

Series: Theological Treatises

The Holy Bible

A deep study of the sacred book of Christianity,
to love it and recognize it as God's message for
this time.



Federico Salvador Wadsworth





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1. General Introduction

The search for God’s knowledge and his purpose for man constitutes the most exciting of all the adventures that the human mind can propose. The challenge of finding in the Holy Book the golden thread of the plan of salvation will reward the scholar, who will be able to understand the majesty of the effort of the One who “**who did not spare His own Son**” (**Romans 8: 32**).

The set of Bible tracts, of which you have in your hands one of the studies, has been prepared to provide the lay member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the knowledge required to teach others about how to grow “**in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**” (**2 Peter 3: 18**) as well as for “**be ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope in you**” (**1 Peter 3: 15**).

The author is a regular member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1977, a church elder since 1979, a husband, father, and grandfather, with the joy of having his entire family in “**the faith once delivered to the saints**” (**Jude 1: 3**) and a full subscriber to the 28 official doctrines of the church.



I reiterate that these tracts have been prepared for the church member, so he must graduate the dose of knowledge that he must transmit to those who are interested in knowing Jesus, whom the prophet calls the “**Desire of all nations**” (**Haggai 2: 7**).

That's why, at the same time, we also wanted to include supplementary material to the Bible study that we hope will allow you to expand your current knowledge, as well as to be prepared to deepen on “**things the angels desire to look into**” (**1 Peter 1: 12**). Your ability to introduce these subthemes in harmony with the central concepts is key to the transfer of knowledge that you and I intend to pursue.

Since the knowledge of our God and His purposes will, by the work and grace of the Holy Spirit, always be in full swing, you will be able to find regular updates of each treatise (see the date yy.mm.dd that accompanies the name of the file). These updates, of course, will also correct some of the human flaws that may have gone unnoticed by the author. On the other hand, your well-meaning intention to help us improve these issues will always be welcome. These treatises were originally written in Spanish, my mother language, but translated to English by the author to reach more people, as the latter is considered

world-wide as the commercial and technical language.

2. Structure of the Theological Treatise

At the beginning of each treatise, we will present the general structure of the set of these using a numbered block diagram, called the General Treatise Map. This chart (shown on one of the following pages) will allow you to see where the tract you have in your hands fits concerning the other topics. To make it easier to locate, in addition to the numbering, it will be marked in a different color than the others. Collect the topics, update them, and arrange them in this sequence if you find it useful to your knowledge development.

The numbers in each block simultaneously establish the order of creation of these treatises and the logical dependence between them as well. The blocks from number 70 onwards represent, in turn, a set of special treatises. I have grouped them into 6 major themes:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|--------------|
| a. | Comparative Religions | Series 70.nn |
| b. | Chronologies | Series 75.nn |
| c. | Gospel Harmonies | Series 80.nn |
| d. | Genealogies | Series 85.nn |
| e. | Bible biographies | Series 90.nn |

The reading of these topics will give you the frame of reference to understand the most thematic treatises. These other topics have their own structure that will be related to the one mentioned here.

After the diagram of the whole, you will find a block diagram of the study itself, called the Treatise Map, where you will be able to notice the following:

- Each block of the diagram indicates the reference verse(s) at the bottom and a short phrase that corresponds to the logic of its inclusion in the topic.
- You will notice that there are some blocks, with different colored verses, that refer to parables that help to understand the central theme.



- c. Other blocks, which do not contain verses, expose issues that you might touch on when presenting the study; issues that have historical, geographical, scientific, technical, and other backgrounds. You will find in this study some information that will help you expose these concepts.
- d. These two types of blocks are not necessarily included in all studies.
- e. The arrows indicate the logical sequence in which the author thinks these topics should be presented. The sequence is set from left to right and from top to bottom. However, your initiative and the knowledge about your listeners' needs may point you in a different direction. Let yourself be guided in prayer by the One who cannot err.

At the end of this graphic phase, you will find the study in detail, which will follow, as far as possible, the structure of the block diagram. Some complementary materials to the study will be included at the end. I recommend that you read them in advance to find the exact moment to include them in your presentation.

To the extent possible, I have presented the source of some of these topics so that you can extend your understanding by reviewing them. I do not pretend to know everything these sources deal with, so I encourage you to go deeper and tell me how to improve this content. I have included some images found on the Internet to make your reading more enjoyable, I hope you like them.

The written phase of the study will contain:

- a. Headings for the main subtopics.
- b. Bible quotes (in red).
- c. Quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy (in green).
- d. Quotations from books or articles by various authors, aimed at expanding your knowledge on the subject (in blue).
- e. Comments on the mentioned quotations; in some cases, these will be presented before the quotation, as an anticipation of the statement, while in others they will be placed after it as a confirmation of the concept being held (in black).
- f. Maps, chronograms, genealogies, and other diagrams where appropriate to the subject matter.
- g. Complementary material grouped in a section that helps to understand some of the aspects that could arise when dealing with the central theme with other people. Not all topics necessarily contain this material.

Unless otherwise indicated, the quotes from the Holy Bible are from the King James Modern Version, my favorite in English. Sometime I will include other versions to compare or expand the understanding of a text.

When you develop a Bible study on this subject with non-church people, I recommend that you use the section corresponding to the study (with the verses included in the block diagram) without presenting the statements of the Spirit of Prophecy. Discuss the accompanying materials as they come up in the exposition, as well as in the question and answer phase.

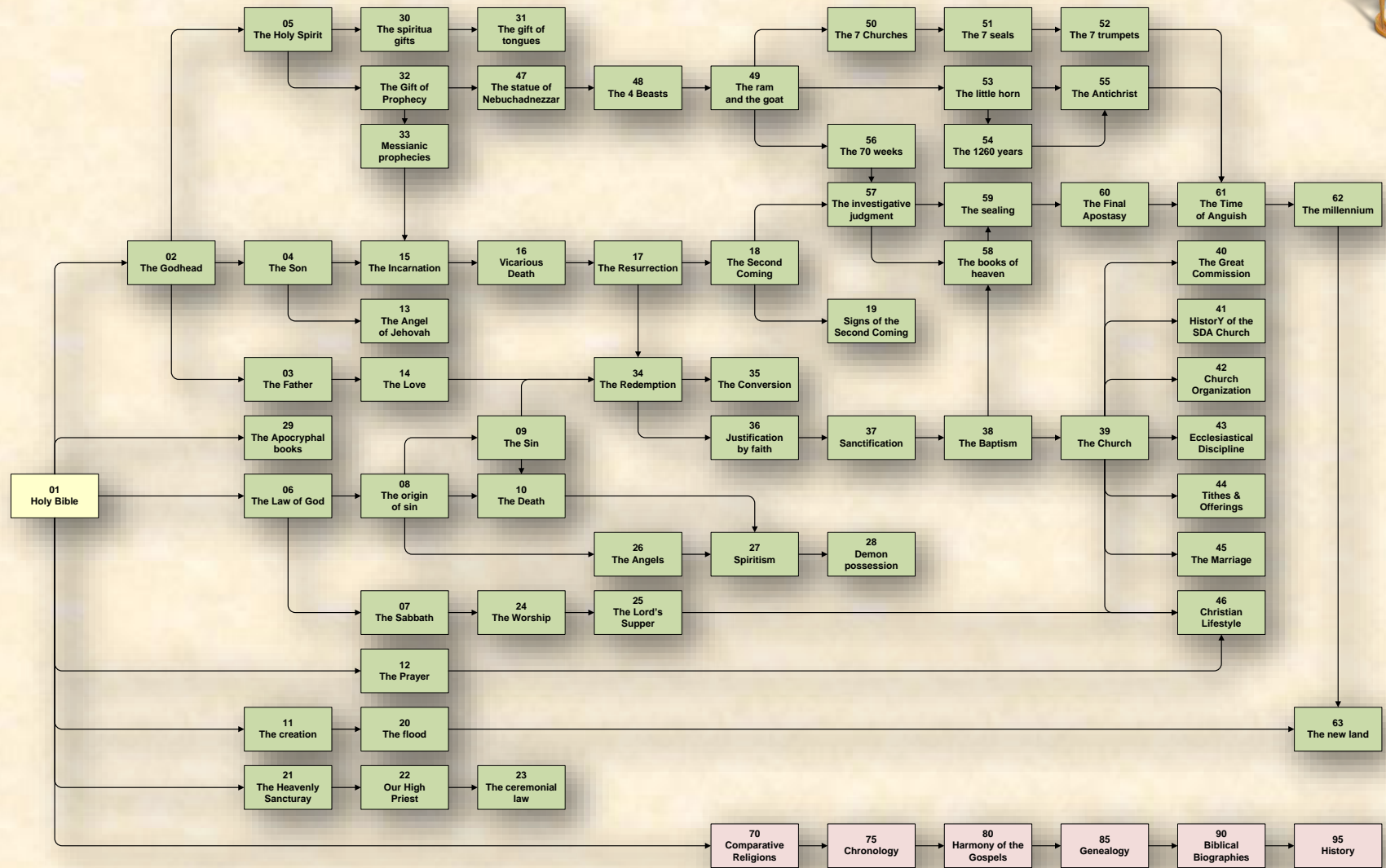
I have also prepared a file that includes all the block diagrams from the tracts so that they will be helpful to your memory when presenting the topic. I have also created a file with a copy of all the contents of the treatises so that you can review them without opening each of the documents, in case you are looking for a specific subtopic.

Allow me, as I have done so far, to address you personally during the study. I believe that this is how our Savior spoke to those He loved and wanted to save. Surely you will do the same with those who listen to you for this purpose.

This is a free material that has surely come to you from someone who appreciates you and wants you to know even more about Jesus and His wonderful plan of salvation. Spread the word in the same way, as you " **have received freely, freely give** " (**Matthew 10: 8**).



3. General Treatise Map





5. Purpose of the Treatise

The purpose of the treatise is as follows:

- a. To present the inspiration of God's Word, so that we may have increased confidence in a "**Thus saith the Lord**".
- b. To define the purpose for which God has preserved it for us.
- c. To show how God's oracles have reached our times.
- d. Explain how the Canon of the Holy Scriptures has been developed.
- e. To prove the historicity of the Sacred Scriptures.
- f. To stimulate the reader to make the Word of God an inexhaustible source of wisdom for the spiritual life.

6. Development of the theme

6.1. Introduction

We live in the age where everything is considered relative and where anyone who accepts any absolute is criticized for having an inflexible mind or for being fundamentalist. This tendency to relativize everything (we say things like: this is "my truth") has reached all fields, including the religious one, where faith is questioned as obsolete or outdated, or as unscientific.

Of course, this tendency makes the Bible, the sacred book of Christians, be perceived as a document or set of documents of historical and cultural interest, one among many other volumes that allow us to recover part of ancient history. In the best of cases, some who consider themselves Christians, recognize the validity of a devotional book with some interesting truths, but with many other equally questionable ones.

Some Christians, apparently very well prepared, even with doctorates in theology from universities that are also Christian, dissect the Sacred Volume and dare to define which parts are inspired and which are not, while others who cannot understand the miracles say that all these manifestations cannot have existed and that their story is little less than part of a Christian mythology. Note that I am talking about Christians and not atheists or anti-Christians.

On the other hand, a small minority of those who call themselves Christians have read or studied the Holy Book, while many can hardly distinguish what is really written from many other non-canonical sources. It is therefore very important to analyze what the Holy Bible says about itself and the purpose God had in giving it to us, as well as to preserve it from those who throughout history have been and are its enemies. This study, we think, is the basis for using the Bible as a source of divinely inspired knowledge in the other subjects it deals with.

6.2. Inspiration

The Bible sustains that it is a book inspired by God, that is to say, The Eternal has inspired the writers of the Holy Scriptures in such a way that this book reflects God's thought and not the opinions of the human beings who participated in its writing.

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

2 Timothy 3: 16

I thank God for having left us in the Bible a means to know Him, to be transformed in our understanding, and to know what His will is for us, His children. I'm sure you feel the same way.

It is interesting to note that Paul says "**all Scripture**" referring mainly to the Old Testament since the New had just begun to be written. This is a warning to those Christians who claim that the Old Testament should be considered less reliable than the New; or that its concepts have been replaced by the preaching of Jesus. Others consider that the Bible "contains" the Word of God; that is, that it also includes human portions or contributions. Paul says "**all**".

The verse quoted also indicates that it is "**profitable for doctrine, for reproof**" (to turn the argument against the one who uses it), that is, to convince the one who opposes it with the same supposed arguments



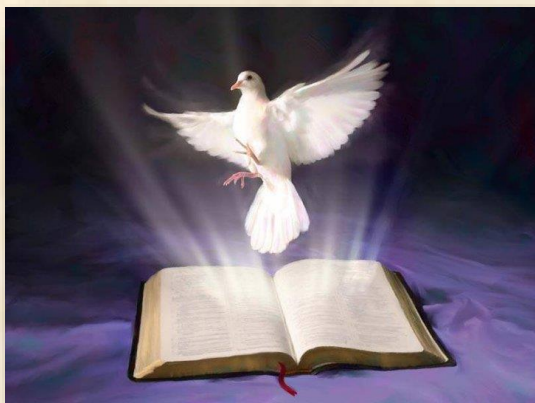


that he wants to use to deny it. But the apostle also maintains that in the Bible we find a source of correction for the errors of our life, to be instructed in God's justice.

God, who at many times and in many ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds,

Hebrews 1: 1, 2

The chosen way of communicating God's will has been, after the fall of our first parents, through the prophets: men and women of God, chosen to be the spokesmen and writers of His messages to us. However, the channel par excellence for reaching a greater understanding of the Godhead has been His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word of God.



We also have a more sure Word of prophecy, to which you do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Daystar arises in your hearts, knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture came into being of its own private interpretation. For prophecy was not borne at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke being borne along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1: 19-21

Note that prophecy, part of the Word of God, is regarded as inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, and it is asserted that the human will have no part in its content, nor in its interpretation. The Bible is and must be its own interpreter. We can understand it through the work of the Holy Spirit in our minds, if we have asked for it before studying it.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, VI, VII

The grass withers, the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall stand forever.

Isaiah 40: 8

The Word of God is eternal as its Maker, forever standing above changes in cultures, the advance of time or knowledge; all because it is as perfect as our God. Everything in our world is temporary, but Jesus held that His Word would never be obsolete, nor subject to change to suit postmodern or current modes of thought.

The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.

Matthew 24: 35

Today many Christians think that the Bible must be adapted to the postmodern times in which we live, considering that its principles must be evaluated by more contemporary thinking. There are also those who assume that they can add or subtract according to their supposed wisdom. God's warning to those who do this, should be enough to keep them from entering into that forbidden path.

For I testify together to everyone who hears the Words of the prophecy of this Book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add on him the plagues that have been written in this Book. And if anyone takes away from the Words of the Book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which have been written in this Book.

Revelation 22: 18, 19

You shall not add to the Word which I command you, neither shall you take away from it, so that you may keep the commands of Jehovah your God which I command you.

Deuteronomy 4: 2

Nor should tradition take precedence over what the Word of God teaches. Catholic theology puts the Bible and tradition (the doctrine or thought of the so-called Church Fathers of the early centuries AD) on the



same level. This is untenable since the teaching of these men is far from uniform and rather shows open contradictions between themselves and with the sacred record. Jesus openly confronted the tradition of his time by contrasting it with the unambiguous message of God. He questioned those who teach "commandments of men".

Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said to them, why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and mother"; and, "He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him die by death". But you say, whoever says to his father or mother, whatever you would gain from me, it is a gift to God; and in no way he honors his father or his mother. And you voided the commandment of God by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, "This people draws near to Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".



Matthew 15: 1-9

I will deal with this subject much more extensively in a specific section later on.

6.3. Canon

The list of books belonging to the Bible is called the Canon of the Bible. The Canon is composed of a total of 66 books: 39 of the Old Testament and 27 of the New Testament. The Catholic Bibles have 73 books, 7 books plus 4 partial additions to another 2 canonical books, which are considered by the Catholic Church to be Deuterocanonical (deuterus = second, second canon). Protestants consider these books as Apocrypha, hidden or of unknown origin. We will address this issue at length in another study, but for now, we will say that all these Catholic additions to the Canon are in the Old Testament and were made during the Council of Trent (AD 1545-1563); that is, almost 12 centuries after the closing of the Canon of the Bible.

It is important to note that these additions to the Canon are not found in the sacred books of Judaism, which only accepts the 39 books of the Christian Old Testament. Therefore, the Protestant canon of the Old Testament is identical to the Hebrew canon of the Holy Scriptures. Paul tells us that we owe it to the Jews to have preserved the Scripture for us. See Formation of the Jewish Canon in the accompanying material.

Then what is the superiority of the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision? Much, by every way! Chiefly, indeed, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Romans 3: 1, 2

6.4. Study of the Holy Scriptures

Even though the Word of God provides us with a great deal of information, it is evident that it is not possible to know everything about the magnificence of God and His work. We should maintain a reverent attitude toward the knowledge of divine things; our poor minds can scarcely glimpse what has been revealed to us. Silence, in the face of what has not been revealed, is gold. We should be careful not to introduce our own concepts and confuse them with the truth. The temptation to speculate on the unrevealed is dangerous ground.

The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our sons forever, so that we may do all the words of this Law.

Deuteronomy 29: 29

Jesus made it clear that the careful study of the Scriptures is indispensable to know Him and to understand the wonderful plan of salvation that God, in His immense love and mercy, has designed for us. What Jesus points out is that this scrutiny should not be left to the religious leaders to drink only of their opinions, but that we should make this a personal, continuous, and sustained activity. It is not true, as the Catholic Church sustains, that she alone can interpret the Bible, and that we depend on the Church's



Magisterium, that we should submit to the judgment of finite men rather than depend on the inspiration offered by the work of the Holy Spirit. No, not at all... but we will discuss this a little more later.

You search the Scriptures,
for in them you think you have
eternal life. And they are the ones
witnessing of Me,

John 5: 39

Unlike other books, which are read sequentially, the Bible must be studied with the method that the Lord has pointed out. The subjects in Scripture are scattered like gems where the student, desiring to know God, with the support of the Holy Spirit, can find them. These gems go one by one, as they are arranged, adding knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, you will notice that this study we are developing presents portions of Scripture, respecting the context in which they were expressed, to open to our understanding the knowledge of God.



For precept must be on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little;

But the Word of Jehovah was to them precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken and snared and taken.

Isaiah 28: 10, 13

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, VI, VII

The joint study of God's Word allows us to learn from each other as we pray and ask for God's wisdom and find the precious veins of knowledge that are waiting to be incorporated into our daily lives. Do as Philip, who, led by the Holy Spirit, was able to teach the Ethiopian official those subjects that perplexed him. Don't wait until you also know all the subjects in depth to share them, because you would probably never start. I have been studying the Bible for about 43 years and I am aware that I have barely begun to touch the shores of the sea of knowledge that comes from God.

And Philip ran there to him and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, do you indeed understand what you are reading? And he said, how can I unless some man should guide me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Acts 8: 30, 31

6.5. Attitude to Scripture

Sanctify them through Your truth. Your Word is truth.

John 17: 17

This beautiful passage contains two fundamental concepts: the first is that the Word of God is truth, that is to say, it is the only source of truth; therefore as Adventists, we adhere to the basic principle of Protestantism: Sola Scriptura; in other words, it is sufficient to lead us to divine knowledge. The second is that the truth transforms us; when you know the truth, it produces, through the work of the Comforter, a change in your heart, which begins to love the God it reveals.

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as



evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain "Thus saith the Lord" in its support.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 595

The Word of God can help change your life, but it will not do so against your will. You must prepare your heart to receive it. Review with me the parable of the sower.

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, the one fell by the roadside and was trampled; and the birds of the air devoured it. And other fell on a rock, and sprouting, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And other fell amidst thorns, and springing up with the thorns, they choked it. And other fell on good ground and sprang up, and bore fruit a hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked



Him, saying, what might this parable be? And He said, to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. But to others I speak in parables, so that seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand. And the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the roadside are the ones who hear; then the Devil comes and takes the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy. And these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And those which fell among thorns are the ones who, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of life, and do not bear to maturity. But those on the good ground are the ones who, in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

Luke 8: 5-15

The parable is self-explanatory, so I would like to comment on this story's approach to the reader's attitude to the Bible. Each of us chooses whether to be a path, or a land full of stones or thorns, or fertile land. It would be an unsolvable problem if I were like the soil of the road and had no opportunity for the seed to penetrate my heart. What Scripture holds up is that it depends on my attitude to the Word how fruitful it is for my life. In other words, I decide if I want to let the word transform me, if I want to do God's will. If I so desire, the Holy Spirit will work in my life to transform the precious seed into the character that God desires His children to attain.

If anyone desires to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God, or I speak from Myself.

John 7: 17

Many people believe that they must evaluate the Word of God and define based on their intelligence what the truth is. The reality is that many do not accept the Word of God because they want to maintain their way of life, they want to remain close to the object of their carnal desires and they notice that they cannot do so if they accept what the Lord teaches. Rejection is, in these cases, voluntary... and unfortunately has eternal consequences.

The prophet Hosea says that we must lie fallow in our hearts. Fallow is the land prepared for sowing. If I want to sow the earth and it is dry, hard, it will have to be moistened, the clods broken, left loose, soft, porous so that it can be oxygenated, receive nutrients and receive the seed. Do the same with your heart, submit to God, let Him speak to you, and convince you of sin.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground. For it is time to seek Jehovah, until He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Hosea 10: 12

On the other hand, the willingness to listen to the Word should not make us listen and accept what is presented to us. The Berean Christians, according to Luke's account, were better than the Thessalonians because when they heard the truth from the apostles, they looked in the Holy Books to see if this was so.



Nothing replaces personal study, which can make us convinced, by the work of God, of what is His perfect will.

And these were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so.

Acts 17: 11

Many times, we err because we do not know the will of God, because we do not know what the Word says about certain subjects. Many times, we do what we think is "right" using the opinion of men, popular wisdom, instead of a clear "Thus saith the Lord". Today almost everyone has the opportunity to read His Word and understand His will, so many times ignorance is also voluntary...

Jesus answered and said to them, you err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Matthew 22: 29

It is also important that we know the Scriptures so that we can humbly face those who twist them on purpose. If you review the following verses you will see that Peter maintains that although Paul writes with a certain complexity, fruit of his evident erudition, we need not be confused. Peter says that those who twist it are those who have not studied it or who are not consistent and look for reasons not to obey, something that continues to happen in our time. We must have a docile heart to listen and apply. I would like you to notice that Peter maintains that these "unlearned and unstable pervert" not only the parts that are difficult to understand but also the others.

And think of the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction).

2 Peter 3: 15, 16

6.6. Purpose of the Holy Scriptures

I would like to discuss with you the purpose for which God has left us this sacred record. We will look at some of the verses that aim to clarify this concept for us.

But continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from a babe you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfected, thoroughly furnished to every good work.

2 Timothy 3: 14-17

It can make us wise for salvation; therefore, this motivation would be enough to undertake the delicious task of studying the Holy Book. But these passages also indicate to me that they support the objective of reaching the perfection of the human being, so that our preparation is translated into good works, which God approves. It is a teaching tool for those who want to be instructed by God, to be far above the wisdom of this world.

For those who do not want to walk in darkness, the Bible is a lamp that allows them to see the dangers of the road before they set foot on it, to clear the terrible darkness in which humanity is plunged from the moral point of view.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

Psalms 119: 105

There is no better reading or study material for loving and respecting God. The king in Israel was commanded to read permanently, that is, "all the days", the Scriptures to "learn". Leading God's people was a task that required the best advice: that which comes from the Word of God.

There is no position, even for the highest intellect in the world, which does not require God's wisdom, all the more so when, as in the case of the king, the responsibilities for his subjects are so great and the danger of self-exaltation so evident. But whether you





are a king or a servant (I am speaking figuratively), you will learn to fear God and keep His Word.

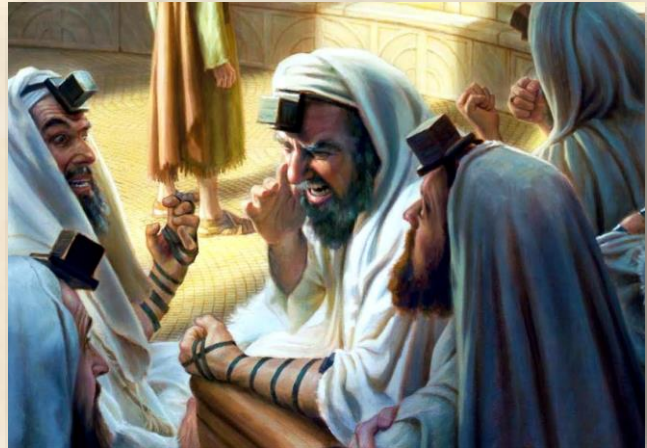
And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this Law, and these statutes, to do them,

Deuteronomy 17: 19

And these words which I command you this day shall be in your heart. And you shall carefully teach them to your sons, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6: 6-9

This passage was misunderstood by Jesus' contemporaries who hung phylacteries in various places in their houses and on their clothing, as well as on their head. These were pieces of parchment or similar with portions of Scripture on them. The term phylactery also refers to a ritual implement, called a mezuzah, consisting of two small wooden trunks covered with leather and fitted with a strap of the same material with which they are fixed: one to the left arm and the other to the forehead during certain prayers in the Jewish tradition. Inside are four fragments of parchment inscribed by a sofer or ritual scribe, with the same precautions used to write the Torah scrolls, with four biblical texts, which are taken from **Deuteronomy 6: 4-9, Deuteronomy 11: 3-21, Exodus 13: 1-10** and **Exodus 13: 11-16**. See illustration. God meant for us to always keep His law and counsel in mind and not fail to instruct our children in the need to fear God. We must hold them over our hearts, treasure them, so that they may transform our lives by the contemplation and application of the wisdom of the ages found in them.



Sometimes the sacred record tells us of the weaknesses of men and women of God, sinners like us, and in need of his grace like us. But we also see their struggles and triumphs so that we may find consolation in our trials, so that our hearts may be filled with hope as we see how God worked in the past for others.

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, so that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Romans 15: 4

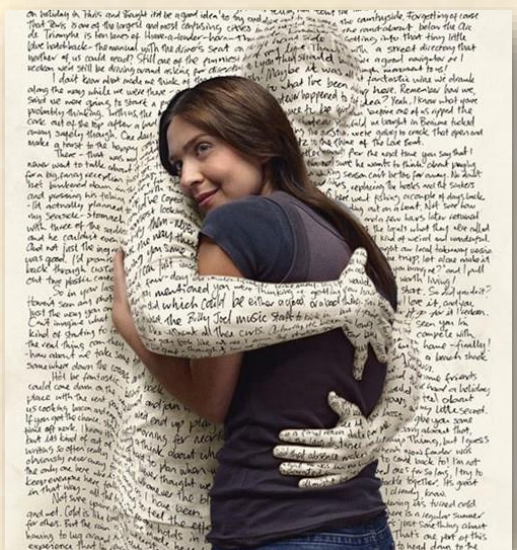
We can find joy in reading it and at the same time achieve the blessings of applying it in our lives. Some may not be able to read, but there is also a blessing in listening, as long as it leads us to observe or keep what we are understanding to be the will of the Eternal.

Blessed is the one who reads and hears the Words of this prophecy, and the ones keeping the things written in it, for the time is near.

Revelation 1: 3

Jeremiah wonderfully illustrated feeding on the Word of the One who never errs. I like him to say that once he found the Word, he ate it; that is, he incorporated it into himself.

Many times, we carelessly read the Word of God without perceiving the depth of its messages, without applying the teachings to change our lives. I am moved to think of the joy the prophet experienced in bringing the fullness of himself into contact with





God's message. I believe that the Bible should not only be a reference book but should serve to shape our lives to what God desires for His children.

Your Words were found, and I ate them; and Your Word was to me the joy and gladness of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Jehovah, the God of Hosts.

Jeremiah 15: 16

By eating the Word, it begins to do a work in us, penetrating to our innermost thoughts and convincing us of our desperate condition of sin. But also, by penetrating our lives, it changes our way of thinking towards a God who gave everything for us. I want to know Him more and more, don't you?

For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4: 12

7. Complementary Material

7.1. How it came to us

God preserved the truth for us using human means. The Bible has come to us in miraculous form from the beginning of writing as we know it today, until the time when the canon was closed. It is not that its path was on a bed of roses, for even those who should defend its reading removed it for a long time from the hands of the people and it came to be on the index of Forbidden Books of the Catholic Church for many centuries... although it is hard to believe.

During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years —from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, V

7.1.1. Biblical Languages

The Bible has been written primarily in Hebrew and Koine Greek (like the fragment shown here), with some portions in Aramaic. I will quote an article that condenses enough to give an idea about this.



First, we will talk about the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament, which also appears to be used in the language of some of the characters of the New Testament, since this was the language spoken in Jesus' time.

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. Here and there are small portions of Aramaic, the language of Syria. Aramaic gradually became a popular language of the Jews from the time of the exile, and in New Testament days it was probably the language spoken by Jesus and his disciples. **Daniel 2: 4b-7: 28, Ezra 4: 8-6: 18 and 7: 12-26, and Jeremiah 10: 11** were written in Aramaic. See also **2 Kings 18: 26**. In the Gospels we hear Jesus speaking in Aramaic: "talita cumi" (**Mark 5: 41**); "ephata" (**Mark 7: 34**); "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (**Mark 15: 34**; compare with **Matthew 27: 46**). In addition, Jesus used the word "Abba" which means "Father" in the garden of Gethsemane, and St. Paul used the same Aramaic word in **Romans 8: 15** and **Galatians 4: 6**. In **Acts 1: 19** we have "Aceldama" ("Field of Blood").

Aramaic, although related to Hebrew, is not derived from it. Both are Semitic languages, like Arabic, Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite. They are very different from European languages such as Spanish, French, and German. For example, in our Western languages, we write from left to right, while Hebrew is written from right to left. In Hebrew, the vowels were pronounced but not written and this continued until the 7th century AD when they were added by the Masoretes. Vowels are indicated



by dots and small marks above and below the consonants. The oldest Greek and Hebrew Bible manuscripts have no punctuation, no separation between words, and are in uncial characters (all capitals).

Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 1 (translated by the author)

As for Koine Greek, let us read the following.

