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# Sacred Books in English Translation

## Wayne Bivens-Tatum, Guest Columnist

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*In addition to the texts listed in the bibliography, this article was informed by discussions with and contributions by two of the author's colleagues, David Hollander and Liladhar Pendse.*

Sacred texts convey the tenets of religious faith and are central to the world's believers. These texts were originally written in a variety of non-English languages, making them inaccessible to many readers. Wayne Bivens-Tatum offers a carefully selected collection of English translations of the sacred texts fundamental to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism—together comprising approximately 77 percent of the world's practicing believers. Bivens-Tatum is the Philosophy and Religion Librarian at the Princeton University Library, where he provides general and specialized reference and instruction, develops and manages the philosophy and religion collections, and acts as liaison to the departments of Philosophy and Religion. He has graduate degrees in English and Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois. He writes frequently about issues in reference, instruction, collection development, technology, and higher education on his blog, [AcademicLibrarian.net](http://AcademicLibrarian.net). His new book *Libraries and the Enlightenment* is available from the Library Juice Press. This is his second contribution to the Alert Collector.—*Editor*

**T**he following survey is intended to provide a brief guide to building a representative collection of English translations of books sacred to Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Considering the overwhelming number of sacred books of some religions and the large number of world religions, I have deliberately considered a small number of major world religions and tried to focus on the most significant books within those. For some religions, the choices were easy and for others much more difficult. I have focused on contemporary translations in print, preferably in relatively inexpensive editions easily available from Amazon.com or other booksellers. Most of these books are available in older translations, many of which have been digitized and are available for free through the Internet. However, older translations are often less reliable and less readable than more current translations, and usually do not have notes, commentaries, introductions, and other scholarly additions that are helpful for readers.

I assume readers approaching these texts are studying the religions casually and as non-practitioners. Serious students of any of the religions would need to be familiar with the texts in their original languages. Practitioners might need such familiarity with the original languages depending on the religion. Christians rarely have any familiarity with New Testament Greek, for example, while for Muslims the Arabic Qur'an is the only authoritative version. In this article, I do not discuss primary language editions at all. Also, any study

of the books in question is best done along with secondary sources such as encyclopedias, commentaries, and histories—none of which I address. Instead, I have gathered information about the texts that is now scattered throughout numerous sources to provide a short guide for librarians selecting books. This is an organized bibliography of (mostly) primary sources in translation for the religions in question with very brief introductions explaining their significance.

Below is a recommended list of books by religion, followed by a very short list of the most representative titles and a brief bibliography of works used in compiling this bibliography and which can also serve as further reading about the books listed below. No selection could be perfect, but the collection below should provide a respectable sampling of the sacred books of the selected religions.

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## HINDUISM

Hinduism contains a very large number of sacred books spanning centuries. For our purposes, I shall focus on the books most commonly studied in English. The original language of early Hindu sacred books is Sanskrit and the way they should be appreciated is through speech rather than the written word. By talking about English translations of Sanskrit works best appreciated through oral recitation, we are obviously far removed from the appreciation of Hinduism from the inside. The texts can be divided into two categories, the “heard” or “revealed” texts and the “remembered” texts. The revealed texts were supposedly the divine word heard by a primordial sage, while the remembered texts were later created by humans. The revealed texts constitute the Veda, divided into four sections, the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda. The Vedas are hymns that are also accompanied in the total Veda by Brahmanas (ritual texts), Aranyakas (“forest” or “wilderness” texts), and Upanishads (philosophical texts). The Upanishads are also called the Vedanta and come at the end of the total Veda. Though less studied than later texts, the Veda is the central scripture of Hinduism.

The “remembered” texts consist of the post-Vedic texts. Among the most important of these are two epics, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana; the Bhagavad Gita, a text inserted into the Mahābhārata that focuses on the god Krishna; and the Dharmaśāstras: consisting of the manuals concerning dharma (the dharmaśāstras proper) and aphorisms on dharma (the dharmasūtras). In addition to the translations mentioned below, there are also translations of numerous volumes in the Harvard Oriental Series, which would be worth investigating for larger libraries.

