

BIBLE, or Sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testament—a selection of writings from Israelite-Jewish and Christian literature concerning the history of salvation to which these writings testify.

The term probably comes from the Phoenician city of Biblos, the place where Egyptian papyruses were transported. Initially it meant “scroll”, “sheet”, “pages”. Later it became a term for the writings that compose the Sacred Scripture that was read, meditated upon, and commented upon by religious believers and places of an intellectually profound faith.

The Bible is not philosophy in the strict sense, but as it has been read, meditated upon, and discussed it had a very profound influence on the development of Christian thought (especially in the first millennium of Christianity) in the form of a variously elaborated synthesis of philosophy and theology, understood as an intellectual-cognitive experience of what the Bible contains. The biblical text of the Old Testament became available to the world of Greek and Hellenistic culture through the translations from Hebrew to Greek in the third century BC. Thereby a way was prepared for the Christian mission, for Christian thinkers justified their truths of faith on the basis of this translation, called the Septuagint. This led to Judaism’s rejection of the Septuagint in the second century AD and at the same time created a need for new translations in keeping with the needs of the times.

THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY. Without doubt there were and still are philosophical schools and systems that owe their character to faith (in a lesser or greater degree) that has its source in the Bible. This group includes variously conceived “Christian philosophies” developed by Christians in the context of Revelation concerning the existence and nature of God in the context of an understanding of man and his destiny, in the context of man’s relation to God, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ as man’s Redeemer and Savior. These lines of thought occur in a different sense in the Bible understood as the Old Testament and the New Testament.

There are discussions as to what measure such a philosophy is “Christian”. One thing is certain: the Christian character of philosophy does not in any way diminish its autonomy, which is based on its own proper method of explanation. In explaining, this philosophy does not resort to arguments taken from faith, although sometimes it will confirm its own arguments with a biblical text. This was understandable for Christian thinkers in a period when there was no clear distinction between theology and philosophy, and thought as a whole was upon the canvas of the reading of Sacred Scripture. Finally, the problematic of revealed faith, which is the essential content of biblical teaching, converged with the problematic of the philosophical speculations of ancient Greece, for it concerned how to conceive the world, God, and man under the aspect of his relation to God. This was convenient material for Christian thinkers as they made a synthesis of revealed faith and reason, the systematic investigations of which could in some measure rationally justify and in addition strengthen and illuminate the contents of the doctrine of faith.

THE BIBLE AND CREATION OR EMANATION. The Bible begins with a well known verse that projects an understanding of the world. The fact of the world’s creation in six days —ἑξαήμερον [hexaemeron]—starts a description of the particular phases of creation. This verse is: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth”, or more literally, “The beginning is: God creates [created, creates, and will create] heaven and earth”. The verb “bara’h” is used here to mean a creative action that belongs to God alone. “Heaven” and “earth” mean

the universe, since in the Hebrew language there is no other expression for “everything” that exist. Everything thus begins from God. He is presented as the only source of being. This is not some concept of the Absolute—it is quite simply God. He alone, without assistance from any other, “creates”—and so has created, creates, and will create everything that is. God’s action is very simple: “He says”—and everything comes into being. God’s word (God Himself) is omnipotent. Consequent upon creation appear light, darkness, the sun, the moon, the stars, water, plants, animals of different kinds, and man as the particular terminal point and end of creation. Everything that came from the hands of God was—is—“very good”. Before the whole work of creation He stands—God—the One, the Omnipotent, He who is above every creature that has been “created”. Here there is no trace of the emanation encountered in all the myths of various cultures. God does not draw the creature from himself as his “parts”. He calls the creature to being by his Word. Everything that has being comes from God by way of the act of creation.

The description of God’s creation of the world and man was the object of religious and philosophical speculation. The description of creation appears as an important text for theological and philosophical meditations among the great Christian thinkers, especially in the first millennium.

GOD AND THE NAME OF GOD. Another biblical text besides the account of creation that became an object of meditation in philosophy is God’s manifestation of himself to Moses. In the Book of Exodus we find an account of a conversation Moses had with God as God appeared in a burning bush in the Sinai Desert. The course of this conversation on account of the sublime truth and reality about God revealed there was later called “the metaphysics of the Book of Exodus”. This is the text: “Meanwhile Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the Lord appeared to him in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, “I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned.” When the Lord saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush. “Moses!” Moses!” He answered, “Here I am.” God said, “Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,” he continued, “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.[...] Come now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?” He answered, “I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who have sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain.” “But,” said Moses to God, “when I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you’ if they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what am I to tell them?” God replied, “I am who am.” Then he added, “This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you.”” (Exodus 3, 1–14).

An expression of essential importance in the Hebrew text is the verb “haya’h” when designates the real state, and at the same time the justification of reality; “to exist” was accepted as a translation of the verb. This is how it was translated into Greek in the Septuagint, but not in the sense of a mere thing (το ον [to on]), rather in the sense of a person, and it was written not with “omicron” but with “Omega”—so it was written “ο Ων [ho On]), not “that which is” but “He Who Is”.

The Hebrew expression “Ehie Asher Ehie”—“Being as Being” (or “Existent as Existent”) expresses a state of being—past, present, and future. That is, it expresses a state: to be-exist as to exist, and so: “He who exists as he exists”. The expressions used to designate God’s Name in the Bible and its translation into Greek as “Existence”, “Being” understood as a person and not as a thing, sets forth an ordinary intuition and understanding of reality, and the reason for this reality: “existence”. In the Book of Exodus God named himself—He revealed himself as unconditional Existence, understood in the present, past, and future sense, and so as Fullness of Existence—as pure existence.

