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**BIBLE, VERSIONS** The existence of different versions of the Bible is caused by and based on distinct interests in a religious community. It is normal for a religious community to express the core of its faith and identity by defining its holy scriptures. Language is a key part in the formation of identity. When this specific language is not understood anymore by the vast majority of believers, a pastoral interest causes a new translation of sacred texts. At this point a combination of several interests may lead to a new version, which is not only a translation or interpretation of an older version but is also different from the earlier version, for example, in the sequence of books, enlarged or shortened versions of some books, or even by including new books or excluding one or more of the old ones. Finally, the struggle among communities between different interpretations of the earlier language may cause revisions of what before was one and the same version.

1. The formation of the canon of the Hebrew Bible (see **CANON OF THE OT**) was a long-term process and can be explained as the task of collecting and preserving the scriptures ascribed to the founder of the religious community, and later collecting and preserving the texts ascribed to other persons of high religious esteem. Circa 400 BCE (according to some scholars even later) the Torah or Pentateuch (Genesis—Deuteronomy, the five books traditionally ascribed to Moses) became accepted as the first canonical text. The canon of the Prophets (Joshua—Kings and Isaiah—Malachi) received official recognition under the Maccabees in the middle of the second century BCE. In describing this first version of the Bible, the NT refers to “the Scripture” or “Scriptures” (See Romans 1:1, 4:1, 9:1, 10:5, 11:1, 15:1, ) or “the Law (of Moses)” (meaning the Torah) “Prophets,” and to the “Book of Psalms,” which signifies that in the time of Jesus the Psalms had gained canonical authority. All three parts combined are mentioned in Luke 24:44 as “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms.”

The so-called Council of Jamnia (70–100 CE) is not to be understood as a synod making binding canonical decisions, but it signifies a discussion process about the different degrees of authority that should be ascribed to the scriptures: the Torah with the highest degree of authority is followed by the Prophets as a first commentary on the Torah, and by the so-called Scriptures as a commentary on the Torah and the Prophets. Hebrew as common language of all these texts is a binding condition for canonization, though the Aramaic in Daniel might be construed as an exception that proves the rule. The common Jewish name for this canon is Tenakh (which is an acronym for Torah, Neviim [Prophets] and Ketuvim [Scriptures]).

2. The **SEPTUAGINT (LXX)** is not only a Greek translation of the Hebrew Jewish Scriptures for the Jewish Diaspora (as the majority of Jews in the Diaspora did not speak or understand Hebrew well enough) but also the result of collecting and translating sacred Jewish texts, some of them quite new. This process began in the third century BCE in Alexandria and lasted until the first century CE (4 Maccabees). Some of the books were not translated in the Diaspora but by Jews in Palestine and exported from there (cf. Esth. 10:31). For the Jewish Diaspora the Septuagint provided a great help to those who maintained the Jewish tradition within a non-Jewish society.

Although most books are translations from Hebrew originals, for some of them the Septuagint offers two different versions (Joshua, Judges, and Daniel); others books are rendered in a different order (Jeremiah, Psalms), some are shorter (Jeremiah, Job), some have addenda (Esther; Psalm 151; Daniel 3:24–45.51–90; 13; 14), some attest remarkable differences between the Septuagint text and the Masoretic text (some of these differences are also attested by Hebrew texts from Qumran; see **DEAD SEA SCROLLS**, e.g. 1 and 2 Samuel), and there are new versions (1 and 2 Esdras). Some books are completely new (Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Sirach, 1 Maccabees), and originally written in Greek (Wisdom and 2–4 Maccabees). Also the sequence of some of the books of the Septuagint differs from the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Ruth is appended to Judges., Lamentations to Baruch).

As evident from the NT, the Septuagint was soon accepted as holy by the Greek-speaking Christian communities, and eventually became known as a Christian Scripture and therefore less attractive for Jews, who as a result produced Jewish revisions (connected with the names of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus).

3. The Targumim are Aramaic versions, some of them literal translations (especially Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch), some much more paraphrastic and dynamic in translation (e.g. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch). See TARGUMS.

