

WRITINGS OF WILLIM BARCLAY

by Willim Barclay

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Willim Barclay, compiled for study and devotional reading.

33 Chapters

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1.00. The Marking The Bible

THE MAKING THE BIBLE

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.01 General Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION THE AIM of Bible Guides is to present in 22 volumes a total view of the Bible, and to present the purpose, plan and power of the Scriptures.

Bible Guides are free from the technicalities of Biblical scholarship but are soundly based on all the generally accepted conclusions of modern Bible research.

They are written in clear, simple, straightforward English. Each author has worked to a comprehensive editorial pattern so that the 22 volumes form a concise conspectus of the Bible, THE AIM The aim of Bible Guides is to offer a "guide" to the main themes of each book (or group of books) rather than a commentary on the text of the book. Through Bible Guides the Bible itself will speak its message, reveal its power and declare its purpose.

Bible Guides is essentially an undertaking for non-theologically equipped readers who want to know what the Bible is about, how its various parts came to be written and what their meaning is to-day. But the preacher, teacher, educator and expositor of all ranges of the Christian Church will find Bible Guides a series of books to buy and study. They combine the modern knowledge of the Bible together with all the evangelical zeal of sound Biblical expression and all done in a handy readable compass.

EDITORIAL PLAN In our suggestions to the writers of the various books we were careful to make the distinction between a "commentary" and a "guide". Our experience is that an adequate commentary on a book of the Bible requires adequate space and on the part of the student some equipment in the scholarly lore and technicalities of Biblical research. A "guide", however, can be both selective and compressed and do what it sets out to do guide the reader in an understanding of the book. That has been, and is, our aim. As general editors we have had a good deal of experience among the various schools of Biblical interpretation. We are constantly surprised at the amount of common Biblical understanding which is acceptable to all types of Christian tradition and churchmanship. We hope that our Bible Guides reflect this and that they will be widely used, and welcomed as a contribution to Biblical knowledge and interpretation in the twentieth century.

THE WRITERS The writers of Bible Guides represent a widely selected area of Biblical scholars, and all of them have co-operated enthusiastically in the editorial plan. They conceive their work to be that of examination, explanation and exposition of the book(s) of the Bible each is writing about. While they have worked loyally to the pattern we suggested they have been completely free in their presentation. Above all, they have remembered the present power and appeal of the Bible, and have tried to present its message and its authority for life to-day. In this sense Bible Guides is, we think, a fresh venture in the popular understanding of the Scriptures, combined as it is with the scholarly skill of our company of writers. We owe our thanks also to our publishers and their editors, Dr. Emory Stevens Bucke of the Abingdon Press of New York and Nashville, and Dr. Cecil Northcott of the Lutterworth Press of London, Their careful management and attention to publishing detail have given these Bible Guides a world wide constituency.

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E F, BRUCE CONTENTS INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE GUIDES THE EDITORS AUTHOR'S FOREWORD 1. THE MAKING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT The Three Sections The Grandeur of the Law The Starting-point of Scripture Some Discrepancies The Holiness Code Other Additions The Prophets The Prophets Established The Writings Attributed Authorship Establishing The Writings The People of die Book The Emergence of Sacred Scripture.

2. THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT The Old Testament, a Christian Book Apostles, the Living Books End of the Oral Tradition The Need of a Written Literature The Words of Jesus The ** Forms *' of the Gospel How the New Testament Emerged The Apostolic Authority The First Christian Books Collecting Paul's Letters Making the Collection The Gospels Win* their Place A Written Gospel Authoritative and Sacred Discarding the Old Testament? The Church's Decision Closing of the Books The Final Completion, 3. THE FINAL TEST Authority of the Books Does the Book speak of Christ? Faith in a Living Saviour.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AUTHOR'S FOREWORD IN ANY undertaking of study the first essential is to define the area of the study. This is precisely what we seek to do in this book. The area of study in this whole series of books is the Bible, and in this initial volume we seek to define the Bible, and to see how it came to be in the form in which it exists to-day. To give it its technical name, this book seeks to deal with the Canon of Holy Scripture, and to tell the story of die Formation of the Canon. For some reason or other the study of the Canon of Holy Scripture has come to be looked upon as one of die dry and less interesting fields of Biblical study. That is a great pity, for it is by the study of the formation of the Canon that we come to see the essential greatness of Scripture. As we study die history of the Bible, and as we come to see how it came to be what it is to-day, we see God speaking to men in every age and generation through men whom His Spirit inspired, and through events through which He was making His will known to men. We see that word of God establishing itself in the hearts and in the minds of men. We see die necessities of the human situation driving men to seek and to study and to cling to the word of God. We see the events of history and the needs of the human heart sending men for strength and for guidance, for help and for comfort to the word of God.

Above all we come to see how the Bible came to be the Bible, how these books came to be regarded as Holy Scripture, how they came to be regarded, not simply as great books, but as holy books, how they came to be regarded, not simply as the products of the mind and pen of great men, but as products of the divine inspiration of the Spirit of God. We come to see quite clearly, when we study the formation of the Canon of Scripture, that the Bible and the books of die Bible came to be regarded as the inspired word of God, not because of any decision of any Synod or Council or Committee or Church, but because in them men found God. The supremely important tiling is not what men did to these books, but what these books did to men. These books, as die story plainly shows, became Scripture, because nothing could stop them doing so. Their unique inspiration was self evidencing through their ability to meet the needs of the human heart, especially in times when life was an agonizing tiling. To study the Canon of Scripture is not to come away with a lesser view of Scripture, but with a far greater view, for it is to see the unanswerable power of the word of God in action in the minds and hearts of men.

It is my hope and prayer that, as people read this book, they will come more and more to realize the self-evidencing power of the word of God. All through my own life my experience has been that, the more I knew about the Bible, the greater the Bible became, and it is my prayer that the reading of the story of how the Bible came to be what it is to-day may convince those who read it even more that the Bible is the word of God to men.

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1.A 00. The Making of The Old Testament

THE MAKING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT To THE JEWS the Scriptures were indeed the Holy Scriptures. They expressed this special holiness in a very curious way. "All the Holy Scriptures," says the Mishnah, "render the hands unclean"* (Yadaim 3:5). When a man had touched an unclean thing he had to go through a process of the most meticulous cleansing and washing of his hands to remove all possible defilement. The law was that he must do exactly the same after he had touched any of the rolls which contained the books of Scripture. The intention of that strange regulation was to make it very difficult to handle the rolls of Scripture at all; they were so holy that they must be fenced about with rules and regulations which made it difficult even to take them within the hands. The process by which the Old Testament came to contain the books which it does to-day contain is a long story. It began with the emergence of the Book of Deuteronomy in 621 B.C. and finished with the decisions of the Council of Jamnia in AD. 90 Or thereby. It took seven hundred years and more to build up the divine library of the Old Testament; and it is the story of that long process which we are to study. The Three Sections As the Jews regarded it, the Old Testament fell into three sections the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, the Torah, the Nebiim, and the Kethubim, That division goes at least as far back as about 180 B.C., when the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus was made. The original author of the Hebrew version of that book was Jesus ben Sirach, and the Greek version was made by his grandson. In the Prologue to the Greek translation the grandson speaks of the many good things which were given to Israel for wisdom and instruction by the Law, the Prophets, and by the others who followed in their steps; and he tells how his grandfather gave himself much to the reading of the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers.

These are the earliest references to the threefold division of Scripture which became so familiar to the Jews. The Law consisted of the first five books of the Old Testament Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The Prophets fell into two sections. First, there were the Former Prophets, which we reckon rather as historical books- Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The last two books were generally, but not always, reckoned as two books and not four, as in our reckoning. Second, there were the Latter Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve. The Twelve, which we sometimes call the Minor Prophets, were reckoned as one book. It ought always to be remembered that when we speak of the Minor Prophets, the word does not imply any kind of inferiority in wisdom or quality or authority, but simply means that the books of these twelve prophets were shorter than the books of the great prophets. The Writings were a much more miscellaneous and loosely connected group, and were composed of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, Daniel Of these eleven books, five were known particularly as the Five Rolls because they were specially connected with certain great Jewish festivals at which they were always read. The Song of Solomon was read at the Passover, and allegorically interpreted to tell of the exodus from Egypt. Ruth, the harvest idyll, was read at the Feast of Weeks, which was a harvest-thanksgiving festival. Lamentations was read on the ninth day of the month Ab, which was

the day of fasting in memory of the destruction of the Temple. Ecclesiastes was read at the Feast of Tabernacles, because, as Cornill puts it, "it preaches a thankful enjoyment of life, united with God and consecrated by the fear of God, as the ultimate aim of wisdom." Esther was read at the Festival of Purim, for the existence of which it was the warrant and authority.

Jewish practice did not enumerate the books as we do, nor did it always enumerate them in the same way. The commonest method of enumeration, which is usual in the Talmud, is to number the books as twenty-four. In the Talmud the Old Testament is frequently called the twenty-four holy Scriptures, or the twenty-four books. In 4 Ezra (2 Esdras), an apocryphal book written towards the end of the first century A.D., there is an imaginary story of how Ezra the scribe restored from memory the books of Scripture, when they had been lost, and how he received other books from God along with them; and the story finishes with God's command: "The twenty-four books that thou hast written publish, that the worthy and unworthy may read therein; but the seventy last thou shalt keep, to deliver them to the wise among the people" (4 Ezra 14:45-46). The twenty four books were made up exactly according to the list that we have already given five books of the Law, four books of the Former Prophets and four books of the Latter Prophets, and eleven books of the Writings. This may be said to be what we might call the official enumeration.

1.A 01. The Grandeur Of The Law

THE GRANDEUR OF THE LAW

Although the Jews regarded all these books as sacred and holy, they did not give to all of them quite the same place. It was in the Law that the greatness of Scripture reached its full height and grandeur. It was the Law which was Scripture par excellence. Using the layout of the Temple as a parallel, they said that the Writings were like the Outer Court; the Prophets were like the Holy Place; but the Law was the Holy of Holies. The Law, they said, was created one thousand generations before Moses, and nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world, and was, therefore, older than the world itself. When the Messiah came, they said, the Prophets and the Writings would be abrogated, but the Law should endure for ever and ever. The Law, they said, was delivered to Moses by God complete and entire, and he who said that Moses himself wrote even one letter of it was guilty of sin; it was literally and completely the word of God. Jewish boys were taught the Law from their first consciousness, and had these laws, as it were, "engraven on their souls" (Josephus, Against Apion 2:18). They learn them from their earliest youth, so that "they bear the image of the laws in their souls" (Philo, Embassy to Cams 31). From their swaddling-clothes they were instructed in these sacred laws (Philo, Embassy to Caius 31). The Jew might in his national misfortunes lose everything, but he could not lose the Law', and, however far from his native land he was, and however hostile a ruler might be, he feared the Law more than any man (Josephus, Against Apion 2:38). History was full of examples of Jews who had chosen to die rather than to be disloyal to, or to abandon, or to disobey the Law (Josephus, Against Apion i: 8). In the Law there was concentrated the very being and essence of Scripture. Great as the Prophets and the Writings might be, they were only quabbalah, tradition, explanation, or interpretation of the Law, It is, therefore, with the story of the canonization of the Law that we must begin. When we make a careful study of the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch the word means the five rolls as it is called, we come to see that it is a composite document, and that it must have been the product "of a long growth and development." Jewish tradition ascribed every word of it to Moses, but there are clear signs that others besides Moses must have had a hand in its writing. Deuteronomy 34:1-12 tells of the death of Moses the story of which Moses himself could hardly have written. Genesis 36:1-43 gives a list of the kings of Edom, and then says that all these reigned before Israel had a king," which takes us down to the days of Saul at least (Genesis 36:31).

Genesis 14:14 tells us that Abram pursued those who had taken Lot captive as far as Dan, but from Judges 18:29 we find that Dan did not receive its name until long after Moses was dead. We find in the Pentateuch repeated references to the Philistines (Genesis 21:34; Genesis 26:14-18; Exodus 13:17), and the Philistines did not come into Palestine until about 1200 B.C., long after the time of Moses. There are quite certainly sections of the Pentateuch which come from a time long after Moses. Further, we find that the Pentateuch contains differing accounts of the same incident. There are, for instance, two stories of how Beersheba got its name, one tracing it back to a covenant between Abraham and Abimelech, the other to an incident in the relationships between

Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 21:31; Genesis 26:31). There are two stories of how Bethel got its name, the one tracing it back to the vision of Jacob on the way to Padanaram, the other to an incident years later when Jacob was returning from Padanaram (Genesis 28:19; Genesis 35:15).

