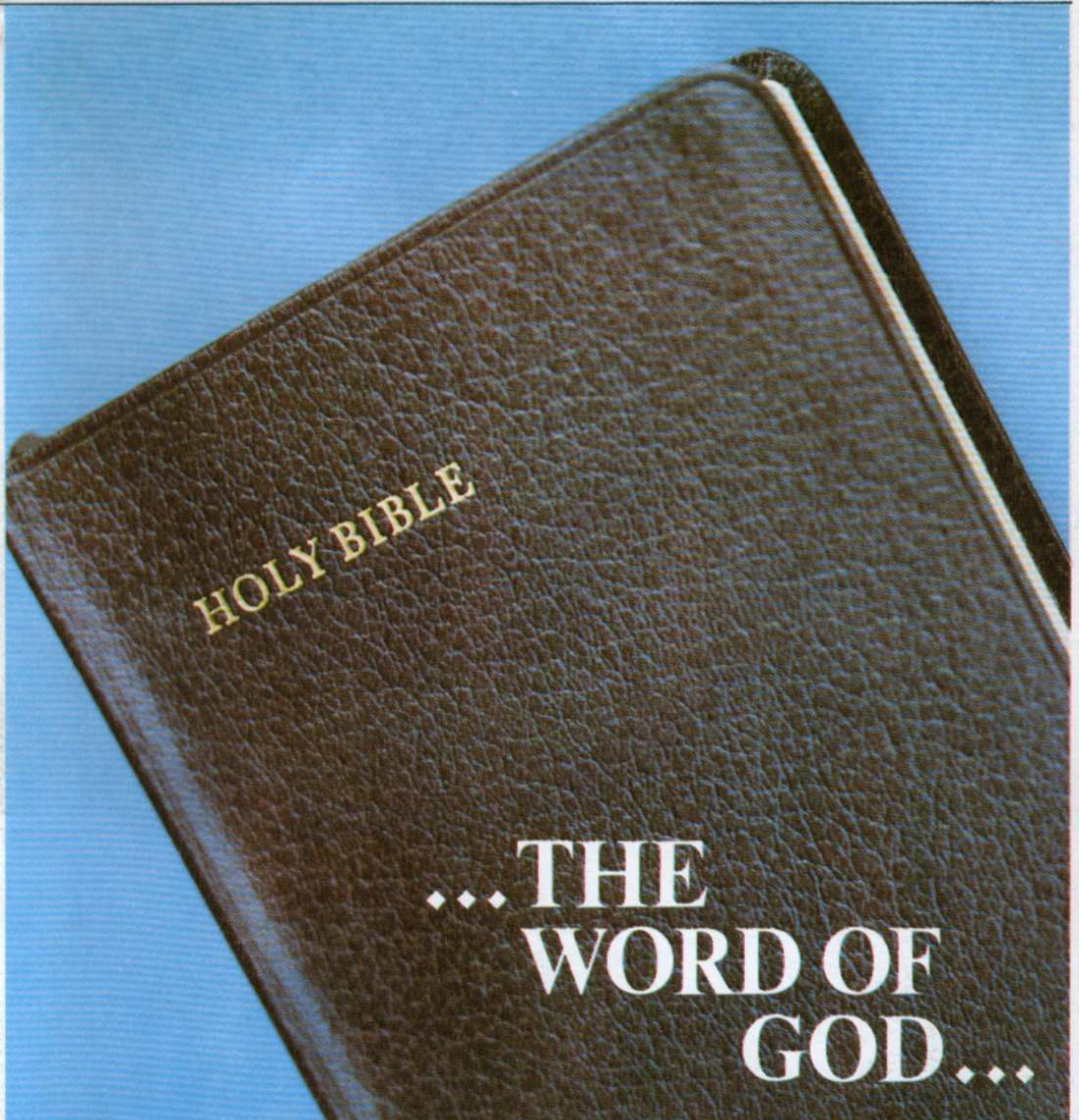


LIGHT on the Bible

A special issue of the  
bi-monthly magazine  
LIGHT on a New World

# Light



HOLY BIBLE

...THE  
WORD OF  
GOD...

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A SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

*'LIGHT on a New World'*

CONTENTS

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|                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| What is the Bible?       | page 1  |
| The Bible beginnings     | page 5  |
| The Bible in English     | page 10 |
| The Word of God          | page 22 |
| The message of the Bible | page 29 |

# What is the Bible?

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WE LIVE AT a time when man's genius for learning and invention has brought the world to the very brink of self-destruction. Yet the one clear message of hope and of certainty in this most uncertain world, the message of the Bible, is almost everywhere summarily dismissed from thoughtful consideration. Such a dismissal seems to have been made without any real appreciation of what the Bible is all about, how it has come to us, who wrote it, or when and why it was written. The purpose of this issue of 'LIGHT on a New World' is to appeal to you to think again whether such a dismissal is valid from a purely logical point of view, or whether the sceptical pseudo-intellectualism of our times has pre-disposed us to a false judgment, to pass a verdict without a true assessment of the evidence.

Let it be stated at the outset that the Bible itself claims unreservedly to be the word of God. The prophets of the Old Testament begin many of their declarations with such phrases as '*Thus saith the Lord . . .*' or '*The Lord said unto me . . .*' In the New Testament Peter writes:

'For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God.'<sup>1</sup>

Or again, Paul says plainly:

'ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .'<sup>2</sup>

When Paul, as quoted above, uses the word 'scripture' he is obviously referring to the Old Testament 'writings' because that is what the word literally means. Our word Bible is from a Greek word meaning 'books'. It is perhaps some measure of its special nature that it is usually called the 'Holy Bible' or sacred book.

## A SPECIAL LIBRARY

This definition of the word Bible as a book, however, needs qualification, for it is really a collection of books or writings; 66 separate books, bound into one

<sup>1</sup>*II Peter 1. 21* (N.E.B.)    <sup>2</sup>*II Timothy 3. 16*

volume. They are books on widely differing topics, from law to poetry, from history and prophecy to teaching and practice, written by many authors from all manner of backgrounds, including kings, herdsmen, lawyers, courtiers, fishermen. These books were brought together gradually over a period of more than 1,000 years, yet all are linked in harmony by a powerful theme—inexplicably so, apart from the inspiration of which Paul speaks.

The volume itself is divided into two distinct sections known as the Old and New Testaments; but the Old is really incomplete without the New, and the New cannot be explained without the Old. The Old Testament scriptures, the holy books of the Jewish people, were further divided by them into three parts—the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The Law consisted of the first five books of Moses; the Writings included the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and the books of Chronicles. All the rest were classified as the Prophets. It was this three-fold division that Jesus referred to when he said:

'All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me ...'<sup>3</sup>

Broadly speaking the Old Testament was written mainly in Hebrew and was completed some 400 years before Christ. The New Testament was written in Greek and was completed about 60 years after Christ rose from the dead.

It would not be unreasonable to ask at this stage: how do we know that the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament still extant faithfully record the original writings of which there are none now available? This is a valid question and in answer we make four points. The first is the almost superstitious regard that the Jews had, and still have, for the exact letter of Holy Scripture, so that their Scribes were scrupulously careful in making copies. For example, to prevent any mistake they counted every word and every letter in every word and if there happened to be a letter written in a different size from the others in the text they were copying, they did not allow themselves to correct it—they copied it strictly, small or large, just as it was. Secondly, we can make appeal to the Samaritan Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) a record kept quite independently from the Jewish, as the Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans, and find that the text is for all critical purposes the same. The third appeal can be made to the Dead Sea Scrolls—discovered in our times—which, although dating back to before the time of Christ, give added authority to the translation of Isaiah particularly as we have it translated in our Authorised Version.

Finally the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek about 200 years before Christ. Most of the quotations made in the New Testament are in the words of this translation—including the quotation that Jesus himself makes from Isaiah.

<sup>3</sup>Luke 24. 44



Greek papyrus, 3rd-4th century AD, of Hebrews 12: 1-11. Although this is a fragment of a copy, the writing is beautifully clear. Thousands of such fragments exist



This translation into the Greek is known as the Septuagint,<sup>4</sup> from the tradition that 70 men were employed in the work. The Septuagint version provided the order of the books of the Old Testament which is still found in our English Bibles today.

If we now consider the New Testament, some of the oldest Greek manuscripts for this date back to the fourth and early part of the fifth century AD. They are:

- the Codex Vaticanus which is kept in the library of the Vatican;
- the Codex Sinaiticus, so named because it was found in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai by Tischendorf in 1844 and was purchased by the British Museum in 1933; and
- the Codex Alexandrinus which was given as a present to King Charles I by a Greek patriarch of Alexandria, and which may also be seen in the British Museum.

