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OUR BIBLE

HOW IT HAS COME TO US

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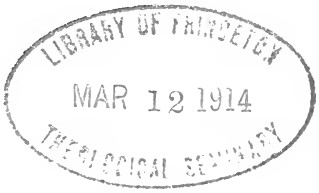

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PREFACE

THE following papers were originally contributed to the "Sunday Magazine." The author has simply sought to make some of the facts in the history of the descent of the Bible accessible to those who have more desire to know than leisure to read; and if the book can make no pretence to original research, it may at least claim the merit of fairly representing the conclusions of the latest scholarship.

R. T. T.

CONTENTS

THE BIBLE BEFORE THE DAYS OF PRINTING

THE BIBLE BEFORE THE DAYS OF PRINTING

THE subject of our first paper is the history of the manuscripts of the Bible. As it is always well to begin quite at the beginning of a subject, we will ask—What does the word "manuscript" mean? It means that which is written by hand. The word manuscript refers us back beyond the fifteenth century, and introduces us to the region of time wherein the printer and his art were unknown. It is only 450 years ago that printing with movable types was discovered. The Dutch claim the honour of discovery for their countryman Laurens Coster, and the Germans for their own Johann Gutenberg. The question may be

amicably settled by allowing a simultaneous discovery on the part of the Dutchman and the German. At all events, it was just about the middle of the fifteenth century that what an old German writer calls the "almost divine benefit" of the printing-press was conferred upon mankind. A generation later, in 1476, our own William Caxton set up his press, under the patronage of the Abbot Esteney, in the almonry of Westminster Abbey.

The invention of printing brought about a peaceful, but complete revolution. Knowledge stepped forth from the cloister and entered into the market-place. Manuscripts had been for the few, the printed page would be for the many. No Franchise Bill has ever placed so much power in the hands of the many as did the invention of printing. For knowledge is power, and the pathway to knowledge, which hitherto in the days of manuscripts had been open only to the few, was now by printing being opened to all alike.

The Bible, like all other ancient books, was transmitted in manuscripts until the age of printing. Let us try and gather together a

few facts which will help us to understand how it fared with the Bible in the days of manuscripts.

First as to the Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts. It is a strange fact that none of those which have come into our hands are very ancient. The bulk of those we have are not much older than the date of our Norman Conquest, and there are only a few which are a little older still. Various explanations have been given to account for the comparatively modern date of the manuscripts which we possess.

One of these is as follows. The Hebrew manuscripts had become faulty in the lapse of centuries, and various attempts were made to correct the text. The most famous revision of the text was executed in the Jewish schools at Tiberias, on the Lake of Galilee, at some time subsequent to the sixth Christian century. The various existing types of text were then collected and compared by Jewish scholars. A corrected text was issued which, under the name of the Massoretic text, became the standard authoritative text. It is probable that the earlier and less correct copies passed out of use and

were destroyed. When a corrected text had been given to the world, there was no use in preserving an imperfect text; indeed, the sooner the latter was put out of the way the better for everybody.

Another explanation is that the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were never in circulation as were the manuscripts of the New Testament. There were public copies in use in the synagogues and elsewhere, but few were in private hands. Moreover, owing to the peculiar reverence of the Jews for the written word of Scripture, when a public copy could no longer be used, it was solemnly immured in the synagogue wall. Manuscripts of the Old Testament were, therefore, always few in number, and of those few as each in turn became past service, it was put beyond the reach of any subsequent antiquarian research. Nobody, of course, ever doubts that there must have been manuscripts of the Old Testament existing in each century before the eleventh century A.D.; and stretching backwards in a long chain to our Lord's day, and further backwards again. In support of this we may call to remembrance

the interesting history of a translation of the Old Testament which was made about two centuries before the Christian era. This was the translation into Greek called the Septuagint translation or translation of the Seventy.

The way the name arose was as follows. Long after the translation became current, a story of its origin was invented to give it an added renown. It was said that one of the Ptolemies who reigned in Egypt was anxious to have a copy of the Old Testament in Greek, the language chiefly spoken in his capital city, Alexandria. This book was destined for a place in the great library of the Alexandrian Museum, of which the Ptolemies were munificent patrons. Seventy men were sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria, and provided with all the requisite materials. The scholars were shut up in seventy separate cells on the island of Pharos in the Alexandrian harbour, under the shadow of the famous old-world lighthouse. Their labours over, the Jewish doctors were liberated, and it was then discovered that each translator, although he had worked independently, had used the very same words as the rest of his fellows, and that

a perfect unanimity of expression ran through the work of all. Such is the legend which, in spite of its unhistorical character, we must needs remember, because it accounts for the name Septuagint (meaning "seventy"), the name of the earliest translation of the Old Testament.

The real facts of the case are these. When Alexandria, the memorial city of Alexander the Great, was founded about three centuries before the time of Christ a determined effort was made, in pursuance of the policy of Alexander, to bring representatives of various nationalities together into one cosmopolitan city. Hither came a considerable colony of Jews, who took firm root and found, as elsewhere, among a Gentile population, a magnificent field for the exercise of their peculiar commercial genius. Living in a city where Greek was generally spoken, they would perforce come to use Greek in their dealings with their neighbours, and their native tongue would fall into disuse. Living also among idolaters, the Jews would find themselves often called upon to give a reason for their abstinence from idolatry. What more natural than that a translation of the Hebrew

Scripture into their adopted language, Greek, should have been called for by this colony of Israelites? The translation appears to have been done bit by bit between the third and second century. Some parts of the work are better done than others. The best translated portion is the Pentateuch.

It must of course be remembered that we have no manuscripts of the Septuagint existing now older than the fourth century A.D.; but there is every reason to believe the statement that the original manuscripts belonged to a period not earlier than the second century B.C., and we may believe that the text of the Septuagint has not undergone any substantial alteration between that time and the time of the earliest existing copy. If we look for a moment at the text of the Septuagint, it does not present us with a narrative precisely the same as that which we have in our existing Hebrew manuscript, but it is sufficiently like to make us feel that there must have been Hebrew manuscripts at least two centuries before the time of Christ, of the same general character and telling the same history in substance as do those Hebrew

manuscripts of a much later date which are in our possession.

Thus it will appear that the Septuagint enables us to build a bridge from the eleventh century A.D. to the second century B.C., across which the substance of Old Testament history travels safely. If the manuscripts of the Old Testament have not been corrupted in any really important degree during that long period, we may reasonably suppose that the Old Testament manuscripts prior to the second century B.C. enjoyed a similar immunity. How much farther back we may place the first manuscripts of the Old Testament we cannot say with certainty. The question is too intricate and too technical for us to deal with here.

It is, however, worth recording that the accuracy of the historical statements of the Old Testament receive a great deal of confirmation from the independent witness of heathen monuments. Professor Sayce has said, "Wherever the Biblical history comes into contact with that of its powerful neighbours, and this can be tested by contemporaneous monuments of

Egypt and Assyria-Babylonia, it is confirmed even in the smallest details."

Let us turn now to the manuscripts of the New Testament—*i.e.*, copies of the New Testament in the original tongue—viz., Greek. There are already discovered close upon eighteen hundred manuscripts of the New Testament, in whole or part. This large mass of manuscript evidence is assigned to very various dates. Some of it is as old as the fourth century of our era, and some of it as late as the time of printing. The older manuscripts are called Uncials, and the more modern, Cursives. The Uncials get their name from the style of lettering in vogue up to about the eighth century. This lettering was of a large kind, and all the letters were formed the same in size; as the letters were about an inch long (in Latin, *uncia*=inch), the manuscripts in which this lettering is found are called Uncials. The more modern manuscripts exhibit a different kind of lettering which goes by the name of cursive, or running-hand writing, and the manuscripts themselves take the generic name of Cursives.

The manuscripts most sought after and most highly valued are those copied nearest to the Apostolic period. These are Uncial manuscripts, and the three most important belong to the fourth and fifth centuries. But sometimes a comparatively modern Cursive, which nevertheless may have been copied from an early Uncial now lost, ranks equal in value with an old Uncial. The three oldest Uncials, curiously enough, belong to the three great divisions of Christendom, —viz., Anglican, Roman and Greek. The youngest of these three seniors is Codex A, commonly called the Alexandrian manuscript. It was copied by some scribe in the fifth century. In the year 1628, it was presented by Cyril Lucar, the patriarch of Constantinople, to Charles I. It is now the property of the British nation, and reposes in the home of many national treasures, the British Museum. Along with the New Testament is bound up the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the famous Septuagint. The manuscript is not complete; there are ten leaves missing from the Old, and thirty from the New Testament. Codex B, a manuscript of the New Testament, belonging

to the fourth century, has lain for the last five hundred years in the Papal residence at Rome, called the Vatican Palace, and hence is known as the Vatican manuscript. It is a volume of over seven hundred leaves of the finest vellum, about a foot square. Part of the Greek translation of the Old Testament has been lost, and there is none of the New Testament left after Hebrews ix. 14.

Codex Aleph, called the Sinaitic manuscript, was discovered in 1859 by the German scholar, Dr. Tischendorf, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai. The story of its finding is a veritable romance of history. In 1844, Dr Tischendorf was travelling in the East, on the look out for rare and precious manuscripts. In the May of that year, he come to the convent of St. Catherine, at the foot of Mount Sinai. Here at the foot of that mountain, so intimately connected with the Old Testament, he was to find the most complete copy of the New Testament. The convent was inhabited by monks belonging to the Greek Church. These monks were the degenerate descendants of that noble race

of monks of an earlier date, who had rendered such signal service to Biblical knowledge. Tischendorf noticed in the convent hall a basket of parchments, and he was told that two heaps of similar old manuscripts had already fed the fire. Looking into the basket the German scholar discovered several sheets of a copy of the Septuagint of an extremely ancient character. He was allowed to take forty sheets, but when he unwarily expressed his delight, and pressed for more material of the same kind, he aroused the envious suspicions of the monks, and met with a stubborn refusal. Tischendorf came home to Germany, and acquainted the literary world with his "find." He spoke only in a general way about the whereabouts of the place where he had found so much, and hoped some day to find still more. He wished to keep his secret to himself, and so he said vaguely that "somewhere in the East" was the scene of his discovery. Thereupon the English Government sent out experts to search in the East for manuscripts, but at length they returned home empty-handed, and

Tischendorf was relieved to think that no one had forestalled him. For fifteen long years the German scholar tried to put himself into a position from which he could successfully assail the selfish cupidity of the monks of Mount Sinai. At length, in 1859, having obtained the patronage of the Czar Alexander, he revisited the monastery. He came, armed with an imperial order from the temporal head of the Greek Church, which the Doctor thought would carry weight with the Greek monks. But he was mistaken. The monks remained unmoved, and Tischendorf seemed still far enough off from the attainment of his cherished hope. It was the evening before his departure, and he walked with the steward of the convent in the grounds. The monk called him into his cell to partake of some refreshment. When the two were together and the door was closed—"I, too," said the steward, "have read a copy of that Septuagint." With these words he took down a bundle wrapped in red cloth and laid it upon the table. When the parcel was uncovered, lo! and behold, there were the very frag-

ments that he had only seen for a moment fifteen years before, other parts of the Old Testament in the Greek translation, some of the Apocryphal books, and the whole New Testament. This time the doctor carefully concealed his intense interest and excitement. He carelessly asked that he might inspect the volume more at leisure in his bedroom. "There, by myself," says Tischendorf, "I gave way to transports of joy. I knew that I had in my hand one of the most precious Biblical treasures in existence, a document whose age and importance exceeded that of any I had ever seen, after twenty years' study of the subject." At last, by the Emperor of Russia's influence, the manuscript was brought to the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg. Facsimiles of it can be seen in all the chief libraries of Europe. The age of this manuscript is generally supposed to be about the same as that of the Vatican—*i.e.*, about the fourth century.

