

37. In what age of the world's history do the Christian Documents represent themselves as having been written?
38. By what class of men do the Christian Documents represent themselves as having been written?
39. On what form of writing material were the Christian Documents originally inscribed?
40. In what language and style were the Christian Documents originally written?
41. On what ground are we justified in accepting the Christian Documents as genuine?
42. Of what does this corroborative historical evidence consist?
43. What is meant by the Ancient Manuscripts?
44. What are the five great Ancient Manuscripts?

**Lesson Fifty-five**

**THE GENUINENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN  
DOCUMENTS (Concluded)**

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Scripture Reading: John 20:30-31, 21:24-25; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:13-16.

Scriptures to Memorize: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

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45. Q. What is meant by the Ancient Versions?
  - A. By the Ancient Versions is meant Translations of the Sacred Writings, from the original Greek into other ancient languages; four of which Versions are older than the four Ancient Manuscripts.

46. Q. What are the most important of the Ancient Versions?

A. They are: (1) The Peshito Syriac; (2) The Old Latin; (3) The Egyptian or Coptic Versions; (4) The Latin Vulgate; (5) The Ethiopic Version; (6) The Gothic Version; and (7) The Armenian Version.

(1) The *Peshito Syriac* (literally, *simple Syriac*) Version, is a translation of both Testaments into Syriac or Aramaean, the language of Northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. It was made from a Greek text in the second century. From its date to the present time it has been the common Bible of the Syrian people who use it in their public worship. It lacks four of the smaller epistles (2 *Peter*, 2 *John*, 3 *John*, and *Jude*) and the *Revelation*. It is the most valuable of all ancient versions. (2) The *Old Latin Version* was a translation of the Bible into Latin, made in the second century, and frequently quoted by Tertullian (150-230). Thirty-eight fragments of this Version are yet in existence. (3) The *Egyptian or Coptic Versions*, the early Egyptian Christians having been named Copts by their Arab conquerors, contain all the books of the New Testament, and date from the first establishment of Christianity in Egypt. It will thus be seen that the *Peshito Syriac*, the *Old Latin*, the *Egyptian and the Coptic Versions* are some two hundred years older than the *Sinaitic Manuscript*. (4) *The Latin Vulgate*, a revision of the *Old Latin Version*, made by Jerome, in 382-385, was "canonized" by the Council of Trent in 1546. All Roman Catholic translations are made from it. Jerome testifies that in preparing it he made use of "the ancient Greek manuscripts" extant in his day; hence it is most valuable as an aid to criticism. It contains all the books of both the Old and the New Testaments. (5) The *Ethiopic Version* is a translation into the

Ethiopic language which is closely related to the Arabic. It includes all the books of the New Testament, and dates from the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia in the fourth century. (6) The *Gothic Version*, is a translation of both testaments into the Gothic tongue, made by Ulfilas, a Cappadocian, between the years 345 and 388. There is extant an uncial manuscript of this Version, which is kept in the library of the University of Upsala, Sweden. (7) The *Armenian Version*, a translation of the *Peshito Syriac Version*, into the Armenian tongue, by Miesrob, the inventor of the Armenian language, in the fifth century.

47. Q. What is meant by the Ancient Catalogs?

A. By the Ancient Catalogs, is meant lists of canonical books drawn up by the ancient church authorities.

(1) The earliest writer to have mentioned the books accepted as "the apostolic writings" by the Christians of his day, was *Marcion*, who came from Pontus to Rome about A.D. 140, and who became the founder of a heretical sect called the Marcionites. Although Marcion was led by his extreme anti-Jewish prejudices to reject the teaching of all the books of the New Testament not written by Luke or Paul, nevertheless his writings show that the four *Gospels*, *Acts*, and the *Epistles* were generally known and accepted as genuine at that early date. (2) The earliest formal catalog of the New Testament books now extant, is that of a document found in 1740 in an old library in Milan, by an Italian named Muratori, whence its name, *The Muratorian Canon*. This document dates from the seventh or eighth century, and is a Latin translation of a Greek original which claims to have been written by a contemporary of Pius, Bishop of Rome (died, A.D. 157). The *Muratorian Canon* in the West and the *Peshito Syriac Version* in the East, both dating from

about 160, in their listing of the New Testament books mutually complement each other's deficiencies, and together witness to the fact that at that early date, only some fifty or sixty years after the death of the Apostle John, *every book of our present New Testament*, with the exception of 2 Peter, was accepted as genuine.

(3) *Tertullian*, the well-known Latin scholar of North Africa, who lived about 150-240, left no formal catalog, but his extant writings contain statements regarding the *Gospels* and Paul's *Epistles* that are equivalent to a catalog. He mentions all the other books of the New Testament Canon except 2 Peter, James, 2 John, and 3 John. He names our four *Gospels*, and expressly states that *Matthew* and *John* were written by apostles, and *Mark* and *Luke* by "apostolic men." In his great work against the heresies of Marcion, he names all of Paul's *Epistles* in their established order. He frequently quotes from Acts, which he ascribes to Luke; quotes by name 1 Peter and Jude; and quotes frequently from 1 John and *Revelation*, expressly ascribing the latter to John. He also insists that the *Gospels* had come down "from the very beginning" and "from the apostles."

