Chapter 3: "In Human Words": The Bible as Human Artifact
Canon, Text, and Critical Theories

Like the incarnate Christ, the Bible has both a divine and human nature. In this chapter, we consider the Bible as a human book, addressing topics such as its formation as a collection of sacred books (the canon), the transmission of the words of each of its component books (the text), and various modern theories about the composition of the bible as a human endeavor (critical theories).

I. The Canon of Scripture

Most Christians never give a thought about what books should be included in the Bible. The typical American Christian who wants a Bible, for example, simply goes to a Christian bookstore (if Protestant) or a religious goods store (if Catholic) and asks for a Bible. Decisions about which books are included have already been made. Protestant Christians will be directed to racks and racks of various English translations of a book consisting of the thirty-nine sacred books of the Jews bound together with the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Catholic shoppers will be directed to a single rack with displaying two or three different translations of the forty-six books of the Christian Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New. The Eastern Orthodox shopper would probably have to order a Bible online, and would find a few more books yet in the Old Testament when his volume arrives in the mail.

Why is there a difference in the number and order of the books of the Old Testament between these different confessions? Who made those decisions, and when? This is the issue of the *canon*, which is defined as either (1) the list of inspired and authoritative books, or (2) the collection of books themselves, i.e. the Bible.

The term "canon" is Latin, derived from the Greek *kanon*, from Hebrew *qaneh*, a cane or reed. Since reeds were used as measuring sticks in antiquity, the concept of "canon" is that of a rule or measure, and authoritative standard against which to evaluate doctrine.

The term and concept of "canon" find their home within early Catholic Christianity. Although Origen first used the term with respect to Scripture, it was St. Athanasius in the mid-to-late fourth century (AD 300s) who popularized it, and it was in the same time period (late fourth and early fifth centuries) that we have a flurry of councils and fathers discussing the canonical status of different biblical and parabiblical books.

When discussing the Scriptural canons of Judaism and Protestantism, care must be taken not to impose on these other faith communities concepts that apply only within the Catholic Church. For example, neither Judaism nor Protestantism (as a whole) have a central hierarchy or authoritative body (such as an ecumenical council) invested with infallible authority on matters of faith. Therefore, while the canonization of the Scriptures in the Catholic Church can be identified with formal decisions of Church councils, canonization in Judaism and Protestantism took place differently, often without formal decisions.

The Development of the Old Testament Canon

The Bible's own account of its origins begins with references to Moses writing down the laws of God at Sinai (Exod 24:4; 34:27-28; 33:2) and receiving from God tablets of stone containing the ten commandments (Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15; 34:1; Deut 5:22; 9:10)

which were stored in the ark of the covenant (Deut 10:2-4; 1 Kings 8:8). At the end of the wilderness wanderings, there are further references to Moses writing down the laws that comprise the Book of Deuteronomy in a "book" (a scroll: Deut 28:58; 61; 29:20-21,27; 30:10; 31:19,22) and entrusting it to the Levitical priests (Deut 31:9) where it was to be stored next to the ark (Deut 31:24-26). Significantly, Moses instructed the Levitical priests to read the "Book of Law" to the people of Israel every seven years, during the Feast of Booths, when the covenant was renewed (Deut 31:9-13). This "Book of the Law" was the first "Bible" in Israel's religious history, and its function is both significant and paradigmatic: it was intended as a guide for faith and morals, to be proclaimed in the context of the liturgy, as part of the renewal of God's covenant with his people. This continues to be the function of the Scriptures in the New Covenant. The Christian Bible continues to be a covenant document (in two divisions, the Old and the New) proclaimed publically in the celebration of the covenant-renewing liturgy.

According to Moses' command (Deut 27:3-8), Joshua wrote a publicly-accessible copy of the "Book of the Law" on tablets of stone on Mount Ebal in a covenant-making ceremony with the people of Israel after entering the promised land (Josh 8:32). At the end of his life, Joshua added supplementary material to the "Book of the Law" (Josh 24:26), presumably the copy kept by the Levites next to the ark.

Following the ministries of Moses and Joshua, there is a long hiatus in references to sacred writing in the Scriptures. Samuel wrote the laws of the kingship in a book to be kept in the sanctuary (1 Sam 10:25), and later mention is made of chronicles that he kept (1 Chr 29:29). Roughly half the psalms are attributed to David; presumably these were composed orally and reduced to writing by royal scribes. Likewise, Solomon is

remembered for having uttered 3,000 proverbs and composed 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). Thus, during the reign of these two great kings (c. 900s BC), the Psalms and wisdom literature begin to take shape.

The middle of the eight century BC (700s BC) witnessed the rise of the "literary prophets," that is, prophets who left written materials. While the early prophetic figures Elijah and Elisha left no written oracles, the eighth-century prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah did write down at least some of their oracles, recorded in the books that bear their names. The seventh century saw the ministries of Habakkuk (Hab 2:2) and Zephaniah, but it is especially the literary prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who ministered at the end of the Judean monarchy and the beginning of the exile (c. 630–570 BC), who provide us the most information about the literary activity of the prophets. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel are filled with undeniable references to texts that we now find in the books of Moses, Jeremiah being strongly influenced by material from Deuteronomy, and Ezekiel by material from Leviticus, although both allude to various passages scattered throughout the entire Pentateuch. It is clear, therefore, that these Mosaic texts were available and authoritative in the late Judean monarchy—indeed earlier, since references to them are not lacking in the older prophets as well. The book of Jeremiah, in particular, abounds with references to the writing down of Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer 25:13, 30:2, 36:2; 51:60), which took place by Jeremiah's dictation to his scribe Baruch (Jer 36:4,6,17-18; 45:1). An initial copy of Jeremiah's prophecies was burned by the king (Jer 36:27) and then rewritten and expanded (Jer 36:28–32).

There are far fewer explicit references to Ezekiel's writing down of his own prophecies, but the prophetic book of Ezekiel is, in its style and structure, notable for its

written rather than oral style. Ezekiel also contains the greatest evidence of intentional re-use of older written sources, particularly the second half of the book of Leviticus (Lev 17-27), called the "Holiness Code" by scholars.

Sometime in the exile, it appears that an unknown scribe undertook to compose a history of the people of Israel from the entrance to the land until the exile, what we now know as the historical books Joshua through Kings. This scribal historian used pre-existing written sources, which he occasionally mentions: the Book of Jashar (Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18), the Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), the Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel[1] and Judah.[2]

After the Persians conquered Babylon (537 BC), the priest Ezra led a large group of Babylonian exiles back to the land of Judah, and was heavily invested in teaching the post-exilic Judean community to live according to the Law of Moses (). Later tradition, as well as some modern critical scholars, credit Ezra with editing the Books of Moses into their present form. Ezra's younger contemporary Nehemiah also led the post-exilic community and left literary remains, as did the prophets Nahum, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, Obadiah, and Malachi.

The conquest of the Near East by Alexander the Great (333 BC) ushered in the final cultural epoch of the Old Testament. In the last three centuries before Christ, additional wisdom books were written (e.g. Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach) which show the influence of Greek thought. The Books of Maccabees, recording the battle for freedom of the Jews against the Hellenistic king Antiochus IV, who ruled over one of Alexander's

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[1] 1Kings 14:19; 15:31; 16:5,14,20,27; 22:39; 2 Kings 1:18; 10:34; 13:8,12; 14:15,28; 15:11,15,21,26,31.
[2] 1 Kings 14:29; 15:7,23; 22:45; 2 Kings 8:23; 12:19; 14:18; 15:6,36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17,25; 23:28; 24:5

successor kingdoms centered in Syria, were perhaps the last of the Old Testament books to be written.

Thus, by the first century A.D., there was a large body of sacred literature in circulation among the Jews. It is only at this time that we begin to find reliable information on which books were considered inspired and authoritative.