New Testament Greek is the common or vulgar dialect of that time, known as Koine. But, especially in the Gospels, it is a Koine influenced by Aramaic. Koine translates Aramaic sayings, and this translates here and there through Greek. Jesus spoke in Aramaic, and his words were written in Greek. Gospel scholars often translate Greek back into Aramaic, and then again into Greek, in an attempt to achieve the fullness of flavor of the original spoken language. But the Aramaic influence, and the Hebrew as well, since the Old Testament is the antecedent of the New, should not be exaggerated. In the final analysis, the Greek of the New Testament is authentic Koine, with the unmistakable characteristics of that ancient language.

Why was the New Testament written in that common language? Because in Jesus' time it was the international language. A man named Alexander of Macedonia played an important role in making this happen. Alexander (4th century BC) conquered much of the ancient civilized world and everywhere he went he spread his language. So, from India to Rome, and on all the shores of the Mediterranean, common Greek came to be spoken. It was natural for the New Testament to be written in this popular international language rather than in local Aramaic. The fact that this happened underlines the fact that the Gospel is for the whole world and not for a select people in isolation.

Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 1 (translated by the author)

7.1.2. Materials used in the writing of the Bible

The materials used by the copyists to bring the Scriptures to our time were mainly papyrus and parchment. These materials were used to form scrolls, which was how they were kept in the libraries of the time. See here the Bodmer VIII Papyrus which includes the end of the First Letter of Peter and the beginning of the Second.

The materials on which the ancient manuscripts were written were generally of two kinds: papyrus (**2 John 12**, in the original) and parchment (**2 Timothy 4: 13**). Papyrus is a kind of junk, a reed... that grows on the banks of the Nile. The plant reaches a thickness like that of a man's wrist. The fibrous marrow was cut into very thin vertical layers. The cut strips were then glued together to form larger leaves. Another strip of similar size



was placed across the first, and the leaves thus formed were crushed to form a thinner material. Finally, they were polished with pumice. The finished pages varied in size from 8 to 20 centimeters by 15 to 45 centimeters, and the color was light brown or grayish. On the front of the page (the writing side), the lines go horizontally. This is the "obverse side". On the "reverse side", the lines go vertically. It used to be written on with a reed (calamus) cut into the shape of a pen to write (**3 John 13**), and the ink (**Jeremiah 36: 18; 2 John 12**) was made of soot, gum, and water. Only specially trained people wrote, and some, like St. Paul, who had a secretary (amanuensis), dictated the documents and eventually signed them to authenticate them. Papyrus was very expensive; according to its size and quality, each piece of paper cost the equivalent of five to seventeen cents of gold. This material, the predecessor of paper, was used for centuries (our word "paper" is derived from "papyrus").

The parchment (a word derived [in Greek] from Pergamon, the city in Asia Minor that at the end of the second century perfected the parchment and exported it) was more durable than papyrus. It was made of specially prepared leather. Sheep and goat skins were



dried and polished with pumice. Sometimes young animals were used because their skin produced thinner material; the vellum, extra-fine parchment, was sometimes obtained from unborn animals taken from the mother's womb. Parchment was used from ancient times until the Middle Ages, when it was gradually replaced by paper.

**Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 1, 2 (translated by the author)**

A new way of binding these materials was to appear at the beginning of the Christian era (the codex or book). A form in which most of the oldest records have been preserved for our times.

The book, technically known as the "codex", was devised and used only after centuries of rolls. In fact, it is believed that the idea of forming books was born around the first century AD. Its predecessor was the diptych, made up of wooden tablets that were attached by a strap and opened and closed like a book. Both the rolls and the books were used from the first to the fourth century; after this, the codex was universally used. The first books were made of papyrus or parchment. Several sheets were put together, folded in the middle, and then glued on the spine to form a "booklet". Several booklets were then joined together to form a "book". Often each page contained several columns as in the Codex Sinaiticus.

The codex form offered many advantages, two of which were convenience and economy. Even if it was large, it was easier to hold a book than a bulky, uncomfortable roll. In terms of economy, both sides of the sheets could be used, which was usually not possible with rolls. Papyrus and vellum were scarce and expensive, but with time paper reduced the cost of book production. Unfortunately, it did not appear in the western world until the middle of the 18th century.

**Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 2 (translated by the author)**

The appearance of paper and printing has made it possible to simplify and mass-produce the distribution of the Bible so that it is almost within the reach of anyone who wants it. We now use digital media... but perhaps more important than the material used is whether it contains the same information that the Inspiration brought to the prophets.

7.1.3. Preserved until our times

A book written today would be very easy to reproduce to reach the most remote places on the planet. Moreover, it could reach many more people by electronic means, as this study has come to your hands (or your hard drive, or the cloud, rather). This was not even remotely the case in the days when the Bible was written.

Before the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, the Bible was known only in handwritten form. That means that the New Testament, not to mention the Old, was copied by hand for 1,400 years, and even in the 16th century, it continued to be copied in this way. Those handwritten copies were called "manuscripts" (manus in Latin means "by hand" and scriptum means "written").



**Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 1 (translated by the author)**

We all would like to think that some original of the holy books have reached our time. Unfortunately, this is not the case, but the multitude of sources and precedence of these codices allow us to prove that what they wrote under the inspiration of God has reached our time unscathed.

Today there is not a single original manuscript of the Greek or Hebrew Bible. The reason is not known for sure, but perhaps the order given by Emperor Diocletian in 303 to destroy all Christian literature explains the fact. Another possible reason is that papyrus, the material on which most of the New Testament was probably written, is not well preserved unless it is stored in a very dry place. From a certain point of view, the loss of the originals was convenient, since mankind tends to worship objects related to the sacred. God should be worshipped and not the Bible, much less the paper and



ink with which it is made. Although the originals were lost, scientific research assures us that the Bible we read is, for all practical purposes, the same one that was produced under divine inspiration. But it is important to remember that all Bible manuscripts are copies.

Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 2 (translated by the author)

Some argue, with human reasoning, that a process of copying these documents, in the old conditions, with great limitation in the apparent control over them would produce a systematic error (when copying a manuscript with errors) that would have distanced us from the true content of these books. Let's see something else about this.

But the amazing thing is that the Bible has been preserved so well. Although copied thousands of times by hand, the vast number of manuscripts demonstrate that we possess what we could almost call a consistent and authentic biblical text. There is a classic statement regarding the accuracy of the New Testament, made by two great scholars of the past generation, Westcott and Hort: "The words which are still, in our opinion, doubtful constitute scarcely one-thousandth of the New Testament" (F. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, editors, *New Testament in Original Greek*, 1882, volume II, Introduction, page 2).

One of the factors that contributed to the accuracy of the Old Testament was the Jewish belief in the sacredness of the Scriptures. Concerning these, Josephus said: "...no one has dared to add, remove or alter even one syllable..." (See **Deuteronomy 4: 2** and **Jeremiah 26: 2**). The fact is that the Jewish Scriptures were carefully copied. The scribes were the guardians of the sacred writings in biblical times, who were historically succeeded by the Masoretes (a word meaning "transmitters"). The Masoretes flourished between AD 500 and 1000, and their efforts to preserve the biblical text were laborious and almost unbelievable. They used resources such as these: they counted every letter in a book and determined the one that occupied the central place; they counted every word and determined the central one; they noted the number of times a word or phrase appeared in the Bible; books that contained errors were discarded. In this way, it is easy to understand why the Scriptures have come to us so close to perfection. Incidentally, the Masoretes, who lived in Babylon and Tiberias on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, left us notes, the "Masoras", on a par with the text of the Old Testament. One of the most famous Masoretes of Tiberias was Aaron ben Asher. The Masoretes preserved the Old Testament so perfectly that his work has come down to us as the standard text, and is called the "Masoretic Text", also known by the abbreviation MT.



Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 3 (translated by the author)

Some of these copyists had such reverence for the Holy Book that when they came to the equivalent word of "God" they left a blank space until they were in a spiritual disposition to write the sacred Name. Some incomplete copies have been found with this peculiarity, which proves the great respect for the Name of God. You can, therefore, be confident that every word of the Bible has come to you with the pure message of the Eternal.

Although there are variations in the biblical texts, more in the New than in the Old Testament, most are of minimal importance, and no great doctrinal truth is called into question by textual errors. The many manuscripts provide a collective testimony to give us a usable and essentially accurate text. There is probably no passage in the New Testament whose correct wording has not been preserved. The well-known scholar Frederick Kenyon says that "no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith is based on a controversial wording". He adds this comment: "We can never overemphasize the fact that, in essence, the text of the Bible is true" (*Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, Revised by A. W. Adams, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958, page 55).

Donald E. Demaray,
Manuscripts and Old Versions of the Bible, 3 (translated by the author)

Until the recent discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumram 1952), and that of Ketef Himnon on June 25, 1979, the oldest Hebrew (Old Testament) manuscript in existence was from around AD 900, (the Old Testament was completed in 400 BC).

The discoveries of the Qumram and Ketef Himnon, give clarity to the Old Testament, as the Qumram manuscripts date from 120 to 100 BC, and the last one which is a small scroll, is from around 400 BC, comparing them with the existing manuscripts, we are amazed at their similarity as there is



a difference of 1.300 years between them. This shows us the reverence with which the sacred writings were treated by the Jews.

Charles J. Spurgeon, Handbook of Bible Introduction, 36 (translated by the author)

7.2. Formation of the Jewish Canon

An article published by Earle Ralph can be very enlightening on this subject. Allow me to make only a few comments on this solid presentation of these facts, although obviously, we will only use some extracts from this material.

The basic nucleus of the Hebrew canon is the Torah, or Law of Moses, consisting of the first five books of our Old Testament. The Sadducees of Jesus' day placed primary emphasis on this part of their sacred Scriptures, and even the Pharisees assigned it greater importance.

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 32

The Hebrew canon contained three divisions: (1) the Law; (2) the Prophets; (3) the Writings. The Law consisted of the five books of Moses. The Prophets were divided into the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets, each containing four books. The Former Prophets included Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (considered as one book each). The Latter Prophets consisted of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. In the Hebrew canon, the 12 minor prophets were placed together and referred to as "The Book of the Twelve".

Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are usually listed by us among the historical books of the Old Testament. But the Jews conceived (rightly) of the history of Israel as prophetic history, and so classified these books under the Prophets.

The third division, the Writings, included the rest of the books of our Old Testament. These were further divided into the three Poetical Books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), the Five Rolls (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther), and the three Historical Books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles).

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 32, 33

One passage in the New Testament has a clear reference to this threefold division. In **Luke 24: 44**, Jesus said that all things must be fulfilled "which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me". Because the third division, the Writings, began with the Book of Psalms, sometimes the whole group was referred to as "the Psalms".

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 33

It is evident to the impartial observer that the dimension of the Hebrew or Jewish canon, protected by Paul's declaration "that the word of God has been entrusted to them" gives reason to those who restrict the Old Testament canon to the 39 books of the Protestant Bible, thus calling for the true compilation of the Holy Bible.

When and why did the Jews officially establish their canon of Scripture? The books of the Law had been used from ancient times as possessing divine authority. The individual books of the Prophets were probably accepted as sacred at the time of their appearance. We know that it took some time for all the Writings to be received as Scripture. The Book of Esther was disputed right down to the time of Christ. This may be reflected in the fact that in the Dead Sea caves there have been found fragments of every book of the Old Testament except Esther.

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 34

It is interesting to note that there is no way to change the Old Testament canon, given the care taken by the holders of the divine will, to prevent books made by humans from being inadvertently included in it.

The situation after AD 70 called for official action. In that year the Temple was destroyed, along with the city of Jerusalem. This brought an end to the Jewish sacrificial system. The Sadducees, who dominated the priesthood, faded out of sight. The Pharisees, who taught the Scriptures in the





numerous synagogues, survived as the leaders. The Jews became the people of the Book. The exact limits of sacred Scripture needed to be set. There must be no doubt as to what books were to be accepted as having divine authority.

There was another very important factor. Christian writings were beginning to appear, the Epistles of Paul, other letters, and especially the Gospels. These must be clearly condemned and excluded from use by adherents of Judaism.

The result was that at the Council of Jamnia, about AD 90, the rabbis officially fixed the limits of the Hebrew canon. Included were the 39 books of the present Hebrew Bible, divided into the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 34, 35

This date is key to defining the Old Testament Canon, so the addition of the so-called Deuterocanonical books (all in the Old Testament) some 14 centuries later is hardly understandable.

Evidently, the inclusion of these books had and has the purpose of sustaining doctrines contrary to the Holy Scripture, but present in Catholicism. We do not have to be blindfolded on this issue.

7.3. The Christian Canon

We will continue with the central concepts of the above-mentioned article.

The earliest church fathers of the second century, such as Ignatius and Polycarp, show a wide acquaintance with Paul's Epistles, some of the Gospels, and I Peter and I John.

This use of our New Testament books increased steadily down through the middle of that century. For instance, Justin Martyr (AD 150) shows a knowledge of the four Gospels, Acts, several of Paul's Epistles, Hebrews, I Peter, and Revelation. By the end of the second century, it is clear that Irenaeus in Gaul (France), Clement of Alexandria (Egypt), and Tertullian of Carthage (North Africa) all had essentially the same New Testament as we have today.

During the third century, there was considerable dispute about the canonicity of seven of our New Testament books. These were Hebrews, James, II Peter, II, and III John, Jude, and Revelation. This uncertainty continued on into the fourth century. The first exact list of our 27 books is found in the Easter letter of Athanasius, in AD 367. Finally, nearly by the close of the fourth century, in AD 397, the Council of Carthage decreed that only "canonical" books should be read in the churches. It then proceeded to list exactly the 27 books of our New Testament. From that day to this the canon of the New Testament has remained the same for the Roman Catholic church and has been the Protestant canon since the Reformation. We believe the Holy Spirit led in the selections made.

Earle Ralph, How we got our Bible, 42

Therefore, the complete Canon of the Holy Scriptures was completed at the end of the fourth century of our era. It is evident that the subsequent inclusion of the apocryphal books, almost 12 centuries after the close of the biblical canon and almost 15 centuries after the Jewish (Old Testament) canon, is arbitrary, to say the least. One aspect that has markedly influenced the incorporation of these books as if they were inspired is the attempt to cohere the so-called tradition.

7.4. The tradition

Some time ago I had the pleasure of reading a book written by Miguel Valbuena Cabarga, a brilliant Galician Protestant theologian who died a few years ago (2010). The book is entitled "The Catholic Church before the Bible and History" and I consider it one of the best treatises available to analyze some issues related to the Holy Scriptures. In fact, I have read it more than once...

I will use part of the logic of some chapters of this book to analyze issues related to Holy Scriptures and the tradition in the following section. The book is well written and draws on innumerable and precise





quotations from Christian authors of the first centuries of our era, which will help us understand their position on the use of tradition. He also presents material on Catholic thought based on his own apologetics.

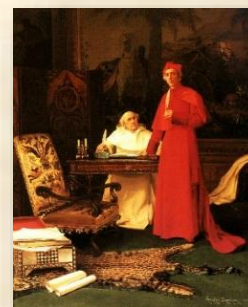
7.4.1. Definition

The Catholic Church holds that truth is found both in the Holy Scriptures and in so-called tradition. The Roman Church officially defines tradition in this way:

Supernatural revelation, according to the universal faith of the Church, declared by the Holy Council of Trent, is contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions which, received orally by the apostles of Christ himself, or as given by the apostles' own hand, to whom the Holy Spirit dictated them, came down to us.