### Veda

There is no complete contemporary English translation of the Veda. A good one is still the nineteenth-century translation by Ralph T. H. Griffith available online here: [www.sacred-texts.com/hin](http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin).

This is a good recent translation, but out of print at the time of writing:

Nooten, Barend A. and Gary B. Holland, eds. *Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with an Introduction and Notes*. Harvard University Press, 1994 (ISBN: 0-674-76971-6).

An easily available but often criticized contemporary translation of a small part of the Rig Veda—the oldest and most important Veda—is:

Doniger, Wendy, trans. *The Rig Veda: an Anthology: One Hundred and Eight Hymns, Selected, Translated and Annotated*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1981 (ISBN: 0-14-044402-5).

### Upanisads

The Upanisads are important philosophical texts. Each vedic school had its own Upanisads. The “principal” Upanisads are among the earliest Hindu sources. Here is one current and respected translation of the principal Upanisads:

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Upanisads*. Oxford World’s Classics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 (ISBN: 0-19-282292-6).

### Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata is an epic poem about the Kurukshetra War, an ancient war fought in Kuru, an early state in what is now India. There is a complete translation, in nine volumes translated by Manmatha Nath Dutt, but it isn’t readily available in the United States, though a number of American research libraries have copies. However, there are partial editions that are more readily available and would be more suitable for study. First, there is an ongoing translation of the complete text with introductions and notes from the University of Chicago Press, begun by J. A. B. van Buitenen and continued by his student James L. Fitzgerald after Buitenen’s death:

van Buitenen, J. A. B., trans. and ed. *The Mahābhārata*. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973–1978. (ISBN: 0-226-84648-2).

Fitzgerald, James L., trans. *The Mahābhārata*, Volume 7. Book 11, The Book of the Women, Book 12, The Book of Peace, Part One. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. (ISBN: 0-226-84648-2).

There is also a recent abridged translation that would probably be the best for smaller libraries:

Smith, John D., trans. *The Mahābhārata: An Abridged Translation*. London: Penguin, 2009. (ISBN: 978-0-14-044681-4).

### Bhagavad Gītā

Most readers might prefer to start with this popular subsection of the Mahābhārata. The Bhagavad Gita is one of the

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better known Hindu texts in the English-speaking world and is available in many translations. Two contemporary and easily available translations are:

Johnson, W. J., trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. (ISBN: 978-0-19-953812-6).

Patton, Laurie L., trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. London: Penguin, 2008. (ISBN: 978-0-14-044790-3).

### Rāmāyana

The Rāmāyana is an epic poem concerning the Vishnu avatar Rama and his struggle to rescue his wife from the demon king Ravana. The texts include different recensions, with the most important being the southern recensions, available in a translation from the Gita Press:

Vālmīki. *Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyana*. 3 vols. Gorakhpur, India: Gita Press, 1969. (ISBN: 812930029X).

An abridged translation is:

Narayan, R. K., trans. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. Penguin Classics, 2006. (ISBN: 0-14-303967-9).

### Dharmaśāstras

Very roughly translated, dharma is the overall balance of the cosmos. There are many dharmaśāstras, with the Laws of Manu being considered the oldest. Several recent and well received translations of the dharmasūtras and two of the dharmaśāstras by Patrick Olivelle of the University of Texas are available:

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *The Dharmasutras: The Law Codes of Ancient India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. (ISBN: 0-19-955537-0).

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. and ed. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. (ISBN: 0-19-517146-2).

Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *The Law Code of Viṣṇu: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Vaiṣṇava-Dharmaśāstra*. Harvard Oriental Series, 73. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010. (ISBN: 0-674-05139-4).

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## BUDDHISM

Buddhism has an even more extensive set of sacred books than Hinduism, with significant contributions in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. After the Buddha's death (circa 483 BCE), memories of his sayings were carried through

oral tradition for several hundred years until they were compiled into collections called suttas (Pali) or sutras (Sanskrit) depending on the Buddhist tradition followed. The Sutta Pitaka ("basket") constitute one of "three baskets" (Tipitaka in Pali, Tripitaka in Sanskrit) of the Buddhist Canon, alongside Vinaya Pitaka (monastic rules) and Abhidhamma/Abidharma (philosophical texts or sastras, as we saw with Hinduism). Here, I include various collections of important suttas—the core of Buddhist teaching (the Dhamma or Dharma).

