

THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Metropolis of Boston often receives requests for a list of the canonical books of the Old Testament in their proper Orthodox Christian order. The text that follows has been prepared by Father Arsenius, monk, of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, MA.

If you are Orthodox you need more than a mere list of books. The translation of the books in question must be made from the authentic text of those books. The translations "made from the original Hebrew" which Protestant preachers are always waving about in the air and thumping, are, alas! not what they claim to be. When the last Jewish editors of the present Hebrew text finished revising it, (which was over 1000 years *after* Christ) they demanded that all copies of Hebrew scripture which varied from their own be completely destroyed on pain of death if the owner of any such copies failed to comply. This demand was carried out so faithfully from Toledo in Spain to Babylon in Mesopotamia (an enormous area, if you look at your map) that until the finding of the so-called "Dead Sea Scrolls" only one earlier copy of the older Hebrew text had ever been recovered (the celebrated "Cairo Genizeh" copy.)

To put it simply: The original Hebrew of the sacred text no longer exists as a whole in any available form. Perhaps it is buried, one way or another, part here, part there, among the mass of fragmentary materials we call the Dead Sea Scrolls, or in other archaeological finds still to be made, but capable editors have not yet sorted out all this material. And capable editors are hard to find.

But all is not lost. God never leaves His people unprovided for. In the famous Greek translation made for the great Library of Alexandria by command of the king of Egypt about 290 B.C. (we call this translation the Septuagint for "the Seventy"--actually, 72 -- learned Jewish scholars who did the work, they being specially chosen for their spiritual wisdom and for their linguistic skills by the High Priest at Jerusalem) we find the original text fully preserved and faithfully rendered into a language at once more exact and intelligible, as the ancient Jews themselves were delighted to recognize, than is the Ancient Hebrew. Indeed, God Himself prophesies, and therefore has Himself overseen the making of, the Septuagint translation. In the Book of the Prophet Sophonias (3.9), He explicitly says, "For then will I change for the peoples my language for their generations, that they may all call upon

the Name of the Lord, to serve him under one yoke." The one yoke, of course, is Christ's (see Matt. 11.29.)

Look this up in your trusty King James or Revised Standard (or whatever) version (= Zephaniah 3.9). There, you will find something quite different. But then, *ALL* modern English versions have been made on the basis of the latest *Masoretic* revision of the Hebrew, a text which dates, as we have said, over 1000 years AFTER the Crucifixion of Our Divine Saviour..

But here is the list:

The Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses:

Genesis: the Birth of the World¹

Exodus: the Way out of Egypt¹

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy: a Recapitulation² of the Law

Jesus the son of Navê

Judges

Ruth

Of the Kingdoms, four books

[N.B. The title "Kings" should not be used by the Orthodox. It is a deliberately deceptive label, originally chosen by the Masoretes to further their own hidden agenda. By intermeddling the usurping rulers of "Israel" with the legitimate Kings of Juda and setting them both on the same level, the Masoretes hoped to confuse the reader as to the pedigree of the Messiah and the legitimacy of the kingdom of "Israel." For the Masoretes were determined that the ten tribes that made up the kingdom of "Israel"--- though these tribes had cut themselves off completely from Juda and were become zealous idolaters³ — should nevertheless be regarded as a congregation of true-blue, loyal, sterling Jews. According to the testimony of the Prophets as given in the Septuagint, the Lord God of Israel deems otherwise.]

Paralipómena, two books

[N.B. The ancient (and until the Protestant Reformation, only) name of these books, "Paralipómena,"⁴ means "Matters kept in reverent silence,

¹ Titles given in the Codex Alexandinus

² *Not*, as those with but little Greek often suppose, "a second (or esoteric law.)"

³ "What have we to do with the house of David?" was their favorite rallying-cry.

⁴ The form "Paralipoménôn" found in the Vulgate reflects the Greek genitive plural (*bibliôn paralipoménôn*); we use the form of the nominative case.

Sacred mysteries not to be divulged to the profane." The books themselves, rich in *theôria*, are largely dismissed by modern Protestants, who refer to them as "Chronicles," and rarely read them. The vaguely indefinite name "Chronicles" has no place in Biblical tradition: it was given to these books by the German reformer Luther, is used only by Protestants and those of like mind, and ought not to be employed by the Orthodox. According to Luther, these books are the "lost" books--*e.g.*, "the book of Jasher" (see Joshua 10.13, &c.)-- referred to here and there in the Masoretic text. They clearly are nothing of the sort, as anyone with half a brain can see, nor is the term "chronicle" at all applicable to them (consult any good dictionary).]

The Twelve Prophets:

Osêe [pronounced O-see-eh]

Amos

Michæas

Joel

Abdias

Jonas

Nahum

Abbacum

Sophonias

Aggæas

Zacharias

Malachias

The Four Prophets:

Esaiâs

Jeremias

Baruch

Lamentations

The Epistle of Jeremy

Ezechiel

Daniel

Esther

Tobit

Judith

Of Esdras the Priest, two books

Of the Maccabees, four books

The Psalter (plus the additional early psalm of David, not numbered with the 150)

Job

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

The Song of Songs

The Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach

The Psalms of Solomon

[FINIS]