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0521290171 - The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Fathers to the  
Reformation, Volume 2  
Edited by G. W. H. Lampe  
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EDITED BY  
G. W. H. LAMPE

*Ely Professor of Divinity  
in the University of Cambridge*



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## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	vii
I THE OLD TESTAMENT: MANUSCRIPTS, TEXT AND VERSIONS		I
by the Rev. Professor Bleddyn J. Roberts, D.D., <i>Professor of Hebrew and Biblical Studies, University College of North Wales, Bangor</i>		
II THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT AND CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO JEROME		27
by the late C. S. C. Williams		
III EARLY CHRISTIAN BOOK-PRODUCTION: POPYRI AND MANUSCRIPTS		54
by T. C. Skeat, <i>Keeper of Manuscripts, British Museum</i>		
IV JEROME		80
by the late Fr E. F. Sutcliffe, S.J., <i>Old Testament Professor at Heythrop College</i>		
V THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY OF THE LATIN VULGATE		102
by Raphael Loewe, <i>Lecturer in Hebrew, University College, London</i>		
VI THE EXPOSITION AND EXEGESIS OF SCRIPTURE		155
1 TO GREGORY THE GREAT		155
by the Rev. G. W. H. Lampe, <i>Ely Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge</i>		
2 FROM GREGORY THE GREAT TO ST BERNARD		183
by Dom Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., D.Th., <i>Professor at the Pontifical Institute S. Anselm, Rome</i>		
3 THE BIBLE IN THE MEDIEVAL SCHOOLS		197
by Beryl Smalley, F.B.A., <i>Vice-Principal, St Hilda's College, Oxford</i>		
4 THE BIBLE IN LITURGICAL USE		220
by the Rev. S. J. P. van Dijk, O.F.M.		
5 THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE IN MEDIEVAL JUDAISM		252
by Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, LITT.D., <i>Reader in Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge</i>		

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 0521290171 - The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Fathers to the  
 Reformation, Volume 2  
 Edited by G. W. H. Lampe  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

VII	THE 'PEOPLE'S BIBLE': ARTISTS AND COMMENTATORS	page 280
	by the Very Rev. R. L. P. Milburn, <i>Dean of Worcester</i>	
VIII	BIBLE ILLUSTRATION IN MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS	309
	by Professor Francis Wormald, <i>formerly Director of the Institute of Historical Research, London University</i>	
IX	THE VERNACULAR SCRIPTURES	338
	1 THE GOTHIC BIBLE	338
	by M. J. Hunter	
	2 ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES BEFORE WYCLIF	362
	by Geoffrey Shepherd, <i>Professor of English Medieval Language and Literature, University of Birmingham</i>	
	3 THE WYCLIFFITE VERSIONS	387
	by Henry Hargreaves, <i>Lecturer in English, University of Aberdeen</i>	
	4 VERNACULAR SCRIPTURES IN GERMANY AND THE LOW COUNTRIES BEFORE 1500	415
	by W. B. Lockwood, D.LITT., <i>Professor of Germanic and Indo-European Philology, University of Reading</i>	
	5 VERNACULAR SCRIPTURES IN FRANCE	436
	by C. A. Robson, <i>Fellow of Merton College and Lecturer in French Philology and Old French Literature, University of Oxford</i>	
	6 VERNACULAR SCRIPTURES IN ITALY	452
	by Kenelm Foster, O.P., <i>Lecturer in Italian, University of Cambridge</i>	
	7 VERNACULAR SCRIPTURES IN SPAIN	465
	by Margherita Morreale, <i>Professor of Spanish Language and Literature, University of Bari</i>	
X	ERASMUS IN RELATION TO THE MEDIEVAL BIBLICAL TRADITION	492
	by Fr Louis Bouyer, D.D., <i>of the French Oratory, formerly Professor in the Faculty of Theology of the Institut Catholique de Paris</i>	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	509
	<i>Notes on the Plates</i>	536
	<i>Plates</i>	between pages 540–1
	<i>Indexes</i>	541

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## PREFACE

The present volume, a companion to *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, edited by Professor S. L. Greenslade, is principally concerned with the history of the Bible in medieval western Europe.

