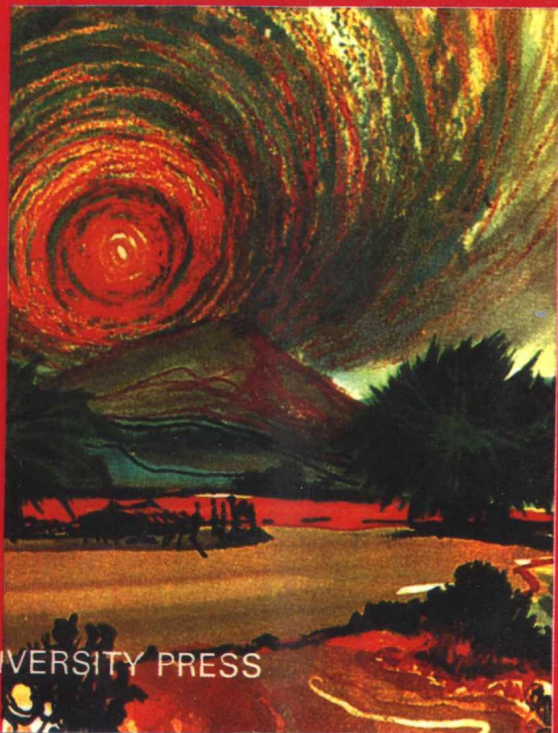


JOURNEYING THROUGH THE BIBLE



By Siu May Kuo



NANJING UNIVERSITY PRESS

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1990·Nanjing

《聖經》探索

著者: 郭 秀 梅

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·(《聖經》探索)

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Foreword to this Revised Edition

“Where is the New Testament?” asked quite a number of friends who have read *Venturing into the Bible*. Here it is, in *Journeying Through the Bible*.

Here we have

- (1) deleted all the lengthy Biblical passages, but
- (2) given, in each case, the name of the relevant Book and the concerned chapter and verse numbers,
- (3) substantiated the subtitles with inklings of the content,
- (4) added some more Chinese parallels, and
- (5) included the discussions about most of the Books of the New Testament.

Foreword

Professor Siu May Kuo (郭秀梅) showed me some specimens of her book on the appreciation of the Bible and asked me to write a few words about it. I read and enjoyed the specimens. I wished such a book had been available in the 1920s, when I made my first attempt to read the Bible. The Bible is not one book, but rather a library of books ever put between covers. Of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, what to read first and what next? And the most important of all, how to read it profitably? Confronted with such questions, I did not know what to do. There was no guidance. As a matter of fact, it was not until I came across a copy of Professor R. G. Moulton's *Modern Reader's Bible* that I could study the book properly.

I think Professor Kuo's book is of the same type as Professor Moulton's *Literary Study of the Bible*. But as Professor Kuo has kept constantly in view the needs of our present-day students of English, her book will be much more useful in this country. Among the many translations or editions of the Bible, Professor Kuo recommends the Authorized Version of 1611, and she gives reasons for the choice. Further, there are background materials and explanatory notes at the end of each section as well as interesting discussions of the dominant features of biblical literature

with comparative illustrations from our own language. Evidently, a lot of work has been done to facilitate our understanding and enjoyment of the best of the Bible. With Professor Kuo as a guide, our students of English will be able to travel in a new and boundless realm of myths and parables and poetry, and begin to be enchanted by visions of the good and great or missions of the righteous. And I am sure they will be grateful.

Fan Cunzhong

(范存忠)

February 1987

Preface

What prompts me to write this book on the Bible as literature for Chinese students is my growing awareness of the crying need for such a book on the part of Chinese learning English. During my thirty odd years of teaching at Nanjing University, I have often been approached with questions concerning the Bible—about the source of a quotation, the origin of an allusion, or the implication of an idiomatic expression. Indeed, one cannot turn a few pages of any essay or novel in English without encountering some Bible-related reference. Some of them, like “the apple of one’s eye” and “a thorn in the flesh”, appear so frequently even in our limited scope of reading that they have become part and parcel of our vocabulary. Some others, like “wolf in sheep’s clothing” and “new wine in old bottles”, have even found their way into the Chinese language.

However, it gradually dawns on me that the trouble lies not so much in what we know we do not know, as in what we do not know we do not know. A person just learning to skate usually does not fall as hard as one having just mastered the rudimentary skills of skating. Expressions like “the elder brother”, “the second mile”, “a still small voice”, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness”, and “writing on the wall” which look simple and innocent enough may prove to be pitfalls for students without any biblical

background.

