in Mesopotamia by scholars.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- describe various types of Texts in the New Testament
- discuss the efforts of Scholars in the discovery of other texts from other places after the ones destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes
- give examples of the Septuagint texts studied in the unit.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Uses of the Septuagint by the New Testament Writers

The Septuagint text was written before Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed several ancient Hebrew manuscripts. However, many scholars of the New Testament are said to often quote from it in the Hebrews. The Septuagint as reflecting one form of Hebrew text in the third and second centuries B.C is a witness of high values. It has been observed that copies of the Law were destroyed by the officers of Antiochus at Judaea during the persecution. But when the persecution was over and the 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. As texts were recovered, many copies of Hebrew scripture that represented both the ancestor of the later Massoretic text and also form of text which the Septuagint translators had before them were in circulation from the last two or three centuries B.C. For the most part, the ancestor of the Massoretic text emerges from a critical comparison of the two bodies of evidence with its superiority established. The New Testament writers perhaps quoted the version in common use among them from the Septuagint.

3.2 The Quoting of the Old Testament in the New Testament

It has been noted that sometimes, when an Old Testament 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 Septuagint perhaps represents a Hebrew text varying slightly from that which has come down to us. Thus, when the last clause of Isaiah 28: 16 is quoted in the New Testament (Romans 9:10-11; 1 Peter 2:6); it appears with the verb "shall not be put to shame", following the Septuagint which reflects Hebrew *yebosi*, instead of "shall not make haste", which is the reading of the Massoretic 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 Septuagint gives an interpretation of a Hebrew expression instead of a literal rendering of it. For example, the Septuagint translator of Psalm 40:6 doubtless 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 New Testament writer quotes such an interpretation, he adopts it as being the true interpretation of the original; this is

manifestly so when the Septuagint wording of Psalm 40: 6, doubtless read the words “ears hast thou digged for me” in his Hebrew text just as we do. But he knew that the “digging” or hollowing out of ears is part of the process of forming 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 New Testament writer quotes such an interpretation; he adopts it as being the true interpretation of the original: this is manifestly so when the Septuagint wording of Psalm 40: 6 has cited in Hebrew 10: 5ff, for the writer there applies it to the body which Christ received at His incarnation and which He offered up once for all (Hebrew 10:10).

3.3 The Date of the Earliest known Copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch

The earliest copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch were believed to belong to the eleventh or twelfth century A.D. The Samaritan edition of the Pentateuch probably goes back to the fourth century B.C. At that earlier period it was not exclusively Samaritan; 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”. This is because they had the edition of 1881 at their disposal. For instance, they had 29 uncials out of 45 known to them to have existed. Likewise, they had 150 cursives out of about 1,000 that were known to exist; and comparatively few lectionaries out of 400 then catalogued. However, scholars claim that there are 85 papyri, 268 uncials, 2,792 cursives and 2,193 lectionaries, 5,338 manuscripts in all.

3.4 The “Received” Text

The ‘Received Text’ is the designation ascribed to the text of the earliest printed editions of the Greek New Testament. Although scholars claim that it was first used in the publisher blurb advertising an edition printed at Leiden in 1633. The earliest printed editions of the Greek New Testament, from which the sixteenth and seventeenth century English versions were translated, were based for the most part on fifteenth century manuscripts. However, it has been observed that Erasmus was in such a haste in preparing his printed Greek text of 1516 that, when the Greek manuscript which he was using for Revelation proved to be mutilated at the end, he translated its last verses from Latin into his own Greek and sent the copy to the printer, and to the end of its days the Received Text has retained two words in Revelation 22: 18 which are not found in any Greek manuscript, but were supplied by Erasmus.

3.5 The Circulation of Byzantine Text

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 Chrysosom (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 Constantople, 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.

