

The Holy Scriptures

The Old Testament

- Written over period of over 1000 years, possibly from ~1400 BC to ~100 BC.
- Simply referred to as “The Bible”.
- It is the basis of Judaism, the first monotheistic religion in history.
- Translated into Greek in Alexandria by 72 Jewish scholars circa 250 BC.
- That first translation is called Septuagint.

Septuagint

- The original Greek text is available with an English translation:
- By Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton
- From Hendrickson Publishers
- Originally published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, London, 1851

The Old Testament

- It consists of 49 books.
- The first Canon included 39 books.
- The second Canon included an additional 10 books, but was not accepted by all Jews.
- The 72 scholars went by the second Canon and translated all 49 books.
- More on the history later.

The 49 Books

- Pentateuch (Torah – The Law)
 - Genesis
 - Exodus
 - Leviticus
 - Numbers
 - Deuteronomy

The 49 Books

- Historical Books
 - Joshua
 - Judges
 - Ruth
 - Kings I (1 Samuel)
 - Kings II (2 Samuel)
 - Kings III (1 Kings)
 - Kings IV (2 Kings)

The 49 Books

- Historical Books Continued
 - Chronicles 1
 - Chronicles 2
 - Ezra 1, Ezra 2 (taken together as one)
 - Nehemiah
 - Tobit
 - Judith
 - Esther

The 49 Books

- Historical Books Continued
 - Maccabees I
 - Maccabees II
 - Maccabees III
 - Maccabees IV

The 49 Books

- Pedagogical Books
 - Psalms
 - Job
 - Proverbs
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Song of Solomon
 - Wisdom of Solomon
 - Wisdom of the Son of Sirach

The 49 Books

- Prophetic Books
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah
 - Baruch
 - Lamentations (of Jeremiah)
 - Epistle of Jeremiah
 - Ezekiel
 - Daniel
 - Hosea
 - Joel

The 49 Books

- Prophetic Books
 - Amos
 - Obadiah
 - Jonah
 - Micah
 - Nahum
 - Habakkuk
 - Zephaniah

The 49 Books

- Prophetic Books
 - Haggai
 - Zechariah
 - Malachi

The Old Testament

- More on the History of the Old Testament
 - Was commissioned by Ptolemy the 2nd the Philadelph, king of Alexandria.
 - His ambition was to collect all the written wisdom of the world into a library.
 - His other reason was that his Jewish subjects wanted a Greek translation, as they no longer spoke Hebrew.
 - Was very welcome by Jews and even considered God-inspired, like the original.

The Old Testament

- More on the History of the Old Testament
 - Its main value for Christians lies in the fact that it was translated at an unsuspecting time, 250 years before Christ was born.
 - It is also a fact of great importance that it is the main source, which the authors of the New Testament quote regularly, since they themselves were Jewish users of the Greek translation.

Jewish and Protestant Positions on the Old Testament

- By the 5th century AD Jews had come to resent the day the Bible was translated into Greek.
- The Protestants, trying to “free” themselves from Papal rule, but stumbling on their own arrogance, decided that they should translate the Old Testament from scratch. Several versions and translations exist, most of them omitting the 10 books of the 2nd Canon.

The New Testament

- Written over a period of less than 50 years mostly by eye witnesses.
- Written mostly by Christ's Disciples, some from the inner circle of the 12 and some from the greater circle of the 70, who eye-witnessed Christ's ministry, His miracles and His teachings.
- It consists of 27 books.

The 27 Books

- The Four Gospels
 - Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
 - John

The 27 Books

- The Acts
- The 14 Epistles by Paul
 - To the Romans
 - To the Corinthians 1
 - To the Corinthians 2
 - To the Galatians
 - To the Ephesians
 - To the Philippians

The 27 Books

- To the Colossians
- To the Thessalonians 1
- To the Thessalonians 2
- To Timothy 1
- To Timothy 2
- To Tito
- To Philemon
- To the Hebrews

The 27 Books

- The 7 Catholic Epistles (Catholic = For All)
 - By James
 - By Peter 1
 - By Peter 2
 - By John 1
 - By John 2
 - By John 3
 - By Jude

The 27 Books

- Apocalypse or Revelation (by John, the author of the 4th Gospel and the 3 Epistles, that is, the son of Zebedee and brother of James).