Buddhism is divided into two major traditions: Theraveda ("school of elders") Buddhism and Mahayana ("greater vehicle") Buddhism. As with many religions, over time a distinction developed between a more conservative and traditionalist strain and a more open strain of Buddhism. Theraveda Buddhism is the older form of Buddhism practiced in India by monks who claimed exclusive understanding of the dhamma. Mahayana Buddhism developed later and included lay persons among its ranks. It is called the Greater Vehicle because it is the tradition of Buddhism with the most adherents throughout the world. The Theravada canon (in Pali) is the oldest and most complete version of the suttas and has been completely translated into English. It has also been the focus of the most scholarship in the West. However, because of the popularity of Mahayana Buddhism, many people will also be interested in texts outside the Theraveda canon.

### General Anthologies

These inexpensive anthologies provide a sampling of Buddhist texts from various traditions:

Lopez, Donald S., ed. *Buddhism in Practice* (Abridged Edition). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007. (ISBN: 0-691-12968-1).

Lopez, Donald S., ed. *Buddhist Scriptures*. London: Penguin, 2004. (ISBN: 014044758X).

Strong, John, ed. *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008. (ISBN: 0-495-09486-2).

### Theraveda texts

The easiest way to build a large standard collection of the Pali Tipitaka is to purchase the Pāli Canon in English Translation set published by the Pali Text Society, which has been publishing English translations of Pali texts since its founding in 1881 ([www.palitext.com/palitext/tipitaka.htm](http://www.palitext.com/palitext/tipitaka.htm)). The standard set for non-members of the society consists of 43 books covering an extensive range of the canon. It is expensive (approximately \$1,700 at the moment of writing), but if affordable provides a solid foundation to a major Buddhist canon. The list of titles in this set includes:

- *The Book of Analysis*
- *The Book of Discipline* 6 vol. set
- *The Book of Gradual Sayings* 5 vol. set
- *The Book of Kindred Sayings* 5 vol. set
- *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*
- *Conditional Relations* 2 vol. set
- *Designation of Human Types*
- *Discourse on Elements*
- *Dialogues of the Buddha* 3 vol. set
- *Elder's Verses* 2 vol. set
- *Group of Discourses*, 2nd Edition
- *The Itivuttaka*
- *Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's former Births* vol. set
- *Middle Length Sayings* vol. set
- *Minor Anthologies*, Vol. III
- *Minor Readings and the Illustrator of the Ultimate Meaning*
- *The Path of Discrimination*
- *Peta Stories*
- *Points of Controversy*
- *Udāna*
- *Vimāna Stories*
- *Word of the Doctrine*

These volumes can sometimes be purchased separately, and some individual volumes are included in the list below.

Another less expensive approach is to select representative translations from the five main collections (or *nikayas*) of the Sutta Pitaka. The divisions include long discourses of the Buddha, mid-length discourses, shorter connected discourses linked thematically, shorter texts arranged by the number of items within them, and miscellaneous texts. Below are suggested translations within each category that are both good translations and readily available, including texts from outside the Pali Canon set.

### *The Long Discourses*

Rhys Davids, Thomas W., and Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, trans. *Dialogues of the Buddha*. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1899–1921. (ISBN 0-86013-258-7).

Walshe, Maurice, trans. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995. (ISBN: 0-86171-103-3)

The Wisdom Publications texts tend to pack more into one text by eliminating repetitious phrases. Thus, three volumes of the Pali text become one volume in the Wisdom text, or five volumes become one or two volumes. Because of this and their generally lower price, they are less expensive to collect than the Pali Canon editions.

### *The Middle Length Discourses*

Horner, I. B., trans. *The Middle Length Sayings*. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1954–1959. (ISBN 0-86013-262-5).

Bodhi, Bhikkhu, ed. *The Middle Length Discourses of the*

*Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*. Translated by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995. (ISBN: 086171072X).