In addition to these manuscripts and many other fragments going back to the second century AD, there are in the works of the early fathers of the church many quotations from the Scriptures, which provide a further proof of the authenticity and accuracy of the text. From all these resources, the Bible has been accurately translated into the languages of every country of the world and has exerted immeasurable influence on successive generations.

#### WHY IS THE BIBLE IMPORTANT?

The Old and New Testaments together form an incomparable treasury of writings far transcending any human works at all levels of human consciousness. In the Bible alone is to be found the answer to the question—*‘What must I do to be saved?’*<sup>5</sup> In the Bible alone is to be found our knowledge of the One who is able to effect this salvation.

*It shall greatly helpe ye to understande Scripture,  
if thou mark  
not only what is spoken, or wrytten,  
but of whom, and to whom,  
with what words  
at what time,  
where,  
to what intent,  
with what circumstance,  
considering what goeth before, and what followeth.*

Miles Coverdale

<sup>4</sup>Meaning 70 in the Greek    <sup>5</sup>Acts 16. 30

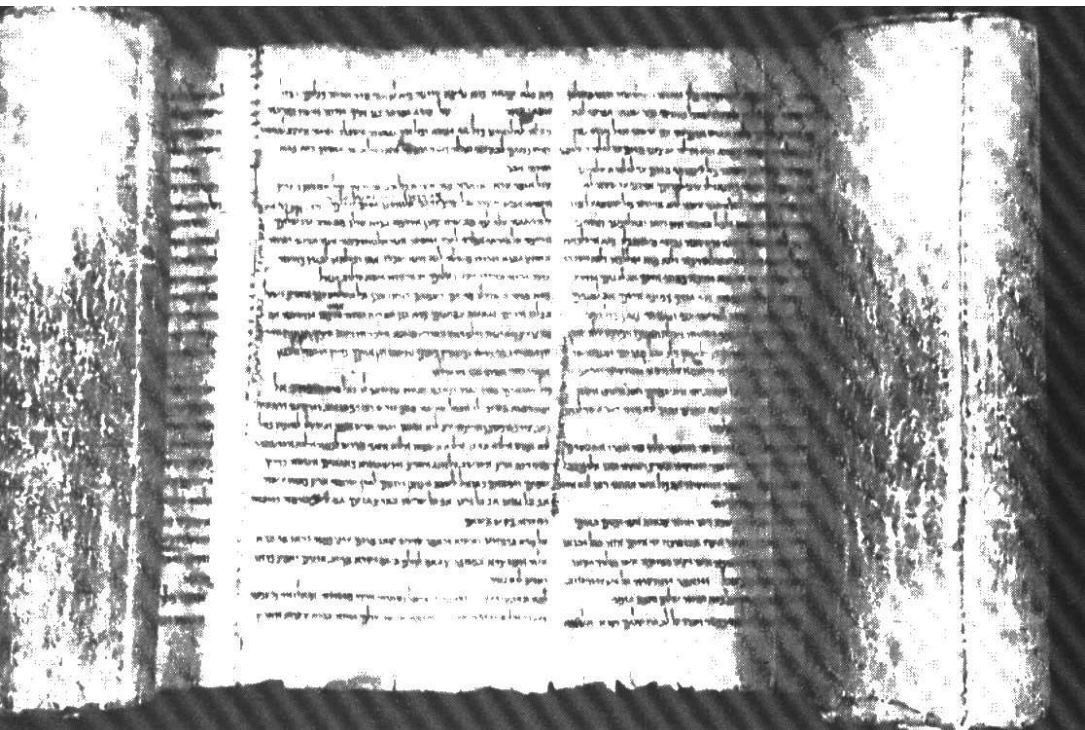
# The Bible beginnings

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THE PICTURE SO far then, is that 'Holy men of God' wrote down God's message as they were impelled by the power of the Almighty.<sup>1</sup> These writings—mainly in Hebrew before the time of Christ and in Greek after the time of Christ—were copied and copied and recopied. Can we be sure that the copying was accurate? The first article has referred to the fact that

- a) The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans but the Samaritans adopted the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) as their sacred book. These two groups of people copied their books quite independently and copies of the Pentateuch produced by the Jews can be compared with copies that have come by the Samaritan route. If mistakes had crept in these would show up at once.
- b) The discovery in 1947 of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided copies of Old Testament books dating from a couple of hundred years before Christ and in 'one jump' gave us, for example, a complete roll of Isaiah several hundred years older than the earliest copy that had been in existence. The

<sup>1</sup>*II Peter 1. 21*



The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah—  
open at chapter 40

most ancient copies we had before 1947 could now be checked against a copy that was very, very much older.

### THE FIRST TRANSLATION

The great Greek Emperor, Ptolemy Philadelphus wanted to establish a library in Alexandria and his chief librarian was instructed to include the sacred books of the Jews. Because these were in Hebrew they had to be translated and the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek is called the Septuagint. Just as the Hebrew Scriptures were copied, so was the Greek translation; thus at the time of Jesus the Old Testament could be read and studied from Hebrew or from Greek manuscripts.

### THE ORIGINALS HAVE DISAPPEARED

We no longer have the original writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah or Moses or of any of the writers of the original books but because the copies are so numerous and can be checked in the ways we have described, we can rely on the accuracy of the early manuscripts that we do possess. The diagram opposite illustrates the ground covered so far.

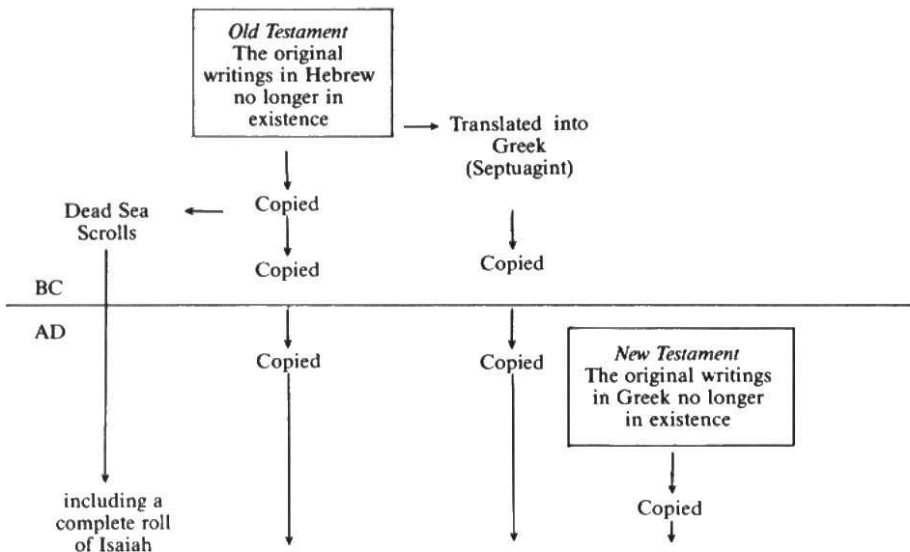


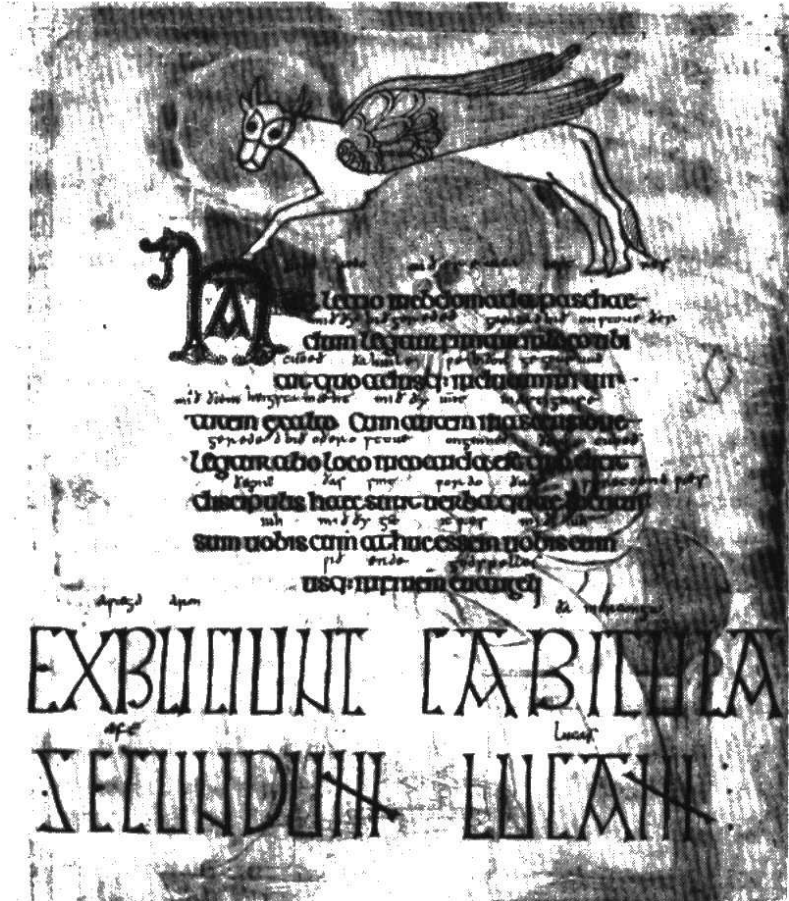
Two important developments affected the history of the Bible. The first is the change in the way manuscripts were kept—from a scroll which could be easily damaged over a period of time—to flat pages. A pile of flat pages fastened together was called a Codex and was the ‘grandfather’ of all our modern books. There are important Codices dating from the fourth and fifth centuries. They contain the books of the Old and New Testaments in Greek (so the Old Testament is the Septuagint version) and they are referred to on pages 17 and 19 of this booklet.

