

## Lesson Fifty-six

HOW THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES HAVE  
COME DOWN TO US

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:1-8.

Scriptures to Memorize: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matt. 24:35).

**49. Q. From what primary sources have the Christian Documents come down to us?**

**A. The Christian Documents have come down to us from four primary sources, viz., (1) the Ancient Manuscripts, and (2) the Ancient Versions; substantiated by (3) the Ancient Catalogs, and (4) Quotations from the Post-apostolic Writings.**

**50. Q. What were the earliest translations of the Bible into the English language?**

**A. The earliest translations of the Bible into the English language were those made by John Wyclif, William Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale.**

(1) The first translation of the whole Bible into the English language (medieval) was made by *John Wyclif* and *Nicholas Hereford*, in manuscript form, about the year 1381. It is commonly known as *Wyclif's Translation* and was made from the *Latin Vulgate*. Wyclif himself suffered martyrdom for it, at the hands of the Papists. (2) *Tyndale's Translation* of the New Testament, the first printed version of any portion of the Bible in the English language, was printed at Worms, in 1525. It was made by William Tyndale (who was burned at the stake in 1536) from the original text as published by Erasmus. Of the Old Testament, Tyndale translated only the five books of Moses. (3) *Miles Coverdale's Translation* of the

whole Bible made from *Tyndale's Translation*, the *Latin Vulgate*, and the *German Version*, was published in 1535. It was the first version of the whole Bible in modern English. (4) *Thomas Matthew's Bible* was published in 1537, by John Rogers (under an assumed name), and Rogers became the first martyr under Queen Mary. This version was made from the translations by Wyclif, Tyndale, and Coverdale. (5) Other versions followed, based largely upon the text of *Thomas Matthew's Bible*. Among these were *Taverner's Bible*, in 1539; *Cranmer's Bible*, in 1539; the *Geneva Bible*, in 1560, the favorite of the Puritans; and the *Bishops' Bible*, which was issued in three parts in 1568-72. The *Geneva Bible*, a joint work of Calvin, Beza, Knox, Coverdale, and others, at Geneva, Switzerland, was the first English Bible divided into verses and the first to print in italics the words not in the original text.

**51. Q. What are the four modern Versions of the English Bible?**

**A. They are: (1) The Douai Version; (2) The King James (Authorized) Version; (3) The Revised Version; and (4) The American Standard Edition of the Revised Version.**

(1) The *Douai Version*, or the *Rheims Version* as it is sometimes called, was made from the *Latin Vulgate*, by a group of English Catholic divines who were at first connected with the college at Rheims, and later with that at Douai, a town in France. The Douai Version of the New Testament was first published in 1582; and of the Old Testament, in 1609-10. The *Douai Version* is the English Version authorized by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. However, it differs very little from the *Authorized* and *Revised Versions* used by Protestants, with the exception that it does contain the so-called Apocryphal books which usually are not included in the Protestant Versions.

These books, however, are purely historical and classical, and of questionable origin; and their rejection or inclusion means little or nothing so far as the fundamental teaching of the Bible is concerned. They contribute no additional information whatever with respect to the Plan of Salvation, or the Christian System. (2) The *King James Version*, or as it is commonly called, the *Authorized Version*, was begun in 1604, by forty-seven Biblical scholars, who, at the invitation of King James, assembled, formed themselves into six groups, and went to work to produce an authentic translation. Seven years were spent on the work. The finished product was published in 1611, and has been since its publication the mainstay of the Christian religion throughout the English-speaking world. Beautiful in its rhetoric, forceful in style, and delightful in its intonation, it has been rightly called "a sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed and controversy never soiled." Its influence has made the English language what it is, and has practically created our literature. (3) The *Revised Version* is an up-to-date revision of the *Authorized Version*. It was made by an English and American Revision Committee, of all evangelical denominations, working together, in the years 1870-85; and for the purpose of bringing the *Authorized Version* into perfect harmony with more modern English, and with the results of the latest researches in textual criticism, history, archaeology, etc. The revisers did not confine themselves to two or three of the older versions, but consulted all of them, and all other original sources as well—in the form of manuscripts, versions, catalogs, quotations, etc. Their objectives were accuracy and authenticity. The *Revised Version* of the New Testament was published by the university presses of Oxford and Cambridge, in 1881; and that of the Old Testament, in 1885. The *Revised Version* is the finished product of the combined Christian scholar-