It is a natural question to ask, What has become of the manuscripts of the New Tes-

tament before the fourth century? There is every reason to suppose that the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts are only descendants of a considerable line of New Testament manuscripts stretching back to Apostolic times. But at present we do not know of any manuscript which represents the text of the New Testament in the intervening period between the first and the fourth century. It may at first sight seem very strange that the manuscripts of the earlier period have not been preserved. But we must take some things into account. Probably the earlier copies of the New Testament were written upon papyrus, a material notoriously liable to fall to pieces in course of time, unless preserved with extraordinary care. There is no reason to suppose that the earlier generations of Christians looked upon their manuscripts in the light of possible evidences and witnesses to the truth of Christianity to be used by a later generation. As soon as copies had had their day they were recopied, and then the older copy naturally disappeared. It would not be out of place to recall the fact that the

first three centuries being centuries during which the Church was persecuted were not well calculated to preserve such perishable material as manuscripts. One of the objects of the persecutors was to burn up Christian manuscripts. Gildas, a British historian, talks about the piles of manuscripts which were burned in British towns during persecutions of the third century, and one who was in another part of the world, living at the very time in question, the historian Eusebius, bears witness from his own observation of this very practice. We know that weak and cowardly Christians earned the title of *traditores*—traitors—because they gave up the manuscripts which their brethen used in order to gain exemption from punishment. This must be taken into account along with other facts as helping to supply a reason for what at first sight seems a strange lack of manuscripts of the New Testament earlier than the fourth century. By comparison with other ancient books the wealth of manuscript evidence for the New Testament is stupendous. The great histories of antiquity have their text founded

upon such few and such late manuscripts that we may fairly say that, in comparison with them, the Bible is founded upon a rock. Of Herodotus there are only fifteen manuscripts and none older than the tenth century A.D. The oldest manuscript of Thucydides is of the eleventh century. The first six books of the Annals of Tacitus are only known to us through a single manuscript which came to light in the fifteenth century, and which is far removed from the days of Tacitus. Thus has time dealt with the precious works of Greece and Rome; who will not regard with wonder and thankfulness the sight of one work of a remote antiquity which has escaped the destroyer's hand to such a marvellous extent, and has witnesses to its text very many, and not a few very ancient?

But to the foregoing something further may be added. It may be said, "Well, the case for the New Testament may not be so desperate as for some of the classical histories, but we want some more definite assurance about the text of the New Testament than this. Is there any indication of manuscripts similar in

general character to those which we possess of the fourth century, existing in previous centuries nearer the Apostolic period? The answer is, "Yes, there are indications." In the second century translations of the New Testament were made into Latin, Coptic, and Syriac. No doubt the text of these versions has suffered a little by transcription, but we may take them in their present form as fairly representing the original Latin and other versions which were undoubtedly made in the second century. These versions tell us substantially the same story as our manuscripts of the fourth century; and, therefore, they carry us back two centuries behind our Sinaitic and Vatican texts to a time when translations were made from manuscripts of a generally similar character. Indications, moreover, are not wanting which reveal to a trained eye that the second century versions must have been translated from manuscripts which even at that early time were not new, but had come of a line of manuscripts of which they may well have been descendants, with an ancestry of three generations back, making them

representative of the text of the Apostolic age.

Apart from this line of evidence is another which makes use of the frequent Scriptural quotations in the early Christian Fathers. The quotations of the Fathers of the second and third centuries from manuscripts extant in their days though not in ours, often supply us with valuable confirmatory evidence as to the existence in a previous period of a type of text substantially like that of the fourth century.

The Bible as we hold it in our hand to-day is a book that we know has come down to us through ages in which we find it at first hard to believe that it can have remained uncorrupted. We look more carefully and we find springing up on all sides in remote centuries witnesses direct and indirect to its freedom from textual error in any point of real importance. It has, of course, suffered in some minor and unimportant details; but even here very often a skilled workman can see what the original pattern was and restore it. The book comes to us through the centuries like some knight of old making his way through the fight. His

shield is dinted, his sword notched, his breast-plate beaten, his helmet scarred, but the man within is as full of life as when he went into the battle.

So it is with the Bible. It bears upon it the marks of the relentless hand of Time and of his ministers. But those marks are upon the outside casque, not upon the inward spiritual being. The life of the book is still unimpaired, and it is still instinct with a "quickening spirit."

There are two points about manuscript work which we ought to notice: (1) the slowness of it and (2) the necessary inaccuracy of it. The first point will be well understood by taking an illustration. At Ferrara, a town in the north of Italy, there is a manuscript copy of the Old Testament. A note at the close proclaims the copyist to have been one "Nicodemus the stranger." It is he himself who informs us that he began his task on June 8, 1334, and finished it in the same year, July 15, "working very hard." Nicodemus evidently felt proud of his work. To copy the whole Old Testament in five weeks was indeed a *tour de force*. But how painfully

slow is the quickest piece of handwriting compared with the performances of the printing-press. And now we may notice the second point. Not only is printing a much quicker, but it is also a much more accurate method of reproducing written matter. The press is certainly capable of mistakes, and there are printer's errors as well as clerical errors. For instance, a printed Bible has a curious error in Psalm cxix., which makes the writer exclaim: "Printers have persecuted me without a cause"; and, again, it is in a printed Bible of 1653 that the omission of a small but important word causes us to read the startling statement: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall inherit the Kingdom of God?" Yet, in carefully edited books, printer's errors are the exception, and not the rule; and, moreover, there is no chance of fresh errors coming in by the multiplication of copies. But the method of making manuscripts opens the door to many kinds of errors, and the oftener copies are made, the greater is the chance of the multiplication of errors.

Before we consider this point farther, let us say something about the human instrument

who is responsible for the Bible manuscripts. The Old Testament was copied by a professional copyist, known as a Scribe. In the time of Hezekiah a great impetus seems to have been given to the diligent copying of the Law, and it would appear that from this period dates the institution of the Scribes as guardians, expounders, and copyists of the Law of Moses. As to the first copies of the Gospels, and other books of the New Testament, we do not know by whose hand they were done. But such ancient copies of the New Testament as have survived the lapse of centuries were the handiwork of a public servant, sometimes not fully appreciated—the monk. Writing materials of many different kinds have been in use in various ages and countries—such as stone, clay cylinders, tree-bark, and waxed tablets. But the most widely used writing material for several centuries before the time of Christ was papyrus. This distant precursor of paper was made by the Egyptians, first of all, out of the pith of the papyrus reed. It is this plant which, under the name of bulrush, appears in the story of the

infancy of Moses, as told in our English Bible.

It is very likely that the earliest copies of the Gospels and Epistles were made on this papyrus. We cannot say this with certainty, for such ancient copies of the New Testament as we possess come to us from the fourth century, when another material was used. This, when made from the skin of young calves, was called vellum ; and when made from the skin of sheep or goats, parchment. The ink used for the New Testament manuscripts was made of soot or lampblack mixed with either wine-lees or gum. The pen which was used upon the softer papyrus was a reed, but the harder vellum or parchment required a metal pen or stylus. Nothing is more wonderful than the way in which the oldest copies of the New Testament have borne the test of time. There are, for instance, two over which not much less than 1500 years have passed, and yet they are still clear, fresh, and legible. The original copyist must have worked well to execute such enduring work. The first word in speaking about manuscripts of the Bible must be a word

of unstinted praise for the copyist. But, at the same time, there is no use in denying that he often made errors in his work. The copyist was not infallible, and his work was not, in the order of divine providence, exempted from the chances of corruption which attend upon all such work as his. The copyist was human, and could not but fail now and again. His eye grew wearied, his mind wandered, the manuscript from which he copied puzzled him; "the spirit, indeed," was "willing, but the flesh" was "weak." But, happily for us, although the Bible did undoubtedly suffer a good deal in the purity of its text before the days of printing, it has not suffered in such a way as to put the meaning of the original writers in any serious jeopardy. The variations in the different manuscripts do not as a rule affect the sense of the passages in which they occur. They do not "extinguish the light of any one chapter, nor so disguise Christianity, but that every feature of it will be still the same."

ENGLISH TRANSLATORS UP TO THE TIME OF WYCLIFFE

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In our previous paper we said something about the Bible before the days of printing, and were chiefly concerned with it in its original languages of Hebrew and Greek. Now we shall say a little about some of the steps in the history of the translation of the Bible into our own tongue. The word translation means the act of carrying across. Between us and a book written in a foreign tongue there is an impassable gulf fixed. We want some one to whom the gulf is not impassable, who will do a translation, a carrying across, of the meaning for us. Such a person is called a translator. The history of the translation of the Bible into English is a long and interesting record which carries us from the fountain-head right away down the broadening stream of English national life to the present time.

The first inhabitants of our country belonged to the great Celtic nation. Among the Celtic population, dominated by the Roman army of occupation, the Church of Christ was founded in the close of the second century. For two centuries and a half the British Church continued to increase, and before long it came to occupy an honoured position amongst the national Churches of the West. There is a faint tradition of a version of the Scriptures among the Celts in the vernacular; but the report is too uncertain to command much attention.