### THE LATIN BIBLE

The second important development was really due to the fact that as the Roman Empire spread, so the written language that was commonly used changed from Greek to Latin. If the Bible was to be read and understood it now needed to be in Latin. The full work of translation was undertaken by Jerome in the second half of the fourth century. Jerome was secretary to the Pope and his translation had the ‘authority’ of the church although it was not entirely popular. Jerome translated from the Greek but after going to Bethlehem and becoming a monk he studied Hebrew with a Jewish Rabbi and worked from Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament as well as from the Septuagint.

Jerome’s translation into Latin is known as the Vulgate. The word is connected with our word ‘vulgar’ which originally meant common or ordinary. So the Vulgate was a translation made into the ordinary, common language of the time.





The Latin Vulgate—the Lindisfarne Gospels

It was as the Vulgate that the Bible came with Christianity to England with the early missionaries like Augustine and Columba.

Parts of the Bible in Latin and Greek had already found their way to Africa by this time, as well as to Europe.

#### THE BIBLE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Outside the Roman Empire to the north were various Germanic tribes called 'barbarians' by the Romans. Christianity had spread to some of these like the

Ostrogoths as early as the third century. One of their bishops, Ulfilas, made a translation of the Bible in the fourth century. Not many of their manuscripts remain and none is complete but the most famous is probably the Codex Argenteus or 'Silver Codex' in Uppsala in Sweden. This is written in silver and gold on purple vellum.

The empire of the Slavs was extensive in Europe in the ninth century. Two brothers, Cyril and Methodius left Thessalonica to teach them Christianity. They devised an alphabet based on Greek letters in order to write their translation of the Bible and a number of languages like Russian and Croatian use this 'Cyrillic' alphabet today. The Slavonic language of the translation of Cyril and Methodius ('Old Slavonic') is no longer spoken today but it is used in Eastern Europe in the Orthodox Church.

Peter Waldo, a merchant from Lyons, founded a religious community in the Twelfth century known as the Waldensians. They were bitter opponents of the established church and because of this they were greatly persecuted. They felt that it was important that people should be able to read the Bible in their own language. Although very little evidence remains of their translations it is believed that they produced translations of the Bible or of parts of the Bible in Italian, German, Provençal (the language of southern France), Piedmontese (spoken at that time in northern Italy) and Catalan (the language of north-east Spain).

So the Bible was available in an increasing number of languages in Europe and beyond. In all these languages people were able to read the words of the apostle Paul to Timothy:

'You remember that ever since you were a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.'<sup>2</sup>

13 Ke ame vōdiwo kple amebile-lawo la woayi dzi vōditɔe wu anɔ amewo blem, eye amewo able wo." 14 Ke wò la nɔ 'nusiwo nɛsrɔ, eye nɛkpɔ kakadɛdzi le wo me la me; elabena ɛnya amesiwo gbɔ nɛsrɔe le, 15 eye esi tso dɛvime ke nɛnya nɔnɔ kɔkɔea-wo la, woate ŋu ana nunya wò

hena agbexɔɔ to xɔse, si le Kristo Yesu me la me." 16 'Dɔnɔ sia nɔnɔ, si tso Mawu fe Gbɔgbɔ me la, enyo hã na nufiafia, na mokaka, na dɔdɔdɔ, na amehehe, si le dzadzɛnyenyɛ me, 17 bene 'Mawu fe ame la nade blibo, eye wòanɔ dzadzɔdɔdɔ hena dɔ nyui sia dɔ nyui wɔwɔ.

II Timothy 3. 13-17 in Ewe—a language used in Dahomey, Ghana and Togo

<sup>2</sup>II Timothy 3. 15-17 (G.N.B.)

# The Bible in English

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THE FIRST TWO articles in this booklet have outlined the history of the manuscript sources of the Bible, which as actual documents go back as far as the second century BC for the Old Testament and the early second century AD for the New Testament. No other book from antiquity has anything like this wealth of written sources; it confirms very fully that the text we now have is a faithful and accurate reproduction of what the prophets and apostles originally wrote.

The good hand of God has ensured the preservation of all this evidence, and that hand may also be seen in three historical events of the Middle Ages which materially promoted the translation of the Bible into the everyday language of the common people in England and Western Europe. These were:

- (1) the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which led to the revival of learning in the West, and especially (in this context) to the spread of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew amongst scholars;
- (2) the invention of printing about the same time, by which books could be produced in multiple copies without the slow and laborious effort of hand copying with its inevitable risk of copyists' errors; and
- (3) the Reformation, which gave an enormous impetus towards the goal of translating both Testaments, so that ordinary people could compare pulpit utterances with the inspired word of God.

**I**teas licet narone antehi  
omnis aut nudi. dila  
pulus apostolos. postea  
pauli scire usq; ad con  
fessionē nō seruicio dno fuit iuuine.  
nam neq; uerum uirū habuit neq; fi  
lios: septuaginta et quatuor annoru  
obit in bethania. plerū spiritui sancto.  
Qui nō iam scripta essent euāgētia. p  
marchū quidē in iudea. p marcū autē  
in italia. sancto instigante spiritum in  
actū p̄catis ipse scripsit euāgēliū:  
significans etiā ipse in principio ante  
sui alia esse descripta. Cuius etiā q  
ordo euāgēticū dispositionis appone  
ra manere necessitas laboris fuit ut  
primū genus fidelibus omni p̄heran  
one uerum in carne de cast. manife  
stata humanitate ut iudicis fabulā  
arcent: in solo legis desiderio reuer  
tur: ut ne hereticis fabulis et sceleris  
solicitationibus seducti erodantur a ue  
nere elaboraret: detinet ut in prin  
cipio euāgēlij iohannis naturate pre  
sumpta. cui euāgēlij scriberet et in  
quo dicit scriberet indicaret: cōstitū ē  
se cōplera esse q̄ essent ab alijs in cōpa  
ra. Cui idro post bap̄tismi filij dei a  
p̄fessione generationis i casto imple  
reptent a principio uanitate huma  
ne potestas p̄missa ē: ut requirētibz  
demonstraret in quo apprehendēs e  
rat pre nathan filij dauid introiti re  
uerens i dno generationis admissio  
indisparabilis de p̄bitas in homini  
bus castū suū. p̄fectū opus hoīs redire  
in se p̄ filiū faceret: qui per dauid patē  
ueneratibus nec p̄berat in casto. Cui  
lucē non inueniens etiā scribēdorum  
actū apostolos potestas i ministerio  
datur: ut deo in dno pleno et filio p̄bi  
tōnis p̄tando. oratione ab apostolis

facta. forte domini electionis munerē  
completur: sicut paulus cōsumma  
tione apostolice ecclie daret. que dicit  
cōtra stimuli recalcitrante dno delegit  
set. Quod et legētibz ac requirētibz  
dno. et si per singula expridit a nobis  
utile fuerat: scias tamen ip̄ operāru  
agricola oporteat de suis fructibus e  
dere. uicium publicā curiositatem:  
ne nos ra uolūtibz tū dnostrare uid  
remur. quā fāctidimabus prodidisse.  
Explicit p̄fatio in ap̄te euāgēlij  
secundū in eam: Proletantur ip̄  
suis legi sua in euāgēlijum suum



**Q**uonia quidē multi co  
nat. hū ordinare nar  
rationes q̄ i nobis com  
plet: sūt res. sicut tradit  
dicit nobis q̄ ab inicio  
ip̄i uideat. et ministri  
fuit hūmō: uisū ē et michi abstracto  
omni a principio diligētē se ordie nbi  
scriber op̄te theophile: ut cognoscas  
con uerū de q̄i tradit: eo ueritatē. l.



