

The New Septuagint Translation of the Old Testament in the Armenian & Byzantine Churches

I'd like to share this watershed moment of Eastern Christianity with all of you. This is something I have waited for most of my adult life for. I'm referring to the publication of the first modern translation of the Old Testament Septuagint into English along with Orthodox study notes to help illuminate our ancient, Orthodox Faith. Some highlights of this Bible for me, as an Armenian & Byzantine Christian, are the following:

1. The Septuagint contains the full Old Testament Canon of the early Church including the Third Book of Maccabees, 1st Ezra (sometimes called 3rd Ezra), the Prayer of Manasseh and the 151st Psalm. These books, along with all the Deutero-Canonical Books appear both in ancient and modern Armenian and Byzantine Church Canons. Unlike most Protestant (and some Roman Catholic) versions, these books are not placed in an ostracized section of the text. Instead they are incorporated properly in a traditional and thoughtful order which reflects their respective genre and meaning. For example, the arrangement of the Minor Prophets corresponds exactly to the order of lections for the Armenian Church Feast of the Twelve Minor Prophets.
2. The numbering of the Psalms reflect the historic tradition of the Catholic Church as it is in the traditions of the Greek, Syriac, Latin, Coptic, Armenian, Slavonic and other ancient Churches (the Septuagint being the source of their respective Old Testaments). Therefore, for example, David's great penitential Psalm is Psalm 50 (not Psalm 51). This, again, is in accord with the usage of the early and historic Church.
3. The Septuagint (commonly abbreviated LXX) was translated by 72 Jewish scholars 200 years before the birth our Lord Jesus Christ. This was roughly 600 years before St. Jerome's famous Latin Vulgate and was 1000 years before the advent of the Hebrew Masoretic Text which now serves as the base text for all modern English Old Testament Translations (Protestant and Catholic). Numerous prophecies about Christ our Lord that are lost (or distorted) in the Masoretic Text, are fully evident in the Septuagint text. This is precisely why the Septuagint was the primary Old Testament text used by the Apostles and the great Fathers of the Church.
4. Not only was the Septuagint the primary text used by the Armenian Holy Translators, Sts. Sahag and Mesrob, who in 406 AD produced the Armenian Version (known as the *Queen of All Translations*), but it was also *the* Old Testament text used by the Apostles themselves as they wrote the New Testament under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! It has been shown that over 80 percent of Old Testament citations in the New Testament come directly from the Septuagint.
5. The Orthodox Study Bible text contains numerous comments on the Scriptures from the ancient Fathers of the Church (see the info below). Many of these Church Fathers

were among the first to be translated into Armenian (following the Holy Scriptures) by the Holy Translators.

6. The Orthodox Study Bible uses a New Testament based on the *Textus Receptus* which is a traditional Byzantine Text from Constantinople. In addition, the OSB uses an apparatus which includes study aids to compare it's text to that of the Majority Text and modern critical texts.

7. The Orthodox Study Bible beautifully presents the many facets of the Byzantine Faith in a very positive format. It is sold by Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic bookstores alike. It is even used and endorsed by many Orthodox and Eastern Catholic hierarchs.

8. Another bonus is that a paragraph in the original Orthodox Study Bible (New Testament Edition), which called into question the orthodoxy of the Oriental Orthodox Communion (including the Coptic, Ethiopian, Syriac, Armenian and Indian Churches), has been removed. The OSB is now truly a text for *all* Eastern Christians and even Roman Catholics can benefit greatly from it.

9. Based on all of the above, this translation should become the official translation of all English speaking Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches, regardless of their ethnic background. **What more could we ask for in an English translation???**

Trusting in Christ's Inextinguishable Light
Sub-Dn. Lazarus W. Der-Ghazarian

The Saint Athanasius Academy Septuagint (SAAS)
From the Orthodox Study Bible editors:

THE FIRST EVER Orthodox Study Bible presents the Bible of the early Church and the Church of the early Bible. Believers of the Orthodox Christian faith now have a clear and compelling study resource enabling them to delve into the riches of Holy Scripture. Prepared by a pan-Orthodox team of scholars and pastors, the Orthodox Study Bible brings to one volume the words of Scripture and the understanding of those words from the earliest days of the Christian era. More importantly, the OSB is a treasury of Christian commentary for all Christians of the twenty-first century.