At the commencement of the fifth century the Roman garrison was withdrawn in order to prop up the tottering throne of Honorius. Then began the troubles of Britain. Old enemies reappeared and ravaged the coast line. These came from Schleswig, Jutland, and Holstein, from the region at the mouth of the Elbe, and from the Baltic shores. The people were Angles, Jutes, and Saxons, who either found their own homes too strait, or were simply led by the love of adventure and conquest. The Romans had managed to keep them from doing much harm in their piratical expeditions. But now the Romans

were gone and there was no more a Count of the Saxon shore guarding the seaboard from the Wash to Southampton Water. We all remember how, in the middle of the fifth century, the Angles and Saxons became, for the moment, allies of the Britons against the Picts, who lived in the Scotch Highlands. But soon the allies were on the offensive against their former friends. Slowly and doggedly the fight was fought out. What though Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table did great feats of arms, and though the Britons fought bravely for hearth and home, they were in the end thoroughly defeated, and only kept a foothold in Wales and Cornwall. To these retreats the Christian religion and the Christian church was relegated for a century and a half. The gods which are commemorated in the names of our days of the week—these gods alone were worshipped for many generations in England. But towards the close of the sixth century, partly by the agency of British evangelists from the north and partly by the agency of Italian missionaries who worked in the south-east of England, the heathen Angles and Saxons embraced Christianity. By the

middle of the seventh century the Church had attained to uniformity, and thus, prior to the unity of the kingdom, for as yet England was politically a divided house, we get sight of a pattern of unity in the Church of England. Churches, like individuals, follow somewhat the fashion of the day. And, if these fashions are harmless, there is no reason why they should not. In the seventh century the fashion was to preserve the Bible in Latin. This was the language of the educated world. To put so difficult a book as the Bible into the hands of the uneducated seemed unwise. If the people were taught the chief contents of the Bible that was considered enough. The unlearned must take those things from the lips of the learned, and must not cause themselves to "stumble at the word." And yet in Old England before the Conquest there was a longing in some quarters to have at least portions of the Bible in the popular tongue, and this was answered by some notable attempts at translation.

The story of the English Bible begins with Cædmon of Whitby in 670. More than twelve centuries ago a lady of royal blood and truly

royal spirit reared an abbey on the dark cliffs of Whitby, in Yorkshire. She had built before this a similar house at Hartlepool, on the Tees. The lady's name was Hilda. Of her the historian Bede says: "Her prudence was so great that not only did ordinary persons, but even sometimes kings and princes, seek and receive counsel of her in their necessities." We are also told that "she made those who were under her direction give much time to the reading of the divine Scriptures;" and this encouragement of Biblical study had its far-reaching results by which she "being dead yet speaketh." For—and now we shall use the exact words of Bede—"in the monastery of this abbess was a certain brother especially marked by divine grace, since he was wont to make songs suited to religion and piety, so that whatever he had learnt from the divine writings through interpreters, this he in a little while produced in poetical expressions composed with the greatest harmony and accuracy, in his own tongue, that is, in that of the Angles. By his songs the minds of many were excited to contemn the world and desire the celestial life. And, indeed,

others also after him, in the nation of the Angles, attempted to compose religious poems, but none could ever equal him. For he himself did not learn the art of poetry from man, or by being instructed by man, but, being divinely assisted, received gratuitously the gift of singing, on which account he never could compose any frivolous or idle poem, but those only which pertain to religion suited his religious tongue. For having lived in the secular habit unto the time of advanced age, he had never learned anything of singing. Whence, sometimes at an entertainment, when it was determined for the sake of mirth that all should sing in order, he, when he saw the harp approaching him, used to rise in the midst of the supper, and, having gone out, walk back to his home. Which when he was doing on a time, and, having left the house of entertainment, had gone out to the stables of the beasts of burden, the care of which was entrusted to him on that night, and then at the proper hour had resigned his limbs to sleep, a certain one stood by him in a dream, who, saluting him and calling him by his name, said, 'Cædmon, sing me something.' Then he

answering said, 'I know not how to sing; and for that reason I went out from the entertainment and retired hither because I could not sing.' Again he who was talking with him said, 'Yet you have something to sing to me.' 'What,' said he, 'must I sing?' The other said, 'Sing me the beginning of created things.' Having received this reply he immediately began to sing verses in praise of God the Creator, which he had never heard. . . . On his rising up from sleep he retained in memory all that he had sung in his dream, and presently added to it more words of song worthy of God, and after the same fashion."

The matter came to the ears of Hilda through the convent steward. The cowherd was accordingly received in audience of many learned men, and, after hearing him, all concluded "that a celestial gift had been granted him by the Lord." Cædmon now left the secular habit and took the monastic vow, and was instructed by the brethren in the whole course of sacred history. "And he converted into most sweet song whatever he could learn from hearing, by thinking it over by himself, and as, though a clean animal, by

ruminating; and by making it resound more sweetly, made his teachers in turn his hearers." Cædmon seems to have ranged all over the Bible for his subject-matter, casting the stories of Scripture into a rough verse form. No doubt the poetry of Cædmon seems very rugged and uncouth to our ears, which are familiar with the latest development of the poet's art; but, at least, we know that Cædmon was an acceptable singer to his own generation. And so in the seventh century, on the great rock above the little harbour of Whitby, Bible translation and English poetry both took their rise.

But one, far better known than Cædmon, laboured as a translator, and died in his labours, some sixty-five years later, namely, the Venerable Bede, the great Northumbrian scholar. When he was seven years old he was placed in the monastery on the north bank of the Wear, where now Monkwearmouth stands, and a little later, when Benedict Biscop had built the sister monastery at Jarrow, Bede left Wearside for Tyneside. At Jarrow, Bede lived a happy and useful life. He never ventured far from his home on the Tyne, but he travelled far and wide

in the world of literature and science. "The whole learning of the time," says the historian Green, "seemed to be summed up in him." "He was the father," said Edmund Burke, "of English learning." His "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," from which I quoted the story of Cædmon, is a unique authority. One of our latest historians, speaking of our earliest annalist, says, "All that we really know of the century and a half that follows the landing of Augustine we know from him." The dearest work he undertook was commenting upon and preaching from the Holy Scriptures. The last offering of his powers which he made to God was a translation of the Gospel of St. John. Death summoned him before his work was well done, but he would not heed the summons until he had quite finished his task. "I don't want my boys to read a lie," he said, alluding to his young pupils and his unfinished work, "or to work to no purpose after I am gone." It is one of Bede's dear "boys" who tells us of the closing scene, with many tender touches. "Our father and master, whom God loved, had translated the Gospel of St. John as far as 'what are these

among so many,' when the day came before our Lord's Ascension." It was the year 735. "He then began to suffer much in his breath and a swelling came in his feet, but he went on dictating to his scribe. 'Go on quickly,' he said; 'I know not how long I shall hold out, or how soon my Master will call me hence.' All night long he lay awake in thanksgiving, and when the Ascension day dawned he commanded us to write with all speed what he had begun." Working and resting, the precious moments sped on till the setting sun gilded the floor of Bede's cell. "'There remains but one chapter, master,' said the scribe, 'but it seems very hard for you to speak.' 'Nay, it is easy,' said the brave old man, 'take up thy pen and write quickly.'" The boy's bitter tears dropped upon the page as he wrote. The time wore on. "And now, father," said the lad, "only one sentence remains." The dying man uttered it. "It is finished, master," said the youth, raising his sorrowful face, as he penned the last word. "Ay, it is finished!" echoed the old scholar. "Lift me up, place me at that window of my cell where I have so often prayed to God. Now, glory be to the Father,

and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." And with these words Bede breathed out his life Manufacture has changed the aspect of Bede's Jarrow. But there is something still remaining which connects the present and the past—that is, the chancel of the present parish church, whose fabric is as old as the time of Bede himself. The body of the saint rested for a long while at Jarrow, but in the eleventh century the bones were removed to Durham Cathedral, and now they lie in the Galilee Chapel at the west end of the great pile. In life translated from Wearside to Tyneside; in death he is brought back again to lie beside the river of his earliest remembrance. If Cædmon is the father of English poetry, we may revere in Bede the father of English prose.

It is difficult to gain a certain knowledge of the doings of King Alfred. Tradition has been busy with the character and achievements of the great patriot king. But perhaps we shall not be wrong in claiming Alfred as one in the great company of English translators of the Bible. At least it is well ascertained that Alfred "took the English tongue, and made it the tongue in which

history, philosophy, law, and religion spoke to the English people." Two contributions to Bible translation are claimed for Alfred. (1) A translation of the Ten Commandments attached to the statutes of the time. (2) A translation of some of the Psalms. Alfred's admiration for the Psalms is worth remembering. In the early days of outlawry it is said that he would read the Psalms in a Latin manuscript which he carried with him over the camp fire when the toils of the day were done. When at length he came to an established throne he did not forget those earlier days or the words which had come home to him in the time of trouble and rebuke. The result was a translation of some of the Psalms. It is touching to think of those Psalms which have ministered to the joys and pains of so many millions in England alone, not to speak of other countries, as having been the cordial which revived the drooping spirits of one of our earliest and greatest kings.

And ere we leave the old Saxon England there is yet one more translator over whose work we may pause a moment. Ælfric the grammarian, a monk of Winchester, translated

portions of the Bible, about the year 1023, into English. The work was animated by a patriotic purpose. Of his version of Joshua the grammarian says: "This book I turned into English for Ealdorman Ethelward, a book that a prince might study in times of invasion and turbulence." Of the Book of Judith, which he also translated, he says: "Englished according to my skill, for your example, that you may also defend your country by force of arms against the outrage of foreign hosts."

The previous period closed, in the foreboding words of Ælfric, ominous of blood and battle. This our second period fulfils the monk's presage of "invasion and turbulence and the outrage of foreign hosts." Just as six hundred years before Saxons, Jutes and Angles, with their strange tongue, had come in upon the then inhabitants of Britain, so now the Normans came down upon the country where Briton, Saxon, Angle, and Dane were struggling together, and added one more element which would contribute, when the process of fusion was over, its own peculiar flavour and colour to the resultant of all these forces—the English

kingdom, the English people, the English tongue. Once again, in the case of the Norman invasion as in the case of the previous invasions of Roman, Saxon, Dane, the pains of death and of birth racked the land. What was customary and familiar and established died, and a new order struggled painfully, with sharp crying, into life. But death-throes and birth-pangs were but the prelude to what now we see was the divine event—the welding of the peoples into a homogeneous whole, bringing with it a national consciousness, a national speech, and a national ideal. But to all human seeming heavy and fatal was the blow of the Conqueror's successful invasion. To use the apt language of Isaiah, it was the inroad of "a fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not perceive, of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand."

The Normans came speaking French. They flooded town and court and castle with their own people; the bishoprics of the Church were filled by French-speaking ecclesiastics, who did not sympathise with the conquered people.

But the strength of England lay not in its

towns, but in its villages. To them we owe it that in the end French became incorporated with Saxon, and not Saxon with French. At the first moment of defeat daring spirits like Hereward rose in armed revolt among the fens of Lincolnshire; others of similar disposition wandered as far as Constantinople, and served as mercenaries of the Eastern empire; and a fraction of the more reckless, of whom Robin Hood is the representative, fled to forests, like that of Sherwood, and lived an outlaw life under the greenwood tree.