**U**tin diebus hōdno re  
gio mare sacerdos quidam  
nomine zarthanas de ui  
et abia. et uxor illi de filia  
bus aaron: et nomen eius elizabeth.  
Etant autem iusti ambo ante deum:  
incedens in contribus mandario z  
iustificationibus domini sine quere  
la. Et non erat illis filius. ro q̄ el  
set elizabeth stalis: et ambo p̄ofes  
sissent i diebz suis. Itadu est autē eu sa  
cerdotio fungetur zarthanas in ordi  
ne uisū sue ante dno: sedm cōsuetudi  
nem sacerdotū forte ep̄ic ut inuentum  
poneret ingressus in tempū domini.  
Et omīs multitudo ppli erat orās so  
ris hora inuenti. A p̄p̄tione autem illi  
angelus dno: stans a dextis altaris

Besides the English versions which are a notable feature of this period, Luther's German translation was published in 1522-34 and the first French versions in 1534-45; Spanish, Italian and Czech versions appeared some 70 years later.

### THE EARLIEST VERSIONS

Certain translations of the Old Testament had, of course, been made centuries earlier, especially the Aramaic 'Targums' and the Greek 'Septuagint'; these were produced, to serve the Jewish communities in Palestine and in the dispersion respectively, for the large number of ordinary Jews who no longer spoke Hebrew. As Christianity spread, the need arose for versions in Syriac, Latin, Coptic and other languages in lands around the Mediterranean where apostolic teaching had penetrated. Notable among these was the Latin tongue, and with the growing supremacy of the Roman bishops it became—in Jerome's 'Vulgate' translation—the 'official' version throughout the Holy Roman Empire for over a millennium. However, after centuries of copying and recopying, the text of the Vulgate became very inaccurate, and although Latin remained the language of the Roman Catholic liturgy, it was meaningless to the common people when they heard it read in church. Such was the situation in the second half of the fourteenth century when the first complete Bible in English was published, the work of John Wycliffe and his followers.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

There had indeed been earlier translations of small portions of the Bible into Old English (ie Anglo-Saxon), eg by King Alfred, but none of these has survived. Some of the earliest specimens are 'glosses'—interlinear insertions in copies of the Latin Psalter and Gospels. Wycliffe stands out as a man who acknowledged the sole authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice, and he wished to give everyone access to the written Word of God. Unfortunately, because he did not know Hebrew or Greek, he had to work from the Latin Bible, with all its accumulated faults. His earlier edition, produced between 1380 and 1384, is extremely literal and 'word-for-word' with the Latin. A later Wycliffe version, believed to be the work of John Purvey, shows much more feeling for English idiom; it held the field until Tyndale's translation appeared, although it was strongly condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities, who imposed severe penalties on anyone caught circulating it.

### THE WORK OF TYNDALE

The 'father' of the English Bible was William Tyndale. Filled with the same zeal as Wycliffe to put the Scriptures within reach of all, he nevertheless found it impossible to fulfil his purpose in England. He left for Hamburg in 1524 and in little over a year produced his first translation direct from Erasmus' edition of the





S. Mathew.

Jo. v.

the shypp/with Sebede their father /mendinge there netts/  
and called them. And they with out tarynge left the shypp  
and there father and folowed hym.

¶ And Iesus wet about all galile/teachynge in there synagos  
ges/ and preachynge the gospell of the kyngdom/and healyng  
ge all manner of syctnes/ and all maner diseases amonge the  
people. And hys fame spred a broode through out all suria.  
And they brought vnto hym all sicke people/that were taken  
with dyuers diseases and grypyngs/and them that were pos  
sessed with deuylls/and those which were lunaticke/and those  
that had the palsy: And he healed the. And there folowed  
him a greate noūbre of people/ from galile/ and from the ten  
cetes/and from ierusalem / and from iury/and from the res  
gions that lye beyond iordan.

### The fyfth Chapter.

¶ When he sawe the people/ he

Eu. vi.

**W**ent vp into a mountaine/and when he was sett/  
hys disciples cam vnto him /and he opened his  
mouth/and taught them sayinge: Blessed are the  
povre in spere: for theirs is the kyngdom of heven. Blessed  
are they that mourne: for they shalbe comforted. Blessed are  
the meke: for they shall inheret \* the erthe. Blessed are they  
which hūger and thirst for rightewesnes: for they shalbe fyl  
led. Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obeyne mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in hert: for they shall se god. Bless  
ed are the maynteyners of peace: for they shalbe called  
the chyldren of god. Blessed are they which suffre persecucion  
for rightewesnes sake: for theirs is the kyngdom of heven.  
Blessed are ye whē mens shall revyle you/and persecute you/  
and shal falsly saye all manner of evle sayings/ agaynst you  
for my sake. Reioyce and be gladde/for greate is youre rewar  
de in heven. For so persecuted they the prophetts which were  
before youre dayes.

\* Ent.

The worlde this  
kerke too possesse  
the erthe/and to  
defend there aw  
ne/when they use  
violence & power  
but christ teaches  
th that the worlde  
musse be possessed  
with mekenes on  
ly/ and with oute  
power and violes  
nce.

All these dedes  
here rehearsed as  
to norishe peace/  
to shewe mercy/  
to suffre psecucion/  
and so forth/ma  
ke not a man hap  
pyre and blessed/  
neither deserve ry  
be rewarde of he  
ven: but dedare  
and testifie that  
we are happy and  
blesse and that  
we shall have gra  
teate pmoctio i he  
ven. and certyfy  
eth vs i oure hert  
res that we are  
goddess sonnes/ &  
that the holy gos  
pelt is in vs. for all  
good thynges are  
given to vs frely  
of god for christes  
blowdes sake &  
his merittes

D

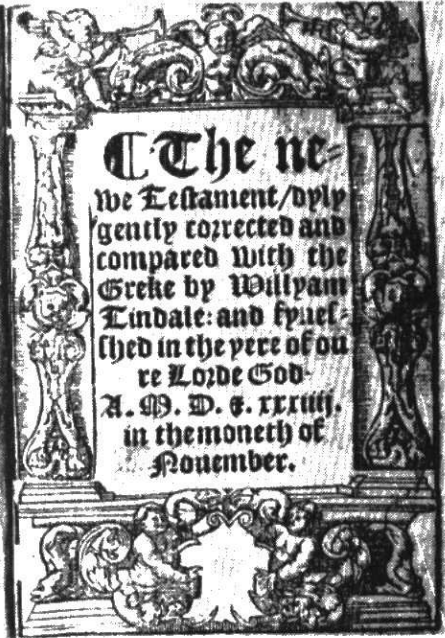
Tyndale's translation of Matthew, chapter 5

Greek New Testament. Several revisions followed up to 1534, together with portions of the Old Testament (direct from Hebrew) on which he was engaged until his death at the stake in Belgium two years later.

Tyndale's revised New Testament of 1534 has formed the basis of all subsequent revisions down to the Revised Standard Version of 1946 (see chart on page 20). Nine-tenths of Tyndale's language survives in the Authorised Version, and such changes as were later introduced (eg 'charity' for 'love', 'church' for 'congregation') are arguably for the worse.



WILLIAM TINDALL



Tyndale's first revision of his New Testament printed in 1534 in Antwerp.  
The passage below is the opening of I Corinthians, chapter 13

**F**though I spake with the tonges of men and  
 aungels, and haue no loue, I am euen as  
 soundyng brasse: or as a tynklynge cymball.  
 And though I coulde prophely, and vnder-  
 stande al secretes, and all knowledg: yea, yf  
 I had <sup>a</sup>\*all fayth, so that I could moue mou-  
 tayns out of their places, and yet had no loue, I were no-  
 thyng. And though I bestowe all my goodes <sup>(to fede the poore)</sup>  
 and though I gyue my body euen that I burned, and yet  
 haue no loue, it profeteth me nothyng.

<sup>†</sup>The pistle on the soday called Quinquagesima.  
<sup>Mat. viij. c.</sup>  
<sup>Luke. xiiij. c.</sup>



These are the lawes that thou shalt lay before them.

# BIBLIA

## The Bible that

is, the holy Scripture of the  
Olde and New Testament, faithfully  
and truly translated out  
of Douche and Latyn  
in to Englyshe.

M. D. XXXV.



So youre waye into all the world, & preach the Gospel



S. paul II. Tessa. III.  
Praise for vs, that the worde of God make  
habe fre passage, and be glorified. zc.

S. paul Col. III.  
Let the worde of Christ dwell in you plene  
ceously in all wysdome zc.

Josue I.  
Let not the boke of this lawe departe  
out of thy mouth, but exercise thyselfe  
therin daye and night zc.



