

CANON

I. SOME BASIC MATTERS

A. The Meaning of the Term

1. Derivation. From the Greek kanon meaning measuring instrument (from a Semitic root as in Ezek. 40:3). Comes to mean a rule of action (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:16).

2. History. In early church used of creeds. In middle of 4th century used of the Bible; i.e., the list of accepted books.

3. Meaning. (a) The collection of books that meet certain tests or rules and thus comprises authoritative holy scripture. (b) This collection is therefore our rule of life.

B. The Underlying Considerations

1. Basically the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Men and councils only recognize what is inherently true in the books themselves.

2. God guided men and groups of men to recognize individual books as inspired of God and to collect those books in the canons of the Old and New Testaments.

3. It is not unexpected that there would be disputes about some books in the process of the formation of the canon.

4. Since the canon is complete, then it is closed. (Consider 1 Cor. 5:9; books of the cults; alleged contemporary prophecies).

5. Canonicity is not an issue in the present inerrancy debate.

II. THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

A. The Witness of the Old Testament Itself

1. Its character--clear but not detailed.

2. Its content.

a. Many references to law of Moses as authoritative (Josh. 1:7,8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 8:61; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; 2 Chron. 17:9; Jer. 8:8; Dan. 9:11; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Mal. 4:4).

b. Prophets claimed to speak the word of the God; did so in a kind of continuous chain; and their prophecies were recognized as authoritative (Josh. 24:26 cf. 1 Kings 16:34; Josh. 24:29-33 cf. Judg. 2:8-9; Judges-Ruth; 2 Chron. 36:22-23 cf. Ezra 1:1-4; Dan. 9:2 cf. Jer. 25:11-12).

c. There is indication that the prophetic witness would end with Malachi (Mal. 4:5; 1 Mac. 4:45; 9:27; 14:41--people were waiting for a prophet).

B. The Witness of the Dead Sea Scrolls

1. Their Importance. Show the state recognition of sacred books in intertestamentary period.

2. Their Number. 175 of 500 Qumran mss. are biblical. Several copies of many OT books and all represented except Esther.

3. Their Testimony. Existence of these mss. does not prove their

canonicity since some of apocrypha and pseudepigrapha also found. But only commentaries that deal with canonical books have been found. Seems to show a distinction. Also 20 of present 39 OT books are quoted or referred to as Scripture and 15 more repeatedly used. Sp positive evidence for canonicity of all but Chronicles, Esther, and Song of Solomon.

C. Other Evidence

1. Prologue to Ecclesiasticus. Refers to threefold division of books (law, prophets, and hymns and precepts for human conduct) known by writer's grandfather (c. 200 B.C.).

2. Philo (c. A.D. 40) referred to same threefold division.

3. Josephus (A.D. 37-100) said the Jews held sacred only 22 books (=present 39 of OT).

4. Jamnia (A.D. 70-100). A teaching house of rabbis who discussed canonicity. Some questioned whether it was right to accept (as was being done) Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. These discussions concerned an existing canon.

5. Church fathers. Accepted the 39 books except Augustine (400) who included Apocrypha but acknowledged it was not fully authoritative. It was officially recognized by the R.C. church in 1546.

D. The Witness of the New Testament

1. 250 quotes from OT books. None from Apocrypha. All but Esther, Eccl., Song of Solomon, Lamentations quoted (assuming Ezra and Nehemiah together, Ruth-Judges, Obadiah and Nahum in writings).

2. Matthew 5:17. Twofold division was related to canonization; threefold, to categorization (cf. Luke 24:27, 44; John 10:34).

3. Luke 11:51 (Matthew 23:25) excludes Apocrypha and includes the 39 books as we now count them.

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

A. The Tests for Canonicity

1. Authority. For OT this meant the authority of a lawgiver, prophet or leader in Israel. For NT this meant apostolic authority--either written by an apostle or backed by one (Peter-Mark; Paul-Luke).

2. Inspiration. Internal evidence of uniqueness.

3. Attestation by churches. For NT no book whose authority was doubted by any large number of churches was eventually accepted.

B. The Witness of the Apostolic Period

1. Of their own writings (1 Thess. 4:15; 5:16; Col. 4:16).

2. Of the writings of others (1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:15-16--also shows a collection process going on; Jude 17-18 cf. 2 Pet. 3:2-3).