But the people (who numbered not more than two millions) as a whole submitted to the Normans. They had never been "more than hewers of wood and drawers of water" under their own native rulers, and to obey the Norman made little or no difference to their condition. But while they had no objection to changing one master for another, they would not change one tongue for another. Norman French was the language of the invading army, and therefore of the ruling class; it was used in the courts of justice and in all matters of state; but the people still held to the tongue wherein they

were born. In 1204, one hundred and thirty-eight years after the Conquest, Normandy was lost for ever as a permanent appendage to England, and one result was that this island became more and more a home to the Normans, and French became more and more of a foreign tongue to them. "English had not only survived, but was spreading itself through the upper classes. Norman children could not be kept from learning it; and the higher ranks, being a minority, felt the necessity of acquiring it. By the end of the thirteenth century English seems to have become the mother tongue of the aristocracy, their children being taught French as a foreign language, and as an accomplishment befitting their rank."

And year by year the English tongue developed and enriched on this hand and on that, drew on to its golden age to be the high instrument for high thoughts. One great stage in its growth is marked by Geoffrey Chaucer, at the close of the fourteenth century, and his "Canterbury Tales." The latent powers of English "pure and undefiled" are manifested as the vehicle of a most exquisite power of story-telling, and we feel that this is the earnest of greater things to

come. But we cannot tarry to link our subject further with its contemporary literature. For we have come now to the age of Wycliffe and his Bible. The events which lead to Chaucer's English lead also to that of Wycliffe, and in all probability by a few years Wycliffe's Bible can claim priority over Chaucer's work as the first great monument of really English literature.

John Wycliffe was born near Richmond, in Yorkshire—the exact date is not known, but in 1361, he was Master of Balliol Hall, in Oxford, and from then till his death in 1384, his doings are writ large in history. The times were stirring. Edward III. ascended the throne in 1327, and ten years later began the Hundred Years' War with France. These were the days of Creçy and Poitiers and the Black Prince. In 1348 the Black Death reached England, and in the course of several separate outbreaks halved the population, which then amounted to three or four millions. Labour was disarranged; wages rose; the serf began to beat off his shackles. Under Wat Tyler and John Ball, "the mad priest," in 1381, the peasants revolted against the oppressive restrictions imposed by landlords

and lawyers upon their new spirit of independence. Abroad also the system of mediæval feudalism was breaking up, and time-honoured landmarks were perishing. The Papacy had been removed to Avignon and was now transparently no more a spiritual force, but a kingdom of this world and the tool of a French king. But Rome still claimed huge money payments from England, and still thrust foreign priests into English livings. People muttered under their breath—and men "despised the offering of the Lord." This state of things could not last long. The English clergy were severed in sympathy from Rome, but they severed themselves from the respect and love of the people by their own corruption. The Friars and their noble work were things of the past; like the lees of a rich wine the impudent mendicant alone remained to witness to what had been. The Baronage, with John of Gaunt at their head, denied all the duties of their station. They were jealous of the priests, jealous of Parliament, jealous of the people—they loved themselves alone. In this world Wycliffe struggled and strove; into the midst of this distracted age he cast the pearl of

great price, the first complete English Bible. He did it by design. He advocated as the cure for the distemper of his age the freedom of the Church, the kingdom, and the conscience from all foreign control. He believed that an open Bible would in the long run teach men the ideal of authority and government, and the ideal of independence and self-control.

In 1384, while hearing mass in his parish church at Lutterworth, he was seized with paralysis and died quietly on the next day. Wycliffe's Bible was the work of his later days; it was published in 1383. About half the Old Testament is the work of Nicholas of Hereford, the other half and the whole of the New Testament are Wycliffe's own. Its chief defect is that it is only a translation of a translation. Wycliffe knew neither Greek nor Hebrew, nor did any one else in England at that time. Its chief merit is its vigorous and forcible English, combined with great dignity. Eight years after his death, Richard Purvey, his curate, revised the whole, and his MS. is still in Trinity College, Dublin.

The book had a wide circulation. Parliament was appealed to to stop it. The Duke of

Lancaster answered right sharply, "We will not be the refuse of all other nations, for since they have God's law in their own language we will have ours in English, whoever say nay;" and this he affirmed with a great oath. Nevertheless, Convocation condemned the reading of the book under pains and penalties. And yet it was still popular among the rich and the poor. A large sum was paid for even a few sheets of the manuscript; a load of hay was given for permission to read it for a certain period one hour a day. Those who could not afford the book would get some one who knew a portion by heart to come and repeat it. We are told of one Alice Collins, sent for "to recite the Ten Commandments and parts of the Epistles of Saints Paul and Peter, which she knew by heart."

"Certes," says John Foxe, "the zeal of those Christian days seems much superior to this of our day, and to see the travail of them may well shame our careless times."

ENGLISH TRANSLATORS UP TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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CONTINUING our history from the era of Wycliffe, we must pass from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century. Great events happened in the latter century with far-reaching consequences. In 1453 Constantinople fell before the Ottoman Turks. The Greek Empire, the eastern division of the Roman Empire, had run its course. Five boats laden with Greeks and their books touched the coast of Italy. This was only the vanguard of a great argosy. Greek literature, Greek art, Greek culture, came westward before the Mahometan destroyer. The refugees from the East were the heralds of a forward movement. The Greek language was now widely studied in the West. The result was two-fold—a greater freedom of thought and a revived interest in the New Testament. "Greece arose from the dead with

the New Testament in her hand." This saying belongs to the period we are speaking about. Manuscripts of the New Testament in its original Greek and a more general knowledge of the language came together into the West, and thus the great groundwork of theology became once more a subject of investigation. And the key which opened one treasure-chamber opened others also. The study of the great masters of Greek literature and philosophy had a widening effect upon men's minds. Thought and inquiry, narrowed and straitened by ecclesiastical considerations, became emboldened to occupy a larger room. The questioning, inquiring spirit, never, of course, dead, now renewed its impaired energies, and with a burst of noble enthusiasm pressed forward in the search for truth. This movement of the human mind, according as it is viewed from within or without, is called either the Renaissance, the New Birth, or the Revival of Learning.

Simultaneously with the great revival came the mechanical contrivance of the printing-press, destined to make knowledge, once the heritage

of the elect, the common property of all. A new world was made in the end of the century still newer by the discovery of America and the revelations of the daring school of navigators, of whom Columbus is the chief. Suddenly Europeans realised that the earth had incredibly widened, and the fabled Atlantis became a sober fact. Again a few erratic men, mere "bookish theorists," might have maintained the rotundity of the earth, yet tradition was against them; but now the navigator has proved the tradition wrong and the theory right—the earth is round and not flat. A few years more and a German canon, Copernicus, will give the world the results of laborious days and nights spent in the lonely tower at Frauenburg. There will be a new heaven as well as a new earth, and the former things will have passed away. A little while, too, and a Luther will lead the way in an exodus from the realm of mediæval theology and ecclesiasticism, and the Reformation will have taken place in Northern Europe.

Everywhere men are called to readjust their thoughts about many things, to look out on an altered world, to fit themselves into a new social,

philosophical, or religious framework, and this necessary work will only be done slowly, and will doubtless involve some temporary loss and disadvantage.

The years at the end of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the sixteenth century witnessed in many parts of Europe much licence. "When the stream is troubled the mud comes to the top," says the proverb. Periods of change are always periods of moral danger. The reason is not far to seek. The latent beast within us is only repulsed and kept down by an effort. Great changes unhinge us by reason of the tremendous excitement they involve. We are weak and off our guard, and then the beast within us rises up and is rampant. In such times we have need of strong men whose heads have not been turned. They are convinced that, while much changes on the surface, beneath the surface things are unmoved. Earth and heaven may pass away, and yet in spite of shifting scenes and changed appearances the words of One shall not pass away. It is the task of the strong man who ministers in a shaken age to testify of those things which cannot be shaken.

And this was the work of the next great translator of the Bible on whom the mantle of Wycliffe fell—viz., William Tyndale.

Born in 1484, Tyndale drew in the new atmosphere of the new world. When he went to Oxford and Cambridge he learnt Hebrew and Greek, and thus was equipped for the task which fell to him at a later time. At Cambridge Tyndale was a hearer of the Greek professor, the great Erasmus; and when, in 1526, he translated the New Testament, it was from a printed Greek Text edited by Erasmus. When Tyndale left the universities he became a tutor to a Gloucestershire knight's children near Chipping Sodbury. Here it was that the first thought came to him to minister to his age and its infirmities by retranslating from the original tongues that great vehicle of spiritual edification, the Bible. He resolved, "if God spared his life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than the Pope did." The resolve was one easily made, but only painfully carried out. In 1524 he applied to Cuthbert Tonstal, then Bishop of London, to be taken into his

lordship's household. It was the custom in those days for a man to seek such succour. One needed a patron while pursuing the thorny paths of literature and scholarship. But the request was refused. In melancholy mood he writes to his friend Fryth, giving a despondent picture of himself, as "evil favoured in this world, and without grace in the sight of men, speechless and rude, dull and slow-witted." Still he tarried in the great wilderness of London, and fell into the kind hands of Humphrey Monmouth, a merchant. But plainer and ever plainer it became that he could not safely carry out his work of translation in England. In 1524 he left his native land for Hamburg. "For," says he "I perceive that not only in my lord of London's palace but in all England there was no room for attempting a translation of the Scriptures." Henceforward, until his martyrdom in 1536, he worked at his translation. Now he is at Worms, now at Cologne, now at Marburg, now at Antwerp; fresh and fresh editions, from 1525 and onwards, of the New Testament issuing from his flying press, and the Books of Moses and the Book of

Jonah as well. Like Wycliffe, he was a vigorous pamphleteer, only he had the advantage over his predecessors of the rapid multiplication of copies which the printing-press implies. Time will not allow us to dwell at length on the chequered life and adventures of him, who, more than any other man, is the hero of the national Reformation. There is in him something of the apostolic spirit, and certainly something of the apostolic experience. "In journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by strangers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." All this is literally true of William Tyndale, and yet, exiled and mostly alone, he worked on unmoved, and translated with such felicity and power that his version, after all this lapse of time, is still the foundation and the base of the translation which we read to-day. There is a humorous side, too, to Tyndale's life to which I should like to introduce the reader. Tyndale's Testaments poured into England in a flood;

sometimes they were packed in cases, sometimes they were hid in barrels, in bales of cloth, or in sacks of flour. Fast as they came they were bought up by Cardinal Wolsey and the authorities, and burned at St. Paul's Cross "as a burnt offering," so said Campeggio, the Legate, "most pleasing to Almighty God." But the printing-press printed quicker than the fire burned. A brilliant scheme flashed into the mind of Tonstal, Bishop of London. He sought out an Antwerp merchant, Pakington, and asked his opinion about the buying up of all the copies across the water. "My lord," said Pakington, who was a secret friend to Tyndale, "if it be your pleasure I could do in this matter probably more than any merchant in England; so if it be your lordship's pleasure to pay for them I will ensure you to have every book that remains unsold." "Gentle master Pakington," said the Bishop, deeming that "he hadde an angel by the toe whanne in truth he hadde, as after he thought, the devyl by the fiste," "do your diligence and get them for me, and I will gladly give you whatever they may cost, for the books are naughty, and I intend surely to destroy them all

and to burn them at Paul's Cross." The scene changes, and we see Pakington and Tyndale in conference. "Master Tyndale," said Pakington, "I have found you a good purchaser for your books." "Who is he?" "My lord of London." "But if the Bishop wants the books, it must only be to burn them." "Well, what of that? The Bishop will burn them anyhow, and it is best that you should have the money for the enabling you to print others instead." "And so," says Hall, the chronicler, "the bargain was made. The Bishop had the books, Pakington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money." Naturally enough copies multiplied, and the Bishop sent for Pakington to know why and wherefore. "My lord, it were best for your lordship to buy up the stamps, too, by the which they are imprinted." And now for the still more amusing sequel. A few months later a prisoner named Constantine was before the Chancellor Sir Thomas More, on charge of heresy. "Now Constantine," said Sir Thomas, "I would have thee to be plain with me in one thing that I shall ask, and I promise I will shew thee favour in all other things whereof thou art accused.