Title page of Coverdale's Bible—the first printed Bible in English

In the years which followed Tyndale's death a number of translations based on his work were produced, including Coverdale's Bible (1535), Matthew's Bible (1537), the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Bishops' Bible (1568). These last two were Calvinistic and Anglican respectively, and it was partly to heal the breach between these opposing parties that the idea of a new translation received the support of King James I. The labours of four years resulted in the birth of the Authorised Version in 1611. It gradually won general approval over its main rival, the Geneva Bible, and reigned supreme for the next 250 years. Its beautiful and lofty English has become part and parcel of our literary heritage, and its influence on the lives of millions has been incalculable.

However, spoken language slowly but surely changes over the centuries and much of the wording and structure of the Authorised Version is archaic, if not alien, to English speakers of today unless they have been in close contact with it over many years. Further, its translators chose to render a large number of the original words in diverse ways in English, even with a confined context, thus effectively obscuring lines of reasoning plain enough in the Hebrew or Greek.\*

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the study of the Greek Bible received a great impetus with the discovery and subsequent publication of several ancient codices such as the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus. As a result, and in view of the defects of the Authorised Version just mentioned, a Revision Committee was set up in 1870, and produced the Revised Version of the New and Old Testaments in 1881 and 1885 respectively. The revision was undertaken in conjunction with an American committee, and a similar volume, known as the American Standard Version, incorporating their preferred renderings (they were less hidebound than their English colleagues) was published in 1901.

### THE REVISED VERSION

The Revised Version of 1885 (or its American counterpart) is probably the most reliable of all official versions for the general reader. It is the most consistent in its translation, and is closest in its adherence to what prophet and apostle actually wrote. Most of its editions, like those of subsequent translations, are properly paragraphed, and the fragmentation of verse division has been kept to a minimum. The archaic language of the Authorised Version was not changed, however, except where the Revision Committee felt that a word had become completely obsolete.

Unfortunately the Revised Version was not received with much enthusiasm, mainly because it changed many well-known and popular passages to more

\* For example, compare II Corinthians 3. 18 and 4. 3<sup>1</sup> in the Authorised and Revised Versions, where the analogy of a veil runs through Paul's reasoning.

accurate or consistent, but less elegant, renderings. Over the next half century a number of private translators endeavoured to fill the gap—Darby, Rotherham, Weymouth, Moffatt, and others. During the same period further progress in Bible archaeology and languages, together with the more keenly felt archaisms of both Authorised and Revised Versions, induced scholars on both sides of the Atlantic to contemplate new translations. In America the National Council of Churches set up a committee in 1937 for a further revision of the American Standard Version, and the Revised Standard Version New Testament duly appeared in 1946. The Old Testament, published in 1952, included a few of the alternative readings of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

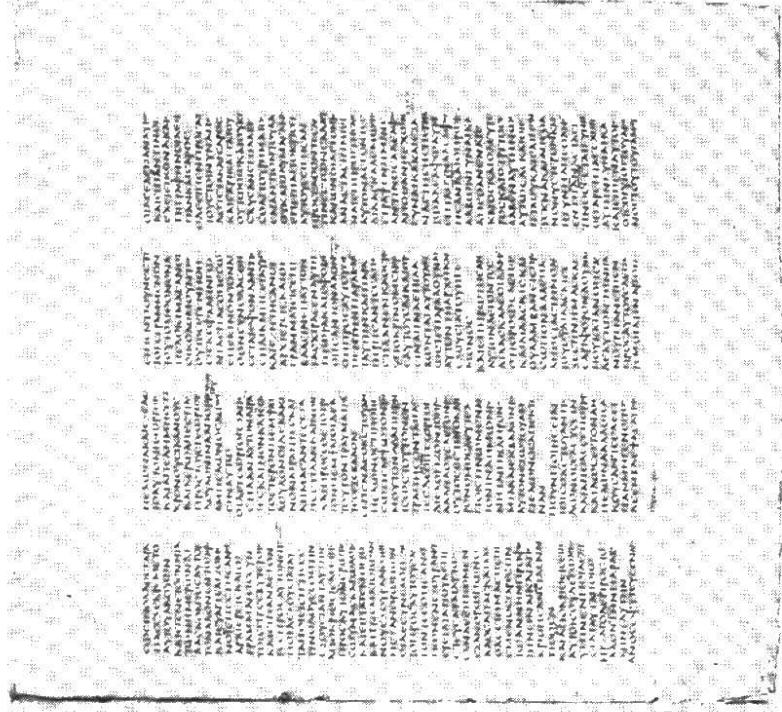
The Revised Standard Version has proved very popular for the general reader because of its dignified yet substantially current English, although it is not as consistent in its translation as the older Revised Version. In the Old Testament it adopts a good many readings of the Septuagint, Syriac and other ancient versions in preference to those of the traditional (Masoretic) Hebrew text and some of these may well be justified. What is less satisfactory is the not infrequent resort to 'corrections' of the Hebrew text without manuscript authority; these ought rather to be called 'conjectures', and they detract from what otherwise would be a very acceptable version.

There is no inbuilt incompatibility between the use of modern literary English and faithfulness in translation. This is demonstrated by the New Jewish Version of the Old Testament based on the traditional Hebrew text, which the Jewish Publication Society of America issued in one volume in 1985. In a smaller area E. V. Rieu's translation of the four gospels (in the Penguin Classics) achieves the same success. But when the more recent versions of the whole Bible are studied, viz. the Jerusalem Bible (1966) and the New English Bible (1970) the indisputable modernity of the language is unfortunately offset by a 'reconstruction' of the text in various passages of the Old Testament. Another regrettable feature is the transposition of lines, verses and even groups of verses on a purely subjective basis (following the lead of Moffatt fifty years previously). For example, in the New English Bible, Isaiah chapter 5. 24, 25 is inserted between verses 4 and 5 of chapter 10; Job chapter 41.1-6 appears after chapter 39.30; there is no manuscript evidence whatever for introducing such changes. One has therefore to read the Old Testament portions of these new translations with a great deal of caution, and preferably with the Revised Version (or American Standard Version) at hand to check doubtful renderings.

#### THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE

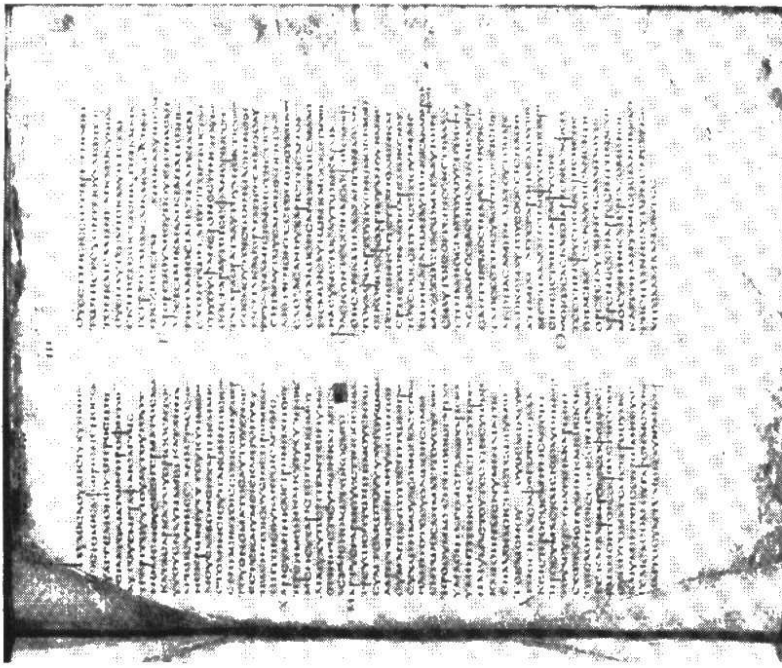
Another version which has become very popular in recent years is the Good News Bible which, in its New Testament section, first appeared as Today's English Version in 1966. It is a Bible Society publication, and there are similar up-to-date