These are small points, but often the difference is more important. There are two distinct accounts of the banishment of Hagar. In the one she is banished before her firstborn is born, and in the other she is banished when Ishmael has grown into a lad (Genesis 16:6 f; Genesis 21:9 f). Still more important, there are two quite distinct accounts of the creation story. In Genesis 1 man and woman are created at the end of creation after all the animals and the rest of the world have been formed. In Genesis 2:1-25 man is created first, then the animals and finally woman. There are two quite distinct accounts of the Flood story. In the one Noah is commanded to take into the ark two of every beast (Genesis 6:19), in the other seven of each clean animal and two of each unclean (Genesis 7:2), a difference which is underlined when the narrative goes on to say that all the animals went into the ark in pairs (Genesis 7:8-9). It is clear that in these stories the men who put the Pentateuch into its final form found two accounts of these incidents and events, and with complete honesty and fidelity to their sources they included both.

Perhaps most surprising of all is the difference in the use of the name of God. To see this clearly we must note that when the Authorized Version uses the word LORD in capital letters, it is translating Jehovah in the original Hebrew. In Exodus 6:2 we see God encouraging Moses for his contest with Pharaoh. " God spake unto Moses and said unto him: I am the LORD; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. ' And yet in Genesis 15:2; Genesis 15:8 we find Abraham calling God by the name Jehovah. We find both Sarah and Laban. using that name (Genesis 16:2; Genesis 24:3; Genesis 24:1). We find the name used in the days of Seth (Genesis 4:26); and we even find Eve using the name Jehovah when she had borne a child (Genesis 4:1). There is quite clearly more than one source here, and to note these discrepancies is not in the least to belittle or criticize the compilers of the Pentateuch; it is rather to underline the meticulous honesty with which they dealt with the sources and documents with which they worked.

We must now go on to see the process by which the Law grew up, and by which it came to be accepted by the Jews as the very word of God. To the Jews God was characteristically a self-revealing God. As G. F. Moore puts it, the outstanding characteristic of Judaism is that it conceived of itself as a revealed religion. God, as the Jews thought of Him, is a God who desires to make Himself and His will known to men, and who continually takes steps to bring that knowledge to men. The natural result of this point of view is that in Judaism the supreme figure is the prophet, for the prophet is the messenger of God to men, and it is through the prophet that the revelation of God to men is commonly made- The promise made through Moses is that God will always give to the nation a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15). The claim of Amos is that God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). God by His Spirit sent His word to men in the prophets, and it was the sin of the nation that men refused to hear (Zechariah 7:12). That is why Judaism ranked all the great national figures as prophets. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Job, Ezra, Mordecai were all prophets; the Jewish scholars enumerated forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses in their national history. This means that the revelation of God was conceived of as essentially a spoken revelation. God spoke to the prophets, and then the prophets spoke to men. The question then is, in a world of religious thought in which

the supreme figures were inspired men how did the idea of an inspired book emerge? "How," as Pfeiffer asks, "did the Israelites come to believe that God not only spoke but also dictated a book?"

1.A 02. The Starting-Point of Scripture

The Starting-Point of Scripture

It is just here that we are fortunate enough to have a fixed date which is a starting-point for, of sacred Scripture. It is to be understood that what follows is a reconstruction of events, as we think that they happened, and, although in our narrative we state the events as facts, we are none the less well aware that it is reconstruction and not indubitable history which we are presenting. In the year 621 B.C. a book which can only have been the Book of JuterpiTLomy wajjdiscovered in thg^gy^ (2 Kings 22:8-20). At the time the young Josiah was king, and he was a good king, and a true seeker after God. This book which had been discovered was accepted as the word of God, and was deliberately taken as nothing less than the law of the nation (2 Kings 23:3). Here is the beginning of the whole process. A book has been accepted as the revealed word of God, and it has been openly and deliberately and publicly taken as the law of the nation and of the individual. "For the first time in the history of mankind," says Pfeiffer, "a book was canonized as sacred scripture." But we must follow the process further. The publication of Deuteronomy very naturally stimulated the interest in written books, and there was another great book lying ready to hand. This was a great epic story which told of the history of Israel down to the death of David, and which was itself a compilation, which had been made somewhere about 650 B.C. To this document has been given the name of JE, because it is formed by the coming together of two documents called respectively JLaid EL These documents have been given these identifying initials 1 because one of them calls God by the name Jehovah right from the beginning, while the other calls God by the name Elohim, which is the general Hebrew word for God, down until the revelation of the name of Jehovah to Moses in Exodus 3:11-18. It is precisely because these two documents have been put together that there were the discrepancies which exist in certain sections of the Pentateuch.

1.A 03. Some Discrepancies

Some Discrepancies As a brief illustration of this let us look at the discrepancies which we noted in the Flood story. In Genesis 6:19 Noah is bidden to take two animals of every kind, and we note that this instruction occurs in a passage in which the speaker is God, that is, Elohim (Genesis 6:13). In Genesis 7:2 there is the instruction to take sevens of the clean beasts and twos of the unclean beasts and we note that this instruction occurs in a passage in which the speaker is the LORD, that is, Jehovah (Genesis 7:1). Further we note that the passage which says that the beasts went into the ark two by two is a passage in which the divine name is God, that is, Elohim (Genesis 7:9). This is an illustration of how the two documents were put together, and how in their earlier sections they can be distinguished by the name of God which each of them uses.

J, the document which calls God Jehovah from the very beginning, is one of the supreme religious documents of the world's literature. H. H. Rowley says of it; "The literary genius of its author will make it live, if only as literature, so long as men read literature." It thinks and speaks of God with a lovely childlike simplicity. Jehovah, makes man from the dust of the earth and breathes life into his nostrils (Genesis 2:7). He makes woman, man's partner, from a rib taken from man (Genesis 2:22). Jehovah plants a garden and walks in it in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). When Noah has embarked his cargo and himself safely into the Ark, Jehovah shuts the door after him (Genesis 7:16). There never has been any book which has spoken with such a lovely, childlike simplicity about God. When we further study this document called J, we find that it is specially interested in Judah and in the Southern Kingdom of Israel. It is in Hebron that Abraham dwells, and it is to Hebron that the spies go when they enter the land, and in the story of Joseph it is Judah who is the leading figure. We, therefore, may say that this document is the document which was produced in the land of Judah and in the Southern Kingdom to tell of the early history of Israel. The document which is called E, as we have seen, does not call God Jehovah until after the revelation of that name of Moses. That is why in the Pentateuch we find one line of thought which says that, although Abraham and the patriarchs knew God, they did not know Him by His name Jehovah., and another line of thought in which the name Jehovah is used from the days of Eve. E does not begin with creation; it begins with Abraham. It is not so simple and childlike as J is; it is specially interested in dreams and angels and in blessings and farewells. When we study it, we find that it is specially interested in Northern Israel. In its version of the Joseph story it is Reuben who plays the leading part. In the time of the Exodus it gives special prominence to Joshua who was from Ephraim; and in the Jacob story the centres are Bethel and Shechem. We, therefore, may say that this document is the document which was produced in the Northern Kingdom to tell of the early history of Israel. It is convenient for memory to make the letters J and E stand not only for Jehovah and Elohim, but also for Judah and Ephraim, so that they may also remind us of the parts of Israel from which these two documents came.

So, then, when Deuteronomy emerged, the Israelites already possessed the incomparable epic history contained in JE; and, since Deuteronomy was taken to be the work of Moses, it was amalgamated with JE, and inserted in the narrative, before the death of Moses. Thus slowly the

Pentateuch was being built up, and the divine library was taking its first steps to growth.

1.A 04. The Holiness Code

The Holiness Code

Now there follows still another addition. The great basic sentence which in itself contains the very essence of the religion of Israel is: "Ye shall be holy, for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Bit by bit there had grown up rules and regulations and principles governing this holiness, and laying down in what this holiness consists. These holiness laws are embodied in a document which is known as the Holiness Code, which is contained in Leviticus 17:1-16, Leviticus 18:1-30, Leviticus 19:1-37, Leviticus 20:11-27, Leviticus 21:1-24, Leviticus 22:1-33, Leviticus 23:1-44, Leviticus 24:1-23, Leviticus 25:1-55, Leviticus 26:1-46, and which is usually denoted by the letter H. This was compiled and published somewhere about 550 B.C., and it was natural that it, too, should be added to the growing sacred literature of Israel. So, then, the Holiness Code was, as it were, the next volume to be added to the divine library of the Old Testament.

There remains one great volume to be added, and then the Pentateuch is complete. This last section of the Pentateuch is called P, because it contains all the great ritual and sacrificial practice in the second Temple, and it is essentially a priestly document. It is composed of the remaining part of Leviticus, in which the sacrificial laws are set out. It also contains the rest of the history of the Pentateuch, and it is characterized by certain features. It can be noble and austere, as it is in Genesis I, when it tells its story of creation. It often tells stories to explain how the great religious practices and festivals of Israel came into being. For instance, its creation story explains the supreme importance of the Sabbath day. It is very fond of genealogies, for to a priest purity of lineage was essential, and it is to it that the long genealogies of the Pentateuch belong, and it became the great framework into which all the other parts of the Pentateuch were fitted. It was completed somewhere about 500 B.C.

So, at last, after more than a century under the guidance of the Spirit of God, the great divine library of the Pentateuch stood complete. It had begun with Deuteronomy; it had embraced the precious history of J and E; it had taken in the great Holiness Code; and finally it had found its unity in the setting of the laws and the history of the great priestly document called P. To put it in very brief form, we might say that the Law, the Pentateuch, equals D + JE + H + P. But we have now to ask, why did this great document become sacred Scripture? When did it cease to be simply a great and precious book, and when did it come to be regarded and accepted as in a special and unique sense nothing less than, and nothing other than, the word of God? A first step was that the part of it which told specially of the great laws of Israel became separated from the rest. That is to say, the Law proper, the first five books of the Bible, became separated from Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. It was the Law of God which was of supreme importance. Three things help us to fix a time when the Law became Scripture in the full sense of the term. i. One of the great events in religious history was when the Old Testament was translated into Greek, and when the Greek Old Testament, which is known as the Septuagint, and which is denoted by the letters LXX, first emerged. The importance of it was that the Old Testament was

no longer hidden away in the Hebrew language, but became available to almost the whole world, for at that time almost all men spoke Greek as well as, their own tongue. That translation was made under the auspices * of Ptolemy the Second Philadelphus, who was king of Egypt from 285-246 B.C. It was originally only the Law which was translated, and we know that by that time the Law was par excellence the sacred book of the Jews. It was for them Scripture in the full sense of the term. We can then say with certainty that by 250 B.C. the Law was Scripture. But can we trace the story further back? ii. To this day the Samaritans accept only the Pentateuch as Scripture, and do not accept the other books of the Old Testament. That can only mean that when the Samaritans split from the Jews, and when the great national schism took place, the Scriptures consisted only of the Law, for it was only the Law that the Samaritans took with them. When that great and lasting schism took place is not accurately certain, but there is good evidence that it at least began to threaten in the days of Nehemiah, that is, at some time not very long before.

There are signs of this belief even within the Old Testament itself. In Deuteronomy the hope and the belief is that God will always raise up a prophet for His people (Deuteronomy 18:15), but in Malachi all that can be expected is not the emergence of any new prophet, but the return of Elijah (Malachi 4:5). Zechariah envisages a time when anyone who claims to be a prophet must be necessarily an impostor. "If anyone again appears as a prophet, his father and mother who bore him will say to him, You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the Lord; and his father and mother who bore him shall pierce him through when he prophesies" (Zechariah 13:3). In Psalms 74:1-23 there is a verse which is probably not a part of the original psalm but rather a comment of some editor, and it is a verse of this latter-day despair: "There is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long" (Psalms 74:9). In 1 Maccabees we repeatedly come on this belief. That book speaks of a sorrow in Israel "such as there has not been since the days that the prophets ceased to appear among them" (1Ma 9:27). It describes how the people put aside the stones of the polluted altar, not knowing what to do with them, and waiting until a prophet should arise in Israel to tell them (1Ma 4:46). It tells that they agreed to make Simon high priest until such time as a prophet should appear (1Ma 14:41)-

It is the same in the writings of the Rabbis. One passage says that up until Alexander the Great Ezra was not very long before Alexander the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit, but from that time onward all that a man could do was to listen to the wise, that is, to the scribes. Rabbi Akiba, writing in the Christian era, declared that any Jew who read in the Christian books had no share in the life to come. He went on to say that books, like that of Ben Sirach and others such, which had been composed after the age of the prophets had closed, might be read, but only as a man reads a letter.