There are beyond the sea Tyndale, Joye, and a great many of you; I know they cannot live without money. There must be some that help and succour them. I pray thee tell me who be they that help them thus." "My lord," said Constantine, "I will tell thee truly. It is the Bishop of London that hath holpen us, for he hath bestowed among us a great deal of money upon New Testaments to burn them, and that hath been our chief succour and comfort." "Now, by my troth," replied Sir Thomas, "I think even the same, for I told the Bishop thus much before he went about it."

I must say a word about Sir Thomas More. Sir Thomas was the fiercest of Tyndale's critics. He did his best to write his translation down. He was vigorous in punishing all who expressed discontent with the then Church order. It would be quite possible for an unscrupulous person to represent him as an enemy of God and a persecutor of the faithful—the champion and the defender of a worldly and unspiritual policy. But, though this might be done, it would be a gross caricature. More was a man in whom almost every grace and virtue met; a

finished scholar, a charming friend, an upright statesman, a devoted father, truly religious, deeply devout. He went to the block without a murmur because he could not see his way to concurring in Henry's divorce. From the point of view of character he was every whit as great and good a man as Tyndale. But the two men belonged to two different schools of thought. More was a Churchman, Tyndale was not. More was a philosopher who had grasped the idea of the Church as a society in which obedience to authority, and a waiting upon authority, was the first duty. Tyndale's action in issuing an unauthorised translation was a breach of this first principle. Tyndale's mind, if it had ever perceived More's point of view, was much more dominated by a sense of the responsibility of the individual to God, and the liberty of the individual to act according to his own sense of right without tarrying for the consent of others. More was probably willing to wait upon occasion. Tyndale was inclined to make the occasion. He would be a bold man who would say that either one or the other was absolutely right. Somewhere midway the truth lies. Happily, we are

not called upon to judge either More or Tyndale. But we ought to be able to admire both men, and to learn the lesson which is taught us by the fact that neither of these great and good men understood the other.

The end of this painful life came to Tyndale in 1536. He was entrapped at Antwerp by one whom he trusted as a friend, and hurried to the dungeons of the Castle of Vilvorden, near Brussels. The English authorities allowed him a while to languish in the prison, where, in much bodily discomfort, he still worked on at his translation. On Friday, October 6, he was led out, not to be set at liberty, but to die. He was to be burned, but, according to the more merciful fashion of the Low Countries, he was first strangled. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

We have said something about the worth of Tyndale's version as English, and we must not forget that Tyndale used what no other translator had ever used before—Hebrew and Greek MSS. The MSS. then discovered were not anything like in value to what we now possess, but, still, Tyndale's work is not like

Wycliffe's, a translation of a translation, but a translation of the original.

"Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Such was the prayer of Tyndale in 1536. In 1539 that prayer was granted. In every parish church stood an English Bible, and its pictured title-page tells its own story of opened eyes. The design is by Hans Holbein. "In the first compartment the Almighty is seen in the clouds with outstretched arms. Two scrolls proceed out of His mouth to the right and to the left. On the former is the phrase, 'The word which goeth forth from Me shall not return to Me empty, but shall accomplish whatsoever I will have done.' The other is addressed to King Henry, who is kneeling in the distance bare-headed, with his crown lying at his feet, 'I have found Me a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will.' Henry answers, 'Thy word is a lantern unto my feet.' Immediately below is the King, seated on his throne, holding in each hand a book, on which is written, 'The Word of God.' This he is giving to Cranmer and another bishop who, with a group of priests, are on the right of

the picture, with the words, 'Take this and teach'; the other, on the opposite side, he holds out to Thomas Cromwell and the lay peers, and the words are, 'I make a decree that, in all my kingdom, men shall tremble and fear before the living God,' while a third scroll, falling downwards over his feet, speaks alike to peer and prelate, 'Judge righteous judgment: turn not away your ear from the prayer of any poor man.' In the third compartment Cranmer and Cromwell are distributing the Bibles to kneeling priests and laymen, and at the bottom a preacher, with a benevolent and beautiful face, is addressing a crowd from a pulpit in the open air. He is apparently commencing his sermon with the words, 'I exhort therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, thanksgiving, be made for all men, for kings—' and at the word 'kings' the people are shouting, 'Vivat Rex,' children who knew no Latin lisping 'God save the King,' while at the extreme left a prisoner at a jail window is joining in the cry of delight as if he too were delivered from a worse bondage."

We may well ask how had all this come

about. The frantic fury of the authorities at the incoming of an English Bible, which we saw a few years back, was the sign really of a weakening opposition. Men argue most dogmatically when they are least sure. They do it to fortify themselves. So with the conservative party in the Church; they stormed and they protested, and almost instantly they yielded when their wrath seemed at the highest. The steps were these. The very year after Tyndale's imprisonment Miles Coverdale brought out the Bible which bears his name. This was largely indebted to Tyndale. The times were altering. Thomas Cromwell was now, upon the fall of Wolsey, the King's guiding spirit. Cromwell, the vicar-general, was a mighty master of diplomacy, and could use any tool to serve his end. He threw himself upon the side which was against the Church, and became the patron of Coverdale that, through him, he might wound the Roman Church, with which Henry had resolved to quarrel. Neither the motives of Cromwell nor those of his master will bear much examination. Our only duty is to relate facts. In 1537 appeared Matthews's

Bible, the work of John Rogers in all probability, who was martyred in the reign of Mary. This again was Tyndale's work revised by another hand. In 1540, Cranmer, now Archbishop of Canterbury, had set his heart on having a translation for the nation at large. Coverdale was again charged by Cromwell to see to the work. When Henry was asked to authorise it, "Well," said he, "but are there any heresies maintained thereby?" "No," replied the promoters. "Then, in God's name," said the King, "let it go forth among our people." This Bible was in fact a revision of Matthews's Bible by Coverdale, and as Matthews's Bible was really based upon Tyndale's, this, "the Great Bible" of 1540, was substantially our hero Tyndale's once proscribed work. The martyr had triumphed. His dearest wish was granted. On the title-page, as having "overseen" the work, stands the name of Cuthbert, Bishop of Durham. Strange irony! Who was he? Cuthbert Tonstal who, erewhile Bishop of London, had laboured so hard to destroy what now he was promoting.

In the following year, 1541, came the fall

of Henry's great minister, Cromwell. As his scheming head fell from his shoulders the pendulum swung back again towards the Roman and conservative party. Until Henry's death, in 1547, there was a time of suspense. Gardiner and Bonner looked sourly upon the Bible, and Tonstal and Heath shuffled out of the fact of their names standing upon the title-page of the Great Bible. When the boy Edward VI. came to the throne, the six years of his reign were occupied with Prayer Book revision and ecclesiastical legislation. The Great Bible was still the authorised Bible. The Prayer Book version of the Psalms, with its attention to rhythm rather than accuracy of expression, is an abiding specimen of what the Great Bible achieved. On Edward's death, in 1553, the reading of the Bible was discouraged by Mary, though the books were not destroyed. Cranmer and John Rogers, both intimately connected with the English Bible, suffered martyrdom.

In 1558 Elizabeth began her reign, and brighter days dawned. The Protestant exiles came back from Geneva with a translation, the fruit of their sojourn, which became ex-

ceedingly popular, and superseded the Great Bible. The Geneva Bible again was more a revision than a re-translation, being chiefly based on Tyndale.

One more stage. In 1604, King James, lately called from Scotland to fill the throne upon the death of Elizabeth, summoned the bishops and clergy to meet him at his drawing-room in Hampton Court. The question of Bible translation was brought up and particularly pressed by the Puritan party. The bishops and the High Church party were not so eager. "If every man had his humour," said Bancroft, Bishop of London, "about new versions there would be no end of translating." But the King had made up his own mind, and he was not the man to let his wish go unsatisfied. At that time three different versions were in use. The Great Bible of Henry VIII. might still be found chained to a stone or wooden desk in many country churches. The Bishops' Bible had appeared in 1568, and was supported by ecclesiastical authority, while the Geneva Bible was the favourite of the people at large. There were objections to all three.

The Great Bible was becoming obsolete. The Bishops' Bible commended itself neither to the learned nor the unlearned. The Geneva Bible, through the Puritan bias of its notes, had become the Bible of a party. To James, with his "high" views both of Church and Monarchy, the Calvinistic and democratic marginal comments of the Geneva Bible were particularly odious. The work of revision was set about in a most thorough and business-like way. Fifty-four learned men from both the High Church and Puritan party formed the revision company. The services of the most competent scholars in the country were put at their disposal. The Greek and Hebrew were carefully studied; Bibles in Spanish, Italian, French, and German were examined to ascertain their point of view in different places. All the previous English translations were made use of, and the expressions therein which were correct as well as forcible English were incorporated. Even the Rheimish translation—a translation made at Rheims from the Latin version, for the use of English Roman Catholics, in 1582—which contained some happy expressions,

was laid under contribution. The work was finished in 1611. Its style, its excellences, its demerits need not be commented upon now —it is the version which we are all familiar with from our childhood, the so-called Authorised Version. I say so-called, for there is no proof that it was ever authorised either by ecclesiastical or lay authority. But that is a small matter. It was evidently intended to take the place of all other translations, and by common consent and usage it has received its authorisation. Besides its intrinsic merits it has a merit which helped much to its general reception—the absence of doctrinal notes. In previous versions, from Wycliffe downwards, the passing views of the day on various matters of importance in the interpretation of the Word had been inserted in marginal notes. The afterthoughts of theology were obtruded into the Bible, and the Gospel of Peace was interlarded with polemics. The Authorised Version presents the Word without a comment, except such as are purely grammatical.

