

## The Canonical Scriptures in the Armenian & Byzantine Traditions

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate and Archbishop of the Armenian Eastern Diocese of America, affirms the traditional Eastern Canon in his forward to the English edition of the Armenian Church Bible. He states, "the Armenian Canon contains a greater breadth of sacred writings than the contemporary Western versions, and includes books which were termed 'apocryphal' or 'secret' in the West, but which in the Armenian tradition have been offered to the faithful with the full authorization of the Church." This is also true of the Churches of the Byzantine tradition. In fact the Septuagint Old Testament was *the* Bible of the Apostles and the early Church -even the Latin Western Church. It was only in the 5th century, when St. Jerome produced his Vulgate in the language of the Latin-speaking people, that the Septuagint came to decrease in importance in the West (something which even St. Augustine objected to). The Eastern Churches, on the other hand, retained the Septuagint and it remains *the* Old Testament of the Byzantine and Armenian Churches to this day.

When discussing the Old Testament's relevance and authority, it is important to note, as the new universal Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

*The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked. Indeed, the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men. Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional, the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God's saving love: these writings are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians venerate the Old Testament as the true Word of God. The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism).*

-CCC #121-123

The following list of Old Testament books is from the Orthodox Study Bible, which in turn comes from a Byzantine source from Constantinople. According to the OSB introduction, “the organization of the Old Testament books, [i.e.] their canonical order, was taken from *The Old Testament According to the Seventy*, [first published in 1928] with the approval of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. The Armenian Etchmiadzeen edition of the Holy Bible contains the same basic list of books in its Canon.

## **I. The 50 Books of the Old Testament**

### **A. The Pentateuch**

1-5. The Five Books of Moses: Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy.

### **B. The Historical Books**

6. The Book of Joshua

7. The Book of Judges

8. The Book of Ruth

9-12. 1-4 Kingdoms (1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings)

13-14. 1-2 Chronicles (1-2 Paralipomenon “Things Omitted”)

15. The Prayer of Manasseh (often appended to 2 Chronicles)

16. 1 Ezra (3 Ezra)

17. 2 Ezra (1 Ezra)

18. Nehemiah (2 Ezra)

19. The Book of Tobit

20. The Book of Judith

21. The Book of Esther (Greek LXX version)

22-24. 1, 2 & 3 Maccabees

### **C. The Wisdom Books**

25. The Book of Job

26. The Psalter (151 Psalms)

27-31. The Five Books of Solomon: Proverbs of Solomon; Ecclesiastes; Song of Solomon; Wisdom of Solomon; Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus).

### **D. The Prophets**

32-43. The Twelve Minor Prophets: Hosea; Amos; Micah; Joel; Obadiah; Jonah; Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah; Haggai; Zachariah; Malachi.

44-50. The Four Major Prophets: Isaiah; Jeremiah; Baruch; Lamentations of Jeremiah; Epistle of Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Daniel.

## **II. The 27 Books of the New Testament**

### **A. The Four Gospels and the Acts**

1. St. Matthew
2. St. Mark
3. St. Luke
4. St. John
5. Works of the Apostles

### **B. The 14 Epistles of St. Paul**

6. 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Thessalonians
7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle to the Thessalonians
8. Epistle to the Galatians
9. 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians
10. 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle to the Corinthians
11. Epistle to the Romans
12. Epistle to St. Philemon
13. Epistle to the Philippians
14. Epistle to the Colossians
15. Epistle to the Ephesians
16. Epistle to St. Titus
17. 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle to St. Timothy
18. 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle to St. Timothy
19. Epistle to the Hebrews

### **C. The General Epistles:**

20. The Epistle of St. James (Jacob)
21. The First Epistle of St. Peter
22. The Second Epistle of St. Peter
23. The First Epistle of St. John
24. The Second Epistle of St. John
25. The Third Epistle of St. John
26. The Epistle of St. Jude (Judah)

### **D. The Apocalypse**

27. Revelation of St. John the Theologian and Evangelist

Appendix: Other ancient books once included in the Armenian Church's Canon and still worthy of veneration for the instruction they contain:

**Old Testament:**

Joseph and Aseneth

Testament of the 12 Patriarchs

The Martyrdom of Isaiah (The canonical assigned reading for the remembrance of the Prophet St. Isaiah)

**New Testament:**

The Epistles of Jesus Christ and Abgarus King of Edessa

3rd Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians

Acts of Paul and Thecla

All the above texts are available on the World Wide Web