1.A 05. Just because the days of the prophets

Just because the days of the prophets were held to have ended with Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi, the works of the great prophets were of extreme preciousness. They belonged to an age of inspiration which no longer existed. The "Thus saith the Lord" of the prophets was something that a man could never hope to hear again. In view of that fact it was only natural that the works of the great prophets should be collected, and carefully preserved, and diligently studied. The very fact that men were conscious of living in an age of lesser inspiration gave to the great prophets a new place in life and thought. We must now go on to ask when the works of the prophets were collected and edited and issued.

Here we are in the realm of tradition and legend, but even in the case of legend and tradition it may be possible to penetrate to the truth which lies behind them. There are three main lines of such legends which we must take into account. i. 2 Maccabees begins with a letter which is certainly a work of fiction. In that letter there is a statement about Nehemiah. It says of him that he founded a library, "and gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts and sacrifices" (2Ma 2:13). It is hard to say what, if any, truth lies behind this; but in this statement Nehemiah is credited with collecting the prophetic writings. ii Jewish belief always gave Ezra an all-important place in the formation of the Old Testament. The Talmud says of him that he would have been worthy that the Torah should have been given to Israel through his hand, if Moses had not preceded him. The legend comes to its peak in the apocryphal book known as 2 Esdras, which belongs to the latter part of the first century A.D. According to that book the Law was lost and burned in the national disasters. Ezra prayed to God that he might be enabled to write down all that God had done in history, and all that God was still to do, as it had been written in the Law. He was told to withdraw from men for forty days, taking five skilful penmen with him. He was given a cup to drink, and he spoke continuously for forty days and nights. In that time ninety-four books were produced, seventy of which were to be handed over to the wise, and twenty-four of which were to be published for all to read, and these twenty-four were the canonical books of the Old Testament (4 Esr 4:19-48). Once again this is pure legend, but it ascribes to Ezra the preservation and the promulgation of the whole Old Testament. iii. In Jewish tradition we meet with a body called The Great Synagogue. In the Sayings of the Fathers we read that, "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue." This Great Synagogue was said to have been a body of men convened by Ezra and numbering one hundred and twenty, and including amongst others Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Mordecai. The Great Synagogue was the spiritual ruler of Israel. It is said that the men of the Great Synagogue wrote Ezekiel, the Book of the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther, and that at the same time Ezra wrote the book which bears his name, and the genealogies in Chronicles up to his own time. If we say that the Great Synagogue edited and published these books rather than wrote them we will come near to the meaning of this tradition. Once again we are in the realm of legend, and it is very doubtful if the Great Synagogue ever

existed at all.

1.A 06. The Prophets Established

The Prophets Established

Jewish traditional and legendary accounts lay it down very definitely that the books of Scripture were assembled and collected and even canonized in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. It may well be that none of these legends and traditions is anything like accurate history, but it seems to us certain that they do preserve the memory of the fact that it was in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah that the Law became canonical and that the Prophets were assembled and collected. Throughout the exile men had fed their souls on the Prophets, In the deep disappointments and the heart-breaking problems of the return they had found their help and their support in the prophetic writings; and it was then that the prophetic writings were deliberately collected and preserved. It is to be noted that at this stage it is not a matter of declaring the prophets sacred Scripture, and not a matter of placing them in the canon beside the Law; it is still a matter of collecting well-loved books, and ensuring that they will never go lost. Canonization was still to come. Have we any indication as to when it did come?

We may begin our investigation with one pointer which provides us with a date at which the Prophets were almost certainly regarded as canonical and as Holy Scripture. The Book of Daniel appeared about 165 B.C. Now Daniel is quite clearly a prophetic book and yet never at any time did it appear amongst the prophets, and always it was included among the Writings. That can only mean that by the time Daniel appeared the number of the prophets was closed; the prophetic literature was a fixed and settled body into which no other book, however well qualified, could find an entry. It is safe to say that that means that the Prophets were regarded as Holy Scripture at least by the time of Daniel in 165 B.C.

So, then, by the beginning of the second century B.C. a further stone has been added to the edifice of Scripture; a further section has been added to the divine library of the Old Testament, and now beside the Law there stand the Prophets. And now there arises a rather significant fact. At no time did there ever arise among the Jews any question or any dispute in regard to any part of the Law. It was unquestionably and unarguably divine from beginning to end. But among the prophets two books were questioned because they had to do exclusively with the heathen and does not mention Israel at all. The first was the book of Jotham, which was inscribed as "a book of Jotham himself", and which was questioned because it has to do exclusively with the heathen and does not mention Israel at all. To some of the Jewish scholars it seemed strange that a book which, as they saw it, had nothing to do with Israel had a place within the canon of Israel. They failed to see that in many ways Jonah is the greatest book in the Old Testament, because it lays down the missionary task of Israel as no other book does. The other book which was questioned was the book of Ezekiel. It was never suggested that Ezekiel should be ejected from the canon, but it was argued sometimes that Ezekiel should be "put away", that is, that it should be withdrawn from general circulation, and that it should not be read in the Synagogue. That was due to two things. It was due to the difficulty of the beginning and the end, especially the passage about the chariot of God.

It was not that anyone wished to eliminate either Jonah or Ezekiel from the canon of Scripture. It was simply felt that they raised difficulties and the difficulties were openly discussed; and it must be noted that, although that could happen with the Prophets, it could never happen with the Law, which was so divine that it was beyond question and beyond discussion.

1.B 00. The Writings

III. THE WRITINGS

We have now arrived at the third part of the Old Testament, the part which was known as the Writings or the Hagiographia. In the case of the "Writings the story is much less simple and much less straightforward. The Writings do not form a homogeneous whole like the Law or die Prophets. They are rather what has been called "a miscellany of independent books". They did not enter the canon of Scripture as a whole as the Law and the Prophets did, but one by one they came to be regarded as sacred Scripture, rather by popular acceptance than by official decision. For long they were not so much Scripture as " religious literature". They were not intended to be used, and they were not as a whole used, for public liturgical reading at the worship and service of the Synagogue; they were rather meant for homiletic exposition. They formed what Ryle calls "an informal appendix to die Law and the Prophets", Their secondary quality can be seen in that to die end of the day the Old Testament was commonly referred to as The Law and the Prophets. In the preface to Daniel Jerome writes: "All Sacred Scripture is divided by them (that is, the Jews) into three parts, into the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiographa." That is true, but it none the less remains true that Scripture was commonly called the Law and the Prophets. "We need go no further than the New Testament for abundant evidence of this. " Think not," said Jesus, "that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17). The Golden Rule that we should do to others as we would have them do to us is the essence and summation of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12). The Law and the Prophets existed until John; thereafter it is the time of the Kingdom (Luke 16:16). It was from Moses and all the Prophets that Jesus expounded the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). In the Synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia it is the Law and the Prophets which are read (Acts 13:15). In every Synagogue on every Sabbath day Moses is read (Acts 15:21). It was from the Prophet Isaiah that Jesus read in the Synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:17). It was the Law and the Prophets which were read at the public worship of the Synagogue, and it is as the Law and the Prophets that the Old Testament is commonly described. Obviously the Writings, the Hagiographa, do not stand on this same level. In the same passage as we have already quoted, Jerome goes on to say that there are five books of the Law, eight of the Prophets, and eleven of the Writings. The eleven books of the Writings do not fall into any natural and inevitable sections, and they were divided in different ways. They were divided into three books of poetry Psalms, Proverbs, and Job; five rolls, the Megilloth, which were, as we shall see, specially connected with five great national occasions The Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; one book of prophecy Daniel; two books of history Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Sometimes, as the prophets were, they were divided into the Former Writings, the Rishonim Ruth, Psalms, Job, and Proverbs; the Latter Writings, the Acharonim Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles; and the five Megilloth. Sometimes they were divided into The Major Writings Psalms, Job, and Proverbs; the Minor Writings The Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations; the Latter Writings Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles. They are a highly varied miscellany falling into highly varied sections. Our task is to trace how these eleven

books became part of the sacred literature of Israel, and part of the Old Testament. We may begin with certain general facts. In the ancient world a book had to be popular and had to be read before it could even survive. We are thinking of an age when books were not printed, but when each copy had to be made by hand; and, if a book was not popular enough to be read, it simply ceased to be copied, and vanished out of existence. These Writings must, therefore, in the first place have been popular works, known and read widely by the ordinary people.

Second, it became a first principle of the Jewish view of sacred books that a book to be Scripture had to be written in Hebrew, or at least in Aramaic, and, if it dealt with history, the history must be the history of the great classical period of the Hebrew story.

1.B 01. Attributed Authorship

Attributed Authorship

Third, we will remember that it was the Jewish conviction that all true prophetic inspiration had ceased with Malachi, and that since about 450 B.C. the divine voice was silent. At first sight it would, therefore, appear that any book must be written prior to Ezra to have even a chance of entering into the canon. But there is one extremely interesting exception to that. If a book was anonymous, if no one knew who had written it, and, if it had become a book dear to the hearts and minds of people, it was possible that it could be attributed to one of the great figures of the past, and, therefore, could become canonical. That is to say, if a book's author was known to be after Ezra, it had no hope of becoming canonical. That is what turned the scale against Ecclesiasticus (in the Apocrypha). There are few who would care to deny that Ecclesiasticus is a very great book, and that it is greater in moral and spiritual power than certain books which gained an entry into the canon, but it had never any hope of entry, because its author was known to be a man called Jesus ben Sirach who had lived not long after 200 B.C. Many of the Writings were written in the fourth and the third centuries B.C., and at least one Daniel in the second century B.C., but their authors were unknown, they were anonymous, and, therefore, it was possible to attribute them to the great figures of the past, and so to make it possible for them to enter the canon. So Ruth was ascribed to Samuel, who was traditionally the author of Judges and the books which bear his name. All the Psalms were ascribed to David. Jeremiah was said to have written both Kings and Lamentations. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were said to be the work of Solomon. Job was assigned to Moses. Ezra and Nehemiah were the work of Ezra, who was so respected that it was said: "The Torah was forgotten by Israel until Ezra went up from Babylon and re-established it." And Ezra had at least a share in the writing of Chronicles. The Song of Solomon might actually be Solomon's, or at least it was held to belong to the time of Hezekiah. Esther was the work, or at least the editing, of the men of the Great Synagogue. The Writings could only become canonical, because, when their supreme value was realized, they were seen to be anonymous, and could, therefore, be held to be the work of men within the period to which inspiration was said to be confined. This is true even in the case of Daniel. It was well known that Daniel had actually emerged about 165 B.C., but it was held to be the actual work of Daniel, the great figure of the exile. It was thus that it was possible for these books to become canonical at all.

Establishing "The Writings" When did they come to be regarded as Holy Scripture? The process was a long one. We must begin by returning to the enigmatic statement about Nehemiah in the admittedly spurious letter at the beginning of 2 Maccabees. There it is said that Nehemiah collected into a library the books about the kings and the prophets, *aiii ta ton Dairid*, which literally means "the things of David", and which in the context can most naturally mean the books, or the writings, of David (2Ma 2:13). It may be impossible to place very much stress or reliance on that statement, but it may mean that Nehemiah began the whole process by the collection of the Psalms by no means the whole book as we possess it which go under the name of David.

It is when we come to Ecclesiasticus (now in the Apocrypha) that the existence of this third division of Scripture becomes quite clear and certain. Writing in or about 132 B.C. the grandson of the original writer of Ecclesiasticus, Jesus ben Sirach, wrote a prologue to his Greek translation of his grandfather's book. There he speaks of the great things handed down to us by the Law and the Prophets and the others who have followed in their steps. He tells how his grandfather gave himself to the study of the Law and of the Prophets and of the other books of our fathers. And he speaks about the Law, the Prophecies, and the rest of the books. He does not use the term Writings; he does not define what these other books are. It is clear that they are not nearly so well defined a body of literature as the Law and the Prophets are; but it is also clear that by the second century B.C. there stands beside the Law and the Prophets a body of literature less well defined than they are, but none the less an essential part of the sacred literature of the Jews. Our next witness comes from the New Testament itself. In Luke's Gospel we read that the risen Christ told the disciples about the things which must be fulfilled in Him, which were written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms (Luke 24:44). Here we see that the Psalms are included in, or perhaps are taken as typical and representative of, a body of sacred literature other than the Law and the Prophets. Once again the existence of the Writings is assured, although their constituent parts are still undefined. When we come to the end of the first Christian century we can call two much more definite witnesses. We have already seen the tradition that Ezra rewrote the whole of the sacred literature; and in that tradition we read that the books which were to be open to all men numbered twenty-four, which by Jewish reckoning is exactly the same number of books as are in the Old Testament (4 Ezra 14:44-46). 4 Ezra (Apocrypha) was written under Domitian about A.D. 90, and here we have proof that by that time the list of the books was settled, and, therefore, the number of the Writings must have been as firmly fixed as the number of books in the Law and in the Prophets. The second witness is Josephus who wrote about A.D. 100. He says that, unlike the Greeks who have vast numbers of conflicting and mutually contradictory books, the Jews have only twenty-two. He arrives at this number by reckoning Ruth and Judges as one book, and Jeremiah and Lamentations as one book. He goes on to say that there are the five books of Moses, the thirteen books of the Prophets, and four books with hymns, or precepts for practical help for life. He arrives at this classification by including Daniel, Job, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther with the prophetic books. He then goes on to say: " * * There is practical proof of the spirit in which we treat our Scriptures. For although so great an interval of time (since they were written) has now passed, not a soul has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is the instinct of every Jew, from the day of his birth, to consider these books as the teaching of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to lay down his life for them" (Josephus, Against Apion 1:8). Here is the proof that by the time of Josephus the number of books in the Writings was regarded as fixed and unalterable, because the number of books in Scripture was so regarded.

