

Introduction

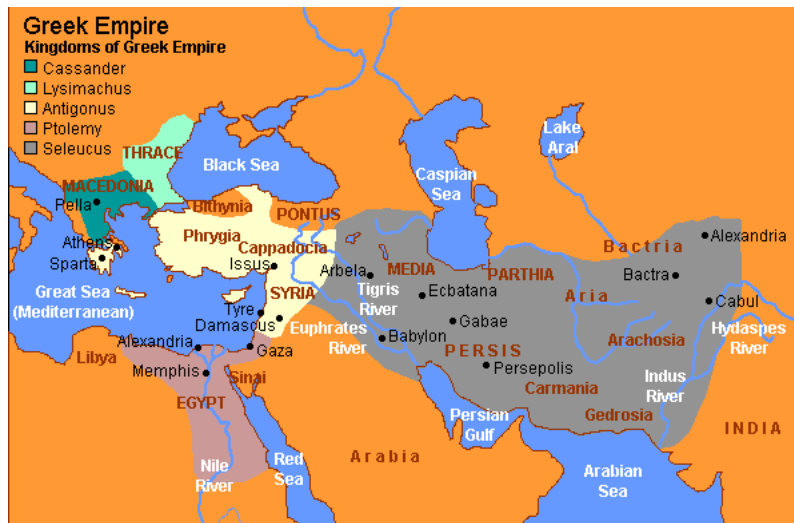
1. What is history and how did we get it? Ancient written records are compared and archeological discoveries are analyzed and studied vis-à-vis the written records of antiquity.

1.1 To determine what is history versus fiction the following tests are used for written records: oldest documents take precedence (those nearest the event, the number of documents available, the number of mistakes in the various manuscripts and the substance of the errors and the time interval between the event and the document

1.2 In summary, various external evidences such as established contemporaneous events, rulers, names of cities, civilizations known to exist at the time and archaeological records are compared and analyzed and conclusions drawn and codified.

1.3 Although the Bible is not a history book, the historical facts found in the Bible are remarkably accurate.

2. The Old Testament *was written* describing events taking place over a long period of time—c. 1450 B.C. to c. 450 B.C. The New Testament *was written* over a not so long period – c. 4 B.C. to c. A.D. 96; there was an intertestamental period of some 400 years in which there was no Scripture written. We have a great deal of history about events taking place during the intertestamental period known as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabee; as we will later see these books are classified by many as “Apocrypha.”



2.1 Bible teachers know of the events taking place in the intertestamental period from not only the Apocrypha but they also find records of these events described prophetically by Daniel. Particularly in Daniel Chapters 2, 4, 7 and 8.

I hope to show later how there is a remarkable coalescence between history and prophecy. This will all be developed later in this categorical study of Canonicity.

3. Let's first review the Old Testament and how it compares with ancient history.

3.1 Until the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which is the oldest extant Hebrew manuscript, our oldest Old Testament manuscript was dated A.D. 900.

3.1.1 Keep in mind a manuscript as used in this doctrine may be only a small portion of an entire Book inscribed on a vellum, parchment, scroll, papyrus, etc. The Dead Sea Scrolls contains parts of several Old Testament Books and the scrolls date back to the 1st century B.C.

3.2 Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947-54 there was an approximate gap of some 1300 years between the event and the oldest Old Testament manuscript: The Old Testament being completed in about 425 B.C. and the oldest copy being 900 A.D.; we therefore had a 1325 year hiatus.

3.3 With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls a number of Old Testament manuscripts were found which were dated before the time of Christ, and when experts compared what we formerly had versus the newly discovered scrolls, there were remarkably only a few minor errors and most involved only punctuation. More concerning this comparison will be provided later.

3.4 The Christian can now take the Old Testament and say without fear, "this is the Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation." As we will see later the New Testament has been studied and experts determined its accuracy is just a little short of miraculous." The Bible takes a back-seat to no other document when objectively compared.

3.4.1 All the more remarkable is the fact that more than 40 men, in three languages, spanning 60 generations and 1600 years have written the Bible from three different continents. This is an astounding feat.

3.5 We will look at the accuracy factor of the numerous copies in great detail later but for now it suffices to simply state that the accuracy of the Bible is "nothing short of phenomenal."

3.6 To understand the accuracy of the Old Testament copies, it is necessary to examine the extreme care in which copyists transcribed the Old Testament from year to year from many and varied manuscripts.

3.7 The Talmudists (A.D. 100-500) spent a great deal of time cataloging Hebrew civil and canonical law. They had quite an intricate system for transcribing synagogue scrolls. For example:

3.7.1 Each copy had to be written on a skin of animal classified as clean.

3.7.2 The skin had to be prepared in a special way.

3.7.3 Every skin had to contain a certain number of columns.

3.7.4 The length of each column had to extend over at least 48 but no more than 60 lines. Each line had to have at least 30 letters.

