

The Holy Scriptures: Nourishment of the Faithful, Part One

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The name of the holy scriptures is derived from the Greek word “Biblia,” which literally means “books.” This term passed into most languages, and it was called the “Bible” in languages of European origin.

The faithful regard the holy scriptures as God’s personal message to them, devoting themselves to reading them daily, and meditating on their verses and their impact on their lives. Thus, the holy scriptures contribute to their growth in their life in Christ, refining them morally and spiritually. The holy scriptures are an indispensable nourishment for the faithful, irreplaceable by any other book, no matter how divine or important.

Getting to Know the Holy Scriptures.

The holy scriptures comprise a considerable number of books, not just one book as the reader might think at first glance. Even in their composition, they differ from each other as they form a library containing several works. This library contains seventy-three books, divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament comprises forty-six books (although there are differences in Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant editions) divided into four sections: the books of the Law (Torah), history, prophecy, and wisdom.

The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books, beginning with the Gospel in its four narratives (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), followed by the Acts of the Apostles, then the fourteen Pauline epistles, the general epistles, and ending with the Book of Revelation by John the Evangelist.

These books cover various and extensive topics, spanning a period from Abraham, the first among the faithful (around 1800 B.C.) to the end of the first century A.D., when the last book of the New Testament was completed.

The multiple themes of these books are presented in a variety of literary styles. There are long tales, short stories, epics, poems, proverbs, and hymns. Moreover, many writers contributed to their composition. Additionally, the Holy Scriptures were not written in one language but in three languages: Hebrew, the language of most Old Testament texts; Aramaic used for some of its texts; and Greek, used for all the books of the New Testament. The Orthodox Church considers the Old Testament

translation into Greek known as the Septuagint (from the second century B.C.) as a divinely inspired and authoritative reference.

The first book of the holy scriptures deals with the beginning of the world and the origin of life: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1), and the last book ends with a call anticipating Christ’s second coming: “Surely, I am coming quickly. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

This book tells of the beginning and the end of the universe.

Many have considered the Bible a history book, because it recounts God’s revelation throughout the history of a people called the Hebrews. Others saw it as a book of science, because it tells stories of the creation of the world and includes wisdom containing much of the science of the time. Those who consider it a philosophical book are not few in number, either, as it contains a particular view on life, God, pain, and death.