3.6 Ephraemi Rescriptus 5th – MSS 10th Century

Ephraemi Rescriptus (Cor⁰⁴), 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 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. While Codex Washingtonianus (the Freer Codex) (W⁰³²), perhaps a 4th century MS, contained the Gospels of which the text –type varies considerably from place to place. Codex Koridethian (or⁰³⁸), which it is impossible to date, since 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. Codex Laudianus (E or⁰⁸), was a 6th or 7th century Graeco – Latin MS of the Acts. Codices Claromontanus, Boernerianus, Augiensis

(D Paul or ⁰¹²; F Paul or ⁰¹⁰, a group of Graeco–Latin MSS, the former of the 6th, the two later belong to the 9th century, containing the Pauline Epistles. Codex Euthalianus, (H Paul or ⁰¹⁵), 6th century MS much 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 centered 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- i. Discuss the uses of the Septuagint texts by the New Testament writers.
- ii. Account for the 4th century text.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have learnt about how the New Testament Manuscript texts were preserved and transmitted by scholars. You have also learnt of the date which each manuscript was written, and the relationship of these manuscripts to one another. The oldest among these texts is the Septuagint, usually referred to as the LXX. The manuscript was written in Alexandria. The writing began about 4th century and was concluded around the 10th century. It was the work of a number of translators who offered their knowledge greatly in both Hebrew and Greek languages. Since the periods in question to date, it has been known as “The Septuagint” meaning the seventy.

5.0 SUMMARY

The uses of the Septuagint text existed before Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed many Hebrew manuscripts that were used by the church. However, after the persecution copies of the destroyed texts were found in other places, especially Mesopotamia. The writers of the New Testament texts probably used the Hebrew Septuagint texts that were found in their works. The Samaritan Pentateuch MSS is dated eleventh century A.D. while the “Received Text” is the earliest printed editions of the Greek New Testament.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the “Received Text” of 1633 A.D.
2. Which are the Byzantine texts?

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Douglas, J.D. *et al.* (1978). *The New Bible Dictionary*. Bungay, Suffolk: Richard Clay: The Chaucer Press, Ltd.

UNIT 4 THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Manuscripts of the New Testament
 - 3.2 The Uncials
 - 3.3 Codex Sinaiticus
 - 3.4 Codex Alexandrinus
 - 3.5 Codex Vaticanus
 - 3.6 The Codex Ephraemi text varies
 - 3.7 Codex Bezae
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have learnt that the uses of the Septuagint text existed before Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed many Hebrew manuscripts that were used by the Church. You have also learnt that copies of the destroyed manuscripts were discovered in other places.

In this unit, we shall introduce you to some manuscripts and witnesses that have formed the raw materials to the judgement of the critics. The aim of this is to let you appreciate the work of the textual scholars.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- describe some great uncials
- discuss some of the papyri
- narrate the history of some manuscripts.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Manuscripts of the New Testament

The manuscripts that have been employed in the writings of the New Testament texts can be divided into the following: the uncials, the

papyri, the minuscule, the translations, the lectionaries and the readings from the early church fathers.

3.2 The Uncials

When Christianity was officially recognised as a legitimate religion (*religio licita*), the use of parchment became the vogue in writing the manuscripts of the New Testament. This is because a parchment is more durable than the papyrus but it became popular only after the order of Emperor Constantine that 50 copies of the bible on parchment be made for the use of the churches in Constantinople.

They are actually called uncials or minuscule because they were written in capital letters. 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 codex sinaiticus is designated with the first Hebrew letters (aleph). The following are examples of some the codices considered to be very important.

3.3 Codex Sinaiticus (⁰¹)

This codex 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 Shepherd 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.

3.4 Codex Alexandrinus (A⁻⁰²)

This is a 5th century manuscript. 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.

3.5 Codex Vaticanus (B⁻⁰³)

Codex Vaticanus is an uncial of the fourth century (perhaps copied about AD 350), and widely regarded as the most important surviving Biblical manuscript. Perhaps, it. Originally contained the entire Greek Bible (except the books of Maccabees). But, 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 Apocalypse. 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 P⁴⁵.