Troubled times were ahead. "Between 1640 and 1650 came the terrible shaking of the

Civil War, the execution of the King, the removing of the Church's candlestick. But in that time the Authorised Version had won its way to the acceptance of Puritan and Royalist, and was one bond of peace when all else had gone. King and Church, the time-honoured symbols of order and catholicity, seemed to have passed beyond recall. But the acceptance of the new Bible gave a spontaneous testimony to the principle of order and catholicity," without which social life were but like the "idiot's tale,

Full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

THE LAST TRANSLATION

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THE whole history of the English Bible is a history of revision, and improvement by revision. Every fresh translator looked over again, or revised, the work of a predecessor. New helps to a better translation appeared from time to time, and each new help was turned to account. The Old English and Wycliffe's versions were translations, not from the Hebrew or the Greek, but from that Latin translation called the Vulgate. Now the history of this Latin Vulgate is so interesting, and bears such a close parallel in its circumstances to those of our revision of 1885, that we may well say something about it. A translation of the Scriptures into Latin was made during the second century. After the lapse of two centuries the variations and errors of the text began to attract the attention of students, and there was a call for revision.

"It happened providentially," says Bishop Lightfoot, "that at the very moment when the need was felt the right man was forthcoming. In the first fifteen centuries of her existence the Western Church produced no Biblical scholar who could compare with St. Jerome." Jerome had just come to Rome from the retirement of his cell at Bethlehem, and at the request of Damasus, Bishop of Rome, he undertook the work of revision. His work of revising the New Testament was finished in 385, and afterwards he revised the Old Testament. The way in which he worked was this. He had before him the various differing readings of the old Latin Bible. He took the oldest Hebrew and Greek MSS. then existing, and by them he corrected the old Latin Bible, and at length produced the revised Latin Bible, which in process of time was called the Vulgata Editio—*i.e.*, the commonly received edition—or, as we phrase it, the Vulgate. But not till more than two hundred years after Jerome's death did it come into general use. The work of Jerome was exceedingly unpopular, even with men as learned as St. Augustine.

Why was this? Because of the strong con-

servative bias which exists even in the most radical natures. The new version meant an effort of readjustment in the mind accustomed to the manner and wording of the old version. Many, perhaps, who had no personal objection themselves felt strongly that it was a needless breach in what was customary, and a cause of offence to the "weaker brethren," and would break up with terrible effect memories, hopes, and beliefs which in some minds were bound up with a certain form of words. We are not without an instance. St. Augustine wrote to Jerome, and gave the instance himself as a sample of what might be expected to ensue in many other cases. In the Book of Jonah we are told (iv. 6) that the prophet sat down under a gourd. In the old Latin version this word was represented by *cucurbita*. Jerome thought that the most accurate translation of the Hebrew word was not *cucurbita*, but *hedera*, and so translated it. An African bishop in reading substituted *hedera* for *cucurbita*. The surprised and angry congregation nearly left their bishop to himself and empty benches, and were only restrained by a promise to keep the wording of the old version.

"They would not tolerate a change in an expression," said Augustine, "which had been fixed by time in the feelings and memory of all, and had been repeated through so many ages in succession."

There can be no question that St. Jerome's version was on the whole a more correct representation of the original than that which it was meant to replace. Unfortunately, however, human nature is often inclined to think more of words than of things. What Shakespeare calls "the tyrant custom" keeps us very often from acknowledging a really useful change, just because it is a change, and very often not the least a change in matter, but only in form. This little incident is worth remembering, because very much the same unreasonable outcry was made fifteen hundred years later—perhaps some of us took part in it—when our latest revision saw the light. St. Jerome was very caustic in his comment upon the prejudice stirred up by his noble work. "In vain," said he, "is a harp played to an ass." But "truth is the daughter of time." Slowly Jerome's version won its way to the front. Constant use took

the place of cold neglect, and admiration the place of derision. Weak human nature even flew into another extreme. People forgot that it was a translation. "It is the version of the Church, and in her own language," they said. "Why should it yield to Greek and Hebrew MSS., which have been all these years in the hands of Jewish unbelievers and Greek schismatics?" And so the Roman Church in the year 1545, at the Council of Trent, decreed the Vulgate authentic. They decreed that it should be considered—albeit a translation, and not a little corrupted by lapse of time—a correct representation of the original. While knowledge has increased and given us means of arriving at a far better text than Jerome's, it is still the only recognised Bible of the Roman Church. This is the history of the Vulgate, which we must remember was the source of all versions in England up to, and including, that of Wycliffe.

And now even, at the risk of being wearied, we must come a step further, and see how in Tyndale's day there was a better foundation for translation than the Vulgate. One of the first

great services of the printing-press was rendered at Alcalà, in Spain. Here Cardinal Ximènes published an edition of the whole Bible in three languages—Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. In the Old Testament side by side stood the Hebrew, the Greek Septuagint version, and in the middle Jerome's Latin version, the Vulgate. Those who were prejudiced in favour of the Latin, and had suspicions of the Greek and Hebrew, made the grim joke that the Vulgate in the middle of the page looked like Christ crucified between two thieves. In the New Testament, of course, there were only two columns, the original Greek and the Latin version. Before this work was published a printer at Basle, called Froben, wishing to be first in the field, got Erasmus, the great scholar whom we spoke of in our last chapter, to edit such Greek MSS. of the New Testament as were accessible at that time, and so, in a measure, forestall the work of Ximènes. The news was brought to Alcalà, and an angry outburst was expected on the part of the cardinal at the sharp practice of the Swiss printer and the Dutch scholar. But Ximènes was too great to feel jealous. He answered in the

words of the disinterested lawgiver of Israel: "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num. xi. 29.)

The first edition of Erasmus's Greek Testament appeared in 1516, and the edition of Ximènes (the Complutensian Polyglott) not till 1522. Tyndale, the first to translate into English straight from the Greek, used in the New Testament the second (1519) and third (1522) editions of Erasmus's work, which first came out in 1516.

And now we pass from Tyndale and the provision for his work to the revision of 1611. Here again the material for forming a correct text has increased very much. Erasmus had only access to a few (four) manuscripts to construct his text upon, and the ones he most followed are of a late type. By the time King James's revisers set to work, not only was Greek and Hebrew scholarship in a much more advanced stage, but more manuscripts were known, notably the Codex Bezæ (D), presented by the Swiss reformer Theodore Beza

to the University of Cambridge, and representing a text of the sixth century.

Now let us come to the year 1870, when the present Revised Version was projected. Materials were then at hand which had been entirely hidden from the revisers of King James's time. The three oldest MSS. of the New Testament—the Sinaitic, the Vatican, the Alexandrine—were ready for use. Translations into Syriac and Egyptian of the second century, and representing a text of the apostolic period, were at the service of Queen Victoria's revisers. The science of textual criticism, which teaches the value and the best methods of dealing with these documents, had entirely sprung up since 1611 ; and the scholarship, also, of the Victorian revisers was as much ahead of that of King James's revisers as theirs was of their predecessors.

So we see how the means of getting a thoroughly adequate translation of the Bible have, bit by bit and step by step, been placed within the reach of the English people; and the very fact of the ever-growing material is

one justification for the successive revising of the Scriptures. Perhaps it may be noticed that we have said nothing about Hebrew Old Testament MSS., and that our remarks have been confined to the Greek New Testament MSS. But some of us will remember that for certain reasons the stock of Hebrew MSS. has never increased, and never can; but our power of interpreting Hebrew with precision has increased enormously, and justifies the attempts at Old Testament revision.

Before leaving this part of the subject, let us once more make clear, beyond all possibility of mistake, that never at any period has the meaning and import of the Word of God been obscured, at least in its grand outlines, by the most imperfect translation. Successive revisions have not been successive paintings of a picture, but restorations, each more successful than the last, of the original.

We may examine now, under several headings, the principal aims of the revisers of the New Testament in our own time.

1*st Aim.*—To establish a correct text. We saw in our first paper that errors found their

way into manuscripts. To ascertain what was probably the original standard text, by forsaking which the various readings have arisen, is a necessary and important work. This work had to be done by a careful and scientific examination of the various manuscripts, versions, and quoted passages in ancient Christian books. With regard to the state of the text of the New Testament, the words of Bishop Lightfoot are well worth recording: "No doubt when the subject of various readings is mentioned, grave apprehensions will arise in the minds of some persons. But this is just the case where more light is wanted to allay the fears which a vague imagination excites. . . . . I can only state my own conviction that a study of the history and condition of the Greek text solves far more difficulties than it creates. Even the variations themselves have the highest value in this respect. Thus, for instance, when we find that soon after the middle of the second century divergent readings of a striking kind occur in St John's Gospel—the old Latin in chap. i. verse 18, reading, 'the only begotten Son,' and the

Peshito-Syriac reading, 'God only begotten' —we are led to the conclusion that the text has already a history, and that the Gospel, therefore, cannot have been very recent."

Let us look at some of the differences in the text used by the last revisers, and that used by the revisers of 1611.

If we turn to 1 St. John v. 7, we shall find in the Authorised Version that passage about "the three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." Now, there is no MS. authority of any moment for the words which crept into the text of some old Latin MSS. The words were originally merely a pious comment, a gloss, upon the three witnesses which St. John does really name—the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood. Tyndale, Coverdale, and the Great Bible all place the words in brackets, and mark their peculiarity by a different type. For some reason they are admitted into the Authorised Version as part of the original text. Now, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is quite independent of the three witnesses of St. John,

and to repudiate, as the Revised Version does by omitting the words, the testimony of three false witnesses, is a real service to the cause of truth.

Again, the last twelve verses of St. Mark are, in all probability, not by the same hand that wrote the Gospel. In the Vatican MS. a space is left at the end of the Gospel (verse 8), as though the scribe knew of the later ending, but was not certain as to whether it had a right to be included. The Revised Version gives the last twelve verses, but separates them, and thus gives a hint that the verses in question did not originally form an integral part of the Gospel. Likewise the first eleven verses of St. John viii., and verse 53 of chapter vii., are printed in the Revised Version in a way which warns us that there is reason to believe that the story of the woman taken in adultery was not originally part of the Gospel. Neither one passage nor the other is without its historical value. Both probably present a true tradition, but a careful examination of MSS. denies them equal manuscript standing with the rest of the narrative.