The New Testament

- History of the New Testament
 - Jesus did not write a book
 - No follower of His wrote, while with Him
 - Teaching was entirely oral
 - After Pentecost, apostles did not write books
 - Apostles wrote only as circumstances demanded
 - This happened between AD 50 and 100

The New Testament

- History of the New Testament
 - Starting in the 3rd century, Christian scholars compiled written works by the apostles.
 - In the 4th Century, the need to distinguish true works from false ones led to the New Testament Canon.
 - The criterion as to whether a book was true work was that it had to have been used by most Churches consistently from the beginning.

Holy Tradition

- The body of teaching starting with Jesus Himself
- Everything that the Church taught and practiced from the beginning
- The Creed
- The decisions and generally the proceedings of the Ecumenical and other local Councils
- The writings of the Holy Fathers
- All works by holy men and women over the centuries that are consistent with the spirit of the Church

The Canon

- Therefore the Canon of the New Testament, having being decided on the basis of what books the Church used consistently from the beginning, is a direct product of Tradition.

Protestant Positions on the New Testament

- The Protestant movement in the 16th century AD threw away Holy Tradition, considering it full of flaws and ill intentions that were introduced by the Popes of Rome, in order to control the people.
- The Protestants accept only the Scriptures as an authentic source of the Christian faith.

Protestant Positions on the New Testament

- Thus, Protestants not only throw away “half” of the Christian teaching.
- They also naively ignore the fact that the particular books chosen for the New Testament were chosen BECAUSE of Tradition.
- The mainstream Protestants neither add to nor reject any of the New Testament writings.

How the authors saw it:

- Luke: "... it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed".

Luke 1:3-4.

How the authors saw it:

- Luke: “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day He was taken up ...”

Acts 1:1-2.

How the authors saw it:

- John: “If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city ...”

Revelation 22:18-19

Christians ?

- The word “Christian” first appeared in Antioch at the time of the Apostles and it came to mean one who believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ (Son of God)
- It should be noted that the Bible is also used by some religions that do not qualify as Christian by the above definition or by the fact that they added or deleted books

Christians ?

- Mohammedans (or “Muslims”) – they reduce Christ to the level of their “Prophet”
- Jehovah's “Witnesses” – they also reject the divinity of Jesus, as the Arians did
- Mormons – they believe the Church died early in AD times and they are reviving by adding a new book, the Book of Mormon
- Marginal Protestant groups who feel at liberty to use the Holy Bible as they please

Should we interpret the scriptures literally?

- St. John Chrysostom insisted that we do.
- Other Antiochian fathers did, too.
- Origen and other Alexandrians preferred to give allegorical interpretations.
- The dominant view of the Orthodox Church is that of St. John Chrysostom.
- Most mainstream denominations take the scriptures literally, too.

What does this really mean?

- Present-day views:
 - If we do not understand some difficult phrase or passage in the bible, we should not rush to say that it is wrong or that it should be taken allegorically. Instead, we should consult scholars who know the Hellenistic dialect (Koine) or simply seek to learn how the major Fathers interpret the phrase or passage.

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 - CORRECT

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- Present-day views (well-intended):
 - The bible is holy, but we should allow for some errors. We should consider that the writers' mother tongue was not Greek, therefore we should be tolerant of errors or peculiarities in their ways of expression.

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– **WRONG**

Hierarchy of the Written Word

1. Lord Jesus Christ's words as quoted by the four Evangelists in the Gospels.
2. The four Gospels.
3. The Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles.
4. The books written by Moses and the Prophets.
5. The Holy Fathers. First the Three Hierarchs, then other fathers and elders.
6. Lives of saints - Synaxarist.