The Canon of the Old Testament in the Days of Jesus

There was no universally-accepted canon of Scripture among the Jews in the first century A.D. Instead, different sects within Judaism had divergent views of which books were inspired and authoritative. The Samaritans and the Sadducees, although very different in their religious views and practice, were agreed that only the five Books of Moses were divinely inspired Scripture. The Pharisees, on the other hand, accepted a larger canon close to that of modern Jews and Protestants. One of the earliest witnesses to this canon is to be found in the Jewish historian

Josephus, a contemporary of St. Paul:

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine

Josephus' Canon: One Proposal
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
Joshua Judges Ruth? 1-2 Samuel 1-2 Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations? Ezekiel Daniel The Twelve 1-2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah?
Job Psalms Proverbs Song of Songs?

doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them. (*Against Apion*, 1:8:38-42)

Unfortunately, it is not at all clear which books Josephus meant by his "thirteen books of the prophets" and "four books of hymns … and precepts." No two scholarly reconstructions agree. Moreover, despite Josephus' assertions, the canon he refers to is that of his own sect, the Pharisees. It is now apparent from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Essenes (a large sect of Jews given to asceticism, prayer, and rigorous observation of the Law) accepted a larger canon than that given by Josephus, one that included certainly apocryphal works like the *Book of Jubilees* and various Enochic books that are now found in *1 Enoch*, and may have incorporated the deuterocanonical book *Tobit* and some sectarian works like *The Temple Scroll.* Furthermore, the large numbers of Greek-speaking Jews scattered around the Mediterranean outside the land of Israel read the Scriptures almost exclusively in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint (see below), and accepted as inspired a larger collection than that of the Pharisees, one that roughly corresponds with the canon eventually accepted by the Catholic Church.

When the Jewish community did reach consensus on their canon of Scripture is a matter of dispute. "Canon" and "canonization" are Christian ecclesiastical terms that presuppose an authoritative body (the magisterium) competent to make formal decisions on religious matters. The Jewish tradition does not have a hierarchy or magisterium, and does not hold infallible councils. In 1871, the German scholar Heinrich Graetz suggested that the Jews may have reached closure on their biblical canon in AD 90 at the "Council of Jamnia [Jabneh]," a city on the coast of Israel to which the Sanhedrin relocated after the destruction of Jerusalem. This theory was popular for about a century, but has now

been discredited due to a lack of evidence. The Mishnah records debates about the status of Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes still ongoing in the second century AD.

Certainly, then, there was disagreement within Judaism over the exact list of canonical books in the days of Our Lord and the Apostles, and this was just one of many disputed religious questions which were expected to be resolved by the coming of the Messiah (cf. John 4:25).

The Perspective of Faith and the Witness of the New Testament

While the New Testament does not record Our Lord communicating a list of inspired books to the Apostles. Some indication of what was considered inspired may be seen in those books that are cited as Scripture by the Lord and his apostles. Many of the books of the Old Testament are quoted in the New, almost always according to the Septuagint translation. However, several protocanonical Old Testament books (like Esther and Lamentations) are never cited in the New; whereas some non-canonical books (like the *Book of Enoch*) are quoted. Therefore, New Testament quotation cannot be a criterion for canonicity, as is sometimes proposed by non-Catholics. If it were, *1 Enoch* would be in the Bible, but Esther would not.

While the New Testament does not provide a list of canonical books, it does make clear that Our Lord authorized the Apostles to make authoritative judgments about religious law. The most pointed example is to be found in Matthew 16:

> "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Leaving aside for the moment the significance of the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," let us focus on the concept of "binding" and "loosing." In first-century Palestinian Judaism, the terms "bind" and "loose" referred to authoritative decisions about religious law. Religious law was (and is) called *halakhah*, from the verb *halakh*, "to walk." *Halakhah* is then, the way one "walks," that is, how one behaves. To "bind" meant to prohibit a behavior, to "loose" meant to permit it. In practice, the Pharisaic scribes generally bound and loosed for the common people of Israel: Jesus refers to their exercise of religious authority (and even partially endorses it!) in Matthew 23:

> "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They *bind* heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger."

The point of Matthew 16:18-19 is, then, that Jesus is investing Peter—and later, the apostles with him (Matt 18:18)—with the authority to make binding decisions concerning religious law for the people of God. One such question of religious law was the correct list of inspired books, i.e. the canon.

The Development of the Old Testament Canon in the Early Catholic Church

In the first three centuries, the exact boundaries of the canon did not constitute a pressing theological issue. Of much greater concern were questions like the manner of inclusion of Gentiles into the Church (Acts 15), the relationship of the Law to salvation in Jesus Christ (Romans; Galatians), and maintaining the visible unity of the Church (see *1 Clement* and the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch).

The second and third centuries witnessed frequent persecutions of the Church that threatened her very survival. This probably explains why it is not until after the legalization of Christianity by Constantine in the early fourth century that we begin to have extant lists of the canon from various Church fathers and Councils (see chart). By the end of the fourth century, the Churches in communion with Rome settled on the canon recognized by the Catholic Church today, as can be seen from the Councils of Rome (382), Hippo (383), Carthage (397 & 419), and by St. Augustine.

Cyril of Jerusalem AD 350	Council of Laodicea AD 360	St. Athanasius AD 367	Council of Rome AD 382[1]	Council of Africa AD 383	St. Augustine AD 397
1. Genesis	1. Genesis	1. Genesis	1. Genesis	1. Genesis	1. Genesis
2. Exodus	2. Exodus	2. Exodus	2. Exodus	2. Exodus	2. Exodus
3. Leviticus	3. Leviticus	3. Leviticus	3. Leviticus	3. Leviticus	3. Leviticus
4. Numbers	4. Numbers	4. Numbers	4. Numbers	4. Numbers	4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy	5. Deuteronomy	5. Deuteronomy	5. Deuteronomy	5. Deuteronomy	5. Deuteronomy
6. Joshua	6. Joshua	6. Joshua	6. Joshua	6. Joshua	6. Joshua
7. Judges and Ruth	7. Judges and Ruth	7. Judges	7. Judges	7. Judges	7. Judges
8. 1-2 Sam. (one)	8. Esther	8. Ruth	8. Ruth	8. Ruth	8. Ruth
9. 1-2 Kings (one)	9. 1-2 Sam. (one)	9. 1-2 Sam. (one)	9. 1 Kings (=1 Sam)	9. 1 Kings (=1 Sam)	9. 1 Kings (=1 Sam)
10. 1-2 Chronicles	10. 1-2 Kings (one)	10. 1-2 Kings (one)	10. 2 Kings (=2 Sam)	10. 2 Kings (=2 Sam)	10. 2 Kings (=2 Sam)
11. Ezra-Nehemiah	11. 1-2 Chronicles	11. 1-2 Chronicles	11. 3 Kings (=1 Kings)	11. 3 Kings (=1 Kings)	11. 3 Kings (=1 Kings)
12. Esther	12. Ezra-Nehemiah	12. Ezra-Nehemiah	12. 4 Kings (=2 Kings)	12. 4 Kings (=2 Kings)	12. 4 Kings (=2 Kings)
13. Job	13. Psalms	13. Psalms	13. 1 Chronicles	13. 1 Chronicles	13. 1 Chronicles
14. Psalms	14. Proverbs	14. Proverbs	14. 2 Chronicles	14. 2 Chronicles	14. 2 Chronicles
15. Proverbs	15. Ecclesiastes	15. Ecclesiastes	15. Psalms	15. Job	15. Job
16. Ecclesiastes	16. Song of Songs	16. Song of Songs	16. Proverbs	16. Psalms	16. Tobias (Tobit)
17. Song of Songs	17. Job	17. Job	17. Song of Songs	17. Proverbs	17. Esther
18. The Twelve	18. The Twelve	18. The Twelve	18. Ecclesiastes	18. Ecclesiastes	18. Judith
19. Isaiah	19. Isaiah	19. Isaiah	19. Wisdom (of Solomon)	19. Song of Songs	19. 1 Maccabees
20. Jeremiah + Lam., Bar., Letter	20. Jeremiah + Lam., Bar., Letter	20. Jeremiah + Lam., Bar., Letter	20. Ecclesiasticus (=Sirach)	20. Wisdom of Solomon	20. 2 Maccabees
21. Ezekiel	21. Ezekiel	21. Ezekiel	21. Isaiah	21. Sirach	21. 1 Ezra (=Ezra)
22. Daniel	22. Daniel	22. Daniel	22. Jeremiah+Lam. (+ Bar.?)	22. The Twelve	22. 2 Ezra (=Nehemiah)
			23. Ezekiel	Hosea—Malachi	23. Psalms
			24. Daniel	34. Isaiah	24. Proverbs
			25. The Twelve (separated)	35. Jeremiah(+Lam&Bar?)	25. Song of Songs
			Hosea—Malachi	36. Daniel	26. Ecclesiastes
			37. Job	37. Ezekiel	27. Wisdom (of Solomon)
			38. Tobit	38. Tobit	28. Ecclesiasticus (=Sirach)
			39. 1 Ezra (=Ezra)	39. Judith	29. The Twelve (separated)
			40. 2 Ezra (=Nehemiah)	40. Esther	Hosea—Malachi …
			41. Esther	41. 1 Ezra	41. Isaiah
			42. Judith	42. 2 Ezra (=Nehemiah)	42. Jeremiah (+Lam.&Bar.?)
			43. 1 Maccabees	43. 1 Maccabees	43. Daniel
			44. 2 Maccabees	44. 2 Maccabees	44. Ezekiel