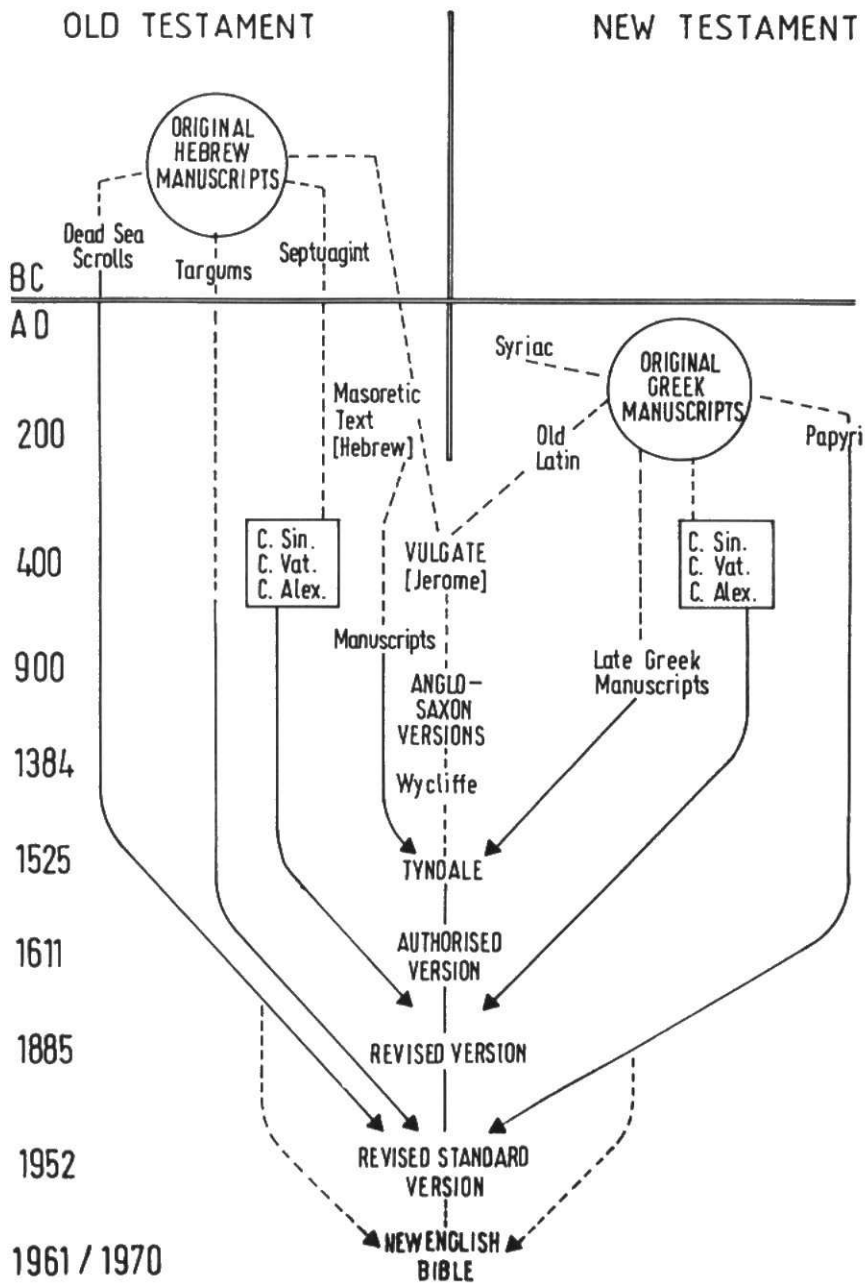
The Codex Sinaiticus—showing part of Luke's record

Note that the Alexandrian manuscript has two columns to a page and the Sinaitic manuscript has four. Both are written without spaces between the words and in capital letters.



The Codex Alexandrinus—the page shows the opening of the Epistle to the Romans

Note that the Alexandrian manuscript has two columns to a page and the Sinaitic manuscript has four. Both are written without spaces between the words and in capital letters.



versions in French (*Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd'hui*), German (*Die Gute Nachricht*) and other languages. The translators' aim in each case was to produce a simple text, avoiding as far as possible stereotyped religious language, and using paraphrases whenever the original was repetitive or unclear to the lay reader. An unfortunate result of this latter policy has been the loss on occasions of important detail.\*

Of course, for well over a century now the various Bible Societies have been promoting the translation of the Scriptures into more and more of the world's great variety of languages. These range from the eleven major tongues of India, each with their many millions of speakers, to small and isolated pockets in Africa and South America, some with only a few hundred speaking a common language. For many peoples, however, it is not a question of lack of translation but rather of access to the printed word, whether through illiteracy or political and religious factors.

#### THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

Finally, in 1978 another major translation, the New International Version, was published in the USA by the New York International Bible Society, and in Britain the following year. It is in general a very attractive production in contemporary yet dignified English. There is, however, in the New Testament a strong trinitarian bias which the reader needs to watch for.

What version, then, should the serious reader rely on? For general reading the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version have much to commend them. For serious study, however, one must still resort to the Revised Version or the American Standard Version, or to one or more of the older 'private' versions such as Rotherham's 'Emphasized Bible' or J. N. Darby's 'New Translation', which were painstakingly produced by men with a wholesome respect for the written text. By using our discrimination in this way, God's revelation to man can be learned and appreciated in all its beauty, and His will understood and applied in our daily lives.

**It should be stressed, however, that knowledge of the 'first principles' of Bible truth, which are essential to salvation, can be learned from virtually any translation. These first principles are repeated, emphasised and illustrated so frequently throughout the Bible that the conscientious reader cannot fail to take note of them.**

\* For example, in Luke 1. 32, when the angel told Mary about the son she would bear: 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David', the Good News Bible reads: 'The Lord God will make him a king, as his ancestor David was'. This falls short of the angel's specific promise and its Old Testament foundations, eg in Isaiah 9. 7; Jeremiah 33. 17-20; Psalm 89. 3, 4.

# The Word of God

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THE BIBLE consists of 66 books written during a period of about one thousand five hundred years. There were many writers ranging from peasant to monarch and the books were written in a number of different countries—Israel, Egypt, Babylon and Italy. In spite of these features and contrary to the statements of many people **there is complete harmony throughout the Bible**. The Old and New Testaments are inseparably linked. The following figures illustrate the point.

|                                      |        | <i>In the writings of</i> |              |              |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                      |        | <i>Paul</i>               | <i>James</i> | <i>Peter</i> |
| Direct quotations from O.T.          | ... .. | 132                       | 4            | 10           |
| O.T. incidents mentioned             | ... .. | 38                        | 3            | 5            |
| O.T. references—not exact quotations |        | 13                        | 1            | 8            |

The first verse of the New Testament is as follows:

‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.’<sup>1</sup>

Then follows a genealogy in which a number of well known Old Testament names occur.

The foregoing facts can be explained if we accept the Bible *as a whole* as Divinely inspired, *ie*, the writers all being guided by the Spirit of God. In early Christian times both New and Old Testaments were accepted in this way as Divinely inspired. Paul wrote that he thanked God without ceasing ‘... *because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*’.<sup>2</sup> This of course refers to matters recorded in the New Testament, but the apostle is equally definite about the Old as is shown elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> If the Bible is

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 1. 1    <sup>2</sup>I Thessalonians 2. 13    <sup>3</sup>II Timothy 3. 16, 17

opened at almost any page in the second half of the Old Testament, which contains the writings of the prophets, chapter after chapter begins with words like:

'Hear the word of the Lord'  
'The word of the Lord came to me'

The Bible claims to come from God: it claims to be inspired. The word *inspired* is connected with 'breathing' so that when Paul wrote, '*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*' it means 'All scripture is God-breathed' or 'breathed out by God'. In this short phrase is the astounding claim of the Bible to be the Word of God.

### INSPIRATION AT WORK

Jeremiah was one of the prophets of Israel and one of the longest books in the Bible bears his name. He was sent to turn the people of Israel from their wicked ways back to God, who said to him:

'Thou shalt go to all that I [God] shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak . . . Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.'<sup>4</sup>

Jeremiah had a very hard task in front of him; the people were unresponsive and antagonistic to his message. He suffered greatly and expressed his troubles to God in the following words:

'O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long.'<sup>5</sup>

Jeremiah was a lone voice for God amongst a wicked people and he confesses to the Lord that, in the past, he had decided to act as his messenger no more:

'But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; INDEED, I CANNOT.'<sup>6</sup>

Jeremiah was the chosen instrument of God and despite the unpleasantness he was experiencing and his own desire to speak no more in God's name, Jeremiah was powerless to cease; his work continued.

Think of that definition of inspiration we mentioned earlier—'God-breathed'; how true this is of Jeremiah's words and writings; he was one of those prophets Peter had in mind, a man carried along by the Holy Spirit, an instrument in God's hands speaking His words to the people.

### REASONS FOR BELIEF

How can we be sure that the Bible is God's word? God does not ask the impossible. He always gives us sound reasons and strong evidence for belief.