It remains to see the final step in the actual time process of the making of the Old Testament.

Somewhere about A.D. 90 at Jamnia, which was also called Jabne, and which was near Jaffa and not far from the sea, an authoritative council of the Jewish Rabbis and scholars met, and at that council the books of the Old Testament were at last finally settled, and the number was laid down as we have it to-day. From that time forward, although a scholar here or there might express doubts about this or that book amongst the Writings, there was never any real question or

argument about the contents of the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament. The process which had begun with the emergence of Deuteronomy, in 621 B.C. had ended with the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90. The divine library of the Old Testament had taken more than seven hundred years to assemble.

1.B 02. The People of the Book

The People of the Book

History has a strange way of repeating itself. It was at Jamnia in A.D. 90 that the Old Testament canon was finally fixed. And Jamnia came only twenty years after the supreme disaster of Jewish history, the disaster from which the nation never recovered, the destruction of the Temple and the near-obliteration of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Once again in the time of disaster it was to the word of God that the nation was driven. With every worldly hope shattered, faced with a future in which humanly speaking they had nothing to hope for, the Jews had to become the people of the book, and for that very reason it was then that the book had to be definitely and finally defined. With nothing else left to live for the Jews began to live for the study of God's word. The Jews clung to the sacred Scriptures not because of any theological theory of inspiration, but because they found in them the comfort of God in their sorrow, the hope of God in their despair, the light of God in their darkness, and the strength of God in a world where for them the foundations were shaken.

It remains briefly to look at the individual books within the Writings and to see how they fared, and in particular to note which of them had questionings and opposition to face. To the Book of Psalms there was never any opposition, and doubtless it was the first of all the Writings to fix itself on the hearts of men. It was the hymn-book of the Temple, and the prayer-book of the community, as Cornill described it. The order of the Psalms in the daily worship of the Temple was as follows. On the first day of the week Psalms 24:1-10 was sung "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" in commemoration of the first day of creation, when "God possessed the world and ruled in it". On the second day of the week Psalms 48:1-14 was sung "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised" because on the second day of creation "God divided His works and reigned over them", On the third day of the week Psalms 82:1-8 was sung "God standeth in the creation of the mighty" "because on that day the earth appeared, on which are the Judge and the judged". On the fourth day of the week Psalms 94:1-23 was sung "O Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth" "because on the fourth day God made the sun, moon, and stars, and will be avenged on those that worship them". On the fifth day of the week Psalms 81:1-16 was sung "Sing aloud unto God our strength" "because of the variety of creatures created that day to praise His name". On the sixth day Psalms 93:1-5 was sung "The Lord reigneth" "because on that day God finished His works and made man, and die Lord ruled over all His works". Lastly, on the seventh day, the Sabbath day, Psalms 92:1-15 was sung "It is a good thing to give thanks unto die Lord" "because the Sabbath is symbolic of the millennial kingdom at the end of the six thousand years dispensation, when the Lord will reign over all, and His glory and service will fill the earth with thanksgiving. From the beginning the place of the Psalms was nev er questioned, for they had a unique place in the public services of the Temple and in the private devotions of the hearts of men.

Certain others of the Writings had their place in public Cervices. The High Priest read in public from Chronicles, Job, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Daniel on the evening before the Day of Atonement. The BvcMe^ilkth the word megilloth means rolls were read at the great Jewish festivals. The Song,

which was allegorized 'to symbolize the deliverance from Egypt, was read on the eighth day of the Passover. Ruth, the harvest story, was read on the second day of Pentecost. Lamentations was read on the 9th of Ab, which was the anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's Temple. Ecclesiastes was read on the third day of the Feast of Tabernacles, to remind men to remember God in the midst of the enjoyment of material blessings. Esther was read at the Feast of Purim, for which it is the warrant. The five Megilloth were the only books of the Writings to be read in the Synagogue, and they were read only on their special occasions; and, as we shall see, certain of them were very far from being undisputed. As we have seen, the place of Psalms was never in doubt. Job, too, was never questioned. Job was attributed to Moses, in accordance with the belief that every prophet described his own period, for Job was taken to belong to the patriarchal age. Ruth and Lamentations were never questioned, because Ruth went with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah. Daniel was never questioned, because in spite of its late emergence its authorship was ascribed to the great Daniel of the exilic period. On some very few occasions Proverbs was questioned. It was questioned on two grounds. First, it was argued that Proverbs contains apparent contradictions. Proverbs 26:4-5 reads: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Second, it was argued that a passage such as Proverbs 7:7; Proverbs 7:20 presented ethical problems which were difficult of solution. The argument about Proverbs was never at any time very serious, and it must be remembered that it was never suggested that Proverbs should be discarded, but only that it should be withheld from ordinary people who might be puzzled and even misled by the apparent difficulties and contradictions.

It was with difficulty that Esther gained a final place in the canon, and, even after it had gained its place, as late as the third century there were those who were not happy about it. The straits in which the supporters of Esther found themselves are illustrated by a Rabbinic tradition about the book. It was said that Rabbi Samuel had said that Esther did not defile the hands, that is, that it was not a sacred book. Rabbi Judah in speaking of this tradition said: "Did Samuel mean that Esther was not spoken by the Holy Spirit? Samuel undoubtedly taught that Esther was spoken by the Holy Spirit, but it was spoken to be recited and not to be written." Such a statement shows the difficulties which Esther encountered. The problem in regard to Esther was twofold. First, from beginning to end it never mentions the name of God, a truly extraordinary fact in a sacred book. Second, there was in some ways an even more difficult problem. Esther tells of the Feast of Purim, and it was at the Feast of Purim that Esther was read in the Synagogue. Now the trouble was that the Feast of Purim is a Feast which finds no warrant and no justification in the Mosaic Law, and the Mosaic Law was taken as a first principle to be absolutely complete (Leviticus 27:34). Here, indeed, was a difficulty. It was circumvented by the tradition that, although the instructions for the Feast of Purim are not written down in the Law, they were nevertheless given to Moses by God verbally during the forty days and forty nights on the mountain, but were not written down until the days of Mordecai. But the fact remained that for long Esther was in dispute, and there have always been those who doubted its right to a place in the canon of Holy Scripture.

Serious controversy in regard to the Writings also centred round two books Ecclesiastes and the Song. Not unnaturally the weary pessimism of Ecclesiastes and the fact that the Song is one of the world's great love poems, which has to be allegorized to become a religious book at all, presented

problems.

It may be said that Esther, Ecclesiastes and the Song were the books about which controversy was most real, for even after the Council of Jamnia there were those who were unwilling to accept them; and it is not without significance that these are three of the very few Old Testament books which are never quoted or referred to in the New Testament.

1.B 03. The Emergence of Sacred Scripture

The Emergence of Sacred Scripture This then is the story of the building up over seven hundred years of the divine library of the Old Testament. From this story one thing stands out with unmistakable clarity. It was in the dark days of the Exile that men discovered the Prophets as the word of God. It was in the agony of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes that the Writings began to emerge as sacred Scripture. It was when life had taken everything else away that the Jewish scholars at the Council of Jamnia defined the content of Scripture, accepted the fact that Israel was the People of the Book, and dedicated their lives to the study of the word of God. Here is no human work. The books of the Old Testament took their place as sacred Scripture, not because of a council or decision of any council or committee of the Church, but because history and experience had manifestly and effectively demonstrated them to be the word of God. These were the books in which men had met God in the times which tried men's souls, and in which they had discovered the strength and the comfort of the Almighty. When any council gave any decision in regard to any book or books of the Old Testament, it was simply repeating and affirming that which experience had already proved. Such councils did not make these books into sacred Scripture and into the word of God; they simply recorded the fact that men had already mightily found them so. And in these books men continued to find God. There have always been times from Marcion onwards when men wished to lay aside the Old Testament as outdated and outworn. One of the extraordinary features of the early Church is the number of men who were converted by reading the Old Testament. Tatian tells us how he was initiated into the Mysteries and how he had tried all that heathen religion and philosophy had to offer, and had come away empty. Then he goes on to say: ** I happened to meet with certain barbaric writings, too old to be compared with the opinions of the Greeks, and too divine to be compared with their errors; and I was led to put faith in these by the unpretending cast of the language, the inartificial character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, the excellent quality of the precepts, and the declaration of the government of the universe as being centred in one Being" (Tatian, Address to the Greeks 29). These writings were the writings of the prophets and in them Tatian found the voice of God. Theophilus of Antioch tells us of his vain search for God. "At the same time/* he says, "I met with the sacred Scriptures of the holy prophets," and it was through them that he was led to God (Theophilus, To Autolytus i: 14). Justin Martyr writes: "There existed long before this time certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved by God, who spoke by the divine Spirit, and foretold events which would take place, and which are now taking place. They are called prophets. These alone both saw and announced the truth to men, neither reverencing nor fearing any man, not influenced by a desire for glory, but speaking those things alone which they saw and heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit" (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 7). Athenagoras, presenting his plea for the Christians to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and his colleague Lucius Aurelius Commodus, actually says to these Emperors: "I expect that you who are so learned and so eager for the truth are not without some introduction to Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the rest of the prophets" (Athenagoras, Embassy for the Christians 9). So well were the prophets known that Athenagoras does not think it ridiculous to

assume that even the Roman Emperors were acquainted with them. And of this same Athenagoras Philip of Side tells us that he planned to write an attack on the Christians. In order to do so he read the Holy Scriptures, and at the end of the reading the wouldbe attacker had become the defender of the faith. The books of the Old Testament were accepted as Holy Scripture because in them men found God and God found men. Through all the centuries that continued to happen, and it can still happen to-day. Men can never afford to discard the books in which God speaks. FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE F. Buhl: The Canon and Text of the Old Testament, 1892. J. A. Bewer: The Literature of the Old Testament, 1947.

F. V. Filson: Which Books Belong in the Bible? A Study of the Canon, 1957.

R. H. Pfeiffer: Introduction to the Old Testament, 1941. H. Rowley: The Growth of the Old Testament, 1949, H. E. Ryle: The Canon of the Old Testament, 1892.

G. Wildeboer: The Origin of the Canon of the Old Testament, 1895. accepted as useful for life and for doctrine; it has to make its way into the public worship of the Church; it has to win acceptance not simply locally but throughout the whole Church; and finally it has to be officially approved by the voice and decision of the Church.

1.B 04. The First Christian Books

The First Christian Books The first Christian books to form a collection were the letters of Paul. Even "withui the New Testament itself there is proof that they existed as a collection and that they were well known; for the writer of 2 Peter refers to them as if they were perfectly familiar to his readers, even if he does say that they have their difficult passages, and that certain heretical thinkers have twisted their teaching for their own ends (2 Peter 3:16). Clement of Rome writing to the Church at Corinth could say; "Take up the letter of the blessed Apostle Paul" (i Clement 46: i) in the certainty that his readers possessed it, and that they were prepared to grant it respect at least, if not authority. Ignatius can write to the Ephesians reminding them that Paul remembers them in every letter (Ignatius, Ephesians 12:2). Polycarp, writing to the Philippians, reminds his readers that Paul in his absence wrote letters to them by the study of which they can build them up in the faith which had been given to them (Polycarp, Php 3:2). It is clear that by A.D. 100 Paul's letters had been collected and were widely known and widely accepted.

There is a sense in which this is very surprising. In almost every case Paul was writing to deal with a local and a temporary situation. Dark and dangerous heresies reared their heads, or threatened to arise; practical problems arose; troubles threatened the peace of some Church; and thereupon Paul, not being able to be everywhere personally present, sat down to write a letter to combat the mistaken thinkers, to give guidance for the practical problem, to seek to preserve the peace and unity of the Church.