3.6 Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C –⁰⁴)

This is a 5th century manuscripts as earlier explained in unit 3, 3.6. It is the most important New Testament palimpsest (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 New Testament, and fragments of the Old Testament 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 is 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 Old Testament and 145 of the New Testament. It contains portions of every book except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John. The codex was perhaps written in Egypt.

3.7 The Codex Ephraemi Text Varies

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 Alexandrius, 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.

3.8 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 respectively. 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, this is because they do not have support from a large number of Latin witnesses.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give brief description of the great uncial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

During the *religio licita*, the use of parchment became the vogue in writing the manuscripts of the New Testament. For it was more durable than the papyrus. Constantine Tischendorf discovered Codex Sinaiticus on Mount Sinai. Codex Alexandrinus was discovered by Cyril Lucar. Codex Vaticanus is widely regarded as the most important New Testament palimpsest written on the Tablet. Codex Bezae was discovered by Theodore Beza.

5.0 SUMMARY

The uncials are the manuscripts that were written in capital letters. They are usually on parchments. It was made popular in the period of Constantine, the Emperor of Rome. Codex Bezae is the most controversial of all New Testament manuscripts. The uncial of ninth century contains the gospels with minor defects.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the context of each of the following manuscripts:

The uncials ². Codex Sinaiticus (⁰¹), Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Bezae (D ⁻⁰⁵).

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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Metzger, B. M. (1968). *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNIT 5 CODEX TEXTS

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Codex Claromontanus (Dp- D²)
 - 3.2 E-o7
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 - 3.4 F-⁰¹⁰ and g-⁰¹²
 - 3.5 Codex Regius (L /⁰⁹)
 - 3.6 P/⁰²⁵
 - 3.7 W /⁰²⁵
 - 3.8 Codex Koridethi (Q^{/038})
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you were introduced to the varied range of the manuscripts that formed the witnesses to the New Testament textual critics in the process of their work. You have learnt that the manuscripts range from the uncials to the Codex Bezae (D -05).

In this unit, you will be exposed to more texts and how they are likely to have occurred in the process of the transmission of the texts of the New Testament.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- give examples of variant texts in the New Testament
- discuss the history of some given manuscripts
- list all available translations and identify them by their symbols
- discuss the critical apparatus of the Greek New Testament.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 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.

3.2 E⁻⁰⁷

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

3.3 Codex Laudianus (E /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.

3.4 F⁻⁰¹⁰ and G⁻⁰¹²

These are ninth century uncials of Paul. Both are Latin diglots; 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.

3.5 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 Sinaiticus. 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.

3.6 P⁰²⁵

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.

3.7 W⁰³²

This is a fifth century uncial of the Gospels, with some slight lacunae. W is uncial of Gospels with some slight lacunae. W is unusual 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.

3.8 Codex Koridethi (Q⁰³⁸)

This is an uncial of the gospels with missing parts of the first five chapters of Matthew. Its date is uncertain (there are no other manuscript which use the same writing style; it seems to have been written by a scribe who had very little knowledge of Greek), but the ninth century is often suggested. The earliest and most important witness to the so-called “Caesarean” text, although in fact it has many Byzantine readings as well.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ASSESSMENT

Discuss W. uncials Claromontanus and Codex Korideth.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you learnt about Codex Claromontanus that contains Pauline Epistles and Hebrew. You also learnt about the uncial of the ninth Century which contains the gospels with minor defects. Likewise, in the unit, we also discussed Codex Laudicanus which is the sixth Century uncial of Acts. You also learnt about the uncials of Paul, Codex Regius that has some gaps with the uncial gospels. Palimpsest of the Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses was discussed. Wuncial of the Gospels with some slight lacunae was also explained. In this unit, we also discussed in details Codex Koridethi that has missing parts of the five chapters of Mark.