C. The Period A.D. 90-170

1. All NT books cited during this period in other writings, though this does not set the limits of the canon.

2. Fathers recognized as canonical all 27 books though each does not list all the books.

3. Marcion (140), a heretic, included only Luke and 10 of Paul's

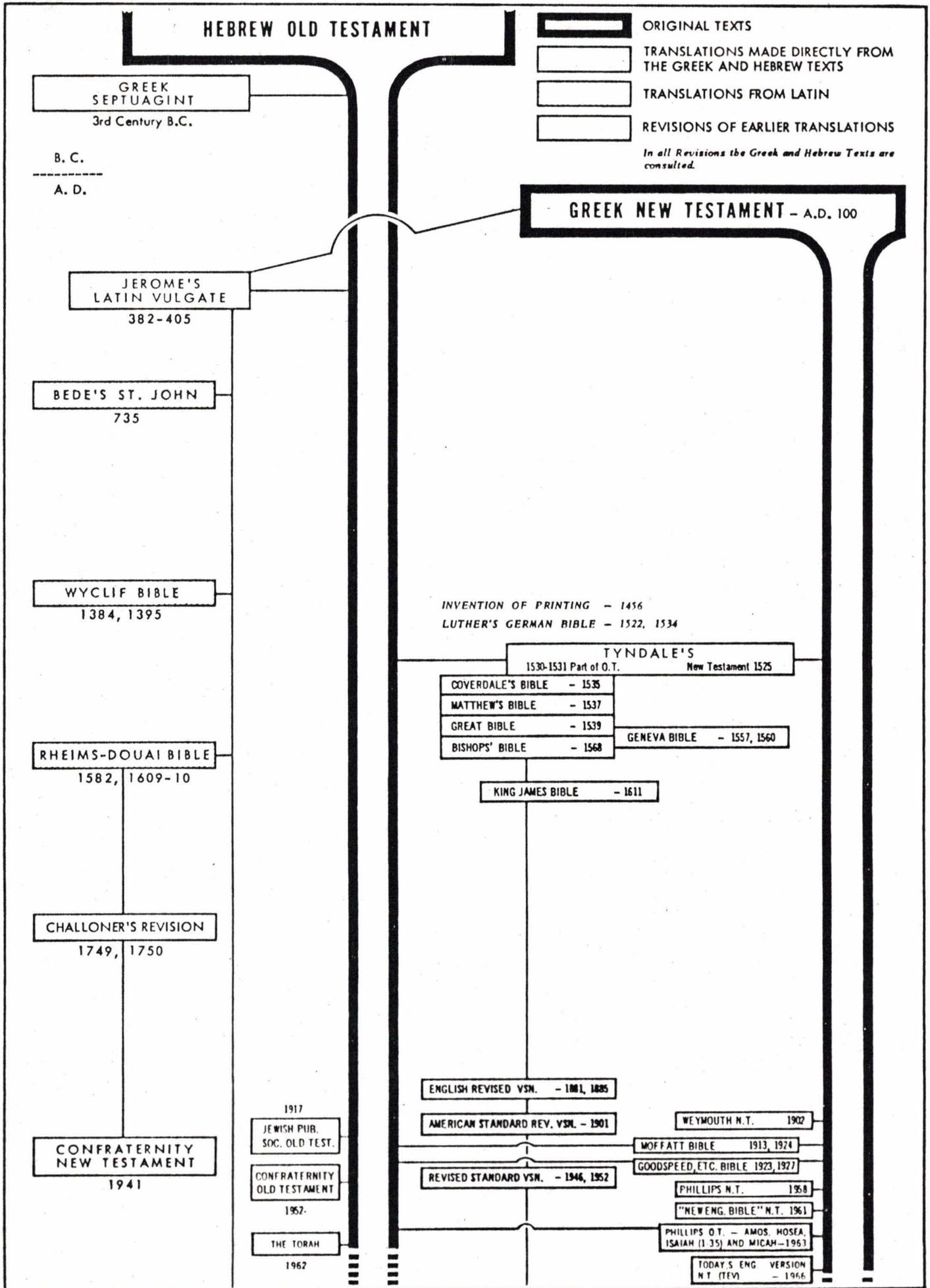
HOW DID WE GET OUR ENGLISH BIBLE, BUT NOW THAT
WE HAVE IT, WHICH TRANSLATION SHOULD I USE ?

- I. The Preservation and Passing On of the Text of the Old Testament
 - A. The Hebrew text
 - B. The Dead Sea Scrolls
 - C. Other documents

- II. The Preservation and Passing On of the Text of the New Testament
 - A. Manuscripts
 - B. Versions
 - C. Other documents
 - D. Problems of copying
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- III. Some Considerations In Using Modern Translations
 - A. What is the underlying text?
1 John 5:7-8
 - B. What is the slant of the translation? How Accurate?
Theological. RSV Ps. 45:7; Heb. 1:8. Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.
Interpretative. NIV 2 Cor. 5:14; John 1:9.
Linguistic. LB. TEV. NIV Jas 1:22; Heb. 5:12-14. NASB.
 - C. What is my purpose in using a particular translation?

CHART OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE



WHY ALL THE TRANSLA

Here's how to decide which of the many available Bible translations meets your personal needs. BY ROBERT THOMAS

For the hundreds of translations of the Bible into English, there are various goals which account for the efforts which have gone into producing these translations. Some translations have stated specifically those aims.

■ J.N. Darby sought to provide the unlearned reader "with as exact a translation as possible."

■ *The Twentieth Century New Testament* used "street English" with a view to capturing the sense of difficult passages and making them more intelligible to the average reader.

■ Weymouth's *New Testament in Modern Speech* sought to express how the inspired writers would have written if they had been writing around the turn of the twentieth century.

