

How We Got Our Bible

ORIGINAL WRITINGS

THE thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written largely in Hebrew with small parts in Chaldee. The first five books, known as "The Law," or "The Pentateuch" or "The Books of Moses" were written about 1500 B.C. The last of the Minor prophets, Malachi, was written about 400 B.C. Men used to question this early writing, but the archeologists have uncovered writings as early as 3500 B.C., dating back to the middle of Adam's lifetime.

The twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written for the most part in Greek and all within the first century A.D.

In the time of Christ and of the Apostles, the Scriptures included only the books of the Old Testament. The Greek translation known as the Septuagint, was more commonly used than the Hebrew original, though it was not an altogether accurate translation.

MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts are COPIES of the originals, in the original languages. The form of the letters and the materials used indicate the age of the manuscripts. No Hebrew manuscripts of an earlier date than 900 A.D. are known. But the Scriptures were in constant use before that time and the copying was done with such care that few mistakes were possible. Back in the days of Ezra a system of checking the Massor-

ah was instituted. In fine writing on the margins of every page were notes giving the count of all the letters on the page and many other details which made errors practically impossible.

There are hundreds of Greek manuscripts available. The oldest are called Uncial Manuscripts. They were written in capital letters, with no spacing between the words and no punctuation. The later Cursive Manuscripts are written in a running hand, the words are divided and punctuation is used. Since the time of the King James Version many manuscripts have been discovered of an earlier date and in far better condition than were available at that time. Textual critics have compared these manuscripts most carefully and as a result we have now a much more accurate Greek text than ever before.

There are three Manuscripts more outstanding than any others: the Sinaitic, the Vatican and the Alexandrian Manuscripts. These include both the Old and the New Testaments. None are entirely complete, but where something is lost from one, it is found in the other two. They were written in the fourth century. Each contains some other writings than those now recognized as belonging to the canon. The Old Testament in each is based on the Septuagint.

—by Grace H. Todd,
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