5.0 SUMMARY

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

- Claromontanus contains Pauline Epistles
- The uncial of the ninth century contains the gospels but with defects.
- The Codex Laudianus which is the sixth century uncial of Act.
- The uncial Palimpsest of the Act, Epistles and Apocalypse.
- The W uncial of the Gospels with some slight lacunae.
- The Codex Koridethi which is the uncial of the Gospels but with missing parts of the first five chapters of Matthew.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the following uncials: Claromontanus, Codex Laudianus and Codex Koridethi.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Metzger, B. M. (1968). *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

On – Line Resources

“*Lower Criticism*” in Wikipedia Encyclopedia online available at www.wikipedia.org

MODULE 3 POPYRI AND VERSIONS

- Unit 1 Popyri
- Unit 2 Versions
- Unit 3 The Syriac and other Versions
- Unit 4 The New International Version

UNIT 1 POPYRI

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit you have learnt that Claromontanus contains Pauline Epistles, while the Uncial contains the gospel. You have also learnt about the Codex, Laudianus, the Uncial palimpsest of the Acts, Epistles and Apocalypse.

In this unit, we shall conclude the uncials to the New Testament and then discuss the various versions in both the Old and the New Testaments. We shall start our discussions with the Papyri first, then move to the variant versions of the Old Testament and finally treat the New Testament Versions.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the reliability of the New Testament
- 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 Testament.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Papyri

Before the introduction of parchment and the manuscripts, writings were done on papyrus, hence the name papyri – the plural form of papyrus. They were also written in uncial script. The earliest papyri are dated from the second century, and last date from the eighth. Papyri are designated by the letter p (often in a black letter script) and a superscript letter. Thus, ^{p13}, ^{p45}, ^{p46}, ^{p47}, ^{p66}, ^{p72}, ^{p74}, and ^{p75} 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.

3.2 Chester Beatty Papyrus 1 (^{p45})

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.

3.2.1 Chester Beatty Papyrus¹¹ (P⁴⁶)

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.

3.2.2 Chester Beatty Papyrus¹¹¹ (P⁴⁷)

This is a third century papyrus of the Apocalypse, containing (with lacunae)^{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.

3.3 The Ryland Papyrus (p⁵² or⁴⁵⁷)

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.

3.4 Bodmer Papyrus 11 (p⁶⁶)

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.

3.4.1 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 lacunae. 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.

3.4.2 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 a very close kin of Vaticanus, though not a direct ancestor.

3.5 The Minuscules

The minuscules are manuscripts that were written in a running hand or cursive style. 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. 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.

3.6 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 symbolised by F¹. 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.

3.6.1 Minuscule ¹³

This is a minuscule of thirteenth century; it contains the Gospels with some lacunae. 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.

3.6.2 Minuscule ³³

This is a minuscule of the ninth century. It contains the entire New Testament except the Apocalypse (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).

3.6.3 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.

3.6.4 Minuscule 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.

3.6.5 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 minuscule, but with a curiously mixed text. The text of Romans and the Johannine 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.

3.6.6 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.

3.6.7 Minuscule¹⁷³⁹

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.

3.6.8 Minuscule²¹³⁸

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.

3.7 The Lectionaries

There is a fourth class of Greek manuscripts, the lectionaries, which contains the lessons read in the Greek Church in the order in which they were written. Lectionaries are quite numerous (about 2300 are now known), but most of them are late and fairly standardised. They may be written on parchment or paper, in uncial or minuscule script. 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the major differences between the Uncials and the Minuscule.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit you have been exposed to the many stages the manuscripts of the New Testament have been before the beginning of textual criticism to determine how we can arrive at the closest text to the original manuscripts. You have learnt about the papyri, the minuscule, ^{1, 13, 33, 81, 892, 1175, 1241, 1739, 2138} and the lectionaries.

5.0 SUMMARY

- The manuscripts discussed were written in capital letters and usually on parchment. They were made popular in the time of Constantine, Emperor of Rome.
- 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.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

List all the manuscripts in this unit and briefly explain each.

