

### *Information from Fr. Mariadass*

Bible- books, origin, manuscripts, translations. 1) Bible - a divine book of human origin: "To be ignorant of Scripture is to be ignorant of Christ." St. Jerome. The name Bible is derived from the Greek word *biblia* meaning books. The Bible is a human book written under divine inspiration, edited and faithfully assembled with divine help. But the Bible is not a book dictated by God as Muslims believe of the Quran. They teach that the Quran was dictated to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel. Christians believe that the Bible is a collection of books written in the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages under divine inspiration, by a few hundred people, and that it was edited and compiled by others through 40 centuries. The Old Testament books existed as oral tradition in the 12 tribes of Israel for a few centuries before they were written down. The foundational material in the New Testament books was also contained in oral tradition for the first half of the first century, and then was written down in Aramaic and Greek.

2) The Old Testament books: The Septuagint Greek translation of the Bible consists of 46 books. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The Jewish Bible is known as Hebrew Scripture or Tanakh, and is composed of Torah (the Law), Neviim (the Prophets) and Kethuvim or Hagiographa (the Holy Writings). The third century BC Greek Septuagint version of the Jewish Bible was made by Jewish Bible scholars for Greek-speaking Jews. The books were arranged in four groups. The Law of Moses came first, followed by the Historical Books, then the Wisdom books, and finally the Prophets. The Septuagint also contained seven other books, namely, 1) Judith, 2) Baruch, 3) Sirach (Ecclesiastes), 4) Wisdom, 5) Tobit, 6) Maccabees I and 7) Maccabees II. At present, the Jews and the Protestants do not have these books in their Bibles. The Catholics, however, continue to keep them, making a total of 46 books. When Protestant Bible includes them, it is in an appendix, calling them Apocrypha (non-inspired). Catholics include them in with the rest and honor them as inspired Deuterocanonical books.

3) The New Testament books: The New Testament consists of 27 books. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, contain the inspired, faith-filled interpretation of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, made by the apostles and their disciples. Next comes a narrative of the preaching and pastoral ministry of the apostles in the early Church, The Acts of the Apostles, followed by twenty-one letters, Epistles, written by various authors. These contain mostly Christian counsel, instruction, and conflict resolution. The last book is an apocalyptic book, The Book of Revelation. The first three gospels listed above are classified as the Synoptic Gospels because they contain similar accounts of the events in Jesus' life and his teaching, thanks to their literary interdependence. The Gospel of John is structured differently and includes stories of several miracles of Jesus and sayings not found in the other three. Only these four, however, were included in the official list of inspired books by the early Church, discarding apocryphal gospels like "The Gospel of Thomas" and many others. They were written in the popular Eastern Mediterranean language, Koine Greek.

4) The origin of the Torah of the Old Testament: The name given to first five books of the Bible -- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Numbers -- is Torah in Hebrew, Pentateuch in Greek. The matter presented in these books was handed down from generation to generation orally until the ninth century BC. Since the Israelites had come into close contact with the Egyptians and other ancient groups, the oral traditions in Israel were influenced partly by the traditions of other people as well. Moses (1391–1271 BC), is considered the first to collect the traditions of Israel and to draft and amplify the God-given commandments and laws. But it was during the reign of Solomon (970-931 BC), that Israel became a big and powerful nation, with the new Temple of the Lord God in Jerusalem serving as the nation's religious center. King Solomon felt the need to collect all the religious traditions of Israel from the 12 tribes of Israel. He invited all tribal heads and those specialized in teaching those traditions to his royal palace and appointed scribes to take down in Hebrew language whatever had been traditionally handed down in their tribes. Along with tribal

traditions of Israel, the result included the teachings given by Moses and later leaders. Since Moses, raised in Pharaoh's court as a Prince, was literate, he might have kept some written documents of the laws and commandments received from God. All these written documents formed the nucleus from which the Torah developed in the later centuries. Finally, a few centuries after Solomon, a group of editors assembled all religious beliefs and traditions of Israel previously collected during the reign of Solomon, put them in a definite order, and made the final edition of the five books of the Torah. They were later copied and recopied on processed leather and copper sheets. During Jesus' time, leather scrolls containing the Torah and prophetic writings were available in all Jewish synagogues.

The origin of the New Testament books: The New Testament books were written in the second half of the first century AD. The apostles and their disciples preached for 20 years without using any written documents, about Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection, and his teachings. Their preaching circulated as oral tradition in the Christian community. Some of the listeners might have written down in Aramaic the message they heard, and some of these documents might have been used by the gospel writers. The four gospels are faith-filled interpretation of Jesus' life and teaching made by the early Christian community. Bible scholars think that some of the named gospel writers might not have been the real authors of the gospels and that some of the epistles of Paul were written in his name by his disciples. For example, it is often claimed that Paul did not write the Letter to the Hebrews, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, or that Peter did not write 2 Peter. The two letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus, they say, were certainly composed long after the death of Paul. The last Epistles are called "Catholic" Epistles because they were not written, like St. Paul's 14 Epistles, only to one church or person, but to several churches. They are the Epistles of James, Jude, I & II Peter, and I, II & III John. The question of who actually wrote down the New Testament books is insignificant because the Christ-instituted teaching authority of the early Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has officially declared that the 27 New Testament books are inspired and canonical.