### *The Connected Discourses (shorter texts arranged thematically)*

Rhys Davids, Caroline A. F., and Frank L. Woodward, trans. *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1917–1930. (ISBN 0-86013-256-0).

Bodhi, Bhikkhu, trans. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya*. 2 vols. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000. (ISBN: 0-86171-331-1).

### *Numerical Discourses*

Woodward, F. L., and E. M. Hare, trans. *The Book of Gradual Sayings*. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1932–1936. (ISBN 0-86013-255-2).

Bodhi, Bhikkhu, and Mahāthera Nyanaponika, trans. *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1999. (ISBN: 0-7425-0405-0).

### *Miscellaneous Shorter Texts*

Cowell, Edward Byles, ed. *The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*. 6 vols. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1895–1907. (Pali Text Society reprint: ISBN 0-86013-260-9).

The 6-volume set is also available through the Internet Archive.

Norman, K. R., trans. *The Word of the Doctrine*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997. (ISBN: 0-86013-335-4).

This is a translation of the Dhammapada. Very scholarly, but not always easily available. However, there are several other contemporary translations of this very popular Buddhist work:

Roebuck, Valerie, trans, ed. *The Dhammapada*. Revised. New York: Penguin Classics, 2010. (ISBN: 0-14-044941-8).

Carter, John Ross and Mahinda Palihawadana, trans. *The Dhammapada: The Sayings of the Buddha*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. (ISBN: 0-19-955513-3).

### **Mahayana texts**

The Mahayana literature is extensive and exists in several different languages. Instead of by *nikaya*, the selections below are organized by some common genres and traditions of Mahayana Buddhist literature. Perfection of Wisdom literature is central to Mahayana Buddhism; forest vocation literature

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concerns seclusion in the forest to achieve enlightenment; in *Change of Sex* sutras, a young woman arguing with a male bodhisattva changes sex to make her points; Pure Land, Lotus, and Zen are popular Japanese variations of Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism is another important tradition.

### *Perfection of Wisdom*

Conze, Edward, trans. *Perfect Wisdom: The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. London: Luzac, 1973. (ISBN: 0-946672-28-8).

Conze, Edward, trans. *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975. (ISBN: 0-520-05321-4).

Soeng, Mu, trans. *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way We Perceive the World*. Wisdom Publications, 2000. (ISBN: 0-86171-160-2).

### *Forest Vocation*

Boucher, Daniel, trans. *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna: A Study and Translation of the Rāstrapālapariprcchā-sūtra*; Studies in the Buddhist Traditions. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008. (ISBN: 8120834232).

Nattier, Jan, trans. *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path according to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugrapariprcchā-sūtra)*. Studies in the Buddhist Traditions. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003. (ISBN: 0-8248-3003-2).

### *Change of Sex*

Thurman, Robert A. F, trans. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976. (ISBN: 0-271-00601-3).

### *Pure Land*

Gómez, Luis O, trans. *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light; Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhāvativyūha Sūtras*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996. (ISBN: 812081813X).

### *Lotus Sutra*

Kubo, Tsugunari, and Yuyama Akira, trans. *The Lotus Sutra*. 2d rev. ed. BDK English Tripitaka 13-I. Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007. (ISBN: 0-9625618-0-0).

### *Zen Buddhism*

Tanahashi, Kazuaki, ed. and trans. *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dōgen's Shōbō Genzō*. 2 vols. Boston:

Shambhala, 2010. (ISBN: 1-59030-474-8).

Cook, Francis, trans. *The Record of Transmitting the Light: Zen Master Keizan's Denkōroku*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003. (ISBN: 0-86171-330-3).

Cleary, Thomas, ed. *The Original Face: An Anthology of Rinzai Zen*. New York: Grove, 1978. (ISBN: 0-394-17038-5).

Kokushi, Muso. *Dream Conversations on Buddhism and Zen*. Translated by Thomas Cleary. Boston: Shambhala, 1996. (ISBN: 157062206X).