The great voices of the historic Church were such luminaries as Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Nicholas of Myra, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Cassian, John of Damascus, and Maximos the Confessor. Grounded in the Scriptures and inspired by the Holy Spirit, these and numerous others like them were the teachers, preachers, pastors and defenders of the Truth of Christianity in the first millennium of Christian history. These were the voice of early Christianity, the leaders of the Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox Christian faith is the face of the ancient Church to the modern world and is the second largest body of Christians in the world. In this first of its kind study Bible, you'll find commentary from the ancient Christian perspective, with sources seldom cited in contemporary study Bibles, sources that shine with heavenly insight. The OSB was prepared to make this treasury of biblical commentary available to Orthodox believers. And abundance of additional helps and articles is provided to encourage Christians to become people of informed faith and people of prayer.

But this bible is not just for Orthodox Christians. Countless others will find the OSB an invaluable road map for their spiritual journey. Those exploring Christianity for the first time and those Christians wanting to discover their own spiritual roots will see this Bible as a source of inspiration and challenge.

Features include: Old Testament from the St. Athanasius Academy Septuagint with Deuterocanon (SAAS); New Testament from the New King James Version (NKJV); Insightful commentary drawn from the Christian writers and teachers of the first ten centuries after Christ; Introduction and outline to each book of the Bible; Helpful notes relating Scripture to seasons of Christian feasting and fasting; And exhaustive subject index to the study notes to facilitate Bible Study; Lectionary to guide your bible reading through the Church year; Morning and Evening prayers; Plus Supplemental Bible Study articles such as: Overview of the Books of the Bible; The bible God's Revelation of Man; How to Read the Bible; Saints of the Old Testament; the Sermon on the Mount; Christology; Beautiful full color icons;

The last decade of the twentieth century saw an historic event. In 1993, the *Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms* was released, the first English Bible with study material reflecting how the early Christians interpreted and applied the Bible

to their lives. Christians from both the Eastern and Western traditions found a source of Bible study that provided light for their spiritual journeys. English-speaking Orthodox Christians -whether converts from Greek, Russian, Arab, Serbian, Bulgarian, Coptic, Armenian or any other Eastern Orthodox parentage -found the biblical roots of their faith in words fresh and powerful. Christians from non-Orthodox traditions glimpsed a faith experience that rang true and enriched their own Christian experience.

The necessity of answering popular demand pressed upon the editors of the New Testament edition the task of preparing an edition of the Orthodox Study Bible with both the Old and New Testaments. So they undertook the task of preparing a biblical text suitable for the purpose. The decision was made that the notes and commentary which address the biblical text would emphasize the major themes of the Christian faith.

Thus, the notes give primary attention to:

1. The Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
2. The Incarnation: the Divine Son of God becoming Man
3. The Centrality of the Church, the "dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:22)
4. The Virtues: God's call to His people to live righteous and holy lives in Christ.

To attain these goals, specific attention was given to the biblical interpretations of the Fathers of the ancient and undivided Church, and to the consensus of the Seven Ecumenical or Church-wide Councils of Christendom, held from the fourth to eighth centuries. Other helps were added to provide the Bible reader every opportunity to employ the Bible not only in study, but also in contemplative Bible reading and prayer.

The prayer of the editors and contributors of The Orthodox Study Bible is that it presents an understandable Bible text and commentary to (1) English-speaking Orthodox Christians the world over and to (2) non-Orthodox readers interested in learning more about the faith of the historic Orthodox Church.

“At last! A study Bible that integrates the Old Testament with the worshipping life of the Church Among the several approaches to the biblical text which Orthodoxy has manifested and permitted over the centuries literal, symbolic or a mix of both this one follows the more symbolic tradition. It's the only resource I know of that relates the Old Testament to the theology, liturgy, lectionary and Fathers of Christian antiquity. Christians of all back grounds -Orthodox, Catholic and Protestants- will see Christ as the key that unites the whole of Christian tradition through an integrated understand of its parts." -Bradley Nassif, Professor Biblical and Theological Studies, North Park University.

The Orthodox Study Bible can be purchased on-line at: <http://orthodoxstudybible.com/>