Paul's letters were far from being theological treatises composed in the peace of a study or a library. They were meant to deal with an immediate situation in a definite community at a particular time. As Deissmann says: "Paul had no thought of adding a few fresh compositions to the existing Jewish epistles, still less of enriching the sacred literature of his nation... He had no presentiment of the place his words would occupy in universal history, not so much that they would be in existence in the next generation, far less that one day people would look on them as Holy Scripture." At the same time, even when we have said that, it must still be remembered that there is no reason why something produced for an immediate situation should not become a universal possession cherished for all time. Every perfect love poem and love song, such as those of Robert Burns, was written for one person and has yet become a universal possession. The music of Bach was often written for Sunday by Sunday performance by his choir in Leipzig and is yet such that it will be performed so long as men everywhere know what music is. There is nothing unusual in a thing being temporary and local and immediate and yet at the same time having in it the seeds of a universal immortality.

It must be remembered that there are times when Paul goes out of his way to remind his readers that he is speaking as no more than a man. "I speak in a human way,"* he writes to the Romans (Romans 3:5). "Concerning the unmarried," he writes to the Corinthians, "I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 7:25). "What I am saying," he says, "I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful

confidence" (2 Corinthians 2:17). There were times when Paul made no claim to infalibility and made no claim that the divine voice spoke through him.

Still further, it is an astonishing fact that, if we possessed only die book of Acts, we would never have known that Paul had ever written a letter. Luke was the hero- worshipper of Paul, and from Acts 13:1-52 becomes to all intents and purposes the biography of Paul, and yet Luke has nothing to say about Paul the letter- writer. Sometimes Paul was by no means sure that his letters would be read by everyone. "I adjure you/* he writes to the Thessalonians, "by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren" (1 Thessalonians 5:27). So little attention was paid to his letters, that we know that many, and in particular a letter which had to do with Laodicea (Colossians 4:16), were lost and vanished from sight.

1.B 05. Collecting Paul's Letters

Collecting Paul's Letters In view of all this how^{^^^^} letters^{gpE^C}ted, and how did they become the universal possession of the Church? There were, of course, ample precedents for the collection and publication of the letters of great men. The letters of Plato, of Cicero had been collected and published. How did Paul's letters attain to the dignity of collection and publication, and how did they in the end gain their place of authority as Holy Scripture? At the moment we shall try to answer only the first half of that question, and the answer to the second half will come later. We have certain pointers to aid us in our investigation.

It is significant that in writings before A.D. 90 there is no mention of the letters of Paul and no reference to them. In writings after A.D. 90 there are abundant references to the letters of Paul and abundant proof of full acquaintance with them. In the Synoptic Gospels, even in Luke, there is no trace of Pauline language or ideas. But in the Fourth Gospel, in James, in 2 Peter, and in the Letters of John there is clear acquaintance with Pauline thought and language. Obviously something must have happened to bring this about.

Further, it is significant that from A.D. 90 onwards there came into the Church what E. J. Goodspeed calls "a shower of Christian letters". Consider the beginning of the Revelation. The Revelation begins with the letters to the Seven Churches. Why should a book begin with a collection of letters? Why should Pergamum read the letter to Ephesus, and Thyatira read the letter to Laodicea, and Philadelphia read the letter to Smyrna? The very way in which the Revelation begins shows that there must have been a precedent for issuing a collection of letters. It may well have been close to that time that Hebrews and James and Jude were written, as well as the letters of John, and most of these are not so much real letters as treatises cast in epistolary form. There must have been a good precedent for letter writing, It is certainly just shortly after this that Clement wrote his letter to Corinth. And it was not very long after this that Polycarp collected and issued the seven letters of Ignatius. Not long after A.D. 90 there was a veritable epidemic of letter writing and something must have given it its impetus. The deduction must be that it was just then that the letters of Paul were first collected and issued, and that this collection provided the precedent and the stimulus for this outbreak of letter writing. But how did this happen? It was for long believed that the growth of the collection of Paul's letters was a long, slow process, a kind of natural growth. The idea was that a Church possessed a letter of Paul of its own; it knew that a neighbouring Church also had a letter; it asked for a copy of its neighbour's letter; and so bit by bit the collection was built up, varying from place to place according to the number of letters each individual Church had been able to obtain, and coming to its completion somewhere towards the end of the century. But in recent times E. J. Goodspeed and John Knox in America and C. L. Mitton in Britain have produced a quite different, and we think a better, theory. We have to explain why between A.D. 60 and A.D. 90 there is no trace of the letters of Paul. These scholars think that the letters of Paul were forgotten, that they were seldom or never used, that they were laid away in some chest amongst the archives of their Churches, covered in dust and buried in neglect, that there was in fact a generation who knew not Paul.

What was it that changed all that? We have seen that the change must have come not very long before A.D. 90. What happened to affect the situation somewhere between A.D. 80 and A.D. 90? The answer is that it was sometime near the middle of that decade that Acts was written and published at least in its first form. The result was that the half- forgotten figure of Paul suddenly burst upon the Church as the most epic, the most heroic, the most colossal and dominating figure in the early history of the Church. Immediately everything about this extraordinary man became precious. Every relic of him must be rescued from oblivion; everything he wrote must be recovered and studied and revered. The publication of Acts suddenly reminded men of the half-forgotten greatness of the incomparable apostle to the Gentiles, and it was that which provided the stimulus to the collection and the publication of the letters of Paul.

1.B 06. Making the Collection

Making the Collection Can we go on to say where the collection was made and issued? There are certain indications which point strongly to Ephesus. It was there that Paul spent three years, longer than in any other place in the days of his freedom. It was there that Revelation with its seven letters was published; it was there that the Johannine letters with their knowledge of Paul were published; it was in Asia Minor that the Ignatian collection was made; and it is there that references to the letters of Paul as a collection appear. Ephesus was in any event what Harnack called "the second fulcrum of Christianity", Antioch being die first. Goodspeed and Mitton both regard Ephesians as a letter produced by a disciple of Paul, who was soaked in the Pauline letters and especially in Colossians, as a preface and introduction to that collection. That may or may not be so; ourselves we very much doubt it; but it is in any event not an essential part of the theory. There is good evidence that it was in Ephesus, about A.D. 90, consequent upon the publication of Acts, that the Pauline letters were collected and published.

One last question arises Can we say who was the moving figure behind this collection? Once again Goodspeed and Knox have a suggestion to make. True, we are now in the realm of conjecture, if not of imaginative reconstruction, but it is a suggestion of such interest and charm that it is more than worth while to look at it.

There is one letter in Paul's collection which stands out as different from all the others and that is the letter to Philemon. It is a little personal note, quite different from the others. As long ago as Jerome there were those who were saying that it was so trivial that it was quite out of place. It is certainly true that anyone must wonder how it succeeded in gaining an entry into the New Testament at all, and why it was included in the collection. For its inclusion there must be a reason. John Knox writes: "The more anomalous the presence of Philemon in the collection appears, the more significant it must be. The more grounds which can be cited for its exclusion, the more important must have been the ground upon which it was actually included. The very fact that Philemon seems so out of place is evidence that the original editors had very good reason for including it. We are convinced that if we knew that reason we should know something very important about the publication of the Pauline letters." Can we then discover the reason for the inclusion of this little letter, so different from the others? The letter is a letter about the sending back to Philemon of the runaway slave Onesimus. Onesimus must have become very dear to Paul. His name means "the useful one" and Paul puns on that name. "Formerly he was useless to you, but now indeed he is useful to you and to me" (Philemon 1:11). Now let us hear what Paul says: "I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will" (Philemon 1:13-14). Could there be a clearer indication that Paul would very much like to have Onesimus back again? And could the heart of Philemon have been proof against that gentle and courteous and half-humorous appeal?

Let us, then, assume that Paul received Onesimus back from Philemon as his personal helper and attendant. If that is so, Onesimus would become very much Paul's right-hand man. And now let us go on rather more than fifty years, when, if Onesimus was still alive, as he might well be, he would be an old man. Ignatius is on his way to Rome to fight with the beasts in the arena. As he goes, he writes to the Church at Ephesus and he speaks of their bishop "a man of indescribable charity and your bishop here on earth" (Ignatius, Ephesians 1:3). And what is the bishop's name? It is Onesimus. This is to say that at the very time when the Pauline collection was made at Ephesus the name of the bishop was Onesimus. Can Onesimus the bishop be one and the same as the runaway slave, who had twined himself around the heart of Paul? No man can say for certain, but it is certainly possible. It may well be that, after the publication of Acts had drawn the fulllength picture of Paul to the Church, and had given the stimulus to the collection and preservation of everything connected with this colossal figure, in Ephesus Onesimus took steps to collect and publish the letters of the master whom he had loved and who had loved him. And in that collection he included the little letter to Philemon, because it told of himself as a thieving and runaway slave. He left deliberately the record of his shame, as if to say: "See what I was and see what Jesus Christ did for me," If that is so, it is one of the loveliest hidden romances of the New Testament, for it is a moving thing to think of the great and good bishop deliberately including the letter which told of what once he was, as if to say: "That is what Christ did for me and he can do it for you." In regard to Onesimus we are in the realm of conjecture, and all we can say is that we hope that that story may be true. But we may regard it as all but certain that the letters of Paul were collected in Ephesus in A.D. 90 as a consequence of the publication of Acts.

It is true that they are not yet fully Scripture that final step is still to come but C. L. Mitton is not wrong when he writes: ' ' It may very well be that this acceptance of Paul's writings as authoritative was the first clear act in the formation of what later came to be the canon of the New Testament."

1.B 07. The Gospels Win their Place

The Gospels Win their Place We can now turn to the story of how the Gospels won their place as sacred Scripture.

Jesus Himself wrote nothing and left no written book. It was not His writing but His words which were always quoted. "Remember," said Paul, "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). "Remember," said Clement, "the words of Jesus, which he spoke, when he was teaching gentleness and long-suffering" (i Clement 13: i). The gospel began by being a spoken gospel, and for long it remained so. The gospel, as Irenaeus says, was first proclaimed by the eye-witnesses of the saving events, and it was only afterwards that it was by the will of God handed down to us in the Scriptures to be the foundation and pillar of our faith (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3:1:1). In the early Church it is persons and not books who dominate the scene. It was not through books but through persons that the gospel went out, and that the work of the Church was done. It was not a letter but Peter and John that the apostles sent to Samaria when the power of Christ began to work there (Acts 8:14). It was not a letter but Barnabas who was sent to Antioch when the great experiment of taking the gospel to the Gentiles began there (Acts 11:22). Paul wrote letters, but again and again he used Timothy or Titus or Mark as well as the written word (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; 1 Corinthians 16:12; 2 Corinthians 7:6; 2 Corinthians 8:6; Php 2:19; Colossians 4:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:2). The very words used of the spread of the gospel are all speaking words. To receive the gospel and its facts is *paralambanein*, and to pass it on to someone else is *paradidonai* (1 Corinthians 15:3), and these are the Greek words which are characteristic of and special to oral tradition. The gospel itself is *euangelion* which is good news, glad tidings, and which only later came to mean a kind of book. To preach the gospel is expressed by the word *kerussein*, which literally means to proclaim as a herald. The supreme function of the Christian is *marturia*, which is personal witness. The gospel itself is *logos akoes*, which literally means the word of hearing, the word which is heard (1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:2). Certainly in the beginning it was in terms of speech and not of writing, in terms of persons and not of books that the Church thought and it still remains true that the best epistle of all is a living epistle known and read of all men (2 Corinthians 3:2).

It may be that in the early Church the order of teachers has never been given its true importance. The teachers are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 13:1; Ephesians 4:2; Hebrews 5:12. The teachers must have been the men in every Christian community who knew the Christian story and who taught it to those who entered the Church long before there were any Christian books. The teachers must have been the living repositories of the gospel story. But as we have seen the day came when a written gospel became a necessity. We know that the Gospels as we have them are not first attempts. We know, for instance, that before the Gospels emerged in their completed form there must have existed a kind of source book on the teaching of Jesus on which both Matthew and Luke freely drew. To that source book, which of course does not now exist, scholars give the symbol Q, which stands for the German word *quelle*, which means a source. We know also that it is highly probable that there was a book of *Testimonia* that is, a collection of Old Testament

prophetic passages with their fulfillments in the life of Jesus. We know that there must have been many Gospels in circulation, for Luke tells us that many had set their hands to the task of setting out the Christian story, and Luke's implication is that none of these earlier Gospels was wholly satisfactory. We know that the Gospels of our New Testament must have had their rivals and competitors, for we have already noted that Jerome spoke of those "who have attempted without the Spirit and the grace of God to draw up a story rather than to defend the truth of history." Cyril of Jerusalem says: "The four Gospels alone belong to the New Testament; the rest are pseudepigrapha (that is, written under assumed names and falsely attributed to great apostolic figures) and harmful" (Cyril, Catech. Hebrews 4:36). Just what the steps in the process were we do not now know, but it is clear that it was not long before our four Gospels triumphed over all their rivals and became supreme. We may say that from the beginning our four Gospels had a ring of truth and the Spirit of God about them, which was obvious to every honest reader and seeker.