Council of Trent, Session III, Chapter 2, D. 1787 (translated by the author)

In this official statement of the Roman Church, she tries to convince us that those concepts arrived at by oral tradition (which there is no way to prove) have the same value as the written Word of God (which surely can be proven by a "written is"). Since the church (Catholic, of course) is supposed to be the depository of this tradition, it can freely establish that it is true, regardless of the quality of the source from which it comes. In reality, this is the thinking of the Roman Church and its apologists. Allow me to incorporate a quote from the renowned Catholic writer Father Bujanda, which is abundant on this subject:



Tradition, in the broadest sense, is the oral or written transmission of a historical fact or doctrine. In the strictest sense in which we use it here, it is the oral transmission of the doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ or the apostles to the Church, whether or not it is recorded in Sacred Scripture. The truth may well be contained in the sacred books and at the same time be recorded by tradition.

Jesus Bujanda, Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 95 (translated by the author)

In his eagerness to overestimate tradition and make it comparable to the Holy Scriptures, this author uses unorthodox (rather circular and illogical) reasoning to support his thesis.

Everything else that Jesus and the other apostles taught in their preaching, of which nothing at all is preserved in writing, they transmitted to the faithful as Jesus had taught them, that is to say, by word of mouth; then if it was Christ's will that the Church should be taught all his doctrine, it is a most evident sign that true revelation is contained in tradition.

Jesus Bujanda, Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 96 (translated by the author)

Interesting logic... or lack thereof. On this basis, almost anything (as is actually proven to be the case) could be considered a doctrine taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ, especially if the supposed depository of this tradition is the Roman Church and its infallible magisterium (which we will discuss in the next main section).

What is also implicit in these statements is that the Word of God is not sufficient and must be complemented by tradition so that the plan of salvation can be understood by those who seek the Lord. The acceptance of tradition as the source of truth declares the imperfection and inability of the Bible to provide all that man needs to know of God's will, contrary to what we have studied so far in this treatise.

7.4.2. Tradition and the Bible

The Roman Church bases its doctrine about tradition on some biblical passages:

And there are also many things, whatever Jesus did, which, if they should be written singly, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen

John 21: 25

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.

John 20: 30, 31

These passages cannot be used with any rationality to support the immense building of tradition used by the Roman Church to uphold doctrines contrary to Scripture. It is evident that to try to include in one volume, however large, all of God's teaching is a real impossibility. But God, who



knew this perfectly, should leave a compendium that would be sufficient to ensure that no one would be misled in his search for truth.

On the other hand, the second verse quoted indicates that the "these" that "are written" are sufficient "so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name". It does not say that it is required to complement it with other documents so that it can be understood, even less so, that there are concepts that are opposed to those that the Bible holds, and that should replace the latter.

Another passage that seeks to support the validity of the tradition is the one shown below:

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come.

John 16: 12, 13

In this passage, Jesus does not say that there is hidden or mysterious wisdom that He refuses to share with His disciples but that their lack of preparation will require that after His death (the purpose of which they did not fully understand) it would be the Holy Spirit who would lead them to a fuller understanding, an understanding that would then lead them to write the Gospels, letters and books of the New Testament, which would complete the understanding of those who wish to find the way of salvation. Moreover, a little earlier that same day the Lord had told them the following:

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.

John 15: 15

Jesus had told them that nothing of what His Father had revealed to Him had been withheld from Him by precept and example. Therefore, it was not the withholding of truth but the inability of the receiver that demanded further communication and reinforcement. This strengthening of the Holy Spirit would lead them to understand the fullness of what they had received and understood only partially. The Holy Spirit would remind them of what Jesus had taught them and would take from what He had presented and make His teachings known, "He shall teach you all things".

He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will announce it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and will announce it to you.

John 16: 14, 15

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said to you.

John 14: 26

Moreover, the Holy Spirit would teach them "all truth" including prophetic events. There is no need for "more truth" and much less... "other truth".

However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will announce to you things to come.

John 16: 13

But Jesus warned us against the enemy's attempt to contaminate the Word of God with human traditions. When confronted with the tradition of the Jews he pointed out:

But He answered and said, every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.

Matthew 15: 13

Lies that attempt to pass for truth will not be recognized by God, and instead, we are asked for strict adherence to the truth as it has been revealed in His Word.

He answered, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up". The customs and traditions so highly valued by the rabbis were of this world, not from heaven. However great their authority with the people, they could not endure the testing of God. Every human invention that has been substituted for the commandments of God will be found worthless in that day when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil". **Ecclesiastes 12: 14.**

The substitution of the precepts of men for the commandments of God has not ceased. Even among Christians are found institutions and usages that have no better foundation than the traditions



of the fathers. Such institutions, resting upon mere human authority, have supplanted those of divine appointment. Men cling to their traditions, and revere their customs, and cherish hatred against those who seek to show them their error. In this day, when we are bidden to call attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, we see the same enmity as was manifested in the days of Christ. Of the remnant people of God, it is written, "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ". **Revelation 12: 17**.



But "every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up". In place of the authority of the so-called fathers of the church, God bids us accept the word of the eternal Father, the Lord of heaven and earth. Here alone is truth unmixed with error. David said, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts". **Psalm 119: 99, 100**. Let all who accept human authority, the customs of the church, or the traditions of the fathers, take heed to the warning conveyed in the words of Christ, "In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".

Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, 398

It is interesting to note that while the so-called teachers of religion recommend the oral tradition, that is, the one that passes from mouth to mouth, God points out that everything that He communicates to the people must be written down so that it remains a testimony to those He has pointed out. I like a phrase from Confucius that says, "The weakest ink is better than the strongest memory". I could not agree more. When we let ourselves be carried away by oral traditions or by the "truth" which they contain, we shall notice that they are tinged by their own understanding, if not by their inclinations. Moreover, even people with the best and healthiest predisposition could give different or contrary versions of the same event. God could not leave the truth to the good memory of his supposed oral communicators. The key aspects should be communicated without the possibility of being misunderstood or generating confusion. See some passages in which God asks to put things in writing (or puts them in writing Himself as in the case of the 10 Commandments):

And Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other. And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God. It was engraved on the tablets.

Exodus 32: 15, 16

And Jehovah said to Moses, cut out two tablets of stone like the first. And I will write upon the tablets the words that were in the first tablets which you broke.

Exodus 34: 1

In one case, when God decrees the future extinction of the Amalek people he says:

And Jehovah said to Moses, write this, a memorial in a book, and set it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heavens.

Exodus 17: 14

This order, to put their commands, laws, ordinances in writing, is a constant in their relationship with the prophets who were carriers of their message. He even worries about the case in which a scroll with the message is burned by a king. Let's see:

And Jehovah said to Moses, write these words for yourself; for on the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.

Exodus 34: 27

And Jehovah said to me, take a great scroll and write in it with a man's pen: make haste to Plunder! Hasten to the Prey!

Isaiah 8: 1

Now go, write it before them in a tablet, and note it in a book, so that it may be for the time to come forever and ever,

Isaiah 30: 8

Take for yourself a roll of a book, and write in it all the Words that I have spoken to you against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I plan to do to them, that they may each man turn from his evil way, so that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.



Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah. And Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the Words of Jehovah, which He had spoken to him, on a roll of a book.

Jeremiah 36: 2-4

Then the Word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after the king had burned the scroll and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take for yourself another scroll, and write in it all the former Words that were in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.

Jeremiah 36: 27, 28

And Jehovah answered me and said, write the vision, and make it plain on the tablets, that he who reads it may run. For the vision is still for an appointed time, but it speaks to the end, and it does not lie. Though it lingers, wait for it; because it will surely come. It will not tarry.

Habakkuk 2: 2, 3

A similar thing happens in the New Testament with the apostles who are instructed again and again so they put the words of life in writing. Come with me to read some texts from the last book of the Holy Bible:

Saying, I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. Also, what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Revelation 1: 11

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after this,

Revelation 1: 19

And I heard a voice from Heaven saying to me, write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they shall rest from their labors, and their works follow them.

Revelation 14: 13

And He sitting on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, write, for these words are true and faithful.

Revelation 21: 5

Finally, men are solemnly warned not to attempt to modify (or remove or add to) the message that God has delivered. Those who attempt to correct what God has written and add their own philosophy to the truth run the risk of facing God's righteous judgments.

For I testify together to everyone who hears the Words of the prophecy of this Book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add on him the plagues that have been written in this Book. And if anyone takes away from the Words of the Book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which have been written in this Book.

Revelation 22: 18, 19

7.4.3. Tradition and the Bible according to the Fathers of the Church

During the same Council of Trent, a declaration was issued that very clearly defines the position of the Roman Church concerning tradition and about the Magisterium of the Church that we will discuss later:

No one should dare to interpret Holy Scripture contrary to the sense which has been and is held by Holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge the true meaning and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, or contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.

Council of Trent, Session IV, D. 786 (translated by the author)

As always, the tone of the statements shows the scarce tendency to allow free examination and the automatic subjection to the official interpretation of the Roman Church, which contradicts much of what we have presented throughout this treatise, especially the task that has been repeatedly entrusted to us to study them. However, I do not wish to dwell on this matter except on the supposed "[unanimous agreement of the Fathers](#)", furthermore to focus on the opinion that the Fathers had about tradition in comparison with the Holy Scriptures, as well as on the need to make the writings or ideas of men (however good they may have been) comparable with the Holy Scriptures. Let me first cite another official statement, from a slightly more modern council (say about 150 years ago):

[Holy Scripture has been explained by people so skillful that we cannot expect to do any better, for the new meaning given to Scripture would have given birth to new heresies. It is, therefore,](#)



necessary to stop the license of modern minds and reduce them to letting themselves be governed by the old doctors and by the Church...

Vatican Council I, Session III, 1870, c.2 (translated by the author)

You will also be amazed that we are told to accept the interpretation of these great scholars even above what the Scriptures actually say. But let's see what they said... let's allow them to speak to us almost from the beginning of the Christian era... I will also use the quotes from the book of Miguel Valbuena. Let's see what they thought about themselves... and I will also include some sentences, by way of conclusion, from the aforementioned author.

For neither I nor any other like me can follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, in whom, when he was among you, he taught with accuracy and steadfastness in the presence of the men who were then living the word of truth, and who in his absence wrote you epistles, in which, if you search them, you will be able to build yourselves up in the faith which is given to you.

**Polycarp of Smyrna, Epistle to the Philippians, Chapter III,
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 33
(translated by the author)**

Not as Peter and Paul commanded you; they were apostles, I am a condemned man.

**Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Ephesians, Chapter XII
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 33
(translated by the author)**

It is obvious that these respectable Fathers considered the apostles and their writings as the only and sufficient basis of authority. The course of time did not alter this feeling and appreciation in any way, and so Justin in his first apology refers to the work entitled Memorabilia or Memorabilia of the Apostles, saying that in it "all things were taught about Our Lord Jesus Christ" (I, 33) and in another place that they were read, together with the writings of the prophets, in the assemblies that the Christians had every week (I, 67). In another place in his apology, he clarifies that these Memorabilia "was called the Gospels".

**Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 33
(translated by the author)**

Polycarp of Smyrna lived approximately between AD 70 and 155, while Ignatius of Antioch lived between AD 25 and 110 (in both cases the dates are approximate). Another interesting defense is that of Irenaeus of Lyon, who was concerned about the heresies that were emerging in his time (2nd and 3rd centuries) and based more on what is written than on those who want to interpret the apostles. Let us read his statements:

For we have come to know the economy of our salvation through none other than those through whom the gospel came to us; which gospel they then preached, but afterward by the will of God they delivered to us in the Scriptures, to be a foundation and a pillar of our faith. For it is not right to say that they preached before they had perfect knowledge, as some dare say, boasting that they were correctors of the apostles.

**Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies, III, 1
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 35
(translated by the author)**

The Scriptures are indeed perfect because they were spoken by the Word of God and his Spirit.

**Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies, II, 28, 2
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 35
(translated by the author)**

When one wants to convince heretics with the Scriptures, they turn against them as if they were uncertain and such that one could not deduce the truth without knowing the tradition. The Scriptures are perfect, they themselves are the apostolic tradition, which in the Church clearly guides anyone who wants to know the truth.

**Irenaeus of Lyon, Against Heresies, III
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 35, 36
(translated by the author)**

Another outstanding Christian scholar of the first centuries, Tertullian (AD 160-220), in his letter against Hermogenes emphasizes the fullness of the Holy Scriptures and recalls the curse we have cited for those who try to change them. We will also quote (always using the scholarly work already mentioned) Cyprian of Carthage (AD 200-258), Basil (AD 330-379), and Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) whose scholarship of the Scriptures is beyond dispute. Their conclusions regarding tradition versus the Holy Bible speak for themselves. I want you to note particularly what Augustine



says about the writings of Cyprian of Carthage (a century and a half earlier). I apologize if this seems too much to the esteemed reader, but it is my aim to make clear the position of the so-called Fathers of the Church, to whom the Roman Church attributes the fact that they are among those who have brought the tradition to us, which this Church considers even superior to the Scriptures.

I adore the fullness of Holy Scripture; may the "apothecary" of Hermogenes show me that it is written or fear the curse pronounced against those who add or take away.

Tertullian, Against Hermogenes, XXII
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 36
(translated by the author)

What pride and presumption this is to compare human traditions with divine ordinances.

Cyprian of Cartago, Against Quintus, 74
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 36
(translated by the author)

It is criminal arrogance to add to Scripture; what is written, believe: what is not written, seek not.

Basil, Epistle against Vidaum, 283
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 36
(translated by the author)

I do not receive the letters of Cyprian as the canonical Scriptures do, but I examine them upon the Scriptures; I accept with pleasure all that I find according to them and reject, without despising the person, all that is not according to the Scriptures.

Augustine of Hippo, Against Grescen., II, 82
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 37
(translated by the author)

I read the writings of the doctors and, however holy and wise they may be, believing what they say to be true, I believe it not because they say it, but because they prove it with the canonical Scriptures.

Augustine of Hippo, Epistle 19
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 37
(translated by the author)

I confess that I have learned to pay respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture; only as to these do, I believe with all certainty that the authors were completely free from error. As to the other writings, however great the authority of the authors may have been... I do not accept their teaching merely on the ground that they hold such an opinion, but only because they have succeeded in convincing my judgment that it is true.

Augustine of Hippo, Letter 82, To Jerome, Section III
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 37
(translated by the author)

We do not receive the opinions of men, however orthodox they may be, to the same degree as the canonical Scriptures, so that we cannot disapprove of them if we find anything contrary to the truth. Thus, do I proceed with other people's writings and so do I wish others to do with mine.

Augustine of Hippo, Epistle III, II
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 38
(translated by the author)

Although these quotes are devastating to sustain the point that these men believed that the Holy Scriptures were far beyond the certainty of their own writings (highly appreciated and even overrated by the Roman Church) let me add some outstanding Fathers that you will know how to appreciate.

The quotations belong to John Chrysostom (AD 347-407) and Jerome of Stridon (AD 340-420), considered by the Roman Church as "Doctor Maximus in interpretandis sacris scripturis" (it does not seem necessary to translate it from Latin).

He who has recourse to anything other than the Holy Scriptures shall perish.