Canonical Lists of the Early Local Councils and Fathers

[1]Disputed by some, because the list is only found appended to a 5th-century document, the *Decree of Gelasius*

For the early councils and fathers, canonical texts were those authorized to be read publically in worship; non-canonical (apocryphal) texts were not approved for public proclamation:

> No psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments. (Council of Laodicea 364; Canon 59)
>
> Apart from the canonical Scriptures, nothing [is] to be read in church under the title of divine Scriptures. (Council of Hippo 383, Canon 36)

Thus, canonical vs. apocryphal was not only a theological but a *liturgical* distinction. The canon defines the books approved for the Church's worship; the Bible is the Church's liturgical book.

Further insight into the thought of the early Church on the issue of canon is provided by St. Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana.* Since St. Augustine holds such authority in Western Christendom, not only in the Catholic Church but also among Christians in the Lutheran and Calvinist traditions, it is well worth quoting his views on canon in full:

> 12. Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures, [the interpreter] must follow the judgment of the greater number of catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles. Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Among those, again, which are not received by all, he will prefer such as have the sanction of the greater number and those of greater authority, to such as are held by the smaller number and those of less authority. If, however, he shall find that some books are held by the greater number of churches, and others by the churches of greater authority (though this is not a very likely thing to happen), I think that in such a case the authority on the two sides is to be looked upon as equal.

> 13. Now the whole canon of Scripture on which we say this judgment is to be exercised, is contained in the following books:--Five books of Moses, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; one book of Joshua the son of Nun; one of Judges; one short book called Ruth, which seems rather to belong to the beginning of Kings; next, four books of Kings, and two of Chronicles -- these last not following one another, but running parallel, so to speak, and going over the same ground. The books now mentioned are history, which contains a connected narrative of the times, and follows the order of the events. There are other books which seem to follow no regular order, and are connected neither with the order of the preceding books nor with one another, such as Job, and Tobias, and Esther, and Judith, and the two books of Maccabees, and the two of Ezra, which last look more like a sequel to the continuous regular history which terminates with the books of Kings and Chronicles. Next are the Prophets, in which there is one book of the Psalms of David; and three books of Solomon, viz., Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. For two books, one called Wisdom and the other Ecclesiasticus, are ascribed to Solomon from a certain resemblance of style, but the most likely opinion is that they were written by Jesus the son of Sirach. Still they are to be reckoned among the prophetical books, since they have attained recognition as being authoritative. The remainder are the books which are strictly called the Prophets: twelve separate books of the [minor] prophets … then there are the four greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel. The authority of the Old Testament is contained within the limits of these forty-four books.

Augustine's comments are noteworthy for a number of different reasons. First, for the criteria of canonicity, he does not propose (1) the personal experience of the believer, (2) the opinions of scholars, (4) the beliefs of the Jews, (5) the quotation of a book by the New Testament, or (5) any abstract principle like "propheticity," "proclamation of Christ," etc. Rather, Augustine states clearly that the *judgment of the Church* is the criterion of canonicity. We should note: St. Augustine does not endorse the view that the Church *confers* inspired status on a book, much less that approval by the Church *makes* the book inspired. Rather, the Church *recognizes* or, to use his terms, *receives* books as sacred and inspired. The Scriptures do not require the approval of the Church to *become* inspired; they were inspired by God during their composition. However, the individual believer does require the guidance of the Church to know which books are inspired. The

Church has an *epistemological,* not *ontological* role with respect to Scripture; she does not *make* the Scriptures inspired, but she does *make known* which Scriptures are inspired.

Secondly, we see that St. Augustine gives the complete Catholic canon of Scripture, including the so-called "deuterocanonicals."[3] Some of the earlier Church Fathers and the Council of Laodicea (360) were influenced by Jewish views of canon and felt constrained to restrict the list of Old Testament books to twenty-two only—a pious Jewish tradition related to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Nonetheless, perusal of the table of Patristic use of the deuterocanonicals below shows that all of them were used, and frequently affirmed, as Scripture by various Church fathers. After AD 380, the Church threw off the artificial constraint of the twenty-two-book canon of the Old Testament, and simply affirmed as Scripture those books that had been employed as Scripture by the Church for centuries.

[3] Baruch and Lamentations are not mentioned explicitly, but were regarded as part of Jeremiah, as made explicit by Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and the Council of Laodicea

The Patristic Use and Affirmation of the Deuterocanonical Books							
	Baruch	Wisdom	Sirach	Tobit	Judith	1 Macc	2 Macc
Pope St. Clement of Rome (d. 96)					*		
St. Polycarp (d. 155)	*						
St. Irenaeus (d. 202)	!						
St. Clement of Alexandria (d. 215)	!	!	!	!	*		
Tertullian (d. 220)	!	!					
St. Hippolytus (d. 236)						*	
Pope Callixtus (d. 200s)				!			
Origen (d. 254)		!	!	!			!
St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)	!	!	!	!		!	*
St. Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 265)		*	!	*			
St. Methodius of Olympus (d. 311)	!	!	*				
Lactantius (d. 330)	*	*	*				
Aphraates			*				*
St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. 368)	!	!					!
St. Athanasius (d. 373)	!	!	!	*			
St. Basil the Great (d. 379)	*	*	!		*		*
St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386)	!	*	*				
St. Gregory the Theologian (d. 390)	*	*	*		!		*
St. Gregory of Nyssa	!	!					
St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397)	!	!	*	*	*	*	*
St. John Chrysostom (d. 407)	*	!	!		*	*	*
St. Jerome (d. 420)	!	!	!	*	!1		
St. Augustine (d. 430)	!	!	!	!	!	!	!

* = *uses* (quotes, cites, or alludes to) the book as though it were Scripture
! = *affirms explicitly* that the book is Scripture or the equivalent (e.g. prophet, divine, the Word of God, etc) when quoting it.
1. St. Jerome personally disputes Judith, but reports that the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea received it as canonical Scripture.