4. The closing of the NT canon also led to a long process of closure by Christians regarding the Jewish scriptures, thus resulting in the formation of the Christian Bible. The terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” are in common use since the end of the second century to distinguish the Jewish and Christian scriptures of the Bible. Modern scholars occasionally use the term “Second Testament” or “Second Bible” to distinguish the Christian testament from the Hebrew Bible, which is occasionally called the “First Testament.” This distinction is not completely logical, which prevents widespread use, as in this respect the Septuagint should be labeled as the “Second Testament.”

The sequence Torah – Prophets – Scriptures (as in the Tenakh) was altered by Christians to a sequence: Historical Books (past) – Wisdom (present) – Prophets (future). The Christian OT contains the scriptures of hellenistic Judaism, and not those of Palestinian pharisees. The book of Daniel is placed by Christians, who perceived literary affinity with the book of Revelation, among the Prophets (contrary to the Tenakh). As attested by the famous Easter Letter of Athanasius (367 CE) the 27 books of the NT had already received their canonical recognition (see CANON OF THE NT) in the course of the fourth century, whereas the books of the OT received it at the Council of Trent (1546) for the Roman Catholic Church, and by the Consensus Tigurinus (1549; no Apocrypha) for the Protestant Churches. At the Synod of Jerusalem (1672) the Orthodox Church declared some of the deuterocanonical books as canonical; actually the Bible editions of the Orthodox churches contain not only the same books in the Vulgate, but also 3 Esra and 3 Maccabees.

5. The VULGATE was produced by Jerome (345–420 CE), originated from his revision of the “Old Latin” translations, but continued as a Latin translation of the original Hebrew and later also included translation of Tobit and Judith. Jerome’s Version was enlarged by adding other books from the Old Latin. At the Council of Trent (1546) this enlarged version received official recognition by the Roman Catholic Church, whereas the Greek Church vacillated in its decisions, sometimes approving the limited, sometimes the extended canon.

6. Martin Luther saw the importance of providing the people with translations of the complete Bible in the common tongue; in Luther’s case, German. Relying on the critical Greek edition of Erasmus (*Novum Instrumentum omne*, 1516), Luther translated the NT in 1521-1522, where he also changed the sequence of books for theological reasons (combining James with Jude and Revelation and putting them at the end of his edition, as books without apostolic authority). His first translation of the complete Bible was published in 1534.

7. The first Reformation translation of the NT into English (see VERSIONS, ENGLISH) was finished by William Tyndale in 1525. Parts of the OT followed before Tyndale’s execution in 1536. The first complete printed English Bible was done by Miles Coverdale (published 1535).

The Authorized or King James Version was the result of a conference at Hampton Court early in 1604, which was summoned by James I of England. The first edition came out in 1611, carrying in its title the phrase “appointed to be read in Churches.” Important versions to follow this Authorized tradition were – among others – the English Revised Version (1881, 1885), the American Standard Version (1897, 1901), the Revised Standard Version (1952), and the New

Revised Standard Version (1989), as well as the New American Standard Bible (1971, updated 1995).

In addition to these Standard Versions that use formal equivalence as a translation principle, we have easy access to dozens of translations that are committed to “formal equivalence” on the one hand (e.g., the translations of biblical scholars in their commentaries) or on the other hand to translations that use varying degrees of “dynamic equivalence” as a translation principle, thus serving the intent that the Bible be read easily by people of all ages and backgrounds (e.g. Good News Bible, Contemporary English Version, Living Bible, The Message). Some translations, such as the New International Version (1978; updated as Today’s New International Version in 2005) lean toward dynamic equivalence when it is deemed necessary to adjust specific language (such as a pronoun, metaphor, or image) that is not understood by the vast majority of believers.

*See* VERSIONS, ANCIENT; VERSIONS, ENGLISH; VERSIONS, GREEK; VERSIONS, LATIN; CANON OF THE OT; CANON OF THE NT; BIBLE TRANSLATION THEORY.

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