John Chrysostom, Hom. Mat., 49
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 38
(translated by the author)

Even if you do not understand the secrets of Scripture, yet the simple reading of it causes in us a certain holiness; for it cannot be that you fail to understand something of what you read. For this



is why the grace of the Holy Spirit has made provision for these writings to be composed by tax collectors, fishermen, tentmakers, shepherds, goatherds, clumsy and ignorant people, so that no one who is not literate can claim by way of excuse the difficulty of understanding them, and so that everyone can easily understand what is contained in them.

John Chrysostom

**Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 38, 39
(translated by the author)**

Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

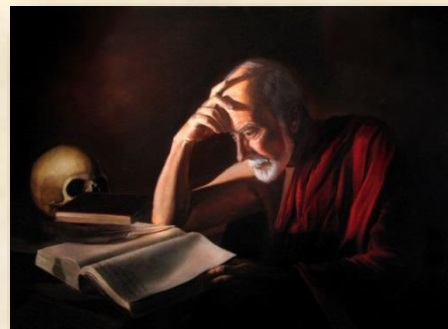
Jerome of Stridon

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 39 (translated by the author)

Things that are invented under the name of apostolic tradition, without the authority of the Scriptures, are punished with the rapier of God.

Jerome of Stridon, Against Helv.

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 39 (translated by the author)



This last quote, as if the others were not enough, is very clear to condemn those who seek to add their own and other uninspired men's wisdom to the perfect Word of God. In this statement, Jerome clearly states that if something does not agree with the Holy Scriptures it should be set aside and not considered a Christian doctrine.

7.4.4. Disagreements between the Church Fathers

Allow me to place before you again the quote with which I started the previous minor section. We mention that the Roman Church upholds the validity of tradition in the supposed "**unanimous agreement of the Fathers**"; as if what these wise men wrote was totally coherent and that there were no differences among them, much less discrepancies.

No one should dare to interpret Holy Scripture contrary to the sense which has been and is held by Holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to judge the true meaning and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, or contrary to the unanimous agreement of the Fathers.

Council of Trent, Session IV, D. 786 (translated by the author)

Unfortunately, for those who support this unsustainable theory, a review of the writings of these Fathers shows that they were far from unanimous in their views. Note that I am not referring to those who at that time held openly heretical positions (even for us) but that the differences are marked among those considered unanimously by the Catholic Church as Fathers of the Church.

Let me once again cite the work of Valbuena. Let us first read this passage; which, by the way, presents rhetorically how our life and works will be evaluated in the judgment.

For of God we are fellow-workers, a field of God, and you are a building of God. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man be careful how he builds on it. For any other foundation can no one lay than the one being laid, who is Jesus Christ. And if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, each one's work shall be revealed. For the Day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try each one's work as to what kind it is. If anyone's work which he built remains, he shall receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3: 9-14

The author presents a commentary by Cardinal Bellarmine (AD 1542-1612), archbishop, inquisitor, and cardinal as well as an author of many treatises, on the above verses, and how they have been interpreted by the Fathers of the Church. Let us read together:

Here there are five difficulties: on the first, that is, what we should understand by those architects and builders, Augustine and Chrysostom believe that they are all Christians, while Ambrose and Jerome believe that they are only the shepherds. On the second there are six different opinions about the fathers: Theophilus and Chrysostom, for example, believe that the foundation spoken of here is faith; gold and silver, good works; hay and oak, mortal sins; while Ambrose and Jerome teach that the foundation is Christ; gold and silver is orthodoxy; hay and oak, heresies; and others give three other interpretations. On the third difficulty connected with the "day of the Lord", Augustine and Gregory hold an opinion which in fact is opposed to none other than St. Paul. The fourth difficulty is:



what is the fire spoken of here? Augustine and Gregory say it is the tribulations of this life; other Fathers say it is purgatory.

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 42
(translated by the author)

Speaking of the famous passage from **Matthew 16: 18** below (a key text used by the Catholic Church to support the apostolic succession of the popes, a subject we will study at length in another treatise) Jean de Launoy (AD 1603-1678), a Catholic scholar says:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16: 18

Only seventeen Fathers support the official interpretation of the Church of Rome, namely that Peter is the rock (see Session III of the Council of Trent). More than half of the patristic opinions examined, or forty-four Fathers, hold that the rock is the faith that Peter confesses. Sixteen of the Fathers think that Christ is the same Rock. And finally, only eight Fathers hold that the rock on which the building of the Church stands is the apostles.

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 43
(translated by the author)

Another Jesuit author, Father Maldonado, dwells on this confusion of opinions (anything but unanimous):

Among the ancient authors, some interpret "on this stone" as "on this faith" or "on this confession of faith, in which you have called me the Son of the living God. Such are Hilary..., Gregory of Nazianzus..., Chrysostom... and Cyril of Alexandria". St. Augustine, going even further from the true meaning, interprets it as "on this stone", that is "on me, Christ", because Christ was the stone. But Origen says, "on this stone", that is, "on all men who have the same faith".

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 43, 44
(translated by the author)

One cannot but be surprised when one notices the lack of unanimity of the authors of patristics on a subject that is at the heart of the existence of the papacy; a doctrine that is supposedly based on the solid building of tradition, but which seems rather cracked.

I also took note of some opinions of the Fathers on auricular confession, one of the doctrines on which the Roman Church has based its struggle for power and in my opinion on the control of the consciences and decisions of those who held and still hold power.

I exhort and adjure you to confess your sins to God, do not reveal them to man; God only sees your confession.

John Chrysostom, De Incomprehensibili Dei Natura, Hom. 5
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 45
(translated by the author)

Why would I go and expose men to the wounds of my soul? It is the Holy Spirit who remits my sins; man cannot do so because he needs a doctor in the same way as the one who seeks the remedy in him.

Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 99
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 42
(translated by the author)

The following quote is both impressive and disconcerting because Basil, one of the Fathers of the Church, shows that many of the forms, symbols, and prayers used by the Roman Church are not based precisely on the Holy Scriptures but on the pagan religion of the mysteries, which was very popular in Rome at that time. From this religion was the Roman Emperor the Pontiff Maximus, a title now proudly held by the Popes.

Among the dogmas and institutions that are preserved in the Church, there are those that we have by Scripture and others by tradition. Both have the same authority regarding religion, and no one who knows the laws of the Church contradicts them, for if we were to reject customs that are not written down, as not having authority, we would do great harm to the Gospel even without thinking about it, and reduce preaching to mere words.

Here are some examples. To begin with the most common. What place in Scripture does it teach us to make the sign of the cross over those who wait for the name of Jesus Christ, or what does it teach us to address the East in our prayers? What sacred author has left us written down the



words we use in the holy mysteries? Since we are not satisfied with those referred to in the Gospels and by the Apostle, we also recite others before and after, which also have much virtue for the mystery and which we have received through a tradition that is not written down. Where is it written that the water of baptism and the oil of anointing are consecrated? Is this not an unspoken and secret tradition?

Basil, De Sancto Spiritu, Chapter 27
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 48
(translated by the author)

Basilio himself comes to hold the following:

[The apostles] kept the mysteries in silence, and their sacredness in secret, for what comes to the ears of the people is nothing less than a mystery.

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 48, 49
(translated by the author)

Note instead what Paul holds when he bids farewell to the elders of Ephesus before his final departure:

Therefore, I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all. For I did not keep back from declaring to you all the counsel of God.

Acts 20: 26, 27

Therefore, watch and remember that for the time of three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. And now, brothers, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20: 31, 32



I would like to end this part with a couple of quotes that show that tradition itself, if analyzed, corrodes the foundations on which the church, that claims to be led by the self-proclaimed Vicar of Christ, the Bishop of Bishops, is supposed to stand. The quotations correspond to Bishop Gregory the Great (considered as Pope Gregory I, AD 540-604, note the painting where he appears with a mitre that he never used). We quote letters he wrote to Emperor Maurice of the Eastern Roman Empire:

My most holy co-Bishop John [was the Patriarch of Constantinople] wants to be called Universal Bishop... Let every Christian heart repudiate that name of blasphemy by which the honor of all bishops is taken away and at the same time, a man with raving takes it for himself.

Gregory the Great,
Letter to the Emperor Mauritius, Session 748 and 149
Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 49 (translated by the author)

I confidently affirm that anyone who calls himself or wishes to be called "Universal Bishop", in the pride of his heart, is the forerunner of the Antichrist.

Miguel Valbuena, The Catholic Church before the Bible and History, 49, 50 (translated by the author)

In fact, ...I totally agree with this statement, which seems not to have been read or accepted by his successors, since a few years later (three to be exact), Boniface III (died in AD 607 in his first year of the pontificate), officially received the title of Universal Bishop, a title still used by the popes.

7.5. Magisterium and Free Examination

One issue, which we already mentioned when we started to deal with tradition, and which is linked to it, is the so-called magisterium of the church. The Catholic Church assumes that it is the only valid interpreter of the Holy Book, and therefore its opinion regarding the meaning of any matter it deals with, becomes a dogma of faith; that is, a truth that must be accepted without the need for reasoning or evaluation; without free examination. Let us read what the First Vatican Council proclaims concerning this matter:

With divine and Catholic faith, all those truths are contained in the word of God written or transmitted by tradition and are proposed by the Church, either in a solemn decision or in the ordinary



universal magisterium, as truths revealed by God that must be believed.

Vatican Council I, Session III, Chapter 3, D. 1772 (translated by the author)

It is interesting to note how the Roman church in presenting the magisterium of the church does so as if it were superior to the Bible and considers it a greater sin to fail to do what the church says than what the Word of God says. According to this, the doctrine of Christ and the apostles needs to be endorsed by the church in order to be considered true.

By universal and ordinary magisterium is meant the teaching of the Universal Church for several centuries of a truth on which the morally unanimous consent of those who in it are or were practically the teachers, that is, always the bishops, the holy fathers in the first centuries and the theologians in later ones, is in agreement. When a proposition is in fact in Scripture, but the Church has not declared or proposed it as the Catholic faith, it is called of divine faith. There is an obligation to believe it, but if someone did not believe it, he would not be a heretic.

Jesus Bujanda, Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 152, 153 (translated by the author)

It's amazing to read these things... I find it hard to recover to keep writing to you dear friend. But this same gentleman, in order to maintain that his point of view is correct, does not hesitate to oppose a tradition and say that it is true, although there is no trace of it in the Sacred Scriptures, being that it rather contradicts the Sacred Scriptures.

Nowhere in Scripture does it say that Mary was kept a virgin all her life, and yet we have it by tradition as a truth of faith.

**Jesus Bujanda,
Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 113
(translated by the author)**

In summary: Scripture says that Mary was a virgin before and during [not really] the birth; it does not say that she was a virgin after the birth. To prove the latter, we must turn to tradition.

**Jesus Bujanda,
Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 439
(translated by the author)**

The true revelation is contained in the tradition.

**Jesus Bujanda,
Manual of Dogmatic Theology, 112 (translated by the author)**

According to this logic, and after noting that the Fathers of the Church have not been unanimous in their propositions or analysis of the Holy Scriptures, we are asked to abandon our free will to analyze these teachings by reason and simply let ourselves be led by them, even if they are contrary to the Scriptures and the will of God.

It is incredible to find statements like this one by Cardinal Bellarmine, who in the absence of arguments to defend the magisterium against free examination goes so far as to say:

If the pope were to err, prescribing vices or forbidding virtues, the Church would be forced to believe that vices are good and virtues are bad, if she does not want to sin against her conscience.

Cardinal Bellarmine, De Pontif., IV, 5 (translated by the author)

No need to read anymore.

As God's people, we have an obligation to present a unique message based on the Holy Scriptures that we cannot ignore. It asks us to recognize the Bible as the source of all doctrine and to warn others against the tendency to accept men's opinions of God's Word. I shall quote the following text which I have already presented:

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches





which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain “Thus saith the Lord” in its support.

Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 595

Speaking of how priests and other influential people opposed Jesus during his ministry, the Servant of the Lord points out:

These opponents of Jesus were men whom the people had been taught from infancy to reverence, to whose authority they had been accustomed implicitly to bow. “How is it”, they asked, “that our rulers and learned scribes do not believe on Jesus? Would not these pious men receive Him if He were the Christ?” It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer.

The spirit which actuated those priests and rulers is still manifested by many who make a high profession of piety. They refuse to examine the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the special truths for this time. They point to their own numbers, wealth, and popularity, and look with contempt upon the advocates of truth as few, poor, and unpopular, having a faith that separates them from the world.

Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages. And His fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and His warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.

The Roman Church reserves to the clergy the right to interpret the Scriptures. On the ground that ecclesiastics alone are competent to explain God’s word, it is withheld from the common people... Though the Reformation gave the Scriptures to all, yet the selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings as interpreted by the church; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church.

Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are ready thus to commit the keeping of their souls to the clergy. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no other reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Saviour’s teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. But are ministers infallible? How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God’s word that they are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the minister; and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride, and prejudice, of another.



Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 595-597

7.6. Authors of the Holy Bible

The Bible has been written over a period of more than 1,500 years by more than thirty authors. It is wonderful to see that these men who have lived in such different circumstances, times, and cultures, who have possessed a very different degree of education, have nevertheless been able to maintain a perfect level of coherence in each subject that surprises the reader.

This is because the true author is the Holy Spirit and that inspiration has acted upon them in such a way as to produce a set of books with wonderful content. Each of these authors inspired by the Holy Spirit



has, however, used their own experience and illustration to make God's message known to us. In some cases, they have conveyed what God said literally (usually indicating it explicitly) and in other cases they have used their own words and figures of speech, typical of their time, to lead us to the Truth.

Note the following charts about the authors. The first one corresponds to the first books of the Old Testament (not including the prophets). As you can see when analyzing this table there are a few books whose author is uncertain (see those considered in the last line) and a few others (marked with yellow circles) where there is no marked agreement of the specialists about the author or authors.