The canon of Scripture endorsed by the late fourth-century councils became the standard for churches in communion with Rome through the rest of antiquity and the middle ages. The question of canon next became pressing during the Ecumenical Council of Florence in the mid-fifteenth century (1400s), during attempts to heal the schism between the Western (Latin Catholic) and Eastern (Greek Orthodox) Churches. This Council, with the full participation of the Pope, the Ecumenical Patriarch, and the Emperor of Constantinople, arrived at a common statement of faith, including a common canon of Scripture, in 1441. The canon proposed was the same affirmed by the late fourth-century councils, and repeated afterward by the ecumenical Council of Trent (1546). It is important for ecumenical dialogue to be aware that the Roman Catholic canon was established by an ecumenical council that included ample Eastern representation about a century prior to the outbreak of the Reformation.

The Status of the Deuterocanonicals

The Old Testament canon of the Catholic Church includes seven books not found in the Jewish canon of Scripture or in the Protestant Old Testament: these are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees. For convenience, these seven books are referred to as the "deuterocanonicals," even though the term has misleading connotations. These seven books are subject to a large number of misconceptions that need to be dispelled:

1. *The deuterocanonicals do not, and did not, form a discrete, recognized collection within Scripture, or a genre division.* The deuterocanonicals are not a genre division like the Pentateuch or the Prophets. Instead, the deuterocanonicals fall under

different genre categories. Baruch is considered part of the prophets; Tobit, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees are narratives or histories; Wisdom and Sirach are wisdom books.

There is a widespread notion, especially among Protestant writers, that the deuterocanonicals constituted a discrete collection of books which were accepted or rejected as a group in antiquity. Thus, it is not hard to find theological authors who will claim that one or another of the Church Fathers rejected "the deuterocanonicals" as a group, while others accepted them.

In fact, the deutercanonicals differ from one another in their individual canonical histories, and the fathers and ancient councils treated them *book by book*, and not as a collection. For example, there is no evidence that Baruch was disputed by any father or council in antiquity: the entire book was considered, along with Lamentations, as part of the Book of Jeremiah. On the other hand, certain Church fathers, particularly St. Jerome, did express doubts about, or even deny, the canonicity of some or all of the other deuterocanonicals. Even then, however, there was frequently inconsistency, for St. Jerome can be found quoting Wisdom and Sirach as Scripture in his various writings, although in his prefaces to the Vulgate he relegates them to a non-canonical status. The situation is similar with St. Athanasius.

2. *The deuterocanonicals are not the same as the "apocrypha."* The term "apocrypha" is from Greek, meaning "hidden," and refers to books that might be studied privately but were not to be read in the public liturgy. Which books are considered aprocryphal varies from confession to confession. Jews and Protestants consider the deuterocanonicals as apocryphal. The Eastern Orthodox generally accept as canonical certain books considered aprocryphal by the Catholic Church, including *1 Esdras* and *3*

Maccabees, sometimes also *4 Maccabees* and the *Odes of Solomon*. The Ethiopic Orthodox accept *1 Enoch* and the *Book of Jubilees.* The category "apocrypha" is therefore broader than the "deuterocanonicals."

3. *The deuterocanonicals do not have a secondary level of inspiration.* The term "deuterocanonical" means literally "second canon." It is unfortunate, because it implies that these books are secondary to the other canonical books, and are perhaps less inspired or authoritative. This is not the faith of the Church. The deuterocanonicals are fully inspired and are no less a part of Scripture than any of the other Old Testament books.

4. *The deuterocanonicals were including in manuscripts of the Septuagint, but the Septuagint did not have set canon.* It is sometimes said that the deuterocanonicals were included in the "Greek canon" reflected in the Septuagint, but excluded from the "Hebrew canon" of Scripture. The statement is not quite accurate, however.

It is true that the Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestine tended to follow the Pharisees in holding to a smaller canon of Scripture, which eventually became the modern Jewish canon or "Hebrew Bible." It is also true that Greek-speaking Jews of the diaspora tended to accept a larger number of books as inspired, including most of those included in ancient manuscripts of the Septuagint, the ancient translation of the Bible into Greek. This larger body of books, translated into Greek, is roughly approximate to the Catholic canon of the Old Testament.

However, it must be kept in mind that there was no exact canon of the Septuagint, nor was there a set order of the biblical books in the Septuagint. The origin of the Septuagint will be discussed below; for now we will just point out that no ancient codex

of the Septuagint has exactly the same number of Old Testament books in exactly the same order.

5. *The deuterocanonicals were not added by the Catholic Church at Trent, in order to produce Scriptural support for "unbiblical" doctrines.* The falsehood of this assertion should be apparent already. As we have seen, the deuterocanonicals were used as Scripture by the fathers and endorsed by local councils in antiquity, and reaffirmed by the Ecumenical Council of Florence in 1441. All the Catholic deuterocanonicals are received also by the Eastern Orthodox Churches, which broke from Rome in 1054. Since the Eastern Orthodox do not recognize the authority of Trent, it cannot be Trent that added the books to the canon.

Longer Editions of Some Old Testament Books

In addition to the deuterocanonical books, the Catholic Church accepts as canonical longer editions of some biblical books than those accepted in the Jewish tradition (and this Protestantism). Catholic Daniel includes the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men (found within Daniel 3) as well as Susanna (Daniel 13) and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14). Apparently, the Book of Daniel circulated in antiquity in longer and shorter editions. The longer edition embraced by the Church was written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic. In fact, the Greek version read in the Churches in antiquity was actually translated by a Greek-speaking Jew, Theodotion.

Also, the Greek translation of Esther received by the Church is considerably longer than the Hebrew text that eventually became standard within the Jewish community.

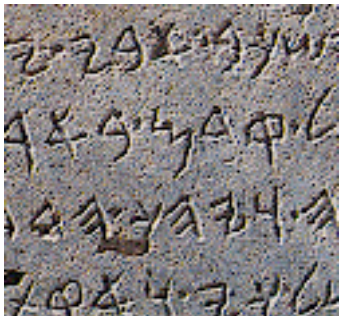
Summary of the Process of Canonization from the Perspective of Catholic Faith

The exact limits of the canon of Scripture was a disputed point in ancient Judaism, one of the many issues to be resolved by the Messiah. Jesus Christ taught the Apostles by word and example which books were to be considered Scripture, and entrusted them with the authority to "bind and loose", to make authoritative decisions about religious law. This authority was passed to the successors of the apostles, the bishops of the Church, who began to address the canon question explicitly in the second half of the fourth century, when circumstances were favorable to the clarification of Church doctrine. The decisions about canon concerned which books were suitable to be read in public worship. The fathers of the fourth-century councils discerned the canon on the basis of tradition, especially liturgical tradition. They did not innovate, but approved those books that had been used by the fathers as inspired Scripture for centuries. Since the canon of Scripture was discerned by the magisterium of the Church on the basis of liturgical tradition, it makes little sense to interpret Scripture apart from its relationship to the magisterium, the liturgy, and the Church's tradition.

II. The Text of Scripture

The Original Languages of the Old Testament

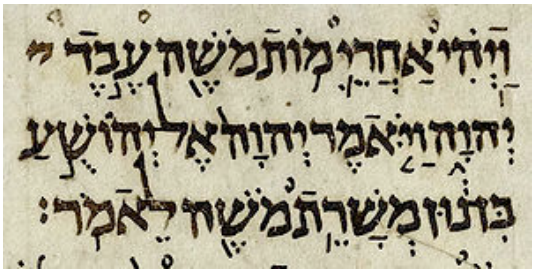
The original language of large majority of the Old Testament books is Hebrew. Hebrew is the ancestral language of the people of Israel. It is a *Semitic* language, that is, one of a family of Near Eastern languages that share certain features such as tri-literal word roots (most words are formed from a root consisting of



three consonants), the absence of true verbal tenses, and a paratactic syntax.[4]

In ancient times, Hebrew was (and continues to be) written from right to left without consonants, using a form of script now called *paleo-Hebrew*, an example of which is illustrated here, from a ninth-century BC inscription found in northern Israel.

