

The Amazing Bible



Part 5

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*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep
the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
Revelation 14:12*

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HISTORICAL LINEUP

The Hebrew history is well documented -- what about the New Testament?

When the apostles wrote their letters, they were soon copied and distributed to Christians scattered through the ancient world. Any deviations from the original text would have been noted immediately, as this was during the lifetime of these men.

The New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. However, the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings.

Because they are so numerous, they can be cross-checked for accuracy -- and they are very consistent.

By the middle of the second century, thousands of portions of the New Testament had been written. In fact, over 5600 Greek manuscripts are extant (existing) even today. These are called the Textus Receptus (or Received Text) because they are believed to be so close to the originals as to be from the apostles. (This does not count the texts in other languages -- 8000 in Ethiopic, Slavic, Armenian)

Great harmony exists between all these manuscripts, with less than 5% difference; the variations having little impact on the overall text. These abundant manuscripts are also known as the Majority Text.

Many manuscripts came from Christians who had fled for their lives -- the Waldenses in northern Italy, the Huguenots in France, the Albigenses, the Moravians, and others -- all had written copies of the Scriptures. The Celts in England had copies of the Scripture, even the Gauls had written copies.

Christians were encouraged to learn whole books of the Bible by heart, from the oldest to the youngest. This not only safe-guarded them from the enemy, but made it almost impossible for truth to be lost.

The majority of the New Testament books were already in the hands of Christians at an early date. Others were accepted only if they had been written by the apostles, eyewitnesses or followers of the apostles. (For instance, Mark, who assisted Paul and Barnabus, and Luke, who was a Gentile doctor) To be accepted, they needed to conform to the rule of faith already established in the Hebrew Scriptures and have a continuous acceptance and usage by the church at large.

Many later writings vied for acceptance, but most were written after the second century and do not carry the same authenticity. Analyzing these writings reveal many contradictory statements, immediately barring them from acceptance into the canon of Scripture.

During the first few centuries, there was a proliferation of gospels, epistles, apocalypses. Genuine scholars say they are "fanciful and heretical... neither genuine or valuable as a whole", and "no orthodox father, canon or council considering them to be authoritative or desirous of including them in the New Testament." The Case for Christ. Lee Strobel p99. Quoted in Introduction to the Bible. Geisler and Nix p199.

There are no secret words of Jesus, as suggested in the pseudopigraphal 'Gospel of Thomas', and Jesus did not marry Mary Magdalene as purported by the Da Vinci Code.

At the beginning of the second century, a divergence of Bible translations began to appear.

Justin Martyr, a pagan convert, had a pupil by the name of Tatian, who wrote a harmony of the gospels called the 'Diatessaron'. It was so corrupted that a bishop of Syria "threw out two hundred copies, as church members were mistaking it for the true gospel." Which Bible? B.G. Wilkinson p16.

However, not all the corrupted manuscripts were destroyed, and at the beginning of the third century, Clement, a pupil of Tatian, founded a school at Alexandria in Egypt, where he expressly stated he would not hand down Christian teachings pure and unmixed with error, but rather "clothed with precepts of pagan philosophy." The Revision Revised. Dean Burgon p336. And so it was that Clement quoted from the corrupted manuscripts as if they were the pure words of Scripture.

Clement's pupil Origen, like his master, lightly esteemed the historical basis of the Bible. When writing his six-column Bible, the 'Hexapla', Origen actually changed the words to suit his great love of philosophy.

The historian Mosheim stated that Origen "deformed most of the doctrines of Christinity." Mosheim's History p102.

Eusebius accepted Origen's manuscripts with open arms, collecting eight hundred of his letters, restoring and preserving Origen's library. Which Bible? p17.

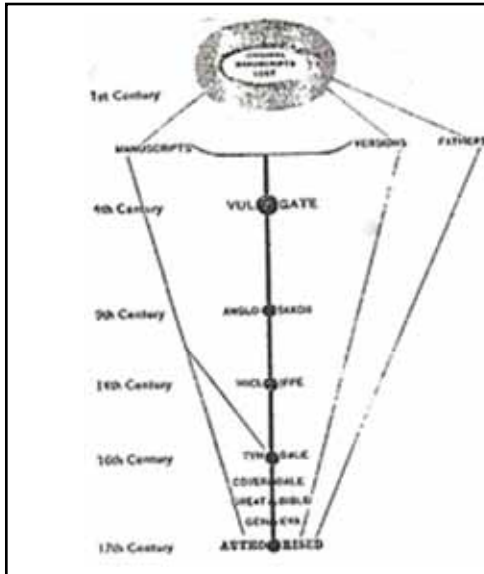
When Constantine came to power, he became a Roman Catholic and commissioned Bishop Eusebius to prepare fifty Bibles for the churches of Rome and Constantinople. Eusebius willingly did so, following the corrupted

manuscripts of Origen.