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UNIT 2 VERSIONS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 The Septuagint
 - 3.2 Manuscripts that were Discovered from the Pre-Christian and Early Christian Era
 - 3.3 Manuscripts Discovered from the Qumran Caves
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor–Marked Assignment
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1.0 INRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt that manuscripts were written in capital letters on parchment. You also learnt that manuscripts were made popular in the time of the Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire. In addition to these, you have learnt that papyri were written earlier than the uncials.

In this second unit of this module, you will begin to study the versions of both the Old and the New Testaments.

You will learn about the origin of the Hebrew text and early history. Besides, you will learn about the prehistory of the versions. We shall also discuss the Septuagint and its subsequent versions that are more closely related to the Massoretic text such as the Targums, the Samaritan recession, Syriac Peshitta and the Arabic version.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- identify the origin of the Septuagint
- give an account of the early history of the Septuagint
- describe the parent text of the Septuagint.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Septuagint

In the history of the Church the most relevant of the versions 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 version used for the Gospels in their present form. However, the Orthodox Judaism either refused to recognise it from the 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 Massoretic 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.

3.2 Manuscripts that were discovered from the Pre-Christian and 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 B.C. and *Papyrus Fouad 266* in Cairo from the late second or early first century B.C. both of which contain fragments of Deuteronomy Qumran cave four has produced a papyrus fragment of Leviticus, and two leather fragments of Leviticus and of Numbers. However, Numbers are still awaiting publication. 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 B.C. 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

The following manuscripts were discovered from the Qumran caves: one, four, five, and six. They were said to have come from the biblical texts in Hebrew. These were reported related to the parent text of the Septuagint historical books. Specific interest was attached to Samuel fragments from cave four; hence the text form shows more obvious affinities with the Septuagint than do the others. Although, it has long been agreed upon by scholars that the parent text of the Septuagint version of Samuel contained recessional divergences from the Massoretic text, but 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 B.C. 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, which interpretative elements bear typically Jewish characteristics, and such items as found in the Aramaic Targums. Also the Septuagint rendering of the historical books may well be a true rendering of a Hebrew parent text, agreed in a different recession from the Massoretic. But scholars claimed that some legendary features in the Massoretic 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. On the other hand, it seems that 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 Massoretic. 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 centered on the nature of the Greek texts and the early textual transmission of the Version. However, Kahle opined that at the period of pre-Christian era there were many Greek rendering of the Old Testament and that the only thing Aristeas described was the standardisation 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 Septuagint text before the second century A.D. 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 New Testament itself, though the quotations are mainly Septuagint, other renderings were considered as exemplified in Theodotianic readings in the Book of Revelation and others.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

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

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the history of the Church, the most important of the versions is the Septuagint. Paul adopted it in his letters to the Churches. John Rylands papyrus 458 and papyrus Found 266 were discovered in Cairo at the early century B.C. 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 B.C. 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 the use in apologetic and for liturgical use in the Synagogues of the Hellenistic Diaspora.

5.0 SUMMARY

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

- Septuagint versions were considerably favoured by the early Church.
- Paul made use of such versions in his writings.
- John Rylands papyrus 458 and papyrus Found 266 were discovered in Cairo at early century B.C.
- Manuscripts one, four, five, and six were discovered from the Qumran caves.
- They were traced to the biblical texts of Hebrew.
- At the third century B.C. 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.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the Hebrew parent text.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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Online Resources

New Testament in 1880 and of the Old Testament in 1884 in Wikipedia Enclopaedia online available at http://www.biblewiki.be/wiki/Bible_Version_category_Easton_1897.

UNIT 3 THE SYRIAC AND OTHER VERSIONS

CONTENTS

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- 2.0 Objectives
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 - 3.1.1 The Authorised Version
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 - 3.1.3 Reason for the Revision of the King James Version
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 - 3.8 English Versions
 - 3.9 The King James Version
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt that Septuagint versions were favourable to the early Church. Paul used such various versions in his writings. You also learnt that John Rylands's papyrus were discovered in Cairo early Century B.C. You learnt that the commissioned body of the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem produced the koine Greek. In this unit, you will learn that the Syriac version is the oldest translation of Hebrew Scriptures. We have no information about the authors or the date of its translation. However, you will learn about the views of scholars concerning its origin. In this unit, we shall introduce you to various versions of the Bible apart from the Syriac version.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the facts that led to the process of various versions of the Bible
- list some errors in the King James Version.