3.7.5 The ink must be black and prepared according to a certain recipe.

3.7.6 No word or letter could be written from memory.

3.7.7 Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene.

3.7.8 Between every Book there must be three lines.

3.7.9 The copyist must sit in full Jewish dress.

3.7.10 Before beginning the copyist must take a bath.

3.7.11 Before writing the name of God he must use a new pen dipped in a new bottle of ink.

3.8 The existence of the many ancient copies of the Scripture is even the more remarkable given the repeated persecutions to the Jews and the large-scale destruction of their property--certainly to include their books, manuscripts, etc.

3.9 That any remain at all is a tribute to God's intervention. This is especially evident given the Philistine, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Turkish, German, Spanish and Russian pogroms.

3.10 The **Masorites (A.D. 500-900)** accepted the laborious job of editing the text and standardizing it.

3.10.1 They added vowel points under the consonants to help with pronunciation.

3.10.2 They were well disciplined and treated the texts with the greatest imaginable reverence and devised a complicated system of safeguards against scribal error.

3.10.3 They counted the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurred in each book: pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible, and made even more detailed calculations to verify accuracy.

3.10.4 They counted everything countable and came up with a system of mnemonics by which the various totals might be readily remembered.

4. I think we are now ready to review the *Doctrine of Canoncity*.

1. Canoncity

1.1 A tremendous mass of literature appeared in the first three or four centuries, all of which claimed to be authoritative and inspired.

1.2 Something had to be done to determine which books were "in" and which were "out" of the Canon.

1.2.1 There was little if any controversy regarding the content of the New Testament; the controversy related only to the Old Testament.

1.3 The early Church fathers agreed upon five criteria to determine what books were to be included. These were:

1.3.1 Was the Book of Divine Origin? - Does the book itself purport to be divinely inspired?

1.3.2 Was its claim to inspiration adequately sustained by the awareness of the writer that this was indeed a sacred Scripture?

1.3.3 Documentation by quotation; for example, the New Testament contains numerous quotations from the Old Testament made by not only Jesus Christ but by virtually every writer of Scripture.

1.3.4 The law of public or official action as in the Old Testament a priest, a prophet, a king or in the New Testament, our Lord would read from it in public.

1.3.5 External evidence was used in the sense that the Masoretic copyist only preserved for us that which all of Israel seem to know was the Canon.

3. There has been far less controversy with reference to what represents the New Testament.

3.1 Criteria for New Testament Canoncity can be summarized:

a. Apostolicity - every Book must be written by an apostle or someone close to an apostle.

b. Reception by the early local Churches as being authentic.

c. Consistency - doctrines in the Book must be consistent with extant Christian teaching.

d. Each Book must give either internal or external evidence of Divine inspiration.

3.2 The Church Councils finally resolved all question as to what constituted our New Testament.

Council of Laodicea - 336 AD

Council of Damascus - 382 AD

Council of Carthage -397 AD

Council of Hippo - 419 AD

3.3 The Council of Laodicea recognized and accepted all books of the New Testament except the book of the Revelation however the next three councils included the book of Revelation into the Canon. The question of Canonicity never came up again until the rise of liberalism in the nineteenth century which led to our twentieth century modernism.

### **How We Got Our King James Bible**

The following has been taken from a book written by Col. R. B. Thieme, Jr. The title of the book was *Canonicity*. It is necessary you understand some of the background connected with the reign of King James I. Elizabeth, Queen of England, had a beautiful cousin, Mary Stuart, who had returned from France in 1561 to take her rightful place as Queen of the Scots.

Scotland was in a state of turbulence: the clans fomented discontent; the new faith preached by John Knox swept across the chilling lochs; and Catholic Mary was held in contempt, not only for her presence in Scotland, but for her continuing claim to the Tudor crown of Elizabeth. Mary unwisely married the Scottish Lord Darnley. This created further antagonism, both to the English because of his Tudor connections and to the Scots because he was Catholic.

The Scots had become Calvinistic in their beliefs and resented Mary's Romanism and the influence of her French court. The people were determined that never again should the Roman Church be allowed to gain and hold political power in their nation. After a series of indiscretions and acts of poor judgment, Mary was forced to abdicate in favor of her infant son, who then became James VI of Scotland. Fleeing the wrath of the Protestant nobles, Mary sought refuge in England. Elizabeth was in a quandary.

She dared not send Mary back to Scotland, for the Scots might execute their ... monarch; she was equally afraid to give her sanctuary in England where Mary was certain to be a rallying point for all manner of malcontents.