<sup>4</sup>Jeremiah 1. 7, 9    <sup>5</sup>Jeremiah 20. 7, 8 (N.I.V.)    <sup>6</sup>Jeremiah 20. 9 (N.I.V.)

There are a number of lines of evidence which can give us confidence in the Bible and we have already drawn attention to its unique construction and honest portrayal of events. The Bible is historically accurate down to the smallest details, an accuracy which has been repeatedly tested by the science of archaeology.

Another unique feature of the Bible record is its many and varied prophecies—the ability to chart accurately the affairs of men and nations, often centuries in advance. This is not the stuff of fairy tales but sober fact. This ability to foretell future events even down to the 20th century is one of the hallmarks of the Bible, stamping it as a Divine record.

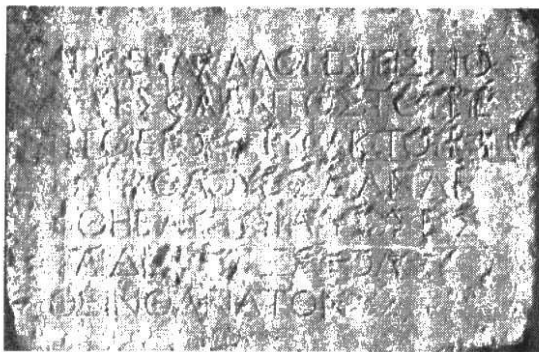
In order to whet your appetite for further reading and study we will consider two lines of evidence, historical accuracy and prophecy.

#### EXAMINE THE TEXT

Let us look at the text itself and note some examples of its accuracy which it is possible to prove. From the New Testament we have chosen the following words of the apostle Paul:

'In Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.'<sup>7</sup>

Paul is declaring that through Jesus, Gentiles had been brought within the scope of the Divine purpose. There was now no difference between Jew and Gentile.<sup>8</sup> In the past the distinction had been very marked, so much so that Gentiles



White limestone notice forbidding Gentiles to pass—from Herod's Temple at Jerusalem

<sup>7</sup>*Ephesians 2. 13, 14*    <sup>8</sup>Compare *Galatians 3. 26-29*



were forbidden on pain of death to go inside the inner court of Herod's temple at Jerusalem. On one occasion the Jews saw Paul with an Ephesian and thought he had been taken into the temple. This caused a considerable stir.<sup>9</sup>

Along the balustrade between the two courts was a notice in Greek forbidding Gentiles to go within the sanctuary on pain of death. Excavators have discovered in the temple area one of these notices, and there is a cast in the British Museum—the original is in Constantinople. So the reference of Paul to the 'middle wall of partition' was not only apt, but it was accurate and has been confirmed. Examples of such accuracy can be multiplied.

### HISTORICAL ACCURACY

You will be familiar with the record of Joseph and Mary, the mother of Jesus, who travelled from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

The gospel writer Luke gives us the reason why that long journey was undertaken. He wrote:

'And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David :) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.'<sup>10</sup>

These verses clearly show that Joseph's family originated from Bethlehem and in order to obey the Emperor's decree they travelled the many miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

The record reads as sober historical fact but critics of the Bible found fault with the record. They seized upon this historical aspect concerning the census and dismissed it as complete fiction, arguing that there was no census in the Roman Empire at that particular time and no decree for the people to return to their family home. For good measure, they also stated that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria at that time.

Like so many other critics of the Bible record, those who found fault with Luke's account have subsequently been proved completely and utterly wrong. Archaeology has proved the Bible record right in all its detail; discoveries have shown that the Romans did have a regular enrolment of taxpayers and held a census every 14 years, taking place first in the reign of the very Emperor mentioned by Luke—Caesar Augustus.

<sup>9</sup>Acts 21. 28, 29    <sup>10</sup>Luke 2. 1-5

Archaeologists have also shown that Cyrenius was governor of Syria about the time of Christ's birth; this information is based on an inscription found in Antioch. It appears that Cyrenius was twice governor and the critics of Luke's account knowing only of his later governorship around AD 6 dismissed Luke as an inaccurate historian. They should have been more careful.

Finally a papyrus found in Egypt which contained direction for the conduct of one such census agrees with Luke that registration in the family home *was* required.

Sir William Ramsey, one of the great archaeologists of the last century made the following conclusion after 30 years' study of Luke's writing:

'Luke is a historian of the very first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.'<sup>11</sup>

This conclusion is not surprising is it? After all, the author is God; Luke, like the rest of the Bible writers, was only recording *His* words. If we can trust the Bible record in such small details we can have confidence in the record as a whole.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY

Turning now to the Old Testament, we can find very many instances of historical narrative which are confirmed by archaeology.

The following is recorded about Hezekiah, King of Judah, for example:

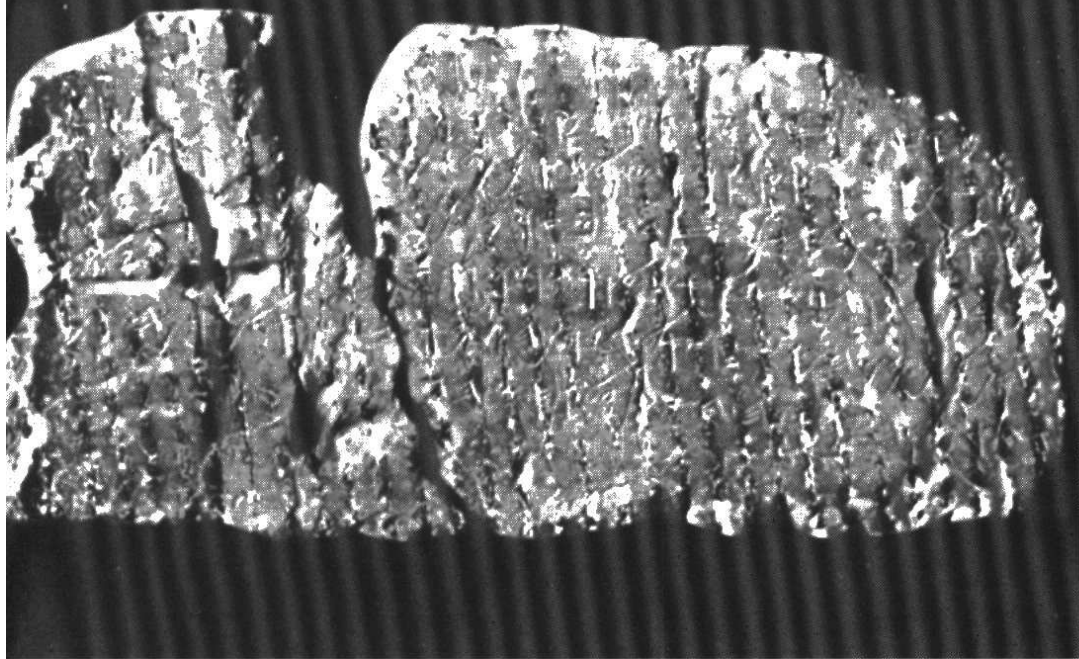
'And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?'<sup>12</sup>

'This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David.'<sup>13</sup>

An inscription was found in Jerusalem in 1880 in the reputed Pool of Siloam. It is agreed by all recognised authorities that this Siloam Inscription (a cast of which is in the British Museum) has reference to the above-mentioned water supply and its construction. The following is a translation:

'(Behold) the excavation! Now this had been the history of the excavation. While the workmen were still lifting up the axe, each towards his neighbour, and while three cubits still remained (to cut through), (each heard the voice of the other who called to his neighbour, since there was an excess in the rock on the right hand and on the left). And on the day of the excavation the workmen struck each to meet his neighbour, axe against axe, and there flowed the waters from the spring to the pool for a thousand two hundred cubits; and . . . one hundred cubits was the height of the rock over the heads of the workmen.'

<sup>11</sup>The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament. Sir W. M. Ramsey <sup>12</sup>*II Kings* 20. 20 <sup>13</sup>*II Chronicles* 32. 30



Hezekiah's inscription—now in the Istanbul Museum\*

Confirmation like this serves to strengthen our belief in the Bible, and as there have been many such cases, there can be **NO DOUBT ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THE ACCOUNTS.**

The Book of Chronicles quoted above is one of the historical books of the Bible. The first Book of Chronicles contains no less than sixteen chapters devoted to genealogical particulars, family and personal details, extensive lists of names tracing pedigrees back to the sons of Jacob, Levitical families and the allotment of cities to priests in their distribution throughout the rest of the tribes of Israel, Levitical orders in the service of the temple, etc.