		Book																						
		Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy	Joshua	Judges	Ruth	1 Samuel	2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings	1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles	Ezra	Nehemiah	Esther	Job	Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song of Solomon	
Author	Moses	●	●	●	●	●													●	●				
	Joshua					●	●																	
	Samuel								●	●	●													
	Nathan									●	●													
	Gad									●	●													
	Ezra													●	●	●	●	●						
	Nehemiah																●	●						
	David																				●			
	Asaph																				●			
	Solomon																				●	●	●	●
	Uncertain							●				●	●											

In the case of the prophets there is greater precision in determining the authors of the sacred books (with almost a total correspondence from one to one, except for Jeremiah) as can be seen in the following table:

		Book																
		Isaiah	Jeremiah	Lamentations	Ezekiel	Daniel	Hosea	Joel	Amos	Obadiah	Jonah	Micah	Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah	Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi
Author	Isaiah	●																
	Jeremiah		●	●														
	Ezekiel				●													
	Daniel					●												
	Hosea						●											
	Joel							●										
	Amos								●									
	Obadiah									●								
	Jonah										●							
	Micah											●						
	Nahum												●					
	Habakkuk													●				
	Zephaniah														●			
	Haggai															●		
	Zechariah																●	
Malachi																	●	

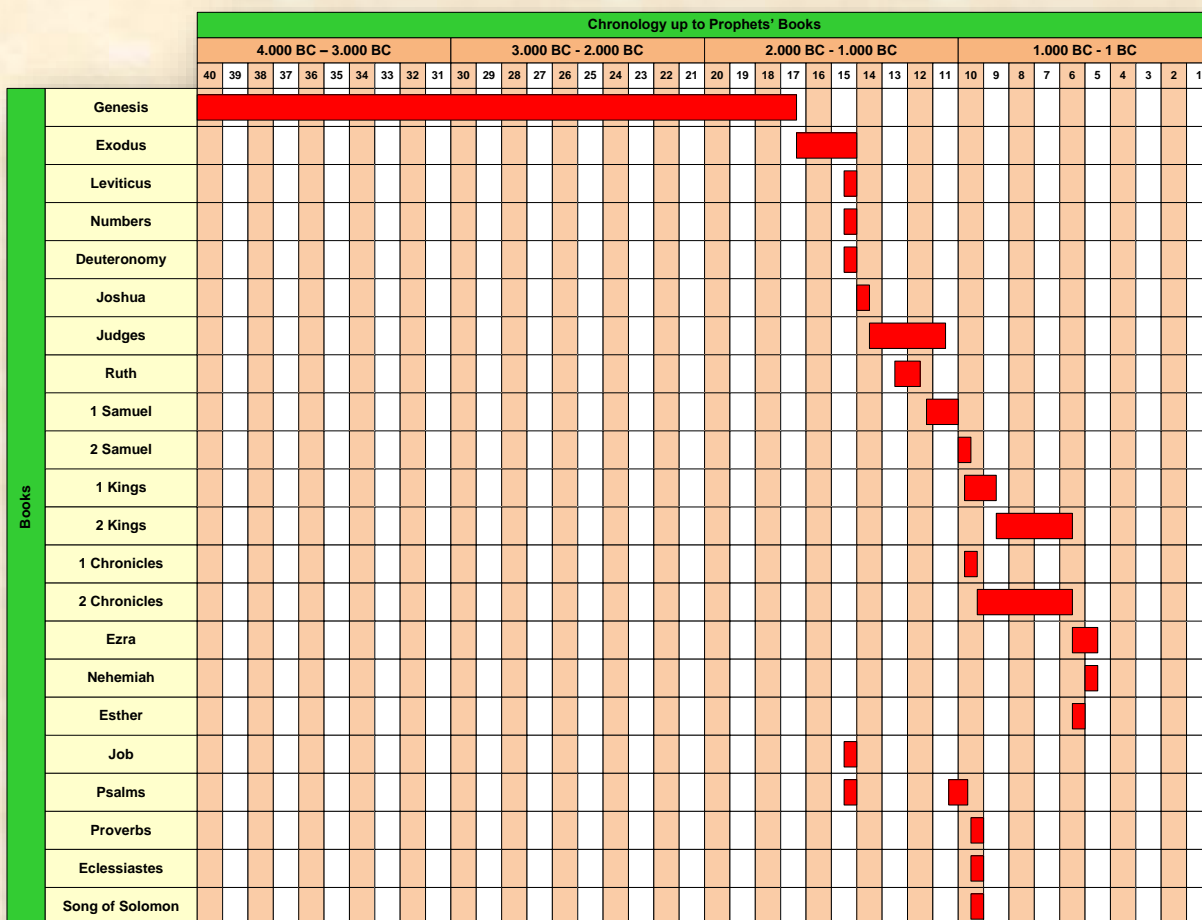


This is pretty similar to the New Testament authors, where the number of letters of the Apostle Paul (with his 14 epistles in total) stands out, as well as the extensive contribution of the Apostle John, the beloved disciple.

		Book																											
		Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy	2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon	Hebrews	James	1 Peter	2 Peter	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude	Revelation	
Author	Matthew	●																											
	Mark		●																										
	Luke			●		●																							
	John				●																				●	●	●		●
	Paul						●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●							
	James																					●							
	Peter																						●	●					
	Jude																											●	

7.7. Chronology of the Books of the Bible

It is important to establish a chronology of the books of the Bible in order to understand the historical sequence of the Book of Books. The following chart shows a sequence of the period covered by the books of the Old Testament before the books of the Prophets.



The diagram is only intended to be an approximation and shows the contemporaneousness of the different writers as well as to see which books were written in similar times. Some scholars place the dates



cases, there is a discussion between the scholars on the period covered by each book, so consider this only as a reference.

		New Testament Chronology										
		10 BC - 100 AD										
		10-1 BC	1-10 AC	11-20 AD	21-30 AD	31-40 AD	41-50 AD	51-60 AD	61-70 AD	71-80 AD	81-90 AD	91-100 AD
Books	Matthew											
	Mark											
	Luke											
	John											
	Acts											
	Romans											
	1 Corinthians											
	2 Corinthians											
	Galatians											
	Ephesians											
	Philippians											
	Colossians											
	1 Thessalonians											
	1 Thessalonians											
	1 Timothy											
	2 Timothy											
	Titus											
	Philemon											
	Hebrews											
	James											
1 Peter												
2 Peter												
1 John												
2 John												
3 John												
Jude												
Revelation												

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all “given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3: 16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols, and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, V

7.8. Main Codices

The list I present to you here is intended to be only a reference (there are many more codices than those mentioned herein), and I hope, as you do, that the archaeologist's shovel will continue to unearth, as it has for the last few centuries, even more evidence (for unbelievers) of the assurance of having the immaculate Word of God (without human modification) in our modern Bibles.

I have no particular doubt that this is so, but I would like to convey to you my confidence based on facts.

I will use an article, which I have used before that seems to me to be very appropriate and with sufficient synthesis.

- The John Ryland Manuscript (AD 130)

It is kept in the John Ryland Library in Manchester, England. Being the oldest manuscript of the New Testament, because of its early date, this manuscript confirms the tradition of its writing,



tearing down the High Criticism that said that the Gospel of John was written at the end of AD 160, [the manuscript] contains the 18th chapter of John.

- The Chester Beatty Papyrus (AD 200)

It is kept in C. Beatty Museum in Dublin, and is partly owned by the University of Michigan. They are papyrus codices containing large portions of the New Testament. It is important because of its early writing, as High Criticism dated several of the New Testament writings with later dates.

- The Bodmer II Papyrus (AD 150-200)

It is found in the Bodmer library of world literature in Geneva, containing most of the Gospel of John, some assigning it a date as old as AD 120.

- The Vatican Codex (AD 325-350) "B"

The Vatican Codex takes its name from the fact that it is found in the Vatican Library, and is indicated in the lists by the letter "B". It has generally been established that this is the oldest and most valuable of all known manuscripts of the New Testament. It contains the almost complete Bible, it consists of 734 pages of a vellum whose beauty is pondered by those who have seen it, its pages measure 25 by 26 cm, of three columns each, of 42 lines on each page and 16 letters on each line. It was probably written in Egypt or Caesarea in Palestine in the fourth century.

At first, it must have had both testaments, but it has lost parts of both over the centuries. It is missing some small parts of the Old and New Testaments. It begins in **Genesis 46: 28**, ending in **Hebrews 9: 14**. It is also missing **Psalms 105: 27-137: 6**, and letters **1** and **2 Timothy**, **Titus**, **Philemon**. With these exceptions, the Vatican Codex contains the entire version of the Septuagint, and the entire New Testament. The Vatican Codex belongs to the fourth century. It seems to have been written around AD 350.

The general opinion is that this manuscript originated in Egypt; although some have thought that it originated in Rome, and others that it originated in Caesarea. It was brought to Rome in the mid-15th century, shortly after the foundation of the Vatican Library (founded by Nicholas V in 1448). The papal authority did not allow anyone to have access to this manuscript. During the reign of Napoleon, it was taken by him to Paris, and while there it was examined by Dr. Hug, who recognized its great value. For many years after it was returned to Rome, the manuscript was inaccessible to even the most eminent scholars; but at last Tischendorf, Tregelles, and others were permitted to make a slight examination of the precious document. It was finally possible to study it extensively in 1890, when a photographic facsimile of the manuscript was published. Critics consider this codex as one of the most important for the study of the biblical text, both in the field of textual and palaeographic criticism.

- The Codex Sinaiticus (AD 350) Letter Aleph, from the Hebrew alphabet

This manuscript has been considered the second most important. Its text has made it possible to make important corrections and to complete passages that had been badly or poorly transcribed from other Codices. It is in the British Museum. Its name comes from the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai where it was discovered. It is an extensive manuscript (and continues to be the oldest and most complete manuscript of the New Testament) only missing: **Mark 16: 9-20** and **John 7: 53-8: 11**. It is also the oldest testimony of the Old Testament after the Qumran Scrolls, as it has more than half of the Old Testament, about 300 pages.



It also contains the apocryphal books the so-called Canon of Eusebius, IV of Maccabees, The Epistle of Barnabas, and a part of the Shepherd of Hermas.

The Codex Sinaiticus has a very interesting history. Having been abandoned and its sheets dispersed, they have been appearing in a very curious way. Constantine Tischendorf, a German



scholar, and specialist in biblical matters, discovered the Codex Sinaiticus at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai in 1844. On his first visit to the monastery, Tischendorf learned from the librarian that a large number of old manuscripts, which were in a basket, served to fuel the fire. He saw 129 sheets of the manuscript, which were thrown into the furnace, of which he managed to rescue 43, which he took with him to Leipzig, Germany, where they were kept in the university library. These sheets belong to the Greek Old Testament. In 1853, nine years later, Tischendorf went to the monastery again, but was unable to obtain anything else from the manuscript. However, in 1859 he made a third trip, and then found not only other parts of the Old Testament, but also the complete New, and two apocryphal books, the Epistle of Barnabas and the Pastor of Hermas. In all, he obtained 346 sheets and a half, which added to the 43 he had obtained before, makes a total of 389 sheets and a half.

Each page of this manuscript has four narrow columns, with 48 lines in each column. The writing is uncial and the pages are made of vellum.

At first, the monks did not want to allow Tischendorf to take the manuscript with him; but he was able to persuade them to present it to the Tsar of Russia and so he managed to get it out of the convent and to the Tsar. In 1859 the Sinaitic Codex was taken to the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg, and there it remained until 1933, when the British people and Museum bought it for the sum of 100,000 sterling pounds, paid by the English people to the Russian Government at Christmas 1933. The Czar of Russia had paid the monks, for the manuscript, only about \$6,750.00. The manuscript was placed in the British Museum.

The date of the manuscript is situated at the time of the triumph of Christianity with King Constantine or one of his successors. It is believed that the place of origin of this codex was Egypt or Caesarea. Tischendorf thinks that the Vatican Codex "B", and the Codex Sinaiticus Letter Aleph, are possibly two of the fifty copies that Constantine (the Emperor) ordered Eusebius [bishop] to prepare for the Churches of Constantinople in AD 331. He also believes that Justinian may have sent the Codex Sinaiticus to St. Catherine's Convent on Mount Sinai, a convent that this emperor had founded. From the above and other reasons, it can be said that the Codex Sinaitic belongs to the fourth century.

- Codex Alexandrian (AD 400)

This was the first major uncial manuscript used by biblical scholars and is therefore called the Codex "A". Stored in the British Museum. It took its name from the city in Northern Egypt famous for its culture and that is why the codex is called "Alexandrian". It was written at the beginning of the 5th century in Egypt and belonged for a long time to the Patriarch of Alexandria. From there it was taken to Constantinople by the Patriarch of this city, Cyril Lucari, in the year 1621... [who] gave it as a gift to the King of England, James I, in 1624. But this monarch died before receiving such a precious gift; and the manuscript arrived in the hands of King Charles I of England, in the year 1627. The manuscript is in the British Museum in London, England, where it remains to this day.

In this manuscript, the work of two copyists or scribes with different calligraphy in the production of this codex is clear. For some books of the Bible, such as Deuteronomy and the Apocalypse, the Alexandrian codex is considered to provide one of the best texts, coinciding almost entirely with texts from very ancient and venerable manuscripts.

This codex is composed of 773 sheets of very fine parchment, written on both sides in 2 columns with 50 lines each and each line with 22 letters. Each sheet measures 31 by 36 cm.

It contains almost all the Bible, including the apocryphal books, except some parts of the Psalms and a good part of Matthew (**Matthew 1: 1-25: 6**), also missing small parts of **1 Samuel**, 2 chapters of John (**John 6: 50-8: 52**), and a long portion of **2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4: 13-12: 6)**. It also has two letters from Clement the bishop to Rome written around AD 96, an epistle from Athanasius to Marcellus, 18 spurious psalms attributed to Solomon and 14 hymns, some Apocryphal and others biblical, such as the Magnificat from **Luke 1: 46-55**... As for its date, it has been accepted that it dates from the first half of the fifth century.

- Codex Ephraimicus (Efraemi Rescritus) (AD 400) "C"

Stored at the National Library in Paris. It is an uncial manuscript; its origin is from the 5th century. At the beginning of the 16th century, it was brought from Eastern Italy to Paris by Queen Catherine de Medici and the evidence it provides makes it important for the study of certain portions of the New Testament.

The Ephraimicus Codex contained the entire Greek Bible; but it is now fragmentary and contains only two-thirds of the Scriptures. Most of it belongs to the New Testament with the letters of



2 Thessalonians and **2 John** missing. The remaining 209 sheets measure 24 by 30½ cm and have only one column per page.

It is a "palimpsest" manuscript, that is, it originally had the biblical writings but it was scraped and over the original text a commentary by St. Ephraim was written.

This was probably done in the 12th century. At the end of the 17th century, a student in the Royal Library discovered that under the sermons of St. Ephraim, there were traces of another text; but it was not until 1834 that great progress was made in reading the text which they had previously attempted to erase. By means of special chemicals, they made the original text appear, and it was Tischendorf who first read it completely. Count Tischendorf published the text of this manuscript in 1843 and 1845.

With regard to palimpsests (a word that etymologically means palin = new and psetos = scraped), when towards the 6th century, papyrus and parchment began to be scarce, the odious use of "palimpsest" was devised, with which many manuscripts in capital and uncial letters disappeared. In general, all "palimpsests" are on parchment. To erase the writing, washing and sponging were used if the inks were easily removed otherwise, they resorted to scraping with knives or pumice stone, softening before the membrane with milk and flour. The knowledge and study of the "palimpsests", dates back to a little more than a century, and is due to the illustrious Cardinal Angel Mai, a librarian who was of the Milan Ambrosiana Library and later of the Vatican.

Several chemicals have been used to try to restore the original text. Chemistry provided reagents that could restore inks that had been erased centuries ago, allowing the discovery, reading, and copying of the incomplete traces of previous civilizations. One of the acids that most favored the deciphering of "palimpsests" and that less damaged the material, is "ammonia sulfate".

- Codex Beza (450 DC) "D 05"

It has not been possible to establish the place of origin of this codex. Scholars have mentioned several places, including Egypt, Rome, North Africa, etc. Theodore of Beza, Calvin's disciple, and successor obtained the manuscript in Lyon, France, in 1562 and gave it as a gift to the University of Cambridge in 1562, where it stands today. It belongs to the 6th century (although some believe it belongs to the 5th century).

This manuscript is bilingual; it is written in Greek and Latin. It has the Greek text on the left page, and the Latin version is on the right, containing rare variants. It is the oldest known manuscript of its kind. In its present form, it contains 406 vellum sheets measuring 20 by 25 cm, with a single column of writing, 34 lines per page. It contains the four Gospels, the **Acts of the Apostles**, and a few other verses from **3 John**.

