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**PALAEOGRAPHIA SACRA PICTORIA:**  
BEING A SERIES OF ILLUSTRATIONS  
OF  
THE ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE,  
COPIED FROM  
Illuminated & Manuscripts,  
Executed between the Fourth and Sixteenth Centuries.  
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**SAMARITAN AND HEBREW BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS.**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATE.**

- 1., 2., 4. } Fac-similes of Samaritan MSS. of the Pentateuch.
3. Copy of the Autograph of Archbishop Usher.
5. 6. } Fac-similes from two of the Duke of Sussex's Hebrew Pentateuchs.
7. Fac-simile of the Hebrew Bible, Harl. MS., 5710, 6711.

THE authenticity of the books of Scripture, as the foundation of the religion both of the Jew and the Christian, is in a great measure involved in the history of its Biblical monuments.

From various passages in the Old Testament it appears that the sacred books of the Jews were *written* and deposited by the side of the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> In the reign of Josiah there was indeed no other book of the law extant besides that found in the Temple by Hilkiah, from which, by his order, copies were made and distributed among the people, who carried them with them into their Captivity at Babylon.

During the Captivity, Daniel alludes to "the Law of Moses, the servant of God,"<sup>2</sup> and immediately after the return from Captivity we find Ezra, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given,"<sup>3</sup> together with Joshua and others, reading and "causing the people to understand" the law,<sup>4</sup> by which is to be understood that they translated it out of the old Hebrew, in which it was at first written, into the Chaldee, which had then become the common language of the people. It is indeed a tradition universally adopted by Jews and Christians, that, about fifty years after the Temple was rebuilt, Ezra, assisted by the great synagogue, settled the Canon of the Old Testament. This genuine collection of the sacred text was placed in the Temple, the compositions of Ezra himself, Nehemiah, and Malachi, the last of the prophets, being subsequently added. "It cannot now be ascertained whether Ezra's copy of the Scriptures was destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes, when he pillaged the Temple, nor is it material, since we know that Judas Maccabeus repaired the temple, and replaced everything requisite for the performance of Divine Worship,<sup>5</sup> which included a correct, if not Ezra's own, copy of the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup> This copy, whether Ezra's or not, remained in the Temple till Jerusalem was taken by Titus, and it was then carried in triumph to Rome and laid up with the purple vail in the royal palace of Vespasian."<sup>7</sup>

Numerous passages in the New Testament, Josephus, &c, proving the fact of the collection of the Old Testament Scriptures into a single volume—many quotations from them in the New Testament; and the specification of the books by Origen, who enumerates twenty-two (in which he coincides with Josephus)<sup>8</sup>—all sufficiently attest that the canon of the Old Testament was settled at the commencement of the Christian era.

The genuineness of the Hebrew text was preserved after the destruction of Jerusalem by the sedulous care of learned academies, which flourished at Tiberias, Babylon, and other places, from the first to the twelfth century. The date of the Masorah is generally fixed about the fifth century. This work consisted of such a minute enumeration of the sections, verses, words, and letters of the Old Testament, that although there have been discovered upwards of 800 discrepancies between the Eastern and Western Recensions, they all relate with one single exception to the vowel points. The dispersion of the Jews over the face of the earth, and the discovery of the Sacred Volume in the most distant parts (as

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Deuteronomy, xxxi. 9, 24, 26, which in our Bibles is rendered *in the side of the Ark*.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel ix. 2, 11, 13

<sup>3</sup> Ezra vii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah viii. 1—18.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Mace. iv. 36—59.

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Tomline's Elements of Theology, vol. i, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Josephus, lib. vii., c. 3, § 11.

<sup>8</sup> "We have not myriads of books which differ from each other, but only twenty-two books which comprehend the history of all past time, and are justly believed to be divine, and of these five are the books of Moses," &c.—*Josephus*.