ship of all ages of the Christian era. (4) The *American Standard Edition of the Revised Version*, otherwise known as the *American Revised Version*, is the outcome of about thirty years' work on the part of the American Revision Committee, which continued its organization after the English Revision Committee had disbanded in 1885. It contains the changes recommended by the American company of revisers, but not accepted by the English company; and such other changes as appeared to the American Committee to be needed after twenty years' experience with the Revised Version. The *American Revised Version* was published by Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, in 1901. The *Revised Standard Version*, issued in 1952, is in many passages more of a paraphrase than a translation. The same is true of *The New English Bible: New Testament*, issued in 1961. (Some wag has remarked recently that in reading the Gospel narratives, as they appear in those two most recent versions, he fully expected on turning a page to find Jesus saying, "O.K.," and was indeed amazed that Paul's "carnal mind" or "mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8:7) was not rendered *eros* or *libido*. Attempts of the translators of these two productions to "modernize" the original text have surely vitiated the forcefulness of Scripture teaching in many passages. The Old Testament section of the *New English Bible* is due to appear soon, and pre-publication reports indicate that it will truly have the Menckenic flavor.) Among the better paraphrases of the Bible, or of the New Testament alone, are those of Moffatt, Goodspeed, and Phillips.

52. Q. What must be our conclusion with respect to the Christian Documents as they appear in our English Version?
- A. Our conclusion must be, in view of the array of evidence presented, that the Christian Documents as they appear in our English versions are trustworthy.

(1) The very fact alone, that in the New Testament writings as we have them there is no reference except in certain prophetic statements, to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place A.D. 70, is almost positive proof that the books themselves (with the exception probably of the Apocalypse) were written prior to that date. It is inconceivable that such an important event in the history of the Jewish nation, such an obvious fulfilment of the prophecies of Jesus, would have been allowed to go unnoticed in the New Testament writings, had that event occurred prior to the actual writing of the documents which constitute the New Testament Canon. (2) Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield, Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Theological Seminary of Princeton, New Jersey, 1887-1921, in his book entitled *Revelation and Inspiration*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1927, summarizes as follows (p. 408): "We risk nothing in declaring that *modern biblical criticism has not disproved the authenticity of a single book of our New Testament. It is a most assured result of biblical criticism that every one of the twenty-seven books which now constitute our New Testament is assuredly genuine and authentic.*"

**53. Q. For what purposes were the books of the New Testament Canon written?**

**A. The books of the New Testament Canon were written originally for four purposes: (1) to give us the evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God; (2) to inform us as to what to do to be saved, or to be received into covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ; (3) to instruct us in the laws and principles of Christian worship and conduct; (4) to give us a final picture of the trials and triumphs of the Church and of the future state of the redeemed in the new heavens and new earth.**

In the four *Gospels*, we have the evidence respecting Jesus of Nazareth, sufficient to prove that He is the

Christ, the Son of God. In *Acts of Apostles*, we have the terms of remission, adoption, justification, etc., under the New Covenant. In the twenty-one *Epistles*, we find the instruction we need as Christians in the laws, principles, and institutions of Christian worship and living. In *Revelation*, we have the portrayal, in prophetic symbolism, of the trials and triumphs of the true Church of Christ.

54. Q. In what four books especially, do we find the story of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth?
- A. We find the story of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth in the four books, commonly called the Gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
55. Q. For what purpose were these four books, commonly called the Gospels, written?
- A. They were written to give us the evidence sufficient to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

See again John 20:30-31. Let us therefore, as did the Bereans of old, "receive the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:10-11).

#### REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON FIFTY-SIX

49. From what primary sources have the Christian Documents come down to us?
50. What were the earliest translations of the Bible into the English language?
51. What are the four modern Versions of the English Bible?
52. What must be our conclusion with respect to the Christian Documents as they appear in our English version?
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### Lesson Fifty-seven

## THE CREDIBILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

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Scripture Reading: Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-8, Gal. 1:11-20, 2 Pet. 1:12-21.

Scriptures to Memorize: "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "Am I not free? am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (I Cor. 9:1). "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16).

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56. **Q.** What did Jesus Himself say to His Apostles with regard to their witnessing for Him?
- A.** He said: "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth."
57. **Q.** How are the Apostles witnessing for Jesus unto the uttermost part of the earth?
- A.** The Apostles are witnessing for Jesus among all nations in and through the New Testament writings.

(1) As it has been frequently pointed out, the Apostles were essentially witnesses; and not priests, philosophers, reformers, clergymen, or theologians. (2) Their testimony as set down in the books of the New Testament pertains to what they saw with their eyes; in other words, matters of their own personal experience. 1 John 1:1—"that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled," etc. (3)