These are, to this day, the most important uncial Greek manuscripts; but there are others that contain substantial parts of the Scriptures; lately, some papyri containing fragments of the Old Testament have been discovered. Papyri are the oldest known New Testament materials to date, some of them dating back 100 or 150 years to other manuscripts that had been considered the oldest.

- Codex Washingtonian or Freerian (AD 450-550) "W"

It contains the Gospels in the following order: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark. It is a mixed text, that is, some parts belong to one family and other parts to other families.

- Codex Chlorotomanus (AD 500) "D 06"

It is in the National Library of Paris, contains the Pauline epistles, being a bilingual manuscript: Greek and Latin.

- The Dead Sea Scrolls or Qumram Scrolls (100 BC to AD 100)

They are currently in a museum specially made for them. They are the oldest, most numerous, and best-preserved manuscripts of the Old Testament. Most of them are in Hebrew, although there are some in Greek.

These manuscripts demolish the arguments of the High Critics who question the authenticity of many books of the Old Testament. For example: the books of Isaiah and Daniel; the first was said to have been written by at least three writers (three Isaiahs) around 100 BC; the second was said to have been written in the second century AD or at least 50 BC.

The discovery of these manuscripts shatters most of the speculation of High Criticism about



the writings of the Old Testament. In the face of these discoveries, we can be absolutely sure of and trust in our Bible.

Charles J. Spurgeon, *Handbook of Biblical Introduction*, 45-49
(translated by the author)

7.9. Biblical Archaeology

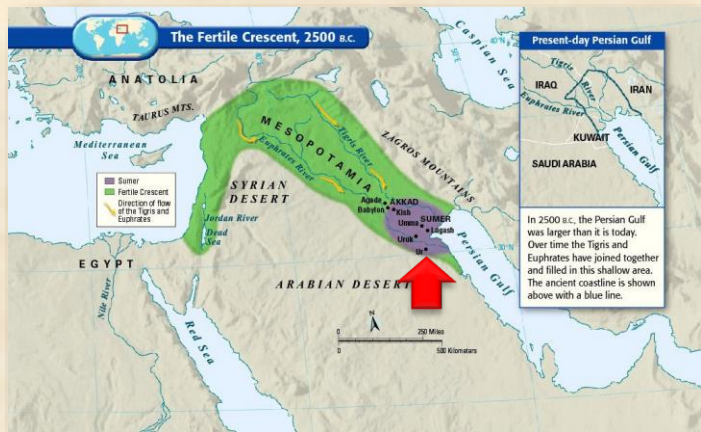
Archaeology has been and continues to be, an important tool to reveal to the eyes of critics and unbelievers that the Holy Bible, besides being the Word of God, is a historical book, in other words, it supports the historical evaluation of the events that are narrated there.

Until before the middle of the nineteenth century, the so-called High Criticism attacked the Holy Scriptures assuming that some of the supposed biblical characters and places, including kings and even empires, with all the dimension that this implies, seemed to be of fable since no reference to them had been found in history (until that moment).

7.9.1. Some evidence

The evidence today is so overwhelming in sustaining the historicity of the Holy Book that these criticisms have already had to be transferred to the field of theological opinion, but not to the historicity of the document. I will refer to some cases.

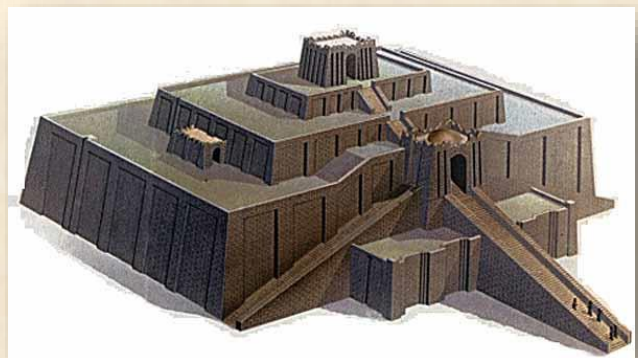
The first is about the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, from where Abram left with his family, including his father, on his way to Haran. The critics, by maintaining that Ur did not exist, nor did it ever exist, also attributed to Abraham the condition of a created or fabled character, with all the theological meaning that this has. But in the second half of the 19th century, Ur appeared before the eyes of the unbelievers in all its splendor...



Although there are several cities that have used the Ur root, the most important site is located south of Mesopotamia. The main promontory, called Tell el-Muqaiyar ("the summit promontory" in Arabic), is about 257 km from the current head of the Persian Gulf and about 354 km southeast of Baghdad. It rises 16 km west of the present course of the Euphrates River, although it originally occupied a prominent position on the east bank before the river changed its course.

The site is composed of a series of sand-covered mounds, which occupy an oval space of about 914 by 732 m. The elongated axes of the oval generally point from north to south. The overall view is dominated by the ziggurat or tower of the temple with its sacred area fenced around.

This artificial mountain, made of bricks and bitumen, originally covered an area of 183 by 137 m and 64 m in height. It is the best-preserved example of an ancient ziggurat in Mesopotamia.



Charles Pfeiffer, *Archaeological Bible Dictionary*, 328
(translated by the author)

Another interesting case is about King Belshazzar, who received the inscription on the wall of the palace, an inscription that Daniel translated and which announced the fall of Babylon to the



Persians commanded by Cyrus. Well, the High Critics considered that the mention of this king was a proof that Daniel had not lived in Babylon at that time, and that the book of the prophet had been written in a period close to the time of Jesus by a pious Jew who would have tried to prove that God controls world events through a pleasant fable.

No historian, until then, spoke of this king, and Nabonidus was supposed to have been the last Babylonian king. Until the archaeologist's shovel came into play...

Belshazzar, the Babylonian Bel-sar-usur ("may Bel be the king's protector"), was the son of Nabonidus and may have been through his mother, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Nabonidus entrusted the army and the kingdom over to Belshazzar (about 556 BC) while Nabonidus was on a campaign in central Arabia where he stayed for 10 years. Legal documents from the 11th and 12th years of Nabonidus record sworn affirmations for the life of Nabonidus "and for the life of Bel-sar-usur, the Crown Prince".

According to Daniel 5, after the unholy banquet of Belshazzar, the Persians entered Babylon, killed the king, and gained control over it...

Charles Pfeiffer, Archaeological Bible Dictionary, 69
(translated by the author)

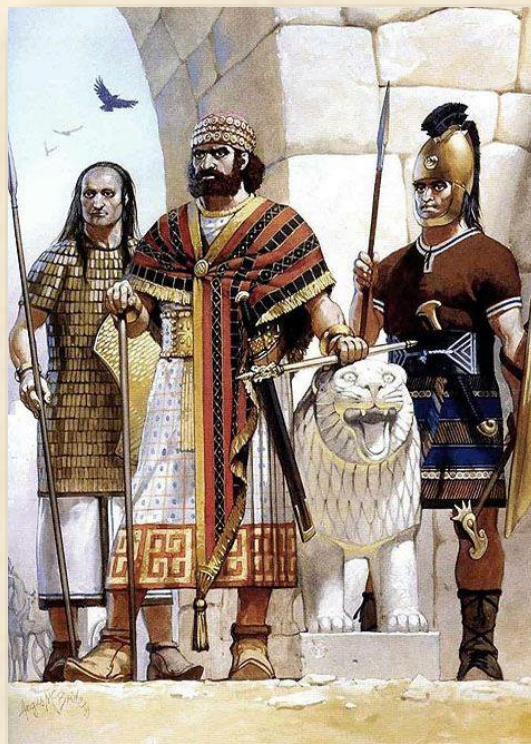
Nabonidus or Nabunaid was the last king of the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire, who ruled from 555 to 539 BC. The so-called Nabonidus Chronicle, first published by T. G. Pinches in 1882, relates certain events from the year of Nabonidus' ascension to the fall of Babylon. It says that the king was at Teima in Arabia during the seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh years of his reign and that his son Belshazzar (Bel-sar-usur) was left in charge of the government. Nabonidus remained king, but Belshazzar served as regent. In October 539 BC, Babylon fell to the Persians when Gobryas (Ugbaru) and Cyrus' army entered Babylon without a fight. Nabonidus was arrested when he returned to Babylon. Chapter 5 of Daniel relates the event of the fall of Babylon after the ungodly feast of Belshazzar, who was executed by the Persians when they entered the city.

Charles Pfeiffer, Archaeological Bible Dictionary, 228
(translated by the author)

I would like you to notice that when Belshazzar promises Daniel a reward to interpret the writing on the wall, he offers him the third place in the kingdom. Of course, he who was the second (regent of Nabonidus) could not go further but offer the third place. This demonstrates Daniel's historicity and consequently puts the prophecies of that book in their proper place.

The various mentions of the Hittites... in the Holy Scriptures were also questioned by the claim that there were no such people. Again, in the mid-nineteenth century, an argument against the Bible was buried when the history of the Hittites... was unearthed.

The people called "Hittites" have been known in the Christian era since the Old Testament, but most of the biblical references to them point to only one insignificant ethnic group living in central Palestine (**Genesis 15: 19-21; Joshua 3: 10; Numbers 13: 29**). Only a few passages suggest something else. The Hittite wives of Solomon (**1 Kings 11: 1**) were foreigners of some importance. Solomon sold horses to the kings of the Hittites and Aramaic peoples (**2 Chronicles 1: 17**). A Syrian army was terrified, believing that Koran of Israel had used the kings of the Hittites and Egyptians against them (**2 Kings 7: 6, 7**). In the mid-nineteenth century, the historical records of the Egyptians and Assyrians were carefully studied and references to the powerful people of Hatti were found.



In the 1870's, basalt stones inscribed with strange hieroglyphics were found in Hamat and Aleppo in northern Syria. A. H. Sayce attributed them to the Hittites. In the following years,



monuments inscribed with the same script and pictures cut in low relief, but especially concentrated in the bend of the Halys River near the modern village of Boghazkoy, were observed all over Asia Minor. Excavations began in Boghazkoy itself in 1906 by the German Oriental Society under the direction of Hugo Winckler. More than ten thousand clay tablets unearthed at the site (many of them in the well-known Akkadian language of Babylon) confirmed that this mound was, in fact, the site of ancient Hattusa, capital of the "land of Hatti".

**Charles Pfeiffer, Archaeological Bible Dictionary, 161
(translated by the author)**

Archaeology then, that allied of historical truth, provides, to those of us who believe in the divine origin of the Holy Bible, irrefutable proof of the existence of biblical characters, cities, events, battles, empires that emerge confirmed by archaeology and its associated sciences.

7.9.2. Key findings

Although we do not require archaeology to prove the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, it is no less true that this science has allowed us to corroborate what the Bible shows about the social, economic, historical, and anthropological environment in which the characters of the Bible move.

Let us see in Dr. Edesio Sánchez's opinion some of the most important discoveries.

1. The Behistún inscription (1835). Carved on the rock, in three languages, in cuneiform characters. It opened up the possibilities for deciphering cuneiform writings: it is known as "the key to other keys".
2. The Moabite stele (1868). It contains the story of the triumph of Mesa, king of Moab, against Ahab and Joram, kings of Israel. The inscription comes from the Late Iron Age (c. 840 BC). Its importance in biblical studies is threefold: (1) It aids in the study of ancient scripture (paleography). The Moabite language is a close relative of Biblical Hebrew. A comparison of the two helps to understand the style of Hebrew writing at that time. It helps to date other inscriptions and writings by comparing the style of the letters. (2) The stele of Moab also offers help in the religious field by giving us a particular perspective on the god Moloch. (3) The historical value is given by corroborating a historical event narrated in the Bible (**2 Kings 3: 1-27**)
3. The Hittite Empire (1871, 1906). The most important thing is the discovery in 1906 of the Hittite state archives with more than 20,000 cuneiform texts, part Akkadian and part Hittite. The interpretation of the Hittite texts started in 1915. The most important thing about the discovery of these texts is the vassalage or sovereignty treaties. The model they follow appears in one form or another in various parts of the Old Testament. Since the studies of Mendenhall, these treatises have helped to better understand the important theme of the covenant in the Old Testament. Various cultural elements of the patriarchal era have been illuminated by these discoveries.
4. The Code of Hammurabi (1901) The stele containing the code of laws was discovered in 1901 by French archaeologists. It was written by Hammurabi, king of Babylon. This king lived about four or five hundred years before Moses. There is a lot of similarity between Hammurabi's





laws and the Mosaic laws. In Hammurabi's text, the law of the talion appears. This discovery helps biblical studies to place the Mosaic laws in a broader context and to open the eyes of many skeptics who do not accept the antiquity of the Mosaic laws. On the other hand, the laws of Hammurabi make it possible to recognize the difference between the laws of a general and universal character and those of God's people.

5. Nuzi and Mari (1925 and 1936). More than 20,000 tablets from the 15th century BC were discovered in Nuzi. The Mari tablets (more than 20,000) date from the same period. Both discoveries have shed light on the historical and cultural context of the patriarchs; the accounts of the relationship of Abraham and Hagar (**Genesis 16**); that of Jacob and Bilha (**Genesis 30**); the adoption of a slave as heir (**Genesis 15: 2**). All these cases are corroborated by the customs of Abraham's contemporaries, narrated on the tablets of Nuzi.
6. Ras-Shamra (Ugarit) (1929). The discovery of innumerable tablets written in Ugaritic helped to give a complete and clear picture of the Canaanite culture and religion. With the mythological accounts of Ras-Shamra and the picture given in the Bible, we can now better understand why Old Testament Israel so often left Yahweh to follow "other gods". The studies of Frank M. Cross and others are only a sample of what is indispensable for understanding the religious-theological background of the Old Testament. Moreover, Ugaritic, being a language similar to Hebrew, has helped to understand incomprehensible words of biblical Hebrew. One of the greatest contributions has been in the study of the literary and grammatical structure of many of the Psalms. It is now known that the Psalms reflect the idiosyncrasies of the poetic language and structure of the peoples settled in Canaan.
7. The Lachish letters (1935). The sentinel room of the old Lachish fort provided 21 fragments of sherds. They describe, in great detail, the last days of Judah. These writings were made in the haste and danger of an attack. The Babylonian armies were approaching. The sentinel scribbled the bad news on pieces of clay. This discovery is important for Bible studies because it speaks of a prophet who proclaimed a message of warning. This prophet was undoubtedly Jeremiah. Several of the expressions in the writings of Lachish appear in the writings of this prophet (**Jeremiah 6: 1; 38: 4; cf. 34: 7**). The Lachish letters offer strong evidence that corroborates the historicity of captivity and exile. They are also important for paleography because they show how Hebrew was written at that time.



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8. The Dead Sea Scrolls (1947). This is the best-known archaeological discovery of modern times. Excavations at the site (Qumran) have provided information about the life and customs of the Jewish sect known as the Essenes. Most important of all has been the discovery of a large number of scrolls or fragments of them (more than 600). These scrolls had been kept in



eleven caves. The Essene Jewish sect lived between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD.

Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 114-116 (translated by the author)

7.10. The Spanish Bible

7.10.1. A little bit of early history

The Bible of the Bear (published in Basel, Switzerland, in 1569) is usually considered the first translation of the Bible into Spanish.

When we lived in Seville, Spain, we had the opportunity to visit the beautiful Monastery of San Isidoro del Campo, located in the nearby town of Santiponce, where the famous Hieronymus Catholic monks Casiodoro de Reina and Cipriano de Valera, authors of this translation known as Reina-Valera, the most recognized and used by most of the evangelical Christian churches (Protestants would say others) in the Spanish language, lived.