### *Tibetan Buddhism*

Buddhism arrived later in Tibet than India or Japan. Tibetan Buddhism has four major living traditions: the Geluk, Kagyū, Nyingma, and Sakya traditions. Representative titles include:

Guenther, Herbert V, trans. *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*. Boston: Shambhala, 1986. (ISBN: 1-57062-101-2).

A translation of a hagiography of a great Kagyū master.

Namkhai Norbu, Chögyal, trans. *The Supreme Source: The Fundamental Tantra of the Dzogchen Semde*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1999. ISBN: 1-55939-120-0).

A translation of the important Nyingma work. The “All-creating King.”

Thurman, Robert A. F, trans. *The Central Philosophy of Tibet: A Study and Translation of Tsongkhapa's Essence of True Eloquence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991. ISBN: 0-691-02067-1).

An important philosophical work from the Geluk tradition.

Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltzen. *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems*. Translated by Jared Douglas Rhoton. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. (ISBN: 0-7914-5285-9).

An important text from the Sakya tradition.

Dalai Lama. *Ethics for the New Millennium*. Riverhead Trade, 2001. (ISBN: 1-57322-883-4).

A philosophical work from the current Dalai Lama.

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## JUDAISM

### **Tanakh**

Compared to Hinduism and Buddhism, the number of sacred texts associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is small and could be condensed to one book for each religion, though I discuss more. The canonical Jewish bible is known as the Tanakh, which corresponds roughly with the Christian Old Testament. It consists of three parts: the Torah (“teaching”)

or the Written Law, traditionally handed down from God to Moses on Mount Sinai; the *Nevi'im* (“prophets”), consisting of the writings of prophets inspired by God; and the *Ketuvim* (“writings”), consisting of several poetical and wisdom books. There are two good recent translations of the Tanakh into English, both authoritative and relatively inexpensive.

*The Jewish Study Bible*. Jewish Publication Society Tanakh translation. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. (ISBN: 0-8276-0366-5).

A standard study Bible with commentary.

*The Koren Tanakh*, New Edition of the Koren Jerusalem Bible. Bilingual. Koren Publishers Jerusalem, 2010. (ISBN: 965-301-151-0).

A bilingual edition with Hebrew and English on facing pages.

## Talmud

The Torah is the Written Law of Judaism, but traditionally the written law cannot be fully understood without the accompanying Oral Law, which was also passed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The most important source for the Oral Law is the Mishnah, which can also be considered a sacred book. The most complete source of the Mishnah is the Babylonian Talmud, a collection including the Mishnah, commentaries on the Mishnah called the Gemara, extensive commentary by a famous medieval rabbi traditionally known as Rashi, and later rabbinical commentary. Those who want to dig deeper into Judaism will want some familiarity with the Talmud. There are two Talmuds, the Jerusalem and the Babylonian. The Babylonian is the later and more complete Talmud and the one generally studied. There are two recent English translations of the Babylonian Talmud.

*The Talmud = [Talmud Bavli]: The Steinsaltz Edition*. 1st American ed. New York: Random House, 1989. (first volume ISBN: 0-394-57665-9).

An English-only edition in 21 slender volumes.

*Talmud Bavli = [Talmud Bavli]: The Schottenstein Edition: The Gemara: The Classic Vilna Edition, with an Annotated, Interpretive Elucidation, as an Aid to Talmud Study*. ArtScroll Series. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Mesorah Publications, 1990. (first volume ISBN: 0-89906-717-4).

An Aramaic-Hebrew-English edition in 71 thick folio volumes. Easier to use, but much larger and more expensive than the Steinsaltz edition. Also, the commentaries are considered more conservative.

There are also available English translations of just the Mishnah, including this standard translation consisting of one large volume:

Danby, Herbert, trans. *The Mishnah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933. (ISBN: 1-59856-902-3).

## CHRISTIANITY

### The Bible

The Christian Bible consists of two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament. Christianity is a development from within Judaism, and the earliest Christians were Jews who used the Hebrew scriptures as part of their new religion centered around Jesus. The Hebrew scriptures became the Christian Old Testament, considered by Christians to be the old covenant with God. The New Testament is considered to be a new covenant with God in the form of Jesus Christ, and is thus of central importance. The New Testament consists of four parts: The Gospels (or “good news”), which relate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the Acts of the Apostles, which chronicle early Christian history; the Letters or Epistles, mostly written by the early Christian evangelist St. Paul, some of which are the earliest writings in the New Testament; and the final book of Revelations.