1.B 08. A Written Gospel

A Written Gospel The first instances when the word Gospel, euaggelion> comes to mean a written gospel come from very early in the second century. The Didache, the book known as the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles introduces the Lord's Prayer with the words: "Do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel*" (Didac Hebrews 8:2). Ignatius speaks of those who say that if they do not find a thing in the chapters in the Gospel they do not believe (Ignatius, Philadel Php 8:2). Polycarp speaks of the apostles who brought us the Gospel (Polycarp, Philippians 6:3)- When we trace the story, we find that the progress of the four Gospels is triumphant and apparently almost unopposed, Martyr (A.D. 110-165) quotes copiously, although not accurately, but practically never from anything other than our Gospels. Theophilus of Antioch (c. A.D. 170) is the first to quote the New Testament as a definitely inspired work on a level with the prophets of the Old Testament. He quotes "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) and says that it is the word of a Spirit-bearing man called John.. ^Qrigen^ (A. p M.,i,,fer ^ft),, Speaks of "the four Gospels which alone are undisputed in the Church of God under heaven" (Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History 6:25:3). EusshiUS. speaks of "the holy quaternion of the Gospels" (The Ecclesiastical History 3:25). And Easter Letter in A.D. 367 mentions no other Gospel but our four. It may be said that our four Gospels held undisputed sway long before A.D. 200. Very occasionally we come across quotations from or references to other Gospels, but, as far back as we can go, our four Gospels are the fundamental documents of the Christian Church.

One final point emerges. Did the Church always intend to have four Gospels, or did it ever have the intention of reducing or unifying them into one? The existence of four different Gospels obviously presents difficulties. For instance, the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke are different; John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, the other three Gospels at the end; the first three Gospels declare that Jesus was crucified after the Passover, and John that He was crucified before the Passover; there are undoubted differences in the Resurrection narratives in the different Gospels. Did the Church ever have any intention of somehow making the four Gospels into one? There was in fact a deliberate attempt to do so. Sometime about A.D. 180 Tatian produced the Diatessaron dia means through and tessaron means four which was the first harmony of the four Gospels. For a time it was a very influential book, and it seemed possible that it might even supplant the four Gospels, But in the end it utterly failed to do so; it failed so completely that for many years it went completely lost. In fact the swing away from any idea of one composite Gospel was so complete that we find Irenaeus (A.D. 125-200) insisting that the fourfold Gospel is in the very nature of tilings: "As there are four quarters of the world in which we live, as there are four universal winds, and as the Church is scattered over all the earth, and the Gospel is the pillar and base of the Church and the breath of life, it is likely that it should have four pillars breathing immortality on every side and kindling afresh the life of men. Whence it is evident that the Word, the architect of all things, who sitteth upon the cherubim and holdeth all things together, having been made manifest unto men, gave to us the Gospel in a fourfold shape, but held together by one Spirit " (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3, 11:8).

Later Jerome was to take the four corners and four rings by which the ark of the Covenant was carried as a symbol of the four Gospels (Prologue to the Four Gospels in the commentary on Matthew). The Church unhesitatingly retained the four Gospels and unhesitatingly turned away from any attempt to turn them into one, in spite of the undoubted problems that the fourfold Gospel raised. Why should that have been? It was due to the dominating importance of apostolic witness and apostolic testimony. No document which bore the name of Matthew or of John, no document which was held to go back to Peter or to Paul could possibly be discarded. The Gospels were apostolic, and were, therefore, the essential documents of the Christian faith.

We have still to reach the position when the Gospels are sacred and holy Scripture, but we can already say that midway through the second century our four Gospels held a place of undoubted and unquestioned authority within the Church.

1.B 09. Authoritative and Sacred

Authoritative and Sacred As we have seen, the Pauline Epistles and the Gospels came to be regarded as authoritative Christian books as groups, and along with them the book of Acts gained full acceptance. The other books of the New Testament gained authority in a much more piecemeal way, just as the Old Testament Writings did; and we must postpone the story of their acceptance and entry into the canon in order to look at a very important question and a very important development. The question we are now bound to ask is How did these books come to be regarded and set apart as Scripture? How and when did they cross the line between being books which were regarded as important and even authoritative, and books which were regarded as holy and sacred and inspired and the word of God's How, to put it in one word, did they become canonical?

There is more than one answer to this question. i. Without question the books which are Scripture and which are truly the word of God have about them a self-evidencing quality. They carry their uniqueness on their face. To read them is to be conscious of being brought into the presence of God and truth and Jesus Christ in a unique way. They have always exercised, and still exercise, a quite unparalleled power upon the lives of men. In *The Bible in World Evangelism* A. M. Chirgwin cites a whole series of stories to illustrate this unique power of Scripture. In Brazil there was a certain Signor Antonio of Minas. A friend urged him to consider the claims of Christ and again and again tried to make him accept a Bible. Finally he took the Bible with the sole idea of taking it home to burn it. When he arrived home, the fire was out, but such was his determination to burn this book that he rekindled it. He opened the Bible so that it would burn more easily and he was just about to throw it into the fire. It opened at the Sermon on the Mount, and he glanced at the words. "The words had in them something that held him. He read on, forgetful of time, through the hours of the night, and, just as the dawn was breaking, he stood up and declared, 'I believe.'" In New York there was a gangster, recently released from prison after serving a sentence for robbery and violence. He was on his way to join his old associates to plan another exploit in crime. As he went along Fifth Avenue in New York, he picked a man's pocket. He slipped into Central Park to see of what his haul consisted, and he found himself in possession of a New Testament. Since he was too early for his appointment with his fellow-criminals, he sat down and idly began to read the book. "Soon he was deep in the book, and he read to such effect that a few hours later he went to his comrades, and told them bluntly what he had been doing, and broke with them for good." Here is the unique effect of the Bible. Its power is self-evidencing. When Coleridge was asked what he meant by the inspiration of the Bible, he said that he could give no other answer than to say: "It finds me." It is the simple truth to say that the New Testament books became canonical because no one could stop them doing so. There were other books circulating; and there were even other books which in certain Churches enjoyed for a brief time a position in which they might possibly have entered the canon. Many of these books we still possess; and we can say that to read them and then to read the New Testament is to enter into a different world, ii. Certain books began to be read at the public worship of the Church, were an essential part of the Christian service (Justin

Martyr, First Apology 1:67). Clement of Rome wrote a letter to the Church at Corinth, and Eusebius tells us of a letter of Dionysius of Corinth, written about A.D. 175, in which Dionysius says that it was still the custom in his day to read Clement's letter at public worship (Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History 4:23:10). And, as Harnack pertinently asks, if the letter of Clement was read, how much more would the much greater letters of Paul be read in the Churches to which they were sent, and in other Churches which knew of them? Books which were read at the worship of the Church had a special position, and had at least begun on the road that lead to their full entry into the canon of Scripture.

1.B 10. Discarding the Old Testament?

Discarding the Old Testament? iii. But something happened which forced the hand of the Church. About A.D. 140 there came to the Church in Rome a man called Marcion. Marcion was a wealthy and much-travelled ship-owner from Sinope, and he was generous with his money to the Church at Rome. Marcion was a Gnostic, and a knowledge of the broad principles of Gnosticism is necessary to understand Marcion's position and the Church's reaction to him. The Gnostics believed that they possessed a special and an inner knowledge which had come to them direct from the secret teaching of the apostles, or even from the secret teaching of Jesus Himself. It was an essential principle of the Gnostics that the whole universe was founded on a dualism. They believed that spirit and matter were both eternal. God is pure spirit, and altogether good. Matter is essentially flawed and evil. Since matter is eternal, the world was not created out of nothing; it was created out of this essentially flawed matter. God being altogether good could never directly touch or handle this flawed matter. So God put out a series of emanations called aeons. As each aeon was further from God, so each aeon was more and more ignorant of God. As the aeons proceeded down this scale, they became not only ignorant of God, but actually hostile to God. At last in the series there emerged an aeon so distant from God that he could touch and handle evil matter and so create the world. This creating aeon was called the Demiurge. From this it can be seen that the Gnostics believed that the God of creation is quite different from and quite hostile to the true God. It was in this way that they explained the sin and sorrow and suffering and evil of the world. This kind of belief had many serious consequences. It had serious consequences on their beliefs about Jesus. If matter is evil, then Jesus never could have had a real body, and was nothing other than a kind of spiritual phantom with only the appearance of a body. If the body is evil, one of two courses follows. Either, the body must be denied, and starved and kept down in a rigid asceticism, or, the body does not matter, and, therefore, its instincts may be sated and glutted in a wild antinomianism. But in the case of Marcion and in regard to the canon of the New Testament, Gnosticism had very definite consequences. The Gnostics identified the ignorant, hostile God of creation with the God of the Old Testament, who, they said, was a quite different God from the God of the New Testament whom Jesus had revealed. Sometimes this made them, as it were, turn the Old Testament upside down. If the God of the Old Testament is an ignorant and inferior God, hostile to the true God, then the people he punished are the good people, and the people he blessed are the bad people. So there were Gnostics who believed Cain and Koran and Baalam to be the heroes of the Old Testament, and who actually worshipped the serpent as the representative of the true God. In particular most kinds of Gnosticism obviously demanded the complete and total abandonment of the Old Testament and all those that had to do with the Old Testament as the work and the words of the evil God. In view of this attitude to the Old Testament Marcion very naturally produced his own canon of Scripture. In it the Old Testament was completely discarded. The Old Testament had held three parts the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. In place of the Law Marcion put the Gospel. He discarded Matthew, Mark and John as being far too much tinged with Judaism, and in place of them substituted an expurgated version of Luke, from which every Old Testament reference had been removed. In place of the Prophets he

substituted the Apostle, in which he included ten letters of Paul, whom he regarded as the great enemy of the old Law and the great exponent of the new gospel. The ten letters were Galatians, I and 2 Corinthians, Romans, I and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans (arguing from Colossians 4:16 he regarded Ephesians as having been written to Laodicea), Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. For the Writings he substituted a book of his own called the Antitheses in which he compiled a list of Old Testament passages with the New Testament contradictions of them. This presented the Church with a real problem. Here was a heretic who had compiled a canon of Scripture for himself while the Church still officially had none. The greatest problem of all was the position of Paul, Marcion worshipped Paul barely this side of idolatry. As he saw it, Paul was the great enemy of the Law, and the great bringer of the gospel. For Marcion Paul was the supreme figure in the Church. He held that in heaven Paul sits at the right hand of Christ, who sits at the right hand of God. He held that Paul was the promised Paraclete, the Comforter whom Jesus had promised to His followers. Christ, he said, had descended from heaven twice, once to suffer and to die, and once to call Paul and to reveal to Paul the true significance of His death. As Tertullian ironically put it, Paul had become the apostle of the heretics. Of course, Marcion had to misinterpret Paul to make Paul fit his beliefs, but the impression was that Paul had been annexed and appropriated by the heretics. So, then, Marcion, as Tertullian put it, "criticized the Scriptures with a pen-knife," cutting off the parts which did not suit him, and forming his own canon. The Church had to act.

1.B 11. The Church's Decision

The Church's Decision The Church had to act; the Church had to say which books it did regard as holy Scripture. And what was to happen to Paul? Was he to be abandoned to the heretics, or was he to be legitimized? It could be argued that Paul was no apostle because he was not one of the original twelve; it could be argued that his letters contained statements which could be used as a basis for heresy; and it was true that the heretics had wellnigh made him their patron saint. Paul's letters were in the balance. But two things resolved the matter. First, his letters were read in all the Churches, and were mightily effective in the spread and defence of the gospel. Second, there was the book of Acts. In it Paul was set forth in all the glory of his apostleship, and it was proved in that "Book" that he was called and that the Twelve had accepted him. That is why Acts comes where it does in the order of the New Testament books. Logically Acts should come after Luke, of which it is the second volume, but in point of fact it comes between the Gospels and the letters of Paul, because it is the bridge between them, and it is the document which guarantees that the letters which follow are the letters of an apostle, and of the greatest of the apostles. Acts provides Paul's title to apostolicity, and, therefore, immediately precedes his letters. So the Church finally legitimized Paul. It further sought out such additional apostolic materials as it possessed and it finally arrived at a list. This list, which takes its name. The Muratorian Canon is damaged at the beginning, and actually begins with Luke, but its list of books is as follows Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Romans, Philemon, Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy, Jude, 1 and 2 John, the Apocalypse of John (that is, the Revelation), the Apocalypse of Peter. To this list is added The Wisdom of Solomon.