A radical linguistic and literary shift occurred for the people of Israel when much of the population of Judah was deported to Babylon in 597 and 587 BC. The during the decades the Judeans spent in Babylon, they began to speak Aramaic, the international language of the day. Aramaic is the mother tongue of ancient Aram (modern Syria), and it is closely related to Hebrew. The two languages are almost mutually intelligible. Not only did the Jews begin to use Aramaic as their spoken language, they also adopted the Aramaic square script, which continues to be the font used for copying and printing the Hebrew Scriptures to this day.



Since ancient Hebrew was written without vowels, it was not possible to interpret the ancient texts of Scripture properly without learning the oral tradition of the community from those responsible for the preservation of the documents—usually the priests and scribes. There is some theological significance in this fact, inasmuch as it demonstrates the reciprocal, complementary relationship that has always existed between sacred Scripture and sacred tradition.

[4] That is, the logical relationships between words, phrases, and clauses are often simply implied by juxtaposition, rather than clearly indicated by a hierarchical syntactical structure, as in Greek.

The Hebrew language did change during the centuries that the books of the Bible were being composed, so not all biblical books are written in the same kind of Hebrew. The distinction between Classical or Standard Biblical Hebrew (CBH or SBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) is widely recognized by scholars. Classical Biblical Hebrew is a pre-exilic form of the language; Late Biblical Hebrew reflects the influence of Aramaic and other linguistic changes introduced during the trauma of the exile. A good contrast between the two forms of the language can be seen between the Classical Biblical Hebrew of the historical books Genesis–Kings (the "primary history") and the Late Biblical Hebrew of the Books of Chronicles, which employs the earlier books as a source.

Since, however, it may have been possible for ancient scribes to write documents in an older form of the Hebrew language (a procedure called "archaizing"), and conversely, it was possible systematically to rewrite an older document in a more contemporary form of the language, the use of linguistic data to assign the *composition date* of biblical documents is hotly contested among biblical scholars.

Besides Hebrew, two other languages are employed in the Old Testament: Aramaic and Greek. All of Tobit and portions of Daniel and Ezra were originally written in Aramaic. The Wisdom of Solomon and 2 Maccabees were originally written in Greek. All other books of the Old Testament, including 1 Maccabees, were first written in Hebrew.

The Oldest Manuscripts of the Old Testament

The original manuscripts (the *autographs*) written by the sacred authors themselves are no longer extant for any book of the Bible. The oldest partial copies of the text of any biblical book are to be found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (see below). However, the

oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew of the protocanonical books of the Old Testament is a *codex* (a book formed by leaves of paper stitched on one side; i.e. the form of book most familiar to us) called *Leningradensis*, held in the Imperial Russian Library in St. Petersburgh (formerly Leningrad). *Leningradensis* is a complete copy of the *Masoretic Text* written in Galilee around AD 1000.

The Masoretic Text

The *Masoretic Text* is the standard Hebrew form of the books of the Jewish Bible, the form used for chant and proclamation in traditional Jewish synagogues to this day. It takes its name from the *Masoretes*, a school of Jewish scribes who flourished between AD 700 to AD 1000. The Masoretes raised the reproduction of the Hebrew Scriptures to a high art. Among other innovations, they devised a system of markings (called "points") placed above and below the Hebrew consonants to indicate the vowel to be pronounced after the consonant. In this way, they were able for the first time to record in writing the Jewish oral tradition of the pronunciation of Scripture. The Masoretes also introduced various quality control measures for the reproduction of manuscripts: they tabulated the number of words and letters in each biblical book. Subsequently, every newly-written copy was carefully counted to verify its accuracy.

Leningradensis is almost universally regarded as the oldest and best copy of the *Masoretic Text*, the name given to the precise form the Hebrew developed by the Masoretes as their standard. When translating or studying the Old Testament today, scholars typically begin from the Hebrew of the Masoretic text, usually a printed (or increasingly, an electronic) edition of Leningradensis.

The Septuagint

When translating the Old Testament, scholars also consult the readings of the *Septuagint*, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament books.

According to a semi-legendary account in a document known as the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Septuagint translation was begun when the Hellenistic king of Alexandria in Egypt, Ptolemy II, brought Jewish scribes from Jerusalem to Alexandria in order to translate the sacred books of the Jews into Greek for the Library of Alexandria in the third century BC. According to the legend, seventy scholars were commissioned for this project: thus the name *Septuagint,* meaning "seventy," and the commonly used abbreviation "LXX," the Roman numeral for seventy.

Although the accounts of the translation of the Septuagint in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Philo, Josephus, and other ancient authors sound embellished, the historical kernel of the story seems plausible and fits known data: Ptolemy II commissioned a Greek translation of the Pentateuch for his library. The translation of the Pentateuch was the first and perhaps best, and dates to c. 250 BC. The remaining Old Testament books were translated progressively over the next two centuries. The Septuagint translation began to circulate in a collection that was broader than the Hebrew canon mentioned by Josephus (see above), and did not have a clear limit—in other words, the Septuagint had an *open canon,* including deuterocanonical works and some apocrypha.

The quality and style of translation exhibited in the LXX can vary quite widely from book to book. The rendering of Daniel in the LXX, for example, was so loose that the Church replaced it with a better translation executed by Theodotion, a Hellenistic Jew. Other books, such as Genesis, were much more literal in translation.

The LXX translation carried enormous prestige in the ancient world. Jewish scholars like the philosopher Philo and the historian Josephus regarded it as virtually inspired, a view shared by some Church Fathers. For the millions of Greek-speaking Jews living in the Roman Empire outside of Palestine, it was the only form of the Scriptures they used. The majority of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are taken from the LXX translation, since the Apostles and other New Testament authors typically wrote for a broad audience, rather than just the Jews of Palestine.

In the fourth century A.D., the Church, with the newly-acquired support of the Roman government, had the resources to produce *codices* (bound books, not scrolls) of the entire bible for use in major churches (e.g. Cathedrals). Our oldest more-or-less complete manuscripts of the entire Bible, consisting of the Septuagint plus the New Testament in Greek, come from this century. The three most important are named for the places they were found or now reside: *Vaticanus*, the best manuscript of the complete Greek Bible, Old and New Testaments, stored in the Vatican Libraries at least since the middle ages; *Alexandrinus*, an excellently preserved Greek Bible from Alexandria, now stored in the British Library, and *Sinaiticus*, another Septuagint + Greek New Testament found in the nineteenth century in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, and now also residing in the British Library.

The Septuagint remains the official version of the Old Testament in use by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Revisions of the Septuagint

Before the rise of Christianity, Jewish authors like Philo and Josephus had high praise and reverence for the Septuagint translation. As Christianity grew and became the leading religion of the Roman Empire, however, a reaction set in, especially among Jews in Palestine. Increasingly, Jews rejected the Septuagint, calling it inaccurate and misleading. At least three Greek-speaking Jewish scholars published *recensions* (revised versions) of the Septuagint which were closer to the Hebrew in use in Palestine: Aquila (c. AD 130), Theodotion (c. AD 150?), and Symmachus (c. AD 170).