- identify the role of Baumstark in the work of translating the Bible.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Syriac Version

The Syriac version is the oldest among the Hebrew Scriptures. This 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 Genesis 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 is with a Genizah text and the Palestinian Targum as against Targum Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan who suggested that the Peshitta Pentateuch originated from an E Aramaic district which had some relationship with Jerusalem. The monarchy house of Adiabene, a kingdom established between rivers Zah, east of the Tigris, was converted to Judaism around A.D. 40. Children of the ruling house were sent to Jerusalem for their education. Likewise, some members of the ruling house were also reported to have been buried there. The religion of Judaism spread among the people of Adiabene, and they needed the Hebrew scripture in a language they could understand, such as Syriac. Therefore, it was assumed that parts of the Syriac Old Testament bible, 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

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

3.1.1 The Authorised Version

The work of John Rogers, the first martyr under the reign of Queen Mary was the first authorised version, Henry VIII having ordered a copy of it to be given 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, was so called because of its large size, it was also called Cranmer's Bible published in 1539 and 1568. In a strict sense, the "Great Bible" was the only authorised version for the Bishop's use and the present Bible (AV) never had the formal sanction of the 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 authorised version (1611), and the revised version of the New Testament in 1880 and of the Old Testament in 1884.

3.1.2 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 versions and the first to be printed was the work of William Tyndale. He met bitter opposition. He was accused of willfully perverting the meaning of the scriptures, and his version of the New Testaments was ordered to be burnt as "untrue translations". He finally became a victim in 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 other preceding versions; and comparison shows that it got some information from each of them. It kept felicitous phrases and apt expressions, from whatever source, which had stood the test of time. Most the New Testament writings can be attributed to Tyndale.

3.1.3 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 Testament and New Testament, 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 feign,” “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”.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

State the main reason for the revision of the King James Version.

3.1.4 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 authorised 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 (Matthew 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 (Matthew 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; 1corinthians 3:9; 2Corinthians 5:19; Hebrew 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: Matthew 10:8; 12:1; 15:29; 17:20; Luke 7:36; 11:17; 12:40; John 16:9; Roman 10:16, 1 Corinthians 12:24; Corinthians 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Give reason for the need of the use of the Revised Standard Version.

3.2 Baumstark's View on Date of the Original Text

According to Baumstark, the date of the original text of the Syriac version is dated as far back as the Palestinian Targum. Besides, the Palestinian style that is ambiguous and 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 as has been described in 3.1, 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 Old Testament 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 A.D. Scholars 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 center 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 opined 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 New Testament 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 New Testament, 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'. On the other hand, F. Buhi states that 'the Peshitta owed its origin to Christian effort: in part older individual Jewish translations were utilised, in part the remainder was commissioned to Jewish Christians for translation'. However, such is possible, as 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 advanced than the knowledge possessed by the Septuagint, and yet the stress of Greek fashion of it had its way now and again. The Syriac scribes on the contrary, were ignorant of the 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

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

3.3 Latter History of the Peshitta Text

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 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.

3.4 Other Translations

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 to 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. A.D. 508), of this only a few fragments remain, giving portions of the New Testament 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 AD.

3.5 The Syriac Version of Paul

Another Syriac version of the Old Testament 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.

3.6 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 Old Testament seems to have been made not from the original Hebrew but from the LXX (that is, seventy). This version became greatly corrupted by repeated transcription, and to provide remedy. Jerome (A.D. 329-420) was requested by Damasus, 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, recognised as the “Vulgate” version. It appeared in a printed form about A.D. 1455, the first book that 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 VIII was adopted as the basis of all subsequent editions. It is regarded as the sacred original 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 Genesis 3: 15, “shall bruise thy head”.