How did such statistical documents come to be written? They must have been written in the first instance because of facts which it was desirable to record—facts about the land, the people and their transactions. Just as we can refer to our registers of such things and confirm past happenings, so these writings in the books of Chronicles and elsewhere in the Bible prove the 40 years in the wilderness, the exodus from Egypt, the work of Moses, the accounts of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—in general, the historical foundation on which the Bible stands.

\* This is one of the examples which is dealt with in detail in 'LIGHT on Bible Archaeology'.

## PROPHECY

Finally, let us look briefly at Bible prophecy, the most fascinating of subjects; if you are familiar with the Bible at all you will know that the history of the Jews forms a large part of the record. For reasons that we cannot pursue now, they are the chosen people of God and they are the subject of many prophecies in the Bible.

The most amazing prophecies concern the dispersion of the Jewish people from their land in the first and second centuries AD and their subsequent return after centuries of wandering and persecution.

Israel today is a nation constantly in the news and a military power to be reckoned with. Their re-emergence as a national force is a living witness—first to God's existence and secondly to the truth of the Bible record.

Jesus Christ himself predicted the day when they would be driven from the land:

'And they [the Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.'<sup>14</sup>

These words were fulfilled in AD 135 when the Roman armies again attacked Jerusalem and the Jews were taken into exile.

Their regathering has also been on record for thousands of years. Here are two examples of many taken from the prophet Jeremiah:

'For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, *and they shall possess it.*'<sup>15</sup>

'Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel *will gather him*, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.'<sup>16</sup>

These prophecies deserve your study; they are remarkable and have been fulfilled in the twentieth century. Israel is a living miracle; the Bible makes it clear that when Israel is regathered as a nation then the Kingdom of God will soon be established on the earth.

Prophecy is beyond the power of man and as you read the pages of LIGHT you will be introduced to many Bible prophecies.<sup>17</sup> There is only one satisfactory answer to these things and it is the answer already quoted:

'Men spoke *from God* as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Luke 21. 24    <sup>15</sup>Jeremiah 30. 3    <sup>16</sup>Jeremiah 31. 10

<sup>17</sup>There is a special issue called 'LIGHT on Bible Prophecy'. See page 32.

<sup>18</sup>II Peter 1. 21 (N.I.V.)

# The message of the Bible

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WE HUMANS ARE often in need of help, more so than we care to admit.

From the moment of our entry into the world—with a cry for help—we remain dependent to some degree all our lives, very often ending our days in a condition as completely dependent as when we began. Moreover, from beginning to end we are breathing the God-given breath of life, all too often failing to acknowledge that it is God's gift alone that has made possible our short and troubled existence.

'Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.'<sup>1</sup>

And then—we die—and then?

Much optimistic speculation has surrounded the subject of death. It has been confidently declared over and over again that death is not what it seems, but the beginning of a new life on another plane. An attractive idea truly, but is there any substance in it? If not it is worse than useless, because it raises false hopes and obscures the truth. But where can truth be found?

## THE BIBLE IS TRUTH

The whole of this booklet has been written with one simple purpose—to direct your attention to the Bible as the source of truth; not merely observable truth about science or nature, but truths which we cannot know otherwise, DIVINELY REVEALED TRUTH concerning God our Creator and His purpose; concerning what He wants us to do, and what He promises for the future. When we read the Bible and take it as our guide through life, we are spared all the uncertainties, the nagging doubts, the forebodings for the future to which we are otherwise prey. The Bible is like a rock in the midst of shifting sand. Once our feet are firmly upon it we have a sure foundation on which to build our lives.

<sup>1</sup>*Psalm 104. 30*

But in taking the Bible as our guide to truth, we may find we have to discard some cherished ideas which we formerly believed, and possibly even thought were part of the Bible's message.

For example, this question of the death state already mentioned. The Bible is absolutely clear and emphatic: death is a state of complete unconsciousness, a cessation of life, and there is no part of us that survives in conscious existence of any kind.

'In death there is no remembrance of thee.'<sup>2</sup>

'The dead know not any thing.'<sup>3</sup>

Death, the Bible declares, came as punishment on man for his sin, so it is hardly likely to be the doorway to something better! Paul reminds his readers: '*death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*'.<sup>4</sup>

A grim message certainly, but once we have acknowledged it as revealed truth we are in a position to receive the MESSAGE OF HOPE the Bible has for us. It can be simply stated: DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH.

### GOD'S PROMISES

This theme can be traced right through the Bible. Very early on God made certain promises to His faithful servants which related to eternity:

'For all the land which thou [Abram] seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed FOR EVER.'<sup>5</sup>

'Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established FOR EVER before thee [David].'<sup>6</sup>

Abraham and David, having been promised something everlasting, must clearly be given everlasting life in order to enjoy it. This was certainly the hope of such men:

'God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.'<sup>7</sup>

Unending life is one of the things the Bible promises through the work of Jesus Christ, '*who . . . hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*'.<sup>8</sup>

However, we have already noted that death is the consequence of sin—it is a matter of cause and effect—'*the wages of sin is death*'.<sup>9</sup> Man was expelled from the garden of Eden at the beginning to prevent him becoming an immortal sinner:

'Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden.'<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 6. 5    <sup>3</sup>Ecclesiastes 9. 5    <sup>4</sup>Romans 5. 12    <sup>5</sup>Genesis 13. 15    <sup>6</sup>II Samuel 7. 16

<sup>7</sup>Psalm 49. 15    <sup>8</sup>II Timothy 1. 10    <sup>9</sup>Romans 6. 23    <sup>10</sup>Genesis 3. 22-3



### DELIVERANCE FROM SIN AND DEATH

While sin remains, death remains. If death is to be abolished, sin must be abolished too. It is idle for us to dream that modern medical science can eliminate death from our experience—God has decreed otherwise. But God has also in His kindness and love provided us with the means of deliverance from both sin and death. All through the Old Testament can be found hints and promises of this coming deliverance. The prophet Isaiah declared:

'He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.'<sup>11</sup>

Men and women of faith were encouraged to trust in such assurances; Job was one who did so:

'If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee.'<sup>12</sup>

So the message of hope gradually unfolds through the Bible, until we come to the New Testament, where the promise comes to fruition:

'And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.'<sup>13</sup>

'John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'<sup>14</sup>

Do please notice the emphasis in such verses on the taking away of SIN. This is crucial to our needs as children of Adam. The task that was set before Jesus was to destroy the death-dealing power of sin by living a sinless life. If he had sinned, his death would have been unavailing. A further reminder of the importance of his sinlessness comes from Peter:

'Christ . . . Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth . . . Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.'<sup>15</sup>

### ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS

Such words take us to the heart of the Bible's message. Just as the life-giving blood pulses out from our heart through the whole body, so the love of God flows forth from the sacrifice of His Son giving life, eternal life, to all who will receive this message of hope.

'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'<sup>16</sup>

Jesus rose, the third day, the victory won, sin's power destroyed, the grave conquered. What is more, the promise is given that all his faithful followers will also rise:

'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.'<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Isaiah 25. 8    <sup>12</sup>Job 14. 14, 15    <sup>13</sup>Matthew 1. 21    <sup>14</sup>John 1. 29    <sup>15</sup>I Peter 2. 21-24

<sup>16</sup>John 3. 16    <sup>17</sup>I Thessalonians 4. 14

Those who put their faith in Jesus and become his followers will share his triumph over death. Even though none of us is able to live at present as perfectly as Jesus did, God forgives our sins for Jesus' sake so long as we confess them and maintain our faith in him.

The passage quoted above which speaks about the resurrection of Jesus' followers goes on to tell when this will be:

'The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.'<sup>18</sup>

Jesus is coming back! This too is a vital element of the Bible's message. Only by returning from heaven can Jesus fulfil his God given mission, to bring lasting peace and joy to this earth by his righteous, world-wide reign. All who follow him now and obey him will share his glory then and enjoy for ever the blessings of his everlasting kingdom. Then, the promises given long ago by God to such men as Abraham and David will be fulfilled, and those faithful characters will rise, together with many others, to receive their promised inheritance.

#### ALL PEOPLE INVITED

There is no reason whatever why every reader of these lines should not also share in that bright future. God's invitation is not restricted to any one nation or class: '*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*'.<sup>19</sup> To do so involves commitment on our part, the exercise of faith, the obligations of being a disciple of Christ; but nothing is required of us that is beyond our ability to give, and God promises help to those who seek Him:

'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>1 Thessalonians 4. 16    <sup>19</sup>Revelation 22. 17    <sup>20</sup>Isaiah 55. 1-3

## SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE BIBLE

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The Christadelphians  
believe the Bible (Old and New Testaments)  
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Its principal theme is the salvation of mankind through the saving work  
of the Lord Jesus Christ and the setting up of the kingdom of God  
under his rulership when he returns to the earth.

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