The Latin Vulgate

Also of some value to Bible scholars and translators is the *Vulgate*, the Latin translation of the Catholic Bible executed (largely) by St. Jerome in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. St. Jerome translated most of the biblical books of the Old Testament directly from the best Hebrew copies he was able to procure. However, the Hebrew available to St. Jerome tended, by and large, closely to resemble the Masoretic Text we now have. For that reason, when the Masoretic Text is itself unclear or appears disturbed, usually St. Jerome's Vulgate is not helpful in resolving the issues.

Other Ancient Versions and the Cairo Geniza

Scholars also consult other ancient *versions* (that is, translations) of the Old Testament, such as the Syriac translation (known as the Peshitta), the Coptic (Egyptian), and Ethiopic versions. Fragments of biblical books dating to the medieval period were also found in the *genizah* (a store room for worn biblical scolls) of the oldest synagogue in Cairo in the nineteenth century. Many of these "Cario genizah" texts have been published and are of some interest to biblical scholars.

Important Ancient Texts of the Old Testament			
Name	Language	Date Translated	Date of oldest surviving complete copies
Masoretic Text (MT)	Hebrew	Not a translation; standardized AD 700-1000	11th cent. AD (c. 1000)
Septuagint (LXX)	Greek	250–100 BC	4th cent. AD (late 300s)
Vulgate	Latin	AD 382–405	8th cent. AD (mid-700s)
Peshitta	Syriac	AD 100's	6th-7th cent. AD (500s–600s)

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Of far greater interest to textual scholars are the Dead Sea Scrolls, the remains of an Essene library found in caves at the north-west end of the Dead Sea in the late 1940s at a cite called Qumran. The scrolls provide our oldest copies of any portion of Scripture, including texts that date to the second century (100s) BC. All of the protocanonical books of the Old Testament are represented at Qumran except for Esther and Nehemiah; however, apocryphal books like *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* are better represented than most biblical books, and just as many copies of the deuterocanonical Tobit (six) were discovered as of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Job. For this reason, as mentioned above, most scholars believe the Essene canon was significantly different than that of the Pharisees and modern Rabbinic Judaism.

Fragmentary remains of about a thousand scrolls were found at Qumran, of which about a quarter (~250) were copies of biblical books, almost all in Hebrew.

About a third of the Hebrew biblical texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls closely follow the textual form that we now know as the Masoretic. The other biblical texts displayed differences in wording, including some that agreed closely with the Septuagint (about 5% of the texts; see below on Septuagint), others that agreed with the form of the Pentateuch used by the Samaritans (also 5%), and a large number that had unique *readings* (differences of wording) in many biblical passages.

The Dead Sea Scrolls changed how scholars viewed the history of the text of the Old Testament. It became clear that in antiquity, around the time of Jesus, the text of the Old Testament varied from Hebrew manuscript to Hebrew manuscript. Over time, the Jewish rabbinical tradition, culminating in the work of the Masoretes, settled on a standard form of the text—an ancient and generally good form of the text, to be sure, but only one of those that circulated in antiquity.

The discovery among the scrolls of Hebrew biblical texts that agreed closely with the Septuagint Greek also changed the way scholars viewed that translation. Certain books of the Old Testament, notably Jeremiah and 1 Samuel, had long been known to have some significant differences from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. Many suspected the Septuagint translators as being responsible for these differences. The Scrolls clarified, however, that the Septuagint translators had, for the most part, translated the Hebrew in front of them straightforwardly. The more significant differences between portions of the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text were due to differences in different Hebrew editions of the biblical books, not the activity of the translators.

While the Dead Sea Scrolls did change the way scholars understand the development of the Hebrew text of the Bible, it has not fundamentally changed the translations in use among modern believers, whether Christian or Jewish. The variant readings found in the Scrolls were, and are, of great interest to biblical scholars who specialize in *textual criticism* (the study of the exact wording of Scripture), but other theologians and lay people find them of less interest. The vast majority of variations in wording are trivial (a few missing or additional words; the substitution of synonyms; changes in declension or conjugation), and of those that are significant, it is usually easy

to identify which manuscript represents the more original reading, and which contains an error or intentional change.

The Text of the Bible and Modern Catholic Translation

Prior to the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Pius XII, 1943), Catholic translations of the Bible into English were based on the text of the Latin Vulgate. Pius XII clarified that Trent's declaration of the Vulgate as the "authentic" translation was meant to establish the Vulgate as the official *Latin* translation (among many Latin translations in circulation) and to provide a common biblical text for use in public theological discussion and education. The decree of Trent was not meant to enshrine the Vulgate as more authoritative than the original Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic texts composed by the sacred authors.

Modern English translations of the Catholic Old Testament have been based on the best original language texts available, generally the Masoretic Text for the protocanonicals, supplemented by consultation with the ancient versions and the Scrolls. The Vulgate remains the official version of the Latin rite, which represents, in certain places, an authoritative interpretive tradition of the Church which should be given weighty consideration in the process of translation.

III. Critical Methods of Biblical Study

In Biblical scholarship, the term "criticism" is a neutral term simply meaning "analysis," although it is true that Biblical criticism has often been pursued in a spirit hostile to faith. In what follows we describe the origin and practice of the various forms of biblical criticism, beginning with the uncontroversial "lower" or textual criticism, and proceeding

through the stages of what used to be called "higher" criticism, but is now usually called the "historical-critical method."

"Lower" or Textual Criticism

Textual criticism is the careful comparison and analysis of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible in order to reconstruct, so far as possible, the original wording of the biblical document under consideration.

Due to human error, no two ancient manuscripts (hand-written copies) of the Bible are *exactly* alike. Textual criticism attempts, by careful comparison of texts, to correct obvious errors (misspellings or wrong words), to remove additions to the text (whether unintentional or theologically motivated), and to restore *lacunae* (missing words, phrases, verses).

Textual criticism was undertaken already by the Church Fathers. Origen was the greatest text critic of the Patristic era. He produced a celebrated work called the *Hexapla,* in which he arranged, in six columns, the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, the recension (=revision of the Septuagint) by Aquila, the recension of Symmachus, Origen's own recension, and the recension of Theodotion. The Hexapla was an enormous work, said to comprise 50 volumes, and was kept in Caesarea until being lost in the Muslim invasions.

The economic and political duress of the Middle Ages prevented much progress in the area of textual criticism, but the revival of classical learning in the Renaissance and Reformation period led to renewed efforts to produce accurate editions of Scripture in the original languages. Erasmus produced a critical text of the New Testament. Cardinal Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros, famous for his work in renewing the Church in Spain,

sponsored one of the finest achievements of textual criticism of the sixteenth century: the Complutensian Polyglot, a critical edition of the Bible in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. The Old Testament was published in 1517, with the Masoretic Text, Vulgate, and Septuagint in three parallel columns.

In modern times, the textual criticism of the Old Testament has mostly involved make slight adjustments to the Masoretic text based on the ancient versions and, since 1950, the Dead Sea Scrolls. Rudolf Kittel (1853-1929), a German Old Testament scholar, was probably the most influential Old Testament textual critic in modern times. His critical edition of the Masoretic Text developed ultimately into the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the standard printed edition of the Hebrew Bible published by the United Bible Societies in Stuttgart, Germany, and used as an international standard by bible scholars and translators worldwide.

The Rise of "Higher" or Historical-Critical Interpretation

The basic patristic approach to Scripture remained functional into the period of the Reformation. The Protestant Reformers tended not to elaborate on hermeneutical methodology, but accepted the paradigm that a virtuous life, sound philosophy, and liberal education, (especially grammar, logic, and rhetoric) were necessary and sufficient to interpret the Scriptures. The Reformers, however, did begin to part ways with the Catholic tradition over the use of typology, for various reasons, including the following: (1) some commentators had overused typology and argued for fanciful typological associations, which discredited the method, (2) typological interpretations were often used to support "Roman" doctrines the Reformers opposed, (3) lacking a magisterium, the Reformers were uncomfortable with the recognition of multiple senses in Scripture,

and sought for a interpretive methodology that would consistently yield the same, single meaning each time it was applied to a given text, regardless of who applied it.