According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1964 Document: "Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels," we find three stages in the development of the New Testament, which can be divided roughly into thirds: Jesus' life, death and resurrection: AD 1-33; The Preaching of the Apostles: AD 30 - 50; The Writing of the Evangelists: late AD 50 - 100+. The chronology given below about the year of writing of the New Testament books is mainly drawn from the Navarre Bible, "Introduction to the Books of the New Testament". 1. James (around AD 50-60); 2. I Thessalonians (around AD 51-52); 3. II James (around AD 50-60); 4. I Thessalonians (around AD 51-52); 5. II Thessalonians (around AD 51-52); 6. I Corinthians (AD 57); 7. II Corinthians (AD 57-58); 8. Galatians (AD 54); 9. Romans (after AD 57-58); 10. Matthew's Gospel (Aramaic version AD 5—55; Greek version: AD 68-70); 11. Luke's Gospel (AD 62-70); 12. Philemon (AD 62); 13. Colossians (AD 62); 14. Ephesians (AD 62); 15. Mark's Gospel (AD 60-70); 16. Philippians (62?); 17. The Acts of the Apostles (AD 63); 18. I Timothy & Titus (AD 65); 19. II Timothy (AD 66); 20. I Peter (AD 64?) 21. Hebrews (AD 65?); 22. II Peter (AD 64); 23. Jude (AD 70); 24. II Timothy (in AD 67); 25. John's Gospel (AD 98-100); 26. John I, II, III: AD 95-100); and 27. Revelation (around AD 85- 95).

5) Original languages of the Bible books: The books of the Bible are originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. Hebrew is a Semitic language which originated in Canaan and was passed on by Abraham and his descendants. In Palestine, Hebrew was replaced by Aramaic in the 3rd century B.C. This was the language Jesus spoke. The Greek language spread with the conquests of Alexander the Great and disappeared with rise of the Roman Empire and its official language, Latin. The Greek used in the Bible books is not the classical Greek, but the popular colloquial Koine Greek. Most of the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew; the books of Wisdom, and II Maccabees were written also in Greek. In the Old Testament, some portions of the Book of Daniel, Ezra, Jeremiah and Esther, and all of Tobit and Judith, as well as the New Testament Gospel of Matthew, were written in Aramaic.

6) Division of the Bible into chapters and verses: The Bible was divided into chapters and verses in the 14th and 16th centuries AD. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury first divided the Bible text into chapters in the 13th century. Santes Pagninus divided the Old Testament chapters into verses in 1528 and Robert Etienne, a printer in Paris, divided the New Testament chapters into

verses in 1551.

7) Ancient manuscripts of the Bible: Since perishable materials were used in writing and because the Roman emperor ordered all Bible manuscripts destroyed, we don't have an original manuscript of any book of the Bible. But we have very ancient transcriptions or hand-written copies (manuscripts), of the Bible. The oldest Hebrew manuscripts, dated to various ranges between 408 BCE and 318 CE are found in the "Dead Sea Scrolls" discovered between 1946 and 1956 at Khirbet Qumran in the West Bank. Another Hebrew manuscript belonging to second century AD, was found in 1947 in a cave near Jericho. The oldest Greek manuscript kept in the John Ryland library, in Manchester, England, also belongs to second century AD. The most complete and important Greek manuscripts found so far, are the Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Alexandrinus – all probably of the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ.

8) The translations of the Bible: The Septuagint Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and the Vulgate Latin translation of the Greek Bible are the two famous ancient translations of the Bible. Work was begun on the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew, made for the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, in 250 BC and was completed by 100 BC. The translation was copied and used even in Palestine. Christian converts from pagan religions (the Gentiles), made up the great majority of Christian. They started using the Septuagint in their liturgy. Later, when Latin replaced Greek because of the rise of Roman Empire, several Latin translations were made by different scholars, though they had many inaccuracies. Hence, Pope Damasus I (366-384), ordered St. Jerome, the Scripture scholar, to translate the Septuagint into popular Latin. St. Jerome completed the Vulgate Latin translation of the New Testament in AD 383-384 in Rome and took 34 years in Holy Land to revise his hurriedly made New Testament translation and to translate the Protocanonical books of the Old Testament as well as the Deuterocanonical books into Latin. By the 9th century Jerome's Vulgate Latin translation, including the Deuterocanonical books, was universally accepted and became the official Bible of the Roman Church.