Let's see something about the efforts that were made previously (that is, before the appearance of the Bible of the Bear) in Spain to provide the Word of God in the language of the people, something that the Roman church did not approve of.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, here are some of the translations of the Bible before 1569.

As a curious case, since they are not exactly translations into Spanish... but directed to "Castilians", we mention the following two: (1) an Arabic translation made on Spanish soil, in Muslim Spain. Alvaro Paulo de Cordoba, known as "the column of the Mozarabs", asked himself: "Where can one find a layman who reads the Latin of the Holy Scriptures? Who among them studies the Gospels, the Prophets, and the Apostles? To remedy this evil, "to edify the faithful who had forgotten Latin and as the best means of winning over the Muslims to the faith in Christ", Bishop Juan Hispalense devoted himself to the task of translating the Bible into Arabic. And (2) an edition of a Visigothic Latin Bible, "which belonged to the ancient monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña... The date is calculated to be before the year 953... The same is true of another Toledo codex and other ancient Spanish Bibles: they do not follow the Vulgate, but are independent translations".



Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 374, 375 (translated by the author)

Mozarabs were called the Christians who, during the Muslim domination, stayed to live among the Arabs. Although they followed a policy of tolerance, they also created special schools, with the purpose of making Mozarabs learn Arabic and forget Latin.

Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 374 (translated by the author)

This same author comments on the first attempts from the 13th century onwards to offer the people the Oracles of God, which were until then restricted to priests and monks who knew Latin, or the original languages.

The Alfonsine Bible, 1280. It is a translation of the Vulgate, of the whole Bible (Old and New Testament). It was published in 1280 and is part of the "Gran e General Estoria". Its name is due to the fact that it was made under the patronage of the wise king, Alfonso X of Castile and Leon. From the information available it is concluded that this was the first translation of the Bible into Castilian Romance.

The Bible (of the Duke) of Alba is a century and a half later than the Alfonsine [Bible], in other words, 1430. It was sponsored by John II, King of Castile. It is a translation of the Old Testament made directly from Hebrew and Aramaic. In justifying it, it was said that "he [Luis González de Guzmán, who commissioned the translation to Rabbi Moisés Arrage] was dissatisfied with the



versions that had preceded it, such as the Alfonsine [Bible], because of their antiquated or very corrupt language. The place where it is kept (the Library of the Duke of Alba) gave the name to this version.

The Bible of Rabbi Solomon. "It is generally taken as anonymous, although some scholars attribute it to Rabbi Solomon. It contains only the Old Testament and is dated 1420. From the same date is another version, also anonymous, of the Old Testament and which does not contain the book of **Ecclesiastes**".

The New Testament of Francisco de Enzinas, published by the Spanish scholar in 1543. For this publication (which he presented to Emperor Charles V) Enzinas was imprisoned, but he was able to escape from prison and flee Spain.

The Ferrara Bible, so named because it was published in the Italian city of Ferrara in 1553, is the work of two Portuguese Jews, who used the names Abraham Usqui and Yom Tob Atias. It is characterized by its exaggerated literalism and the antiquated character of its Spanish.

The New Testament translated by Dr. Juan Perez de Pineda This version was published with the following title: The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ -new and faithfully translated from the original Greek into Spanish Romance- in Venice, at the house of Iuan Philadelpho -MDLVI. Although the edition of 1556 (the only one, according to P. N. Tablante Garrido) is not named after an author and "the imprint does not correspond to any known printer", by Cipriano de Valera (in the "Exhortation to the Christian reader" of his 1602 edition) we know that the author was Juan Perez de Pineda. This translation has been highly praised by scholars. The author himself was held in very high esteem for the excellent quality of his literary production, as Dr. Tablante Garrido maintains in the work already cited.

Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 375-377 (translated by the author)

7.10.2. The Reina-Valera Bible

It is, however, the aforementioned appearance of the Reina-Valera version that constitutes the most important milestone for the dissemination of the Sacred Book in the language of Cervantes.

Especially important is the fact that its authors were Catholic monks who sympathized with the Reformation and who had to flee the monastery to save their lives.



It owes its name to the sum of efforts of Casiodoro de Reina, its main author, materialized in the Bible of the Bear (Basel, Switzerland, 1569) (the original title is "La Biblia que es, los sacros libros del Viejo y Nuevo Testamento / Traducida del español, 1569"), and of Cipriano de Valera, its first reviewer, materialized in the Bible of the Pitcher (Amsterdam, Holland, 1602). Both were Hieronymus Catholic monks from the Monastery of San Isidoro del Campo (Santiponce, Seville), who

had exiled themselves from Spain after being persecuted by the Inquisition because of their open sympathies with the ideas of the Protestant reformers Luther and Calvin.

Wikipedia, Reina-Valera (translated by the author)

The year 1569 marks a milestone in the history of Spanish translations of the Bible. It is the year of the first edition of the Bible, on whose translation Casiodoro de Reina had been working for many years: The Bible of the Bear, so-called because of the figure of a bear, standing next to an arbutus tree, which adorns its cover and which was the "logo" of the printer. A specialist in the study of that Bible, and holder of a copy of the princely edition (of 1569), Dr. P. N. Tablante Garrido has written the following: "as disputed as the matter is, the same [i.e., the Bible of the Bear] preserves among its merits that of being the first complete and direct Spanish translation of the Holy Scriptures, and also the first of such characteristics that has never been published in its own language; on this matter the opinion of authorities and specialists in the matter is uniform: Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo..., Eric M. North..., Cardinal Isidro Gomá Tomás..., John E. Steinmueller..." (and the author continues to quote other authorities).

Much has been written, over the years, about this work. Of course, there has been no shortage of impugnation, including manipulation of false information to take the brilliance out of this work, which is unique in its time. Such has been the welcome that the Spanish-speaking Protestant world has given to Reina's translation, that there are many revisions to which it has been subjected...

Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 374, 375 (translated by the author)

The Bible of the Bear has had several major revisions. The main ones are the 1602 revision published by Cipriano de Valera in Amsterdam, Holland, and then revised in 1909 and 1960 (in my



humble opinion, the best). There has also been a very important version in 1995 (published as a study Bible) which has used the Textus Receptus as a basis for the translation of the New Testament. There are also some earlier and later versions with updated language for better understanding by the modern reader.

7.10.3. Other important versions

In the work we are quoting, published under the auspices of the United Bible Societies, some of the most important versions after the appearance of the Reina-Valera are mentioned. I will comment on some of them.

1790 to 1793: translation by Fray Scio of San Miguel (from the Vulgate)

1823 to 1825: at this time a translation was published which bore the name of Felix Torres Amat (Bishop of Barcelona). Later on, it was acknowledged that the translation work had been done by José Miguel Petisco [Jesuit Priest] ...It is also a translation of the Vulgate.

1893: The Modern Version. Praised by some who consider it very faithful to the original languages (from which it was translated), its Spanish can be described as "hard", as it lacks stylistic fluency...

1944: Nácar-Colunga. Translation made by the biblical scholars Eloíno Nácar Fuster and Alberto Colunga. It is the first edition of a Bible sponsored by Catholic institutions (it was published by the B.A.C., [Madrid]) and with the due ecclesiastical authorization, made based on the original languages. From this translation onwards, practically all the translations made by Catholics are based on the biblical languages.

1947: Bóver-Cantera, named after the translators José María Bóver and Francisco Cantera Burgos. Also made from the original languages, this is a critical edition (J. M. Bóver had already published a Greek and Latin edition of the New Testament).

1948-1951: Translation, recently re-edited, by Monsignor Straubinger. It has abundant notes of an accentuated pastoral orientation.

1966: The Jerusalem Bible. It follows the criteria proper to the original edition published by the Biblical School of St. Stephen in Jerusalem in French. The translation is based on the original languages. Its notes are of great value.

1966: God comes to Man. The New Testament in popular version, published under the auspices of the United Bible Societies, where the principles of translation known as dynamic equivalence, promoted by Dr. William L. Wonderly, are applied. Its simple language, which seeks to communicate the message of the Gospel to the common reader, is its great value and its great weakness...

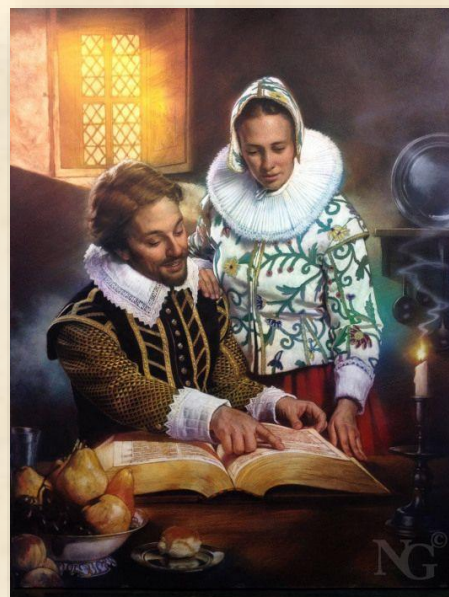
1979: God speaks today. Better known as the "popular version". This translation also follows the principle of dynamic equivalence, keeping in mind communication with the common reader, and not necessarily with the more cultivated from the point of view of literature. This aspect is its great value and its great weakness. For the translation of the New Testament, the text produced by the United Bible Societies and known as the "critical text" was taken as the basis. It is an interconfessional version. It has been revised.

Edesio Sánchez, Discover the Bible, 379-382 (translated by the author)

There are many other versions, but these are some of the most important. I will comment on some of them and on others that are not in the previous list.

7.10.4. Current Versions

The great proliferation of versions or translations of the Bible may cause some confusion, especially because some of them are questioned by scholars as having a certain theological bias.





Some are gross distortions of the manuscripts and have been criticized almost unanimously by scholars, as is the case with the New World Translation sponsored by the Jehovah's Witnesses Church.

Here is a commentary on a book written in defense of the more traditional versions of the Reina-Valera (1909 and 1960).

There are Catholic versions that are trustworthy, but in recent years two versions have emerged that are very pernicious and we will reflect on them.

In 1972 the so-called "Latin American Bible" was published. This version was translated by South American Catholic priests who were sympathetic to Karl Marx, and tried to get the Bible to help the Marxist movements. In 1979 the version "God Speaks Today" (Popular Version) came to light. For the translation of this version, the Vatican and the American Bible Society joined forces. The translators - Catholic and evangelical - took the liberty of substituting and changing many texts according to their "liberal" wishes. They attribute regenerative virtue to the water of baptism. They removed from the Old Testament the word Satan, which appears in the original text 18 times. The divinity of Christ comes out very badly in this version. Instead of presenting him as the son of a virgin, they present him as the son of a young woman. Where the prophet Micah speaks of the eternity of Christ, this version says that he descends from an ancient family, and where the original Greek says that God was manifested in the flesh, this version says that Christ was manifested as a man. And where Paul presents Christ as equal to God, the version to which we refer to says that Christ, although divine, did not insist on being equal to God.

Domingo Fernández, Conspiracy against the Holy Scriptures, 12

I fully agree with these concepts. Some Catholic versions are excellent; for example, Nácar-Colunga, Bóver-Cantera, or the Jerusalem Bible. Others are quite good but those mentioned in the above quotation are regrettable. It is incredible, for example, the defense that the Latin American Bible makes of the theory of evolution at the same time that it points out in its notes that Genesis is a fable. One version of this Bible excludes, without blushing, the passages of Ecclesiastes that demonstrate the mortality of the soul, among others.

I believe that even some more modern versions of the Reina-Valera have gone to extremes to modernize the message, affecting its veracity as well as its poetic sense. Something similar occurs, perhaps partially, with the New International Version. I would rather recommend the so-called Modern Version (1929, last version). Avoid also the so-called paraphrases (where the convictions of the translator have too much influence) or those that tend to be so without confessing it.

Dear friend, take what is mentioned as a recommendation to the versions you use. You will find in them, if you accept the advice, coherence in content concerning what has been the traditional translation of the Bible from the oldest and most respected codices. I recommend that you compare the texts in more than one version, but choose wisely these ones.

7.11. Bible Statistics

The Bible is the Book of books and almost every aspect of it has been studied. Some fall into the realm of the anecdotal, but they are nonetheless interesting to the Bible scholar. Here are some statistics, always based on the most widely used Bible in the English language: King James Version.

General data:

- a. The Bible has been translated into more than 1,200 languages.
- b. The Bible can be read aloud in about 70 hours.
- c. In AD 1228 the Bible was divided into chapters by Stephen Langton.
- d. In AD 1448 the Old Testament was divided into verses by R. Nathan.
- e. In AD 1551 the New Testament was divided into verses by Robert Stephanus.

Books, chapters, and verses:

- a. Detailed statistics from the King James Version provide the following data:

Data	Old Testament	New Testament	Total Bible
Number of Books	39	27	66
Number of Chapters	929	260	1.189



Data	Old Testament	New Testament	Total Bible
Number of verses	23.214	7.959	31.173
Number of words	592.439	181.253	773.692
Number of letters	2.728.100	838.380	3.566.480

- b. This denotes that the Old Testament is 76.5% of the Bible, with the New Testament making up the remaining 23.5%. A little more than a 3 to 1 ratio.
- c. The largest book of the Old Testament: Psalms with 150 chapters.
- d. The largest book of the New Testament: Luke with 1,151 verses.
- e. The smallest book of the Old Testament: Obadiah with 21 verses.
- f. The Smallest Book of the New Testament: 3 John with 14 verses. Actually 2 John has one less verse but more words.
- g. The book located in the center of the Old Testament: Proverbs.
- h. The book located in the center of the New Testament: 2 Thessalonians.
- i. The chapter at the center of the Old Testament: Job 29.
- j. The chapter at the center of the New Testament: Romans 13.
- k. The verse at the center of the Old Testament: 2 Chronicles 20: 17, 18
- l. The verse at the center of the New Testament: Acts 27: 17
- m. The verse in the center of the Bible: Psalm 118: 8
- n. Central word of the Bible: Lord in Psalms 118: 8.
- o. The shortest chapter of the Bible: Psalm 117.
- p. The longest chapter of the Bible: Psalm 119 with 176 verses.
- q. The longest chapter of the New Testament: Luke 1 with 80 verses.
- r. The shortest verse of the Old Testament: 1 Chronicles 1: 25.
- s. The shortest verse of the New Testament: John 11: 35 (2 words)
- t. The longest verse in the Bible: Esther 8: 9 with 78 words.
- u. The longest verse in the New Testament: Revelation 20: 4.

Words and messages:

- a. About 2,500 times the Bible speaks of itself as the Word of God.
- b. There are 1,260 promises in the Bible.
- c. There are 6,468 commands in the Bible.
- d. There are over 8,000 predictions in the Bible.
- e. There are 3,294 questions in the Bible.
- f. There are 8,674 different Hebrew words in the Bible.
- g. There are 5,624 different Greek words in the Bible.
- h. There are 12,143 different English words in the Bible (in the King James Version of course).
- i. The word God appears 4,379 times in the Bible.
- j. The word Lord appears 7,738 times in the Bible.

This information has been extracted from Bible Statistics, an e-Sword module, one of my favorite electronic tools (also free, www.e-sword.net). Download it.

God bless you.