Increasingly, then, the Reformers began to move away from the spiritual sense of Scripture and emphasize the literal sense and the literary tools need to obtain that sense: a command of the original languages and literatures, and—increasingly—historical study.

The Reformers' increased emphasis on the grammatical and historical aspects of the text, combined with new movements in philosophy (e.g. Spinoza and Descartes) and a general loss of faith in the institutional Church due to the religious wars ravaging Europe, contributed to the development of the "historical-critical" method, a secular approach to Scripture that became increasingly influential during the Enlightenment, and dominated the academic study of Scripture from the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth.

Source Criticism

"Higher" or "Historical" criticism proper began in earnest in the mid-18th century with the rise of "source criticism," the effort to distinguish the sources used by the biblical author. Literary clues—such as the use of distinct terminology or names, and the presence of apparent "doublets" or recurrences of a similar story—were used to isolate the different sources of a biblical book (e.g. Genesis).

Influenced by the work of Baruch Spinoza, some of the first practitioners of source criticism were the French Catholics Richard Simon (1638-1712), an Oratorian priest, and Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a lay physician. Simon published a work, *Critical History of the Old Testament* (Histoire critique du Vieux Testament) in 1678, arguing that Moses had only written the legal portions of the Pentateuch, and later chroniclers had

added the narratives piecemeal, producing the apparent doublets and repetitions in parts of Genesis and Exodus. His arguments were not well-received by orthodox Catholics or Protestants at the time. A generation later, Jean Astruc attempted (ironically) to defend the intelligibility of the Pentateuch against rationalist critics by separating out different documents from which it was supposed to have been compiled. Based on different names used for God (either YHWH, "LORD," or Elohim, "God"), Astruc separated apparent doublets (repeated stories), repetitions, and inconsistencies into four distinct documents arranged in parallel columns. Astruc argued that Moses had composed the Pentateuch in this way, and a later editor had combined the documents to produce the supposed inconsistencies noted by Hobbes, Spinoza, and other skeptics and rationalists.

While Simon and Astruc did not question substantial Mosaic authorship, as source criticism developed, any substantial contribution of the historical Moses to the Pentateuch was eventually eliminated. A succession of German scholars continued to advance and develop Astruc's source analysis, including J.G. Eichhorn (1753–1827), Wilhelm de Wette (1780–1849), Fiedrick Bleek (1793–1859), Hermann Hupfeld (1796–1866), Karl Heinrich Graf (1815–1869), and ultimately Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918).

Scholar	Date of Publication of Seminal Work	Contribution
Jean Astruc	1753	Suggested two sources in Genesis distinguishable by the divine names YHWH or Elohim
Johann Gottfried Eichhorn	1780	Applied Astruc's views to the entire Pentateuch, abandoned Mosaic authorship completely
Wilhelm de Wette	1805	Identified Deuteronomy as a separate source; nothing dates earlier than David
Friedrich Bleek	1822	Extended the source documents to the Book of Joshua
Hermann Hupfeld	1853	Split the Elohist (E) into two sources (E^1 and E^2)
Karl Heinrich Graf	1866	Tried to prove that E^1 was the last of the sources.
Julius Wellhausen	1877-78	Identified E^1 as the Priestly Source (P), and arranged the sources chronologically JEDP

Source criticism is generally regarded as reaching a high point in the late 1800s, when Julius Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch—the division of the Books of Moses into four documents, the Jahwist (YAH-wist), Elohist, Deuteronomist, and Priestly source, composed in that relative order—found a consensus among Old Testament scholars at the major universities of Europe, and dissenting voices were suppressed or ignored. Although resisted by the Church's magisterium, the Documentary Hypothesis was regnant in Protestant and secular universities, and finally also in Catholic ones, for about a hundred years, from the time of Wellhausen until the 1980s.

The classic Documentary Hypothesis, as advanced by Wellhausen, held that the the Pentateuch was composed of four sources. The Yahwist source—abreviated "J" for the German "Jahwe"—was composed by a Judean in the c. 850 BC, uses the name

YHWH for God almost exclusively, and included simple narratives of the patriarchs in which God has human, personal qualities. A second document was composed by the Elohist ("E") about a century later. Written by a northern Israelite, the E source retells many of the stories of J in a more distant, formal style. Around 650 BC, the Deuteronomist ("D") composed the bulk of the Book of Deuteronomy to provide the basis for a religious reform under King Josiah of Judah (c. 650–610 BC), which was fused by himself or a later editor to the end of the combined JE narrative during the period of the exile (587–537 BC). Finally, sometime in the fifth century (400s) BC, the priests of post-exilic Judah composed a large body of ritual and moral law, the bulk of the books of Leviticus and Numbers, and the end of Exodus. This "priestly source" (P) material, according to the theory, was placed in the center and surrounded with older narratives by some unknown editor or *redactor* (R) of the fifth or fourth century. This hypothesis has been so influential in the history of Old Testament studies that a separate excursus will be devoted to it later in this text.

Form Criticism

At the end of the nineteenth century, Wellhausen's work on source criticism seemed so definitive that scholars began to look for new avenues of biblical analysis. Wellhausen's younger contemporary Herman Gunkel (1862–1932) is associated with the development of "form criticism" of the Old Testament. "Form criticism" attempts to identify and label the "form" or genre of the individual literary units (called "pericopes", *per-IH-koh-peez*) of the Old Testament text, and then assign the unit a historical-cultural "life-setting" (German *Sitz-im-Leben*) that may have provided its origin. Gunkel assumed that different literary genres were clearly identifiable with certain historical eras

and social contexts: the royal court, the temple, the tribal campfire, etc. Thus, identifying the genre was the key to discovering the time and place of a pericope's origin.

Tradition Criticism

Gunkel's work was further developed by two German Old Testament scholars who dominated the field in the mid-twentieth century, Gerhard Von Rad (1901-1971) and Martin Noth (1902–1968). Moving beyond form criticism, these scholars advanced a methodology that came to be known as "tradition criticism," the study of the development of the presumed originally oral "forms" of the pericopes over time, and especially their transition to written form and inclusion into the larger biblical narrative. This method of investigation de-emphasized the four linear documents that were supposed to run through the length of the Pentateuch, in favor of the development of individual narratives or blocks of narrative.

Redaction Criticism

For his part, Noth is also associated with the development of "redaction criticism" of the Old Testament. The word "redaction" comes from *Redaktor*, the German word for "editor." "Redaction criticism" is the study of the editorial process that combined the individual text units into the "final form" of the narrative now found in the Biblical text. Although basic forms of redaction criticism were practiced by Wellhausen and other older scholars, Noth became renown for his redaction-critical study of the historical books of the Old Testament Joshua through Kings, which Noth argued was *redacted* or edited together by a single scribe in the 7th or 6th century BC, in order to emphasize the need for the descendants of Israel to remain faithful to the Mosaic covenant recorded in

Deuteronomy. Since the publication of Noth's work in the 1940s, scholars have take to calling the historical books Joshua through Kings "the Deuteronomistic history."

The Composite "Historical Critical Method"

Together, source-, form-, tradition-, and redaction-criticism are usually considered steps of "historical criticism," or the "historical-critical method," understood as a unified process that begins with the sources and ends with the final editing, in order to present a complete history of the composition of the text. Thus, the sense of the word "historical" needs to be clarified: "historical-critical method" in biblical studies is not the same as the "historical method" that might be used by an ancient historian. The "history" that the historical-critical method aims to reconstruct is not history *per se*, but the history of the composition of the text.