Here, then, is the first list of the New Testament Canon. These are the books which at that time the Church accepted as sacred Scripture. The only startling omission is the omission of 1 Peter, and, although it is absent from this list, it may be regarded as certain that the Church even then did accept it.

Already the Canon is taking shape. The omitted books James, 2 Peter, 3 John, Hebrews are precisely the books which took longest and had the hardest struggle to enter the canon, and to their history we shall later return. The New Testament is well on the way to being finalized and the strange thing is that the stimulus to this first step was the work and influence of Marcion the heretic, and the enemy of true Christianity.

1.B 12. Closing of the Books

Closing of the Books iv. The process of canonization was, therefore, begun by a heretic, and it is a curious fact that it was also completed by a heretic, or at least completed in principle. How did it come about that the canon of the New Testament was closed? Christianity has always been a religion of the Spirit; according to the Fourth Gospel Jesus had promised to His people ever greater and greater revelations and insights into the truth (John 16:12). How then did there ever come a time when the Church declared that all the inspired books that could be written had been written, and that nothing more could ever be added to the written word of God? How did it come about that, as TertuUian bitterly put it, "the Holy Spirit was chased into a book"? In the second half of the second century a change was coming over the Church. The days of enthusiasm were passing and the days of ecclesiasticism were arriving. No more was the Church a place in which the spirit of prophecy was a commonplace. People were flooding into the Church. No more was there the sharp distinction between Church and world. The Church was becoming secularized; it was coming to terms with heathen thought and culture and philosophy. The Christian ethic was tending to become less lofty, and the Christian demand less absolute. Into this situation somewhere between A.D. 156 and 172 there burst a man called Montanus. He had once been a priest of Cybele, and had been converted to Christianity, and he emerged in Asia Minor. He came with a demand for a higher standard and a greater discipline and sharper separation of the Church from the world. Had he halted there, he could have done little but good, and, when Montanism did settle down and purge itself of its extravagances, in the days when TertuUian became a Montanist in A.D. 202, that was the emphasis of Montanist teaching. But Montanus himself went much further. He and his two prophetesses Prisca and Maximilla went about prophesying in the name of the Spirit, and foretelling the speedy second coming of Christ. More, Montanus claimed to be the promised Paraclete, come with a new vision and a new message for the Church. He was convinced that he and his prophetesses were the God-given instruments of revelation, the lyres across which the Spirit swept to draw new music. But this can be a dangerous tendency. As W. D. Niven writes in *The Conflicts of the Early Church*: "When Montanus said, *I am the Father and the Son and the Paraclete/ he had manifestly crossed the line which separates fervour from extravagance. When one prophetess declared that Christ, in the form of a woman, slept with her, she was on the verge of something more repulsive."

Clearly this was a situation in which the Church had to act. Montanus as a herald of a new spiritual vitality and a new challenge to holiness was one thing; Montanus as the claimant to divine revelation was quite another. It was in face of this new situation that the Church decided that Scripture was closed, that the book of the new covenant was signed and sealed, that the basic Christian documents were written. The result of Montanism was the decision in principle that the canon of Scripture was completed and closed.

So, then, by the end of the second century the Church had reached a position in which the Canon of the New Testament was well on the way to being defined, and in which in principle it was agreed that the production of sacred Scripture had come to an end.

1.B 13. The Final Completion

The Final Completion

We must now move on to the final step in the completion of the canon of the New Testament. In this we are fortunate enough to have excellent evidence, for two of the greatest scholars of the early Church made deliberate investigations into the status of the various New Testament books in their day, and the results of these investigations have come down to us. Jerome (A.D. 182-251), who was the greatest scholar the early Church ever had, investigated the matter, and his conclusions are passed down to us by Eusebius (The Ecclesiastical History 6:25:7-14). The following books he regards as beyond question part of the New Testament the four Gospels, the letters of Paul, including Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John, the Apocalypse. He says that Peter may have left a second letter, "but this is doubtful." Of 2 and 3 John he says that "not all consider them genuine". Acts he does not actually mention in his catalogue but he certainly accepted it. James and Jude he does not list at all. He thinks that Hebrews has some connection with Paul, and he never doubts the excellence of its thought and its right to a place in the New Testament. He may well have known the opinion of Clement of Alexandria that Paul wrote it in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek; he hands down the opinion of some that Clement of Rome wrote it. But his own verdict is: "Who wrote the letter, God alone knows."

(A.D. 270-340) made a similar investigation. He divided the books into three classes the homologoumena, which are accepted by everyone; the antilegomena, which are disputed; and the notha the word means bastard which are spurious and to be definitely rejected (The Ecclesiastical History 3:25). The universally accepted books are the four Gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul including Hebrews, 1 John, and 1 Peter. The Revelation is in an intermediate position. Eusebius lists it with the accepted books, with the comment, "If it really seems proper," and notes that some reject it. The disputed books are "the so-called" letter of James, Jude, 2 Peter, "those that are called 2 and 3 John, whether they belong to the evangelist or another person of the same name." Elsewhere he is more definite about 2 Peter (The Ecclesiastical History 3:3), for he says: "We have learned that Peter's extant second letter does not belong to the canon; yet, as it has appeared profitable to many, it has been used with the other Scriptures." He is also elsewhere (The Ecclesiastical History 2:23:25) more definite about James. In his notice on the life of James he says: "James is said to be the author of the first of the so-called Catholic Epistles; but it is to be observed that it is regarded as spurious, at least not many of the ancients have mentioned it," and then he goes on to include Jude under the same verdict.

The canon contained the following indisputable books the four Gospels, Acts, fourteen letters of Paul including Hebrews, 1 Peter, 1 John, and the Revelation of doubt. Still on the fringe of the New Testament were James, 2 Peter, and 3 John, Jude, although Jude was included as early as the Muratorian Canon. We must be quite clear about these books against which there was a question mark. Their usefulness for life and doctrine is not in question; they were freely used and freely quoted; there is no question of their rejection.

Eusebius supplies a list of books which were definitely rejected the Shepherd of Hermias, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Letter of Barnabas, the so-called Teaching of the Apostles. Although Eusebius and Origen list these books as disputed, they never suggest discarding them.

What, then, was the real trouble about these books? The real trouble was that the test of the Church for any book, as we have seen, was apostolicity, and no one was quite sure who had written these books. No one, for instance, questioned the value of Hebrews, but the trouble was that no one knew who had written it, although Tertullian states as a fact that it is the work of Barnabas (Tertullian, Concerning Modesty 20). That is why in the end Hebrews was attributed to Paul, although it was clear enough that Paul did not write it, why James was attributed to the brother of our Lord, Jude to another of Jesus' brothers, 2 Peter to Peter, 2 and 3 John to John. These were of a value which no one disputed, and the only way to bring them fully into the canon of Scripture was to shelter them, under the wing of an apostle. And it is certainly true that, even if they are not the work of the apostles whose name they came to bear, they are certainly apostolic.

We have very nearly come to the full-grown New Testament. There are still two steps. Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-386) in his lectures to those being prepared for membership of the Church lists the books of the New Testament the four Gospels, the Acts of the Twelve Apostles, the seven catholic epistles, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude, and lastly "as the seal of all" the fourteen letters of Paul (Catechetical Lectures 4:36). Here the list is complete save only for the Revelation. And so we come to the final step. In his Easter Letter of A.D. 367 Athanasius[^] finally lists [^]J[^] such a landmark that the relevant passage of it must be quoted in full: must be no hesitation to state again the books of the New Testament, for they are these: Four Gospels, according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John. Further, after these also, The Acts of the Apostles, and the seven so-called Catholic Epistles of the Apostles, as follows: one of James, but two of Peter, then three of John, and after these one of Jude. In addition to these there are fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul put down in the following order: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians, and after these the Epistles to the Galatians and then to the Ephesians: further, the Epistles to the Philippians and to the Colossians and two to the Thessalonians, and the Epistle to the Hebrews. And next two letters to Timothy, but one to Titus, and the last the one to Philemon. Moreover also, the Apocalypse of John.

There stands our New Testament, and, apart from the fact that the Catholic Epistles are placed after Acts, as they are in all early manuscripts, not only the list but the order of the books is the order we possess to-day. The Canon of the New Testament is complete.

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1.D 00. The Final Test

THE FINAL TEST

THERE is ONE last question to ask What is it that makes a book sacred and holy Scripture? What is it that makes a book part of the word of God? What is it that entitles a book to a place among the canonical books of the Church? More than one answer has been and still is given to that question.

Authority of the Books

L The answer of the Roman Catholic Church is clear and unequivocal. A book becomes a canonical book by the tradition, the authority and the decision of the Church. In 1546 the Council of Trent listed the books which for the Roman Catholic Church form the Old and the New Testaments, and then said that if any man did not accept the list whole and entire, each book whole and entire, he was anathema. In the Roman Catholic Church there is nothing more to be said; these books are canonical, and there can be no demur and no dispute. ii. For the Reformers the case was different. To base anything on the tradition and the authority of the Church was precisely and exactly what they could not do. It has often been said that the Protestant Church did no more than substitute an infallible book for an infallible Church; but it must be remembered that the Reformers were well aware of the critical history of the books of the New Testament, and were fully prepared to give that critical history its full place in the evaluation of a book. When Oecolampadius the Swiss reformer was consulted by the Waldensians about the constitution of the canon of the New Testament, he named the twenty-seven of them, but at the same time he pointed out that six of them he did not include Hebrews were antilegomena, disputed books, and that they held inferior rank within the New Testament. "The Apocalypse together with the letters of James and Jude and the second letter of Peter and the two letters of John we do not compare with the rest of the books." The Reformers were not in the least fundamentalists, if that word be taken to describe those who insist that every word of Scripture is equally inspired, equally sacred, and equally infallible. iii. Curiously enough, the one reformer who wrote on the canon in particular took up a position which is very closely connected with the Roman Catholic position. That reformer was Andreas Bodenstein of Karlstadt. He applied one test the test of attestation. The earlier and the greater the attestation to any book, the higher the rank he gave that book within the canon. On this basis he divided all the biblical books into three classes. The first class contained the five books of Moses and the four Gospels, which are in a class by themselves and which are "the most brilliant lamps of divine truth" (*totius veritatis divinae rarissima lamina*). The second class contained the Prophets Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Ezekiel and the Twelve, together with the fifteen undoubted New Testament letters thirteen of Paul, one of Peter, and one of John. The third class contained the Writings of the Old Testament, and the seven disputed books of the New Testament he included Hebrews which occupy the very lowest rank in the canon. If we apply this test, then the Revelation and Hebrews rank below James, Jude, and John, because they were later in gaining a settled and secure and final place in the canon. The one test is How early did a book gain admission to the canon, and how fully is it attested? The

odd fact about this is that to all intents and purposes it settles canonicity by the tradition of the Church, which is precisely what the Roman Catholic Church does, iv. There is the test of Calvin. Calvin's test may be defined as the witness of the Holy Spirit within a mail answering to the witness of die Holy Spirit within the book. Calvin was no obscurantist. He is quite certain that Hebrews is not the work of Paul, yet he has no hesitation in using Hebrews magnificently for commenting on, for preaching on, and for doctrine. He declares that it is by no means clear who wrote James, and that the author may well not have been the Apostle, but he gladly and willingly accepts the book as Scripture. In regard to 2 Peter Calvin is critically ready to agree that it is not the work of Peter, but that position does not in the least detract for him from the religious value of the letter. He does not comment at all on the Revelation, but that does not mean that he gave it an inferior place. For Calvin the test of canonicity is certainly not ecclesiastical tradition; it is equally certainly not apostolic authorship; it is in the last analysis " religious intuition". For Calvin the ultimate test of canonicity was no tiling odier than the witness of the Spirit.

1.D 01. Does the Book Speak of Christ?

Does the Book Speak of Christ? v. Of all the Reformers Luther had the best defined and in many ways the most logical position. Luther's one test was Does a book speak of Christ? It is that test which enables Luther to treat Scripture with an amazing freedom. In the concluding paragraph of his Preface to the New Testament he writes: "In sum: the Gospel and the First Epistle of John, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter's First Epistle are die books which show Christ to you. They teach everything you need to know for your salvation, even if you were never to see or hear any other book, or hear any other teaching. In comparison with these the Epistle of James is an Epistle full of straw, because it contains nothing evangelical." Here is the touchstone, and then there comes the startling passage: "That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, though Peter or Paul should have said it; on the contrary, that which does preach Christ is apostolic, even if it should come from Judas, Annas, Herod, or Pilate."