Jerome was chosen to translate the Old Italic manuscripts into Latin, which became the religious language of Rome. He had been an admirer of Origen and Eusebius and used the corrupted manuscripts as his base. His Bible became known as the Latin Vulgate.

In other parts of the world, the Scriptures were still in Greek and held independent of Roman Catholicism by the Syrian Church in Antioch, the Celtic Church in Southern France and the Celtic Church of Great Britain.

Often a history of the Bible is shown to stem from the Catholic Church and the 'church fathers' of Alexandria, but this is false. There have always been two great lines, one acceptable to the Papal Church; the other held sacred by men and women who opposed the religion that came out of Rome.

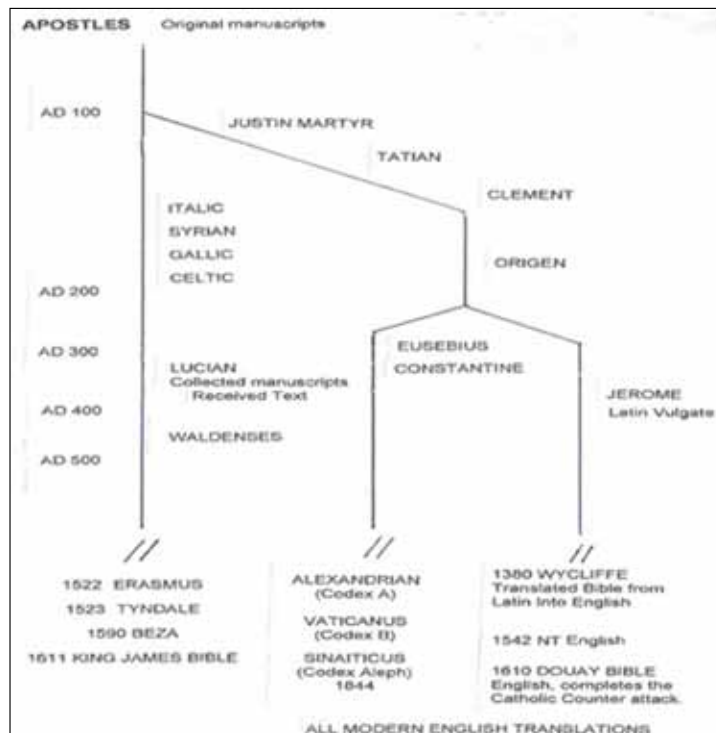


The canon of New Testament Scripture was not “preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church” as has been put forward in the Decree on Sacred Books on Traditions to be Received. Scripture is not “a product of Tradition” from the Catholic Church, as is stated in ‘Catholicism’ by R.O’Brien p65.

But God had His people in the Catholic Church. Young Desiderius Erasmus wanted to become a priest, but on his first visit to England, decided to devote his life to study and writing books. He spent a great part of his life in Germany and Switzerland where he studied and supervised the publication of his books. The Pope urged him to defend the church against the ‘rebellious writings’ of Martin Luther, but he would not do it.

As part of his work, Erasmus gathered together all the Greek manuscripts he could find in libraries and private collections. He subsequently published a Greek Bible that aligned with the Majority Text.

William Tyndale used this Bible for his translation into English, meeting bitter opposition from the Papacy. When he refused to give up his work of translation, he was sent to the stake and burned with his Bible.



Translating and printing Bibles continued in both historic lines. One ceased in 1611; the other continues to our day.

When religious freedom came to England, many Bibles were printed, all based on the Greek manuscripts.

In 1611, the King James Bible was published. King James had chosen the Majority Text as his base, which like Erasmus, Beza, Tyndale, and others, believed it to be in harmony with the original 'received text' of the apostles.

The King James Bible stands without a peer.

The large amount of New Testament manuscripts is unique among ancient books. We take for granted the great Caesars of the Roman Empire and other ancient writings, but their records are sparse.

Robert Metzger of Princeton Theological University stated, "Consider Tacitus, the Roman historian who wrote his 'Annals of Imperial Rome' in about AD116. His first six books exist today in only one manuscript, and it was copied about AD850. Books eleven through sixteen are in another manuscript dating from the eleventh century. Books seven through ten are lost..."

With regard to the first-century historian Josephus, we have nine Greek manuscripts of his work 'The Jewish Wars,' and these copies were written in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries. There is also a Latin translation from the fourth century." The Case for Christ . Lee Strobel p77.

The second largest amount of ancient manuscripts beside the writings of the New Testament are of Homer's 'Iliad,' written approximately 800BC. But there are fewer than 650 Greek manuscripts from the 2nd and 3rd century AD. "There is no body of ancient literature in the world that enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament." F.F. Bruce eminent professor at the University of Manchester, England.

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