There are, of course, other cases where single words and phrases in the text used by the revisers of 1611 have to be altered in accordance with the evidence which fresh witnesses since that day have brought to light. But taken altogether, the changes are not very many, and the number of changes of importance is much less. This must be reassuring. It means that a most searching light has been thrown from many sides; that the text of the New Testament has been subjected to an extremely critical analysis; and the result is that we find that the text of the Authorised Version, though incorrect in many particulars, does yet convey most perfectly the spirit of Christ and His apostles, and the outline of historical fact; and we know that when we turn to the Revised Version we have as near an approach as it is possible to get in a translation to the very wording of the writers of the New Testament.

2nd Aim.—To keep one and the same English word as the equivalent of one and the same Greek word. The Revisers of 1611 often used different English words as translations of the

same Greek word. We may quote an instance, 1 Cor. xi. 29–34. In this passage one Greek word, *κρίμα*, is translated by no less than three English words—viz., damnation, condemnation, and in the margin, judgment. The Revisers have chosen one word judgment, as their translation, and kept to it.

3rd Aim.—To translate different Greek words by different English ones. This was an improvement suggested by the manner in which the Revisers of 1611 sometimes gave one English word to translate two different Greek words. In the older version, Hades, the place of departed spirits, and Gehenna, the place of punishment, were both translated Hell. In Acts ii. 27–31, it will be seen how the Victorian Revisers have benefited the reader by an adherence to their third aim.

4th Aim.—Greater care in bringing out shades of meaning in the original. The translation in the Revised Version of the words in Acts ii. 47, "those that *were being* saved," in place of "such as *should* be saved," is a case in point.

5th Aim.—The use of current English expressions in place of those which are obsolete.

In the course of nearly three centuries it is to be expected that words will change their meaning or go out of use. In Acts xxi. 15, the phrase is used "we took up our carriages." In King James's time carriage meant what you carry, but now it means what carries you. This illustration will show how, in course of time, a word in a living language will quite reverse its meaning. The words of the Authorised Version in St. Matt. vi. 25, "Take no thought for your life," sound to the ear of a modern most improvident. But in 1611, to take no thought, meant to abstain from distressing worry. The Revised Version modernises the obsolete expression and gives the sense of the original Greek, which counsels us not to fume and fret and worry about ourselves. "Be not anxious for your life."

A few words ought to be devoted to the work of the Revisers of the Old Testament. There was no question about textual emendation. To use the words of the Preface to the Revised Bible: "The task of the Revisers has been much simpler than that which the New Testament Revisers had before them. The received,

or as it is commonly called, the Massoretic text of the Old Testament Scripture, has come down to us in manuscripts which are of no great antiquity, and which all belong to the same family." With occasional deviations from this text on the authority of ancient versions, they have followed it in the main.

The reader of the Revised Old Testament will find that generally the sense is more clear in the new translation than in the old, and especially he will find this to be the case in the prophetical books. Compare, for instance, the Christmas morning lesson from Isaiah ix. in the two versions, and we shall find much greater clearness in the new translation. Verse 5 is not without its charm in the old version, with its "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." But it probably conveyed quite a misleading idea to the reader; and the same verse in the new translation reveals a striking figure which was hitherto concealed. "For all the armour of the armed men in the tumult and the garments rolled in blood shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire."

A remarkable improvement secured by the new version is evident in Dan. iii. 25. Instead of the astonishing remark of Nebuchadnezzar, "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God," we have, "and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

It was on February 10, 1870, that Bishop Samuel Wilberforce rose in the Upper House of the Southern Convocation to move for a Committee of both Houses to consider the whole question of a fresh translation, and to report thereon. In prospect of another revision there was a little stir, both among some of the learned and some of the unlearned. Of the latter class was a young person who advanced the opinion that, if the Authorised Version was good enough for St. Paul, it was certainly good enough for us!

The friends of the projected translation witnessed in the opposition raised merely a repetition of past history. The story of previous revisions, from Jerome's days downwards, led them to expect that their path would not be quite smooth. But in the Midsummer of 1870, the Committees appointed by Convocation

to undertake the revision began their work. Each Testament was entrusted to the hands of a specially selected company of scholars. The National Church contributed its representative scholars, and the Nonconformists were also duly represented. In America also a company of Revisers went over the same ground, and communications between the two bodies were interchanged. So the Revised Version is a common work, which not only unites Englishmen to Englishmen, but unites us also to our distinguished kinsmen across the Atlantic. In 1881 the New Testament was finished, and four years later the Old Testament Company had concluded their labours. And thus the year 1885 marks the appearance of our latest revision.

It is hardly to be expected that the generation which was bred up upon the old version will, as a whole, be satisfied with the new translation. But the fault may lie not altogether with the Revised Version. In the "coming on of time" it may meet with a juster judgment than some of us can give at the hands of those who will make their first

acquaintance with the Scriptures by its means. It is not impossible that with them its obvious advantages in the way of accuracy and clearness may secure it a wide and general use; and it may well be that to ears not preoccupied with a traditional rhythm and verbal music, the Victorian version will disclose a pleasant cadence and a music of its own.

THE COLLECTION OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

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FEW subjects can be of greater interest to the student of the Bible than the history of the Canon. The word "Canon" means originally a rule or measuring-rod. "It was applied in the Church to the brief creed or summary of Christian truth, which, in somewhat varying form, as early as the closing period of the second century, was recognised as including the essentials of the common faith—the *regula fidei*, as it was called. The word 'Canon' was first used to designate the Holy Scriptures, in the fourth century, by the celebrated Alexandrian Father, Athanasius, who speaks of this definite body of writings as 'canonised,' that is, as accepted; this acceptance being a part of the Canon or rule of faith. Subsequently 'Canon' acquired the sense which it now holds, and was used by the Latin Fathers to denote the books

which, to the exclusion of all others, regulate Christian belief and teaching." The question with which we will start is this—What was the principle and what the time of the formation of the Canon of the New Testament? There is a fantastic mediæval legend to the effect that the books which now form the New Testament were miraculously sorted out from a considerable number of other similar writings. The scene of the supposed miracle was the church of Nicæa, at the time of the session of the first Ecumenical Council in 325 A.D. It was alleged that a varied assortment of Christian literature lay under the altar until all doubt about the Canon was instantaneously ended by the genuine books leaping of their own accord on to the holy table, leaving the writings now, *ipso facto*, declared uncanonical, below.

Most of us will dismiss this account of the formation of the Canon of the New Testament with an incredulous smile. And yet we might not all be able to tell the true story. So let us try to get the right version of the story truly and simply stated. There seems to have been no attempt at a collection of apostolic writings in

the apostolic age. While no doubt these writings were highly valued, there was something more highly valued still, and that was the oral teaching of the apostles themselves. While that could still be had the writings of the founders of the Church filled a secondary place. But when the second century began to dawn, and the last of the apostles, St. John, had gone to God, the Church entered into a fresh experience. Upon the Fathers of the sub-apostolic age, holy and spiritual though they were, there rested not the same measure of spiritual power as upon their immediate predecessors. The doctrines of the apostles were called in question by some, and by some explained in a different sense to that which had been given at the first. It is true that this had happened in the apostolic age as well, but then there were the Masters in the New Israel present, who could speak with peculiar authority. Now they were no more, and what had had only a secondary importance in their lifetime, now was felt to have a primary importance. The writings of the apostolic age became of exceeding interest

and practical value, and in the second century we get the first attempts at forming a collection of the writings of the first age. The necessary qualification for any writing which was to go to make up this collection was its apostolicity. Was it written by an apostle or under his direction or his influence? This seems to have been the nature of the criterion. The use of this criterion did not at once yield quite the same results. There are three collections of apostolic writings, which seem to have been in use at the close of the second century. One was that in use by the Syrian Christians. This seems to have contained what is found in our Canon with the exception of the Second and Third Epistles of St. John, Second Epistle of St. Peter, St. Jude, and Revelations. If we pass to the North African Church of the same period, we find the books of our Canon in use with the exception this time of St. James, and Second St. Peter. The third collection of books, which was in use in the Western portion of the Church, presents us with a similar problem. And what is this problem?

It is this: how is it that in different portions of the Church in the second century opinions differed as to what writings were of apostolic authority and what were not? The answer to the problem seems to be this: the proper limitations of the Canon were not arrived at formally by the action of a particular council at one particular time. They were arrived at informally and experimentally at the end of four centuries. Councils may have ratified the New Testament Canon, but they did not form it. It was formed by the judgment of different generations and different portions of the Church interacting upon one another. Hence it is easy to see how, for instance, in the second century, differences of opinion existed about the limitations of the New Testament Canon. Now let us pass to the beginning of the fourth century, and hear the interesting information which Eusebius has to give us about the question of the Canon in his day. Eusebius was Bishop of Cæsarea, in Palestine, and completed his famous ecclesiastical history just before the meeting of the Nicene Council in

325 A.D. He divided the books claiming to be authoritative into three classes. The first comprises the universally acknowledged books. These are the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, 1 St. Peter, and 1 St. John. The second class comprises what the historian calls disputed books—books received by some but not by all. These are the Epistles of St. James, St. Jude, 2 St. Peter, 2 and 3 St. John, Hebrews, and the Revelations. The third class Eusebius calls spurious, and these books he says are not received by the Church at all. Among these books heretical and apocryphal writings are included, such as the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Pilate, the Apocalypse of Peter. Thus far had the question proceeded in the beginning of the fourth century. The apostolic authority and therefore canonicity of two-thirds of our present New Testament was and had been generally acknowledged. About the remaining third differences of opinion existed. At the end of the fourth century St. Jerome and St. Augustine, the two most learned men of their day, accepted as canonical

all the books in our New Testament Canon. They reflected the general opinion of the whole Church. Differences of opinion about some, at least, of the disputed books, still existed, and as a matter of fact ever will exist. But there was still a good deal to be said in their favour. The third Council of Carthage, 397 A.D., at which St. Augustine was present, fixed the Canon of the New Testament at its present limits. But it must be clearly understood that in so doing it did not anticipate but simply followed after the general opinion of the whole Church. The decision thus slowly and carefully arrived at by the close of the fourth century has been occasionally, as for instance, in the case of Luther, Calvin, and Tyndale, in some points questioned. But this has been only in the case of the disputed books. The judgment of the early Church we may say has approved itself in the matter of the New Testament Canon to all subsequent ages of the Church.