It is for this reason that Luther felt able to make an actual division in his New Testament as it was printed. There were four books to which Luther gave an inferior place. James derives justification from works; it contradicts Paul; it has nothing to say about the life, death, resurrection or Spirit of Jesus. Hebrews in three places (Hebrews 6:1-20, Hebrews 10:1-39, Hebrews 12:1-29) refuses repentance to sinners after baptism, contrary to all the Gospels and all Paul's Epistles. Jude is useless because it has nothing fundamental to the Christian faith, and is only an extract from 2 Peter. In the Apocalypse there are unintelligible and unbiblical images and visions, and the author had the audacity to add promises and threats about obeying and disobeying his words, when no one knows what his words mean. So, then, on the title page of his New Testament Luther printed these four books in a group by themselves with a space between them, and the other twentythree. Further, he numbered the other twenty-three but left these unnumbered. He quite definitely relegated them to a lesser position. He can admire them; he can admire the austerity of James and eulogize the doctrine of Christ as High Priest in Hebrews, but these books do not manifest Christ, and, therefore, they were not for Luther. There was no point in quoting proof texts to Luther. "If," he said, "in die debates in which exegesis brings no decisive victories, our adversaries press the letter against Christ, we shall insist on Christ against the letter."

He is equally severe on the Old Testament. Of Ecclesiastes he said: "This book ought to be more complete; it wants many things; it has neither boots nor spurs, and rides in simple sandals as I used to do when I was still in the convent. Solomon is not its author." The books of Kings and Chronicles are only the calendars of the Jews, containing the list of their kings and their kind of government. "As for the second book of Maccabees and that of Esther," he writes, "I dislike them so much that I wish they did not exist; for they are too Jewish and have many bad pagan elements."

One thing is to be remembered. Luther granted to others the freedom which he demanded himself. He did not wish to impose his own views on anyone. In the Preface to James he writes: "I cannot

place it among the right canonical works, but I do not wish thereby to prevent anyone from so placing it and extolling it as seems good to him." In the Preface to Revelation he writes: "In this book I leave it to every man to make out his own meaning; I wish no one to be bound to my views or opinion... Let every man hold what his spirit gives him." Of Hebrews he says that it does not lay the foundation of the faith, but nevertheless the writer does build gold, silver, precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:12), even if there is wood, straw, and hay intermingled. "We should receive such fine doctrine with all honour." Luther gave to others the rights he claimed himself.

1.D 02. Faith in a Living Saviour

Faith in a Living Saviour In the last analysis Luther is right. The great test of any book of Scripture is In it do we find Jesus Christ? For in the last analysis it is not upon any book that our faith is built but on a living Saviour. The story of the making of the Bible is a story which enables us to see the supreme value of the books of the Bible as nothing else can or does. It enables us to see that these books did not become Scripture by the decision of any Church or any man; they became Scripture because out of them men in their sorrow found comfort, in their despair hope, in their weakness strength, in their temptations power, in their darkness light, in their uncertainty faith, and in their sin a Saviour. That is why the Bible is the word of God. When the Church did make its canonical lists, it was not choosing and selecting these books; it was only affirming and attesting that these already were the books on which men had stayed their hearts and fed their souls. And that is why there never can be a time when the Church or the Christian can do without this Bible which has always been the word of God to His people, and the place where men find Jesus Christ. FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE Edward Reuss: The History of the Canon of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Church, 1891.

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2.01 The Free Gift of Salvation

<http://www.theoldtimegospel.org/home/freegift.html> The Free Gift of Salvation: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." — 2 Corinthians 9:15

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." — Revelation 3:20 A Special Invitation through the Words of Jesus Himself

There is no better person to guide you through the most important decision of your life than by the One who made it all possible for you, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." Matthew 18:11 "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." Matthew 16:26

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:5-8 "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John 8:51 Read these messages on True Repentance.

How To Find God Tears Of Repentance Phony Repentance Why must I be saved?

God leaves no doubt about our condition. While we set our standards of right and wrong by society's values, God's standard is His own holiness. How do we measure up? "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). It is only fair that God demands holiness; that is how He first created mankind. We have rebelled against Him as a race and as individuals. Our pathway away from God has brought its consequences. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23 a). The Bible compares sin to a cruel slave master. There is no mercy in suffering, no freedom from bondage, no lasting joy, no hope for the future. Most frightening is the final consequence of sin. The Bible warns that without God's salvation, death is the doorway to eternal punishment (Hebrews 9:27).

It is from this that we need to be saved. From our own sin. From its bondage. From its consequences. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

How can I be saved?

God is holy and God is love. His holiness demands that our sin be punished in full. His love provides a way for us to be saved from this punishment. How is this possible? Someone was willing to suffer what we deserve. Our substitute had to be a sinless man, able to suffer the full wrath of God against our sin. The only one able to take our place was God's Son. The greatest display of God's love unfolded as His Son left heaven to become a man. Born of a virgin two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ lived with His creation. He was unable to sin, yet He showed compassion to sinners all around Him. Men hated Christ because His holiness exposed their sinfulness. They decided to remove Him by crucifying Him.

He willingly allowed them to nail Him to a cross of wood outside Jerusalem. They suspended Him so they could sit and watch Him die. The climax of God's plan of salvation had arrived as God covered the earth with darkness. The Bible tells us that for three hours He laid on His Son the full punishment we deserve to receive for our sin. The darkness was broken when Jesus Christ called out with a loud voice, "It is finished". He had accomplished the mighty work, God's great plan of salvation.

After three days in death, Christ Jesus rose from the dead. This is evidence to all who saw Him and to all who read God's word that Christ's suffering completely satisfied His father. He was victorious over death itself - the ultimate consequence of our sin.

God's plan of salvation brings us into the good of Christ's suffering, death, and victory. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). "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" (John 3:16). The only alternative

to Heaven is Hell The Way, Truth, Life

By A. W. Pink The Loss

When A Soul Is Lost

By Charles Finney Free Salvation

By J.C. Ryle

2.02 The Shed Blood of Jesus

The Shed Blood of Jesus What it means to you! Exodus 12:13

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." — Leviticus 17:11
The Blood Of Jesus The blood of Jesus Christ is God's way of meeting man's greatest need, salvation. God is holy, and men are sinful. Sin has separated man from God. To be separated from God is death and means eternity in Hell, for sin must be punished. God will never excuse sin.

God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross as the penalty for our sins,

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood..."

You will notice that in Romans 3:25, it was God's plan, not man's

"Whom God hath set forth..."

Also, that Christ died for our sins,

"...to be a propitiation..."

Lastly, that forgiveness is obtained simply by faith in what Jesus has done for us at Calvary,

"...through faith in his blood..."

Because of the blood of Jesus, God can now show mercy to sinners who repent, yet still remain holy and just to His own nature,

"...that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26
What Will Jesus' Blood Do? The blood washes and cleanses us from every sin

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Revelation 1:5.

"...and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." I John 1:7
The blood pays for our forgiveness,

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..." Ephesians 1:7.
The blood makes peace with our God,

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself..." Colossians 1:20.
The blood saves us from God's eternal wrath,

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Romans 5:9
The blood opens the way to Heaven portals,

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Hebrews 10:19.

What Must I Do?

Admit your need for salvation,

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" Romans 3:23.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions... I will be sorry for my sin." Psalms 51:3 & 38:18

Trust God's in promises,

"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Acts 16:31.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:" 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Cry out to God in earnest prayer,

"...God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:13

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13 It's Your Decision!

Jesus shed His blood, was buried, and rose on the third day. At this very moment, He stands ready, able, and willing to save you from your sins. The choice is now yours. There is a song that says, 'If the blood of Christ is sufficient for God, it is surely sufficient for me.' It is the blood of Jesus Christ that satisfies God. Why not put your trust in Christ's finished work, and call on Him for salvation today?

"For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," Revelation 1:5.

S. Final Week of Christ as the Sacrificial Lamb

<http://www.theoldtimegospel.org/know/bstudy2.html>

"...keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night." Deuteronomy 16:1 The Passover Lamb The Passover Lamb stood for two things. The Passover Lamb was the symbol of deliverance. Nowhere in history did the Jews see the delivering power of God so clearly and definitely demonstrated as in the events which brought them out of Egypt. here was the deliverance par excellence, and without parallel. And to think of Jesus as the Passover lamb is to see in him the delivering and rescuing power of God come to earth for the salvation of men. Just as the first Passover lamb was the sign of God's deliverance of his people from their slavery in Egypt, so Jesus the second Passover lamb is the symbol of their deliverance from slavery to sin. But there is a real sense in which the Passover lamb was more than a symbol of deliverance; it was the means of deliverance. It was the mark of the blood of the lamb, which the lamb had to die to provide, which was the means which kept the Jewish homes safe on that terrible night of death and destruction. The death of the lamb was essential for the deliverance of the people. Jesus therefore is the means of salvation whereby men are saved from the penalty and the power of their sins. Through his sacrifice and death that salvation came. By William Barclay A Look at the Final Week of Christ

as the Sacrificial Lamb

Palm Sunday Christ enters Jerusalem: Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:12-19

Monday The second cleansing of the temple: Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-48

Tuesday The barren fig tree: Matthew 21:18-22; Mark 11:11-14, Mark 11:19-23

The questioning of the chief priests: Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8

Parable of the two sons: Matthew 21:28-32

Parable of the wicked husbandmen: Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-18

The tribute money: Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26

The Sadducees confuted: Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40

The great commandment: Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34

David's Son and David's Lord: Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44

The hypocrisy and ambition of the Pharisees: Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47

The widow's mite: Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

Christ's second coming foretold: Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36

Parable of the ten virgins: Matthew 25:1-13

The last judgment: Matthew 25:31-46

Greeks visit Jesus. Voice from heaven: John 12:20-36

The judgment of unbelief: John 12:37-50

Last passover. Conspiracy of Jews: Matthew 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-2

Judas Iscariot: Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6 Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday)

Paschal supper: Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; John 13:1-35

Contention of the apostles: Luke 22:24-30

Peter's fall foretold: Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-39; John 13:36-38

Last discourse. The departure. The Comforter: John 14:1-31

The vine and the branches. Abiding in love: John 15:1-27

Work of the Comforter in the disciples: John 16:1-33

The prayer of Christ for them: John 17:1-26

Gethsemane: Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1

Good Friday The betrayal: Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-11

Christ before Annas and Caiaphas. Peter's denial: Matthew 26:57, Matthew 26:58, Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:53-54, Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-65; John 18:12-27

Christ before the sanhedrin: Matthew 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:66-71

Christ before Pilate: Matthew 27:1-2, Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-6; John 18:12-28

The traitor's death: Matthew 27:3-10

Christ before Herod: Luke 23:7-12

Accusation and condemnation: Matthew 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:29; John 19:16

Treatment by the soldiers: Matthew 27:27-31; Mark 15:16-20; Luke 23:36-37; John 19:1-3

The crucifixion: Matthew 27:32-38; Mark 15:21-28; Luke 23:26-34; John 19:17-24

The mother of Jesus at the cross: John 19:25-27

Mockings and railings: Matthew 27:39-44; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-39

The penitent malefactor: Luke 23:40-43

The death of Christ: Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; Luke 19:28-30

Darkness and other portents: Matthew 27:45-53; Mark 15:33-38; Luke 23:44-45

The bystanders: Matthew 27:54-56; Mark 15:39-41; Luke 23:47-49

The side pierced: John 19:31-37

The burial: Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

The guard of the sepulchre: Matthew 27:62-66; Matthew 28:11-15 Resurrection Sunday The resurrection: Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18

S. I Believe in God

I BELIEVE IN GOD by William Barclay

...[S]ince I am a simple-minded person, the argument from design, even though it is nowadays discredited by the experts, still weighs strongly with me. Away back in 1748 Colin Maclaurin in his Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophical Discoveries said succinctly: "A manifest contrivance suggests a contriver." And the world is a manifest contrivance. Kant, says M. L. Clarke in his book on Paley, did not regard the evidence from design as sufficient in itself to prove the existence of God, but he none the less called it "the oldest, the clearest argument, and that most in conformity with the common reason of humanity." Cicero in Concerning the Nature of the Gods speaks of the orrery, the model of the solar system that Posidonius made, a model "which at each revolution produces the same motions of the sun, the moon and the five planets that take place in the heavens every twenty-four hours," and then he goes on to ask, if some one took that orrery to Scythia or Britain, the outposts of the world, "would any single native doubt that this orrery was the work of a rational being?" And if so with the model, how much more with the real thing? [Quoted from William Barclay: A Spiritual Autobiography, pg 111, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1977.]
<http://www.godstruthfortoday.org/Library/miscellaneous/Preparedness.htm>

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