Evaluating the Historical-Critical Method

Beginning in the last quarter of the twentieth century, scholars began to find fault with many aspects of the historical-critical method. Some pointed out that it was almost entirely concerned with the process of the composition of the text, and not with discovering the *meaning* of the text as we have it. This critique of historical-criticism led to the exploration of "synchronic" forms of biblical analysis (see below). Other scholars pointed out that the historical and literary assumptions made by many of the source critics were faulty, products of their own time and culture, and/or inconsistently and tendentiously applied. Almost all the most influential contributors to the development of the historical-critical method were German liberal Protestants. Many Jewish scholars have felt certain that the biases of liberal Protestantism have skewed some of the major conclusions of the method, especially the dating and historicity of the Priestly source. On

the other hand, some American and European scholars feel that even Wellhausen's work was not radical enough. Thus, contemporary source criticism of the Old Testament, particularly the Pentateuch, is in a state of vigorous controversy between camps with widely differing views of the existence and dating of the different hypothetical sources.

Form- and tradition-criticism have also been the subjects of scholarly controversy. Scholars have called into question the ideas that the life-setting (*Sitz-im-Leben*) and historicity of a pericope can be reliably identified simply by its genre, or that the development of oral forms can be reconstructed hundreds or thousands of years later from an existing written text. Form- and tradition-criticism have been abandoned by many, and those who still practice them do so more cautiously than in previous generations.

Redaction criticism—the study of the final editing process—has probably weathered the contemporary upheaval in biblical studies the best, but by its nature it is similar to the synchronic methods (see below) that have now become more widespread in their application.

The Contemporary Move to Synchronic Methodologies

While traditional historical-critical forms of analysis continue to be used in Old Testament studies, many scholars have turned their attention elsewhere, to kinds of biblical analysis concerned with the biblical text as we have it. These methods, which analyze the meaning of the "final stage" of the biblical text, are usually called "synchronic" to distinguish them from the traditional historical-critical "diachronic" forms of analysis, which study the composition of the text as it developed through time.

We will mention three of the most important methodologies for our purposes: *rhetorical*, *narrative*, and *canonical* criticism.

Rhetorical criticism is a study of the *rhetorical* features of the text: how the author uses words to communicate meaning and persuade his audience or readership. Rhetorical criticism is not always distinguishable from a general literary criticism of the Bible, that is, analyzing the biblical text in much the same way a literary critic would analyze a classic work like Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* or Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* The brilliant Italian-Jewish rabbi and polymath Umberto Cassuto (1883-1951) was an early rhetorical critic who argued already in the first half of the twentieth century that the literary features used by source critics to delineate separate sources (doublets, repetitions, variations in names, esp. divine names) had *literary* or *rhetorical* explanations that could be elucidated by reference to other classic world literarture, from the Homeric epics to Medieval ballads to Dante's *Divine Comedy.* Other Jewish scholars pursued similar lines of thought (H.C. Brichto, Meir Sternberg), and the influential American Old Testament scholar James Muilenburg is credited with starting a rhetorical-critical movement within English-speaking biblical scholarship in the late 1960s.

Narrative criticism may be considered a subdisicipline of rhetorical or literary criticism that examines in particular the narrative features of the text: plot, theme, characterization, character dynamics, climax, denouement, etc. A seminal work in this area was Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981). Although Alter did not contest the work of source criticism, his examination of the Pentateuch as a story line has caused some traditional source divisions to recede from view.

Canonical criticism is a movement within biblical scholarship associated especially with the American scholar Brevard Childs (1923-2007) and the German Rolf Rendtorff (1925–), the student and successor of Gerhad von Rad. Independently of one another in the 1970s, Childs and Rendtorff began to call for a return to scholarly focus on the meaning of the final, received form of the biblical text. This kind of criticism is "canonical" in two senses: first, the object of study is the *canonical form* of the text, not some putative source from an earlier stage of the text. Thus, the canonical critic studies Leviticus, not "P." Secondly, this kind of criticism studies the *canonical context* of the biblical passage or book, that is, in its place within the entire body of biblical literature. The canonical critic asks the question, "What does Leviticus mean, now that it is viewed as the third book in the canon, an authoritative, inspired collection of books that spans Genesis through Revelation?" Thus, canonical criticism attends to the ways in which biblical books interact with one another, and how the placement of a book within the collection of biblical books shapes how it is perceived and understood.

The Current State of Biblical Scholarship and Catholic Faith

The discipline of biblical studies is currently in a state of flux, with a wide variety of different camps or schools of thought attempting to develop the discipline in different and often contradictory directions simultaneously. In the midst of this tumult, it is helpful to remember a comment of Benedict XVI upon his accession to the *cathedra* of Peter in St. John Lateran: "When Scripture is disjoined from the living voice of the Church, it falls prey to the disputes of experts."

While the academic study of the Bible can be useful and enlightening, ultimately the Bible is not the book of the academy, it is the book of the Church. The definitive

judgment of the truth of biblical interpretations does not belong to a consensus of scholars, most of whom do not share the Church's faith, but to the magisterium. Furthermore, the life of the Church demands that the Scriptures be interpreted every day in the liturgy, for the nourishment of the lives of the faithful. The Church cannot suspend her proclamation of God's Word until scholars resolve their disputes and inform the Church of what the Scriptures mean. In fact, the meaning of Scriptures is already inscribed in the heart of the Church and incarnated in her life: "Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture" (CCC §113).

The Church does not forbid her children from the use of any of the modern methods of biblical analysis, provided that they are not applied in conjunction with *a priori* commitments that are contrary to the Church's faith, such as an assumption that God cannot and does not intervene supernaturally in history, or that true revelation is not possible:

> The secularized hermeneutic of sacred Scripture is the product of reason's attempt structurally to exclude any possibility that God might enter into our lives and speak to us in human words …. In applying methods of historical analysis, no criteria should be adopted which would rule out in advance God's self-disclosure in human history… Approaches to the sacred text that prescind from faith might suggest interesting elements on the level of textual structure or form, but would inevitably prove merely preliminary and structurally incomplete efforts. (*Verbum Domini* 36, 44)

Honesty demands the acknowledgment that, in fact, such presuppositions have typically guided the development and conclusions of traditional historical-critical research, which was often consciously developed as a naturalistic alternative to the Church's hermeneutic.

To engage the contemporary culture, the Church cannot ignore any mode of biblical scholarship, and requires scholars who are familiar with, or even have mastered, the various modern methodologies. In fact, the contemporary state of biblical studies has become so specialized, and the secondary literature so immense, that professional biblical scholars typically find they must devote their careers to the development of only one critical method. However, the Church's interpretation cannot be based solely on one method, or even a confluence of them. The vigorous debate within Pentateuchal studies, for example, over the number, dating, and nature of the different putative sources demonstrates the speculative nature of historical-critical methodology. Academic speculation can never be the foundation of faith, and the Church's interpretation of her Lord's Word cannot be made dependent on certain theories of the pre-history of the text that may be overturned at any time by an archeological discovery or a paradigm shift within the academy.

For this reason, the contemporary synchronic methods have a certain attraction for ecclesial interpretation. The return of scholarly interest to the text as we have it, rather than the putative history of composition, is theologically useful, because it is only the canonical, received form of the text that the Church holds to be inspired, inerrant, and authoritative for faith and morals. In other words, it is Genesis, not the putative "J" source, that the Church proclaims as the Word of God. Furthermore, the text as we have it is an objective fact, not a theoretical construct; and it displays a compelling unity and

coherence, even while showing signs of development. Modern methods of interpretation that start from the objective reality of the canonical form of the text and presume its unity and coherence are uniquely suitable for the Church's exegesis, and in fact have an affinity with the interpretive methods of the Fathers, many of whom were trained in ancient rhetoric and recognized in the biblical text the literary features common to all the classics of world literature.