



All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

(2 Tm 3)

What am I suppose to know about the Holy Scriptures?

The Word "Bible"

The word "Bible" means "the book." In both the Latin and Greek languages the term "Biblia" is a plural noun and signifies "The Books." Originally, the Bible was not one book but a collection of books - in fact, a whole library. It was only in about the



fourth century that the seventy two books of the Bible were combined to form the "volume." Eventually, the plural "Biblia" became a singular noun, and in modern languages signifies "the book." The passing of the word "Biblia" from the plural into the singular was no doubt occasioned by an understanding of the real character of the Bible: While the human authors were many, the Divine Author is but one. The Bible is called "The Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16) and "Holy Scriptures" (Romans 1:2).

The Word "Testament"

The titles "Old" and "New Testament" were used by St. Paul (2 Corinthians, 2:14). The term "testament," as applied to the two parts of the Bible, means: a covenant, agreement, pact.

In the language of the Bible it denotes the agreement or pact between God and man: Man agreed to do certain things and God, in return, promised certain blessings. The Old Testament contains a record of the pact between God and Abraham and between God and Moses. The New Testament is an account of the pact between God and His creatures. Both the old and the new covenants were sealed by blood: The pact between God and Abraham was sealed by the circumcision (Genesis 17); the pact



between God and the Jewish people, by the sprinkling of the people with the blood of animal victims (Exodus 24:7, 8); the pact between God and men, by Christ's own blood (Matthew 26:28; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Besides denoting the Jewish and

Christian religions, the terms "Old" and "New" Testaments also designate the sacred books of each.

Original Language Of The Bible

Two books of the Old Testament - Wisdom and II Machabees - were written in Greek. The rest of the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. The New Testament was written in Greek, with the exception of St. Matthew's Gospel which - according to the unanimous testimony of Christian antiquity - was written in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Divisions of the Bible

The Old Testament books are grouped in the following manner:

1) **Historical books**, which are arranged not in the order in which they were written but according to the order of events in time which they narrate (Genesis to Esther);

2) **Didactic or sapiential or moral books**, which are so called because they instruct us especially about heavenly wisdom and principles of morality (Job to Ecclesiasticus);

3) **The prophetic books**, which contain God's message to men, and predictions concerning the future (Isaias to Malachias);

4) A historical appendix (the Books of the Machabees).

The New Testament like the Old Testament has also a threefold division:

1) **Historical books** (the Gospels and the Acts);

2) **Didactic writings** (the fourteen Pauline Epistles and the seven Catholic Epistles);

3) **A prophetic book** (the Apocalypse).

The various divisions of the Biblical books are of rather recent origin. The Jews divided their sacred books into sections. The chapter division, as found in the Bible today, dates from the thirteenth century and is the work of Stephen Langton, professor at the University of Paris and later Archbishop of Canterbury. The present verse division was first introduced by the Dominican, Santes Pagnino (1528), and his system is still in use in most of the books of the Old Testament. The modern verse division in the New Testament is the work of Robert Stephen, a Paris printer of the sixteenth century. The chapter and divisions are of great value for purposes of reference but frequently break up the sequence of thought.

Versions of the Bible

Versions of the Bible are translations of the Bible into other languages. The following are the most important versions or translations of the Bible.

1. **Septuagint.** The oldest Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament is known as the Septuagint, and was made between 300 and 130 B.C. It derives its name from the seventy or seventy two translators to whom it is attributed. According to a legend, Ptolemy II (284-247 B.C.) wished to have a copy of the Law of Moses in his famous library in Alexandria. At his request the high priest sent seventy two scholars (six from each of the twelve tribes) from Jerusalem to Alexandria to translate the Law into Greek.

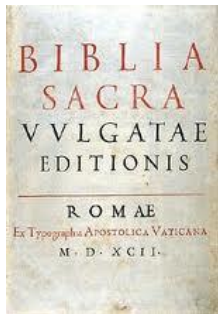
Γ Ε Ν Ε Σ Ι Σ .

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. Ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἄρατος καὶ δευασκεῖατος, καὶ σκότος ἐπὶ τῆν ἕβυσσον· καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐτεφεύροτο ἐπὶ τῷ ὕδατι. Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, γενήθητω φῶς· καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. Καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς, ὅτι καλόν· καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ μέσων τοῦ φωτός, καὶ ἀπὸ μέσων τοῦ σκότους. Καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν, καὶ τὸ σκότος ἐκάλεσε νύκτα. Καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα, καὶ ἐγένετο πρωὶ, ἡμέρα μία.

Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, γενήθητω στερέωμα ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ ὕδατος· καὶ ἔστω διαχωρισμὸν ἀπὸ μέσων ὕδατος καὶ ὕδατος· καὶ ἐγένετο οὐρανός. Καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στερέωμα· καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ μέσων τοῦ ὕδατος, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ οὐρανοῦ τοῦ στερεώματος, καὶ ἀπὸ μέσων τοῦ ὕδατος, τοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ οὐρανοῦ τοῦ στερεώματος. Καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ στερέωμα οὐρανόν· καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός, ἐπιγαλήνην· καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα, καὶ ἐγένετο πρωὶ, ἡμέρα δευτέρα.

The Septuagint contains all the forty-five books of the Old Testament. It was used by the Apostles and early Christians and helped greatly in the spread of revealed truths among the Greek pagans. Many Jewish and pagan converts obtained their first knowledge of the Bible through the Septuagint.

2. **Old Latin.** Since the Christians of Rome and of the Roman Empire needed a Latin Bible for the Liturgy and for private reading, it is probable that as early as the first century the Greek Bible - both the Old and New Testaments - began to be translated into Latin. The Latin Bible which was used in Western Europe prior to the acceptance of St. Jerome's text is commonly known as the "Old Latin."



3. **Vulgate.** The Latin "Vulgate" ("accepted" or "commonly used") text is the work of St. Jerome (383-405). The New Testament is St. Jerome's revision of the Old Latin text made with the help of ancient Greek manuscripts. Most of the books of the Old Testament are a direct translation of the original Hebrew, while the rest are the Old Latin text. The Council of Trent made the Vulgate the official text of the Catholic Church, and our present edition was brought out by Clement VIII in 1592.

4. The **Rheims-Douay Bible.** The most widely used English Catholic translation (from the Latin Vulgate) of the Bible is the Rheims-Douay or Douay Version. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth many English bishops, priests and laymen were obliged to seek refuge in France and other European countries. In 1568 a number of illustrious Oxford scholars opened an English College at Douay in France, in order to supply priests for the English missions. In 1578 the College was transferred to Rheims and later back again to Douay. Among the founders of this College were William Allen, principal of St. Mary's Hall at Oxford and later Cardinal; Gregory Martin, fellow of

St. John's College of Oxford; Richard Bristow, fellow of Exeter College of Oxford, and others.

The English translation of the Bible was made by Gregory Martin and the work was revised by Allen and Bristow. The New Testament was published at Rheims in 1582, and the Old Testament at Douay in 1609-1610. The language of the text was modernized by Bishop Challoner (1749-1752).

5. The *Westminster Version* of the Sacred Scriptures - of which Fathers Lattey and Keating of the Society of Jesus are general editors - was published in England. It is a new critical Catholic translation of the New Testament made directly from the Greek. It is a private and not an official version of the Bible.

6. The *Confraternity of Christian Doctrine* Edition of New Testament. This is not a translation but a revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version undertaken by a group of Catholic scholars under the patronage of the episcopal committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. It aims to bring the language of Challoner's version into conformity with modern English and to render accurately the divine message in the language of our own day.

7. **Protestant** Versions. a). The **King James** or Authorized Version (AV) was published in 1611 in the reign of King James I. The Authorized Version is not a new translation but a revision of an English Bible known as the Bishop's Bible and published in 1568. The translation is often colored by anti-Catholic prejudice which in certain instances leads to outright falsifications of the text. The purity of its English, however, has made it the Bible of English Protestantism. b). The **Revised Version** (RV) (1881-1885) is a modern critical revision undertaken - at the instance of the British Parliament - by a group of English and American Protestant scholars. The committee departed in at least thirty-six thousand instances from the text of 1611. c). In 1901 the American group of the same committee brought out its own text of the Revised Version and this is known as the **American Standard** Version. (SV).

Try to apply to your own life the following statements of the Fathers of the Church:

Saint Jerome: *"To be ignorant of the Scriptures, is to be ignorant of Christ."*

Saint Augustine: *"Letters have reached us from that city apart from which we are wandering; these letters are the Scriptures which exhort us to live well."*

"He who receives negligently the Word of God is not less guilty than he who, through his own fault, would permit the Sacred Host to fall on the ground."

The Imitation: *"I perceive two things to be particularly necessary for me in this life, without which it would be insupportable to me. Whilst I am detained in the prison of this body, I acknowledge myself to stand in need of two things, namely, food and light. Unto me, then, thus weak and helpless, Thou hast given Thy Sacred Body for the refreshment both of my soul and body, and Thy Word Thou hast set as a lamp to my feet."*

"The more we read the Gospel, the stronger our faith becomes" (Pius X).

"Our one desire for all the Church's children is that, being saturated with the Bible, they may arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Benedict XV).