THE BIBLE AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF REALITY—BEING. The combination of the metaphysics of the Book of Genesis and the Book of Exodus provides as a result an image of revealed reality, namely that Pure Existence is Reality as Reality—conceived in its chief and unconditional sense: existence *per se* and from itself—called God. Everything that possesses existence possesses it in causal conditioning, that is, it is a being or a reality that possesses existence. The possession of existence ultimately refers to Pure Existence, which in an act of incessant creation (for God created, creates, and will create: *Bara’h*) causes the state of reality.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS THE COMPLETION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD. The Old Testament revealed doctrine was confirmed in the New Testament, in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans: “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has given him anything so as to deserve return? For from him and through him and for him all things are. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11, 34–36).

In his speech to the Athenians in the Areopagus St. Paul described the relation of creation to God: “For the God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth [...] gives to all life and breath and everything else [...] In him we live and move and have our being [...]” (Acts 17, 24–28).

Presented in this way, the biblical understand of God may be treated, and was treated by early Christian thinkers, as a deeper understanding of the philosophical thought of the ancient world concerning God and the world. Yet in the New Testament appeared a formulation concerning God completely unknown to philosophy, which was even a scandal and “folly” for philosophers, as St. John said: “God is love” (1 John 4, 15; John 3, 16) “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him shall not die but shall have eternal life”. The revelation of God as Love transformed the ancient idea of a cosmic eros (ερωσ) into Christian *chárítas* (*caritas*). That someone who is completely full of his own perfection should love something ontologically inferior was unthinkable, because this would compromise the perfection of the first one. Cosmic desire —‘ορεξις [*horexis*]—moves upward from below, for this preserves the order of the world. The New Testament presented a new order of love—*chárítas*, which elevates man above all things.

THE BIBLE AND LOGOS (Λογος). The Bible cultivated in its own supernatural manner yet another important thought of the Greeks concerning the logos, which appeared in Heraclitus’ thought and in the Platonic vision of the *pleroma* as the set of ideas or archetypes of all reality. The text of the Gospel of St. John concerning the Word fundamentally reoriented the most important moments of Greek philosophy concerning the rationality of reality. In the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John we read: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word

was with God, and the Word was God, [⋯] Everything through Him came into being, and without Him nothing came into being that came into being. In Him was life [⋯] and the Word became flesh [⋯] (John 1, 1–4, 14).

The Johannine Prologue refers to the first verse of the Bible where everything was created by God. The Logos as the Son of God is God as the Second Person of the Triune God. While John was in Ephesus, a place in Greek culture that gave particular emphasis to the functions of the Logos, he did something unusual when he identified God with the Logos, and further proclaimed that God as the Logos became man: Jesus Christ. This truth was scandalous to the Jews, and folly to the pagans, but for Christian thinkers it became an inspiration in their understanding of God and man. It seemed obvious that the biblical Revelation transmitted by John the Evangelist completed Plato's conception of the *pleroma* of ideas as "the original reality"—*ὄντος ὄν* [*ontos on*]. If nothing existed without the Word and in Him was life, this was primarily a matter of spiritual life (at the level of the Word) in God's creative intellect. Here Platonic thought was grafted on to the *pleroma* and the ideas—but at the same time it had to be transformed, for the independent forms of the existence of ideas (*κόσμος νοητός* [*kosmos noetos*]) was no longer tenable, since everything was and is life in the Logos.

THE BIBLE AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF MAN AS A PERSONAL BEING. The Logos incarnate in Jesus Christ appeared as a new essential factor that enabled thinkers to understand man no longer as *ζῶον λογικόν* [*zoon logikon*], but as a personal being. Of course the premises for understanding man as a person were already present in the Old Testament, which describes how man came into existence as a particular creative act by God. "The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" (Genesis 2, 7). Man as a living being became the likeness of the personal God: "'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness [⋯]' God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: 'Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it [⋯]'" (Genesis 1, 26–28).

Man, created directly by God (created in that which constitutes man, and what the Greeks called *ψυχή* [*psyche*])—soul), according to His image and likeness, can have no other end except God himself. The New Testament to the full extent confirms the truth about man, who is "open to God" and whose destiny is ultimately to be united with God provided he is free of sin. He who frees man from sin is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos, who by his life, death, and resurrection destroys sin and leads man to eternal union with God. The whole meaning of his passion, death, and resurrection is salvific for man, who is the image of God, from whom and to whom man makes his pilgrimage to eternity.

This "pilgrimage" takes place over the course of one's entire life by performing conscious and free human acts, which are at the same time moral acts. Man, thus understood, is manifested as a personal being (as an "I" of a rational nature), who actualizes and realizes his humanity in succession by the dynamic structure of personal being.

THE SYNTHESIS OF BIBLICAL-PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT ABOUT MAN. In Christian culture philosophy became a great help in understanding the nature of reality (especially the real God and reality that comes from him), and in particular in understanding man as a personal being. It is very interesting and important, today as ever, that the broadest work in world literature, the work that provides the most profound rational arguments (both from a philosophical and a theological point of view) about man and the meaning of his

personal existence is St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. In its three parts it analyzes and presents the conditions and meaning of man's existence. In the first part of Aquinas' *Summa* he considers the essential context for the philosophical-theological understanding of the really existing human being. Thus we have a treatise about God and His trinitarian life, about creation—so to show in the context of this reality man's ontological structure ordered to human action. In the second part of the *Summa* (both in I–II and II–II) he presents an analysis of human action in the context of a study of human natural and supernatural habits, as well as an analysis of law, which should direct human rational and free actions. In the third part of the *Summa* he presents the ultimate end of human life, which is achieved by the salvific action of the Incarnate Logos—Jesus Christ.

The Bible and its teaching its interwoven inseparably in the history of Christian thought with the philosophical investigations of philosophical systems and provides a great synthesis of human wisdom.

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