There are two points which arise out of the foregoing statements about which a few words should be said. We remarked that the

criterion by which writings which claimed canonicity were tested was their evidence of being written by apostles, or under their direction or influence. The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, the letters of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, among other New Testament scriptures, establish their claim to be written by apostles. But it is not claimed that the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Mark, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews were written by apostles, but these are admitted as being written by men who were under their immediate direction or influence. Now, this latter test was no doubt difficult to apply. The Epistle of Clement, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas, were valued not only for their own worth, but because the writers were believed to have been in close touch with the apostles. In the early Church, the author of the Epistle of Clement was often identified with St. Paul's fellow-labourer of that name mentioned in Phil. iv. 3. The writer of the Shepherd was understood to be the Hermas greeted by St. Paul in Romans xvi. 14; and the Epistle

of Barnabas was considered to be the work of none other than that native of Cyprus who at one time befriended St. Paul, and at another time quarrelled with him. To all these writings the Fathers of the second and third centuries refer with profound veneration ; and at least we know that the Shepherd of Hermas was regarded by Irenæus as inspired, and was placed upon the same level as our canonical books. It was evidently customary to read them in public service, for we find them bound up with ancient MSS. of the New Testament. The writings of Hermas and Barnabas, for instance, are found in the Sinaitic MSS. of the fourth century. Now, we know that writers who wrote under apostolic direction, like St. Mark or St. Luke, or under evident apostolic influence, like the writer of the Hebrews, had their works admitted into the Canon. For some time, at least, it was felt that this principle justified the high place which was given to these three writings of which we are speaking. Clement may have come into contact with the apostles, and it was believed that the Hermas and Barnabas of the apostolic

age were the veritable authors of the works bearing their name. But it was not on this ground alone that the writings in question found such great acceptance. Their intrinsic worth, as it seemed to the early Church, quite as much promoted them to honour. But this feeling apparently changed in course of time. Before the fixing of the Canon in the fourth century, both on critical grounds and on spiritual grounds, it seemed that they could hardly aspire so high as had at first been thought, and we do not find them then or later in the position of eminence that they once held. And here, incidentally, we may observe with gratitude the Providence which made the determination of the Canon a work of long deliberation. It is a satisfaction to us to see what we believe to be the wholesome instinct of an early age, which refused to draw the lines of the Canon too rigidly, and the equally wholesome instinct of a somewhat later age, which could discern a much lower degree of edification in St. Clement's letter to Corinth than in St. Paul's letters to that Church; and which refused the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd

of Hermas a permanent place in the New Testament.

But there is another question of interest attached to the subject of the collection of the New Testament Books. Occasionally we hear about gospels other than those four which every one knows. What are these other gospels? Now, we only have to turn to the opening words of St. Luke's Gospel to have the best warrant for believing that our four Gospels are not the only gospels which have ever existed. "Many have taken in hand"—St. Luke tells the "most excellent Theophilus"—"to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." One can easily understand how the multiplying of gospels would come about. A great many people would have their story to tell about Jesus at first hand. It was chiefly the story of three years, and not a few would have come into contact with Him, both in Galilee and at Jerusalem, during the feast. Such people one can imagine attending the apostolic preachings, and finding their story confirmed, and gleaning information with which they filled in the gaps in their own story. A time came—

probably about thirty-five years after the Ascension—when written gospels, under apostolic authority, were found advisable. Probably shortly before the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), the original Gospel of St. Matthew, in Aramaic, was issued, and, shortly after the year 70, St. Mark and St. Luke appeared; and at the close of the first century came St. John's Gospel. It seems probable that these gospels, as they appeared, received a peculiar recognition. And this was the case not because the apostolic gospels were considered inspired, and the others uninspired, but because one had an official sanction which the others had not. What has become of these early unofficial gospels it is impossible to say; probably no one cared to keep them in memory if they were oral, or in manuscript if they were written. The canonical Gospels went over the same ground, and went over it better. But in the second century, and subsequent centuries, the tendency to write unauthorised gospels had not diminished, while the motive had deteriorated. The result is a great mass of literature which goes by the name of apocryphal gospels. Now, these gospels are based upon, or imply a know-

ledge of, the existence of either the canonical Gospels or some other gospel of the first age. Their object is not to supplant such accounts, but to supplement them, "to embroider with legend the simpler narrative."

One of the oldest of the apocryphal gospels which we have in an entire form is that called Protevangelium, or Gospel of St. James, and it seems to belong to the second century, and probably to the middle of that. It is very explicit about those things which the Gospels of the Canon do not touch on. According to this authority Joachim and Anna are the names of the parents of the Virgin Mary. There is a great deal about the early years of the mother of the Lord; the marriage of the Virgin with Joseph is brought about by a miraculous intervention. The story of the birth of Jesus is told as in St. Luke, but with the addition of not a few portents. The document ends with the massacre of the Innocents, from which John the Baptist is delivered by means of a mountain opening and receiving him and his mother. And just as the mystery of Christ's birth and the reserve of the Evangelists stimulated the

writings of apocryphal gospels of the infancy, so the mystery of Christ's death and passing into the spirit world, whereon the Gospels leave so much unsaid, tempted the writers of apocryphal gospels into supplementing what was left incomplete. The Gospel of Nicodemus and the Acts of Pilate, forming one document, tell much about the passion and crucifixion which the Gospels of the Canon tell, and also a good deal which they do not. The latter part of the Gospel of Nicodemus touches upon the details of our Lord's descent to Hades between His death and resurrection; of His breaking the gates of brass, and releasing and taking up to Paradise the souls of Adam, John the Baptist, and many holy men of the earlier dispensation. Thus we see what the nature is of the apocryphal gospels.

They really add nothing to the knowledge of Christ's character, teaching, and life, which we gather from the canonical Gospels—save portents and wonders. Taken by themselves they give a misleading picture of Christ: He appears rather as a magician than as a spiritual teacher. The

distorted view of our Lord which Mohammed had, he probably owed to the fact of his being acquainted only with an apocryphal gospel, and not the canonical Gospels.

Most of the apocryphal gospels belong to a later date than that at which the Canon was fixed; but one, at least—the Gospel of St. James—does probably belong to a period anterior. That such a gospel or gospels were excluded from the Canon we cannot wonder. But though the apocryphal gospels were never admitted to the New Testament collection, their influence was long felt in art. There is a picture of Raphael's which treats of the marriage of the Virgin. There are various suitors provided with a rod, but Joseph is chosen because from his rod alone issues a dove. In Raphael's picture the disappointed suitors are seen breaking their useless rods. The beasts worshipping the infant Christ in the manger are not infrequent in old pictures. Dante refers more than once to the breaking of the gates of Hades at our Lord's descent, and His bringing into Paradise the patriarchs who had waited for Him. In these

instances, and many others, we see the place in Christian art which the apocryphal gospels made for themselves.

The history of the Canon of the Old Testament before the Christian era is involved in considerable obscurity. While the books which form the New Testament are of one age only, those which make up the Old Testament belong to very various periods of time. In so far the two Canons stand on different grounds, but probably the principle which guided the formation was identical in either case. The name of a great teacher attached to a book, or the possession by a book of eminent powers of edification and the ring of a true spiritual tone, gained, in the slow process of lengthened deliberation, the position for the book of canonical authority. The well-known division of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Law, the Prophets, and the Holy Writings, help us to understand the strata which were successively laid down, and which ultimately formed a solid whole of instruction. The division of the Law corresponds to our first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch. It is necessary to state the bare fact that competent

scholars differ considerably as to the date at which these books took their present form. Some deem them to have attained their present form immediately after the death of Moses. Others believed them to have assumed their present form as late as the first century after their return from exile—*i.e.*, between 536 B.C. and 436 B.C. Others again look for a midway position in the period of the kings before the Exile. It must, however, be understood that the two latter classes of scholars admit the existence of a nucleus of moral and ceremonial law dating from the Mosaic period, which was expanded at a later period.

One thing, however, is clear—viz., that the foundation of the Canon is to be found in the Law. To this was added a collection of writings, the Prophets. This included (*a*) four narrative books—Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings. (*b*) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets united in a single book. The conclusion of this portion of the Canon is thought by some to have been probably between 300–200 B.C. In the prologue to the book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, the writer speaks

thus:—"My grandfather Jesus had much given himself to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other books of the fathers." This prologue dates from about 132 B.C. and was written in Alexandria. Besides the Law and the Prophets there is yet another division of Hebrew Scriptures recognised, vaguely referred to as "the other books of the fathers." These "other books" are probably the Holy Writings which form the third division of the Canon. According to the common arrangement in Hebrew Bibles this would include—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. This part of the Canon is thought to have been concluded about 105 B.C. More than a hundred years, then, before the Christian era the Canon of the Old Testament was practically settled. It only remains to add that the New Testament evidently assumes a definite and compact body of Scriptures, that Josephus (born 37 A.D., died after 97 A.D), the Jewish historian, speaks of our Old Testament Canon as an established thing, and that probably the Jewish synod of Jamnia, near Jaffa, about the year

90 A.D., gave official sanction to what had already been settled in practice. It is interesting to know that the Jewish Canon too had its disputed books—viz., Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and Esther. The pessimistic tone of the first, the sensuous imagery of the second, and the absence of the divine name in the third, were no doubt felt as difficulties, but finally the objections seem to have been overcome.

There remains one more topic which must be slightly touched upon. So far we have been dealing with the history of the Jewish Canon of the Old Testament. But there is a history of the Christian Canon of the Old Testament also. In the first paper of this series something was said about the origin of that Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. Incorporated with this were certain other Greek writings which mostly were penned by members of the Jewish Alexandrian colony, and chiefly in the second and first century before the Christian era. The books are familiar to us under the name Apocrypha. The word originally means "hidden," but acquired a secondary meaning of "spurious." It is denied on good authority that

there was any question among the Jews of the canonicity of these writings. But "in proportion as the [Christian] Fathers were more or less absolutely dependent on that [*i.e.* the Greek] version for their knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, they gradually lost in common practice the sense of the difference between the books of the Hebrew Canon and the Apocrypha. The custom of individuals grew into the custom of the Church; but the custom of the Church was not fixed in an absolute judgment." Under the influence of Augustine, the Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) adopted an enlarged Canon which included the Apocrypha, "though with a reservation," and wholly unsupported by any representation of the Greek portion of the Church. But still up to the Reformation period, distinguished Fathers in succession championed a pure Hebrew Canon, without the Apocrypha. The Romanists at the Council of Trent, in the middle of the sixteenth century, pronounced in favour of the larger Canon, and declared the apocryphal books of the Old Testament to be worthy of "equal veneration" with the Hebrew books.

The reformed Churches—and our own amongst them — decidedly pronounced themselves in favour of the pure Hebrew Canon. But the English Church does not absolutely set aside the apocryphal books. It does not use them for the establishment of doctrine, but reckons them useful "for example of life and instruction of manners." With this end in view some of the week-day lessons in the Lectionary are chosen from the Apocrypha.

We have now seen how the books of the Bible were collected and finally fenced round. As one thinks of all that might have happened in so difficult a task, and then looks at what has actually happened, it does surely all bespeak the presence of a guiding Spirit. In the varied components of the divine Library of Scripture, we have indeed a most impressive example of the "manifold wisdom of God."

INDEX

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