Professor Northrop Frye, the contemporary Canadian authority on the subject of the Bible as literature, says in his book *The Great Code*, that the English Bible bears a continuously fertilizing influence on English literature; "thus a student of English literature who does not know the Bible does not understand a great deal of what is going on in what he reads." Without any acquaintance with the Bible, how can one really understand the works of Hardy or Hawthorne? How can one fully appreciate the cadence of Galsworthy or George Eliot? And if one starts to read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* which begins with "Call me Ishmel", would not one feel bewildered? Could one easily make head or tail of this first sentence of Francis Bacon's "On Truth": "What is truth?" said jesting Pilate and not wait for an answer?" A book about biblical stories may help one know what to expect when one sees this headline in a magazine: "A David Waiting to Bring Down a Goliath"; but could one have any inkling of why another headline reads: "Suffer the Children" and not "The Children Suffer"? No, it is not a misprint.

In a larger sense, it may be hard for us Chinese to realize the full impact of the Bible on western culture and society as a whole. Every aspect of culture, indeed every facet of life in the west bears some marks from the Bible. Not to believe in Christianity is one thing, but to know the Bible which has been translated into more than a thousand languages and which remains to be the best of best sellers in many languages, including English, is entirely another matter. I feel it is not too much to say that the English Bible is a must to students of English. It is for my co-students of

English that I write this book. It is to them that I dedicate it. I will be greatly gratified if some of them will find it of any use.

The Bible is such that no one book can claim or attempt to solve all the problems and questions raised about its study from whatever angle, much less the present one. What I strive to do here is actually very little more than what the late Professor Chen Jia, former Dean of the Department of Foreign Languages of Nanjing University, once asked me to do: to furnish a list of the most essential sections from the Bible to initiate the uninitiated. This book aims simply at removing some of the biggest obstacles Chinese students of English are liable to encounter, providing the necessary background material to facilitate their approach to the Bible, and helping them to appreciate and to enjoy the Bible as literature.

To these ends, the book is so arranged that:

- (1) All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized Version, as it is generally regarded as the best from the point of view of literature and everyday usage.
- (2) Paragraphing has been up-dated to the best of our knowledge, question marks have been added, and some other punctuation marks provided and changed, mostly according to Ernest S. Bates *The Bible Designed To Be Read As Living Literature*.
- (3) We try to present the literary analysis and interpretation of the selected passages by recognized authorities on this subject as well as our own views as Chinese.
- (4) We have given most passages lists of notes in Chinese and/or English, the idioms (i) and proverbs (p) being

often juxtaposed with their closest Chinese equivalents.

In the process of writing, I have gotten help from many quarters. Friends from overseas, on learning of my interest, started to send me books from Canada, from the United States, from England, from Scotland, from Australia, and from Japan. Books also came from Hong Kong. I am very much indebted to their senders, and to their authors. Without these I would not have any straw to make bricks with.

To the late Prof. Fan Cunzhong, I am very grateful indeed for writing the Foreword while I was still struggling with the first manuscript, and for being generous with his encouragement and advice when I began to give talks on the Bible years ago.

I am very grateful to Mrs. Marie Jeanne Coleman, Associate General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation in the 1940s and 1950s and our friend of forty years' standing, and also Professor Mo Ru-xi of the Nanjing Theological Seminary, for going over the manuscript and giving very valuable suggestions, the former spending days and nights on it out of her short stay in Nanjing, the latter being especially good at finding and repairing the "leaks" in it. I feel more than thankful towards Mr. Charles Wilson, former Amity teacher, who though swamped by many, many other demands, managed to type out most of the first manuscript and also did a lot in toning and shaping it as he would with his own writing. To Miss Peng Cui-An, post-graduate student of the seminary here, I am very thankful too for typing and sorting out my usually very disorganized material.

Last but not least, I appreciate very much the help and support given me by my husband, K. H. Ting and our son Stephen

Yen-ren Ting. As always, K. H. dares me to attempt the seemingly unattainable, checks my lopsided propensities, and fills up my oversights. Yen-ren, failing in teaching his old mother the new tricks of using a word processor, undertakes to do much brass tacks on it, despite his duties at the university and the calls of Amity Foundation; but he stubbornly refuses to be mentioned as a co-author.

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THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

What the Bible Is Not

To explain what the Bible is, is easier done through contrast with what the Bible is not, than said in a definition. So, as the starting point, we shall take off from what the Bible is not.

First of all, contrary to its appearance, contrary to common belief, the Bible is not one book. It is rather a group, or collection of 66 books, which differ widely in register and style, in content and subject matter, in approach and point of view.

Then, unlike most books, the Bible was not written by one person, or even by a number of people working in co-operation. Many, many were the people who took part in its making, men and women who knew nothing of the endeavours, or the existence, of one another; most of them remain unknown to posterity. Some sections and passages existed as oral traditions long before they got written down, having been fashioned and polished by numerous people of many generations. Some books, and a few poems, were attributed to authors who, by the simple logic of time sequence, could not possibly have been there to do the writing. Thus, we may say that the Bible was, at least partially if not mostly, written anonymously.

Besides, the Bible was not written within one single period of time. Knowledgeable scholars have more or less agreed that the earliest parts of the Old Testament got written over a thousand