■ J.B. Phillips sought to produce a work for people who were unable to understand the language of the King

James Version.

When you consider these various translations' objectives, you generally can find two main trends or directions in their methodology. One emphasizes the importance of faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. This highlights the need for accuracy in the transition from one language to the other so that as little as possible of the original flavor is lost. The other emphasis is upon the effectiveness of communication. It makes sure that the translation is on the read-

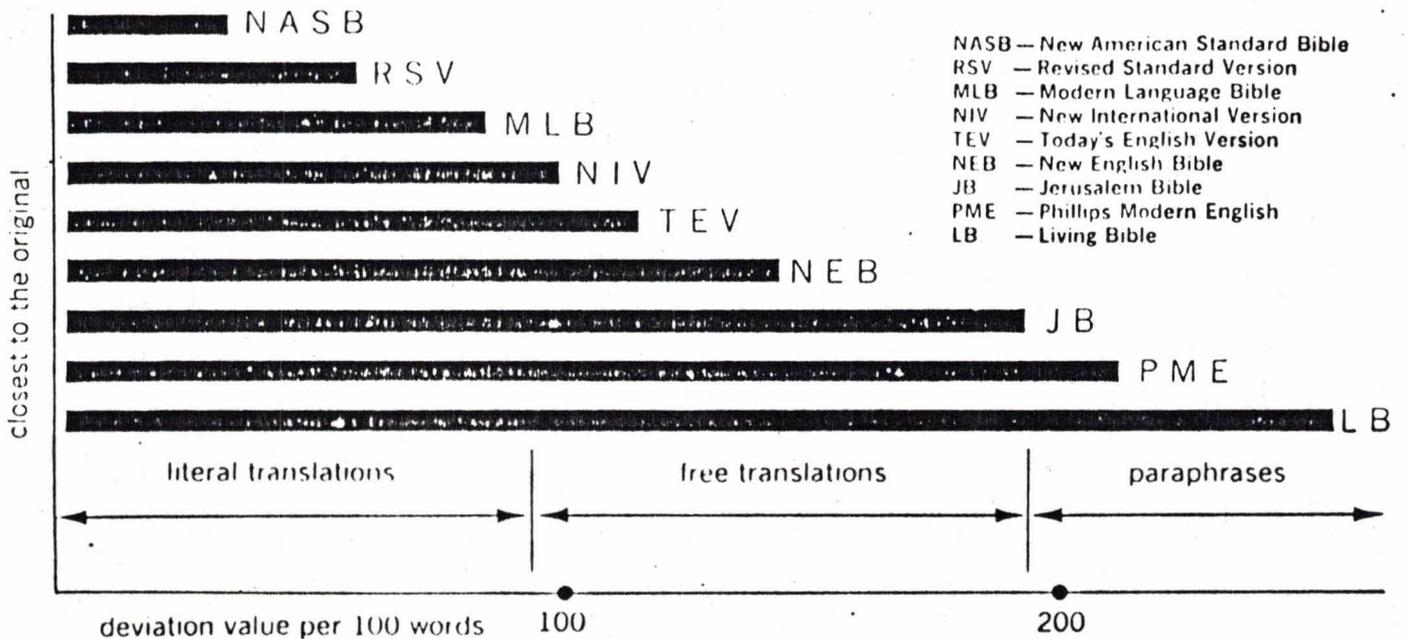
er's plane and speaks in a manner that he understands.

Though on the surface these goals don't appear to be mutually exclusive, English translations up to the present time have tended to polarize around one of these two directions. In other words, either a translation will be noted for its closeness to the original, or it will be noted for how well it has captured modern-day idiom.

It is possible to determine which of these two objectives is most important to the translators by subjecting the translation to an analysis such as has been proposed by William L. Wonderly (*Toward a Science of Translating*). By this means, one can compare with other translations how close a given translation is to the original Greek (in the New Testament) or Hebrew (in the Old Testament). This comparison is meaningful because Biblical languages—especially Greek—are close

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DEVIATION VALUES IN ROMANS



epistles, but shows the early collection of Paul's writings.

D. The Period 170-350

1. The Muratorian Canon, 170. Omits Heb.; Jas.; 1, 2 Peter. May be a break in the ms. so that these books were actually included. Also rejects certain other books like Shepherd of Hermas.

2. Old Syriac Version (end of 2nd century). Lacked 2,3 John; 2 Peter, Jude, Rev. But no extra books included.

3. Old Latin Version, 200. Lacked 2 Peter, James, Hebres and no extra books.

E. The Period 350-397

1. Athanasius, 367, listed all 27 books as canonical.

2. Council at Carthage, 397, fixed the 27 book NT canon.

Luther on James

In his preface to the NT Luther ascribes to the several books different degrees of doctrinal value and of insight into the gospel. He says: "St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's Epistle,--these are the books which show to thee Christ, and teach everything that is necessary and blessed for thee to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book of doctrine. Therefore, St. James's Epistle is a perfect straw-epistle compared with them, for it has in it nothing of an evangelic kind."