

| The Bible: A Very Short Introduction | |
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| Author | John Riches - Professor emeritus of Divinity and Biblical Criticism, (University of Glasgow, Scotland) |
| Diversity of interpretations | <p>Many who supported apartheid sincerely believed that such policies were biblical and therefore theologically justified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those engaged in the struggle against apartheid used the Bible as a source of moral and religious guidance |
| Length of time for biblical books | Between the initial oracles, their subsequent writing down, their collection together with other similar material, and their eventual publication in the form of a prophetic book, a period of several centuries may have elapsed, as in the case of the book of Isaiah |
| Differing accounts in the Bible | There are different, and somewhat contradictory, accounts of the flood, Abraham's migration, God's covenant with Abraham, the manna and quail in the wilderness, the Ten Commandments, and the dietary rules prohibiting the eating of certain animals |
| Oral tradition | Most of the material we now have in written form, whether legal, prophetic, proverbial, poetic, or narrative, will have started out in oral form and only subsequently been committed to writing |
| Hebrew Bible | <p>Divided into three parts: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Torah comprises the first 5 books (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy) |
| Gospels | <p>Represent four tellings of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common view is that Mark wrote first, and that Matthew and Luke both used Mark and another source consisting mainly of sayings attributed to Jesus <p>Many scholars doubt that the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses, as their attributions seem to suggest</p> |
| Etymology of Bible | <p>Derived from the Greek 'biblia', which is simply the plural form of 'biblion', book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Bible is a collection of books |
| Canonization | Process of collecting and fixing the scriptures of a particular community |
| Division of Old Testament | Books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (psalms, songs, proverbs) |
| Language of the Old Testament | <p>The text of the canonical writings at this point was written in unpointed Hebrew (and, in a few parts, Aramaic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This means that only the consonants were represented |

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| <p>Translations of the Old Testament</p> | <p>The Greek translation is generally referred to as the Septuagint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greek became the principal means of communication for much of the world inhabited by Jews <p>There are substantial differences between the text of the Hebrew books and the Greek books</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are differences in the number of books included and there are variations in the order <p>St Jerome translated the Christian Bible into Latin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He was keen on getting back to the original form of the Hebrew text |
| <p>Forced conversion</p> | <p>During the First Crusade, Hebrew chronicles recount that some Jewish communities, faced with massacre or forced conversion, chose collective martyrdom</p> |
| <p>Protestant Reformation</p> | <p>Argued that Scripture, carefully interpreted according to its original meaning, has greater authority than later theological traditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenged the idea that the Church's longstanding interpretation was necessarily correct |
| <p>Latin America</p> | <p>The Spaniards and Portuguese who colonized Central and South America were 'given' the land by the Pope and encouraged to convert its population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The narratives of the conquest of Canaan provided the ideological material for the colonial exploitation of Latin America |
| <p>Liberation theology,</p> | <p>Takes into account the social and political dimensions of human existence so as to bring about a just and peaceful world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Exodus narrative, of Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt and subsequent entry into a 'land flowing with milk and honey,' speaks of a God who 'takes the part of the oppressed' - "He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" |
| <p>European culture</p> | <p>The Bible in its various translations has had a formative influence on the language, the literature, the art, the music of all the major European and North American cultures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is drawn on in a variety of ways, both consciously and unconsciously |
| <p>Reconciling apparent contradictions</p> | <p>Exodus says: "If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matthew says: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evil person. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" - This seems to reverse the Old Testament principle |

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| | <p>Some reconciled Jesus' teaching by saying it only applied to a spiritual elite</p> <p>Luther interpreted Exodus as instructing civil authorities on administering justice, while Matthew instructs individual disciples on how to respond to personal offenses</p> |
| Gender and Bible | <p>There is much in the Bible which is undeniably patriarchal, which commands women to be submissive to men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The New Testament contains injunctions to wives to be submissive to their husbands in all things |

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