The era of the Reformation clearly represents a dividing line in the story of the Bible in western Europe, as in the history of western Christianity itself. A proper starting-point for this volume is not so easy to determine. The Scriptures themselves grew out of the living traditions of Israel and of the Christian Church. They embody the historical memory of a community, its pattern of life and worship, its traditional preaching, and catechetical and ethical teaching. A history of the Bible, however, presupposes the existence of a Canon of Scripture. It must deal with a distinct collection of literature already accepted as authoritative and normative for the thought and practice of the community in which its component parts had come into being. This volume, therefore, begins at a time when the books of the Bible were already in existence. It can take no account of the process, itself the most important part of the history of the Bible, by which the living tradition of Israel came to find expression in the individual books of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, and by which the Christian gospel found its literary form in the fourfold Gospel and came to be reflected in the other books which later became the New Testament. These and similar matters, which fall outside the scope of this volume, will receive detailed treatment in a further volume, the first in chronological order, *The Cambridge History of the Bible: from the Beginnings to Jerome*. The first three chapters of this volume give a kind of retrospective survey of matters more fully dealt with in the other volume, on the ground that readers primarily concerned with the medieval period would find such a summary useful: the volume is in that sense self-contained. Indeed, the process by which these particular books came to be recognized as uniquely authoritative, as the fountain-head of the Church's continuing tradition and as the standard to which that tradition must constantly be referred, cannot be ignored in a work which treats of the subsequent history of these

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Preface*

books as a single 'Holy Bible'. The first two chapters accordingly provide a backward glance to the history, first of the text of the Old Testament in Hebrew and in other versions, and of the final stages in the formation of its Canon, and secondly of the recognition of the canonicity of the New Testament and of the development of its textual tradition.

Other chapters describe the process by which the Scriptures have been handed down: the methods of book-production in the early centuries, the nature of the papyri and the other manuscripts which comprise the oldest witnesses to the scriptural text; and also the methods and materials used by the copyists and illuminators of the middle ages.

The central part of the volume discusses the exposition and exegesis of the Bible. Five aspects of this have been selected. The first is the patristic exegesis which, building on the reinterpretation of the Old Testament which had already been carried out in the primitive Church, interprets the Scriptures of both Testaments as a book about Christ and the Church and finds in them an armoury for apologetic, and a guide both in doctrinal controversy and in the edification of believers. The second and third show the way in which the Bible became, less in the form of a book as such than of an influence which permeated the Church's devotional life, the basis of medieval European culture, especially in the monasteries and the schools. The fourth aspect is specifically liturgical: the embodiment of scriptural material in the actual forms of public worship. The fifth is different: the opposing tradition of Jewish exegesis in which the Hebrew Scriptures were expounded outside the framework of the Catholic Church's life and thought but which at the same time exerted influences on Christian thinking which affected subsequent history.

The permeation of European culture by the Scriptures is illustrated by the presentation of biblical themes in medieval art and by the history of the translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular speech of western European countries. Particular attention has been paid in this book to the early history of the English Bible, but consideration has also been given to the vernacular Bible on the Continent, especially in Spain where the history of the vernacular Scriptures has been relatively little studied and where the contact between Christians and Jews produced particularly interesting results.

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[More information](#)

---

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A select bibliography for each chapter has been appended. So far as possible, footnotes to the chapters have been kept to the minimum, but the detailed history of the Latin Vulgate text, which is necessarily highly complex, has required the addition of a special system of references which will be found in the bibliography.

The volume has been some ten years in preparation. It is only just to the contributors to point out that some articles were written in 1957–9. In bringing the volume to completion and seeing it through the press, the editor has been assisted by the officers of the Cambridge University Press.