3.7 Other Ancient Versions

Other Ancient Versions which are of importance for biblical critics, but which we need not mention particularly, the Ethiopic, in the fourth century, from the LXX (That is, seventy), two Egyptian versions, about the fourth century, the Memphitic, circulated in Lower Egypt, and the Thebaic designed for Upper Egypt, both from the Greek, the Gothic, written in the German language, but with the Greek alphabet, by Uiphlas (died A.D. the Armenian, about A.D. 388), of which only fragments of the Old Testament 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.

3.8 English Versions

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, A.D. 735) and also into English (by Orme, called the “Ormulum”, a portion of the Gospels and of Acts in the form of a metrical paraphrase, toward the close of the seventh century; long before Wycliffe, but it is to him that the honour belongs of having first rendered the whole Bible into English (A.D. 1380). This version was

made from the Vulgate and renders Genesis 3:15 after that version, “She shall tread thy head”.

3.9 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 authorised translation of the Bible into English was made. The King James Version became the “Authorised Version” of the English-speaking people, despite the fact that it has some 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, which was based upon a few medieval manuscripts of the tenth century, and he made the least use of it because it differed most from the commonly received text; 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 contrary 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 A.D. 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

1. Write briefly on William Tyndale.
2. Discuss the defects of the "The King James Version".
3. Give reason for the need to use of the Revised Standard Version.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is very interesting to learn about various translations of Bible versions in this unit. We ought to always remember Tyndale and his work in the process of translating the Bible into King James Version which led to his being martyred. His work became the foundation of subsequent English versions, especially, those of Coverdale, 1535. However, a time came when scholars felt the need for this version to be revised in order to meet the modern age spoken English language standard among the English-speaking nations. Those 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 our societies.

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 English-speaking nations around the world. The role of Martyred Tyndale played in its production is very important such that Christians need to continue remembering him for making the Bible accessible to English-speaking nations around the world.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Comment on the following versions:

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

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

CONTENTS

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- 3.0 Main Content
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about the following Bible versions: Syriac, Latin, King James, Authorised Version, other versions and the Revised Standard Version.

In this unit you will begin to focus on another interesting area of the version tagged the New International Version. In this unit, you will be exposed to the works of over a hundred scholars that used Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts to translate the New International Version that is now in use.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss 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

3.1 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 transdenominational. 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, which made up are in most part 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 international scope. That they were from many denominations – including Anglican, Assemblies 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.

3.2 Discussion Regarding the Meaning of Texts

All these involved many 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 textual and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts.

At the same time, they strived 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.

3.3 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 Anglicanisms 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 Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*, was adopted. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain material bearing on an earlier stage of the Hebrew text. They 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 Masoretic Text 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 Masoretic Text, 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 Masoretic Text 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.

3.4 The Endless Work of Translation

The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was an eclectic one. No other piece of ancient literature has such an abundance of manuscript witnesses as does the New Testament. Where existing manuscripts differs the translators made their choice of readings according to accepted principles of New Testament 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 New Testament 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. In 1973 the New Testament 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.

With regard to the divine name YHWH, commonly referred to as the Tetragrammaton, 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 Old Testament as a compound name of God, they are rendered “Sovereign Lord”.

Because for most readers of 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.

3.5 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 Old Testament, 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 New Testament, footnotes that refer to uncertainty regarding the original text are introduced by “some manuscripts” or similar expressions. In the Old Testament, 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.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the roles of scholars in the New International Version.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As you have learnt in this unit, 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. The Greek text used in translating the New Testament was an eclectic one.

5.0 SUMMARY

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

- In 1967 the New York 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 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.

6.0 TUTOR–MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the processes used by scholars to arrive at the final stage of The New International Version.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Excerpts: *Preface “The New International Version”*. International Bible Society.

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