amongst the black Jews in the interior of India)<sup>9</sup> agreeing with those of the West of Europe, is another proof of their having preserved the original text in great purity, although evidently descended through very different channels. The Hexapla of Origen, the Jerusalem Talmud (circ. 280), the Septuagint Greek version, made about 300 years before the time of our Saviour, and the discovery of a Samaritan version of the Pentateuch written in the characters in use among the Jews before the Babylonian Captivity, are also the strongest evidences of the existence and truth of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The opinion that the Jews during the Captivity adopted the Babylonian or square Chaldaic characters, and allowed their own old characters to fall into disuse, is confirmed by coins, struck before the Captivity, and even before the Revolt of the Ten Tribes, the letters engraved upon them being the same with the modern (p. 2) Samaritan, with some slight variations in form.<sup>10</sup> And as there has been no friendly intercourse between the Jews and Samaritans since the Babylonish Captivity, there can be no doubt that the Pentateuch (which is the only portion of the Old Testament which the Samaritans regarded as inspired) is at the present time precisely in the same condition as it was nearly three thousand years ago. The existence of the Samaritan Pentateuch was known to Eusebius, Jerome, and some other of the early Fathers, but it afterwards fell into oblivion for nearly a thousand years, until at length its existence began to be questioned. The honour of its re-introduction was reserved for the celebrated antiquarian scholar, Archbishop Usher, who obtained six copies from the East, and from his autograph in one of them the fac-simile in my plate numbered 3. has been made. According to Dr. Kennicott (Dissertations prefixed to the *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum*), only 17 MSS. of the Samaritan Pentateuch are known to be extant, and of which six are preserved in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford, and one in the Cottonian Library.

The specimen in my plate, No. 1, is copied from the Bodleian MS. (Pococke, No. 5), which consists of 124 leaves, measuring 3 1/2 by 3 inches in size, a page containing 42 lines. The specimen represents the first line of the book of Exodus which is also the case in Nos. 2 and 4.

The second specimen is copied from one of the MSS. obtained by Archbishop Usher, and is also now preserved in the Bodleian Library, (No. 139, Arch. C. 2, 3128). It consists of 253 leaves, measures 12 1/2 by 10 inches (a page containing 37 lines of plain writing), and contains a parallel Arabic version written in Samaritan characters. It is stated to have been written in the thirteenth century.

The fac-simile, No. 4, is copied from the Cottonian MS. Claudius, B. 8, which is likewise one of those procured by Archbishop Usher. It consists of 254 pages of vellum, in excellent preservation. It is of the quarto size, and was written in 1362. A fac-simile from a very similar MS. is given by Silvestre.

The total number of Chaldaic Hebrew MSS. collated by Dr. Kennicott is about 630; and the number collated by De Rossi is 479. The former of these writers states that almost all the Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament, at present known to be extant, were written between the years 1000 and 1457; he, as well as Bishop Walton, inferring that all the manuscripts written before the years 700 or 800 were destroyed by some decree of the

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<sup>9</sup> See Mr. Yeates's Collation of an Indian Copy of the Pentateuch.

<sup>10</sup> Walton Proleg. III., p. 103—125. Cnprzov and Bauer, quoted by Home, Introd. iii., p. 3.

Jewish senate, on account of the many differences from the copies then declared genuine. De Rossi's Codex, No. 634, appears to be the oldest known MS., being assigned to the eighth century; some parts also of his No. 503 are assigned to the ninth or tenth; and the Bodleian Library possesses another MS. in two parts, also assigned by Dr. Kennicott to the tenth. My specimens, 5, 6, and 7, are apparently of the fifteenth century.

No. 5 is from a finely-written Pentateuch in the library of his late R. H. the Duke of Sussex, measuring 13 inches by 9, and having 27 lines in each page, written in an Italian hand, very similar to the Hebrew types used by Ab Conak, at Mantua. The first letters of each book are large, and gilt on a square of blue, lilac, or green, or written in coloured ink in an ornamented square, with the sides and upper and lower margin illuminated in arabesques in the Italian style, in opaque colours, with patches and radiated spots of gold.

No. 6 is from another Pentateuch in the same library, accompanied by the five Megilloth and Haptoth, measuring 7 3/4 inches by 5 1/2, written in the Oriental Rabbinical character called Rashi, with points, and containing the Masorah in the margin. The text is written in two columns, with 21 lines in each, except the title-pages of the Pentateuch, of which the first letters are in gold inclosed within a foliated space formed of lilac lines, and surrounded by an arabesque border composed of leaves, birds, &c.; one of the borders is scarlet, with a scroll of gold lines, and small green and blue leaves and flowers; another is inscribed on a blue ground, within a border of golden arabesques; and another on a golden ground, with coloured leaves, flowers, and buds. Each of these illuminations occupies the entire page, and produces a very rich effect. The shorter books are headed by a smaller illumination in the same style, one of which is copied in the Plate.

No. 7 is from a remarkably fine MS. of the Old Testament in two folio volumes, contained in the Harleian Library, Nos. 5710, 5711; the headings of all the books in which are ornamented with arabesques, often of a singular and grotesque character, but destitute of miniatures. The text is written in very fine characters and the illuminated borders correspond with those in Italian MSS. of the period

### **Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

This reference is not located in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005