Therefore, Elizabeth was obliged to keep her 'guest' strictly confined and thus began a kaleidoscope of intrigues and plots that was to span almost two decades. Eventually, Mary's continued sedition left Elizabeth no other alternative. Mary was executed in 1587.

James VI, Mary's son by Lord Darnley, who had been King of Scotland since 1568 under the regency of the Earl of Moray, was reared a protestant. He was taught Calvinistic theology, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. Jamie was quite a student. He could discourse on theological subjects in both English and Latin. When Elizabeth died, she left no heirs, thus ending the House of Tudor. James VI was brought down from Scotland and crowned James I of England, beginning the reign of the House of Stuart. The year was 1603. James had led an uneasy life in Scotland and actually looked forward to coming to England.

However, he soon found that England, too, had its troubles; the Puritans were in revolt against the established church. One thousand Puritan preachers had gathered together to write a petition. They beseeched his noble Majesty and parliament for a change in the established church service and the removal of such superstitions as the sign of the cross. Furthermore, the Puritans refused to use the prescribed prayer book because of its corrupted translations.

This petition became known in history as the *Millenary Petition* because of the thousand signatures affixed to it. It resulted in the Hampton Court conference on January 14, 1603, over which King James himself presided. It was during one of the endless debates that the leader of the Puritans, John Reynolds, said, "May your Majesty be pleased, that the Bible be new translated, such as are extant not answering to the original."

Immediately Reynolds' request ran into opposition from Bancroft the Bishop of London. The Bishop claimed that if all who wished were permitted to come up with translations, the country would be swamped with Bibles. So, the talks dragged on.

Finally, the King of England grew weary listening to the debates in Parliament. He sided firmly with Reynolds in favor of a new Bible. He admitted that he had "never yet seen a Bible well translated into English," and he wished that "some special pains were taken for a uniform translation ... done by the best learned of both universities ... lastly ratified by royal authority ... to be read in the whole church and none other."

James was vitally interested in theology and in languages. He was knowledgeable in the Scriptures and in Bible doctrine. Besides, the thought that a new and better translation of the Bible should be published during his reign appealed to James tremendously.

He made but one condition: He would handpick the translators himself. Although the new translation had his complete backing and would eventually be ratified by him, he did not contribute one penny toward its expense. It is said to have cost 3500 pounds sterling - a considerable sum in those days. On July 22, 1604, the King announced that he had appointed fifty-four men to make the new translation. How did he select the scholars? His only requirement was that they must be good linguists.

Half of them were Hebrew experts and the other half experts in Greek. The list included Anglicans and Puritans, believers and unbelievers. Of those selected, seven men died before the work was begun, including John Reynolds, who had asked for this translation. Actually, only forty-seven men worked on what we call today "The Authorized" or "King James Version of the Bible."

It was a perfect time for the translation to be undertaken, for the English language had been greatly improved by men like Shakespeare, Donne, and Spenser; classic literature had reached its peak. The beauty of the English language of that day and its power of expression are thus preserved for us in the King James Bible. Thus, a style of language which would otherwise be long outdated has come down to us fresh and, with the exception of some words, very much to the point.

The scholars were divided into six teams; two teams worked at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster, with the work portioned among them. In each of the groups, the teams were further broken down into an Old Testament team and a New Testament team. All worked independently of each other. That explains, of course, why the word **pneuma** was translated "spirit" in one place and "Ghost" in another. It was simply a matter of esprit de corps - school spirit. The Westminster group used Ghost, and the Oxford group used Spirit.

Each put down what he preferred. One of the teams worked entirely on the Apocrypha, which as you know, is no longer included in the King James Version of the Bible. The teams translating the Old Testament used the Masoretic Text as their source.

For the Greek, the *Textus Receptus* ("the text received by all") was used. All in all, the 1611 edition was a good translation from the manuscripts that were then available. The majestic Anglo-Saxon, with its clarity and style, its directness and force, have made the King James Bible an English classic and a model for hundreds of years. Yet upon its release, the Authorized Version turned out to be the most unpopular and universally condemned translation that had ever come off the printing press. It caused the biggest ruckus ever raised over an edition of the Bible in the English-speaking world.

Some criticism was justified because, in the process of printing, over four hundred typographical errors were made which had to be corrected. For the most part, however, the criticism was unfounded and biased.

The Catholics condemned it for favoring the Protestants. The Arminians thought it favored Calvinism. The Calvinists claimed that it favored Arminianism. The Puritans objected to the church polity and the ritual, as well as the use of such words as "bishop," "church," "ordain" and "Easter." In short, everyone who considered himself to be an expert on the subject screamed in protest and began to write pamphlets condemning the new version of the Bible. No one liked it except King James I.

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