(4) *Clement of Alexandria* (lived about 165-220) is quoted by Eusebius in the latter's *Ecclesiastical History*, as having given explanations, more or less elaborate, of all the books of our present New Testament. Clement was a voluminous and scholarly writer. His writings fill two volumes of the Ante-Nicene Library.

(5) A catalog promulgated by *Origen*, a pupil of Clement of Alexandria, lists all the books of the New Testament as we now have them. Origen (lived about 185-254) was made the teacher of the Catechumens in Alexandria when eighteen years old, and became the outstanding scholar of his day. He traveled extensively over the entire Biblical world, wrote voluminously, and lived a life of extreme self-denial. His testimony regarding the New Testament

books is that of "a competent and unimpeachable witness" (McGarvey).

(6) Another catalog has come down to us from *Eusebius* (about 270-340), who was Bishop of the Church at Caesarea, in Palestine, and who is known as "the Father of Ecclesiastical History." He does not leave us in doubt as to the books which made up the Sacred Writings in his day. He mentions all the books of our present New Testament and in the order in which they appear therein.

(7) Another catalog is that promulgated by Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (lived 315-386). In one of his Catechetical Lectures, as given by his biographer, Jerome, he lists the books which are to be regarded as canonical, and the list agrees precisely with ours, with the exception of *Revelation* which is omitted.

(8) Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria from 326 to 373, one of the most noted Greek writers of the fourth century, lists the canonical books as they now appear in our *English Version*, in a letter addressed to the Christians of his day. He declares also that these books had been "delivered to the fathers" by those who were "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." He appends to the list the following warning: "These are the fountains of salvation; in these alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no one add to them or take anything from them."

(9) A formal catalog of the canonical books was promulgated by the *Council of Carthage*, in 397. It names all the books of the Old Testament now included in our Bible, and then gives the books of the New Testament in the following order: "Four books of the Gospels, one book of Acts of Apostles, thirteen epistles of the Apostle Paul, one of the same to the Hebrews, two Epistles of the Apostle Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Judas, one book of the Apocalypse of John." It concludes: "We have received from our fathers that these are to be read in the churches." "This document," says McGarvey,

“shows not only that all of the books of our present New Testament were in existence and in use as ‘divine Scriptures’ at the close of the fourth century, but that they had been held in the same esteem by the ‘fathers’ of the venerable men who composed this assembly” (*Evidences of Christianity*, Part I., p. 61).

(10) This array of evidence, it will be seen, dates back to within fewer than one hundred years of the actual writing of the Christian Documents. It has come down to us in an unbroken succession, we might say, from men who were not far removed from the apostolic class. Moreover, the evidence is mutually confirmatory and complementary, *i.e.*, what is overlooked by some of these men is supplied by others. As a matter of fact, Marcion, the writer of the *Muratorian Canon*, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen—these five men themselves unitedly mention by name all the books of our New Testament Canon. We may therefore safely conclude that our New Testament Canon had its origin in the latter half of the first century (A.D. 55-90).

**48. Q. What is meant by Quotations found in the Ancient Writings?**

**A. By Quotations found in the Ancient Writings, is meant actual scripture passages which are quoted in the writings of the early Christian scholars.**

(1) The writers whom we have already cited—Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Cyril, Athanasius, etc.—quote freely and copiously from the books of the New Testament Canon. (2) Irenaeus (120-202), a disciple and friend of Polycarp, who was in turn a personal acquaintance of the Apostle John, quotes in his writings from all books of the New Testament except *Philemon*, *Jude* and *3 John*. (3) Justin, a native of the ancient city of Shechem in Palestine, who suffered martyrdom at Rome, from which circumstance he is known as *Justin Martyr*, in his two *Apologies* and his *Dialogue* (written about 146), quotes freely from the four *Gospels*, which he

calls "the Memoirs" of Jesus Christ "which were drawn up by His Apostles and those who followed them." He quotes by name from *Revelation*. He also quotes from several of the Pauline *Epistles* and from *2 Peter*. (4) *Papias* (about 80-164), an overseer of the church at Hierapolis (cf. Col. 4:13), was the author of a work entitled *An Exposition of the Lord's Sayings*. He testifies that Matthew "wrote the sacred oracles in the Hebrew dialect"; and that "Mark, the interpreter of Peter" (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13), wrote, under Peter's direction, an unsystematic yet accurate account of the same discourses and events. (5) *Clement* of Rome (died 101), *Ignatius* of Antioch (martyred 115), and *Polycarp* of Smyrna (80-156), all of whom were friends and companions of the Apostles themselves, have left us in their writings over one hundred quotations from, or allusions to, the books of the New Testament, and among these every book, except four minor epistles (*2 Peter*, *2 John*, *3 John*, and *Jude*) is represented. (6) Finally, the genuineness of *John's Gospel* is confirmed by the fact that *Tatian* (155-170), an Assyrian, and a disciple of *Justin Martyr*, repeatedly quotes from it.

#### REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON FIFTY-FIVE

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