Different denominations of Christians use different Bibles. Roman Catholics and Protestants, for example, consider different books of the Old Testament canonical. Several books of the Old Testament were originally written in Greek rather than Hebrew, and are not considered canonical by either Jews or Protestant Christians. They are considered “apocryphal” books. However, Roman Catholics consider them deuterocanonical and include them in the Catholic Bible. Thus, it is desirable to have translations acceptable to both Catholics and Protestants.

There have been numerous excellent translations of the Bible over the past 400 years. I recommend having three, for different reasons. All are relative inexpensive. They are also available in Oxford Biblical Studies Online.

The Authorized or King James Version (KJV).

Translated in the 17th century and considered a classic of English prose. A necessary translation because of its influence on the English language. Widely available from numerous publishers and freely available on the Internet.

Metzger, Bruce and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. (ISBN: 0-19-528881-5).

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation, a contemporary and commonly cited translation. This edition has excellent notes, and includes the Apocrypha in a separate section.

Senior, Donald, ed. *The Catholic Study Bible* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. (ISBN: 0-19-529775-X).

The New American Bible (NAB), a Catholic translation incorporating the Catholic deuterocanonical books within the Old Testament. Also has an excellent scholarly apparatus.

Kohlenberger, John R, ed. *The Precise Parallel New Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc, USA, 1996. (ISBN: 0-19-528412-7).

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Includes the original Greek text of the New Testament, as well as seven English translations alongside it, including those mentioned above.

### Non-Canonical Books of Possible Interest

Though not sacred books as such, there are collections of primary texts similar to the New Testament writings, but excluded from the canonical New Testament (which in its current form wasn't officially canonical until the fourth century CE). These collections include various early gospels and other writings, including the "Gnostic gospels," that might be of interest to those studying early Christianity.

Robinson, James M. and Richard Smith, eds. *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990. (ISBN: 0-06-162600-7).

Schneemelcher, Wilhelm, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha. Vol. 1, Gospels and Related Writings*. Louisville, Ky.: J. Clarke & Co.; Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991. (ISBN: 0-664-22721-X).

Schneemelcher, Wilhelm, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha. Vol. 2, Writings Relating to the Apostles, Apocalypses and Related Subjects*. Louisville, Ky.: J. Clarke & Co.; Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992. (ISBN: 0-664-22722-8).

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## ISLAM

### Qur'an

For Muslims, the Qur'an is the word of God revealed to his prophet Muhammad over a period of many years. Muhammad recited the words, which were written down soon after his death. The standard written text was established around 650 CE and is known as the "Uthmanic text." Unlike, for example, the Christian Bible, there is one version of the Qur'an accepted as authoritative by all Muslims. It is divided into 114 chapters, called suras, in order of length from longest to shortest. The suras are referred to by name rather than number. Like many holy books, it is meant to be recited orally in its original language. No translation is considered authoritative by scholars, but the following two translations are respected and easily available, including in Oxford Islamic Studies Online:

Abdel Haleem, M. A., trans. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. (ISBN: 0-19-953595-7).

Arberry, Arthur J., trans. *The Koran Interpreted*. 2 vols. London: Allen and Unwin, 1955. (ISBN: 0-684-82507-4—an available reprint).

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## HADITH

Hadith are sayings or acts attributed to the prophet Muhammad and are the most important sources for interpreting Islamic law after the Qur'an. Whereas the Qur'an is the word of God revealed to Muhammad, the Hadith are sayings or actions performed or approved by Muhammad. Below are English translations of Hadith of central importance to the Sunni and Shi'ite denominations of Islam.

### Sunni

The Sahih al-Bukhari is the most authoritative collection of Hadith for Sunni Muslims. The entire collection is translated in nine volumes. There is also a one-volume translation of the first part of the Sahih. Both are available and reasonably priced:

Al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Ismā'īl. *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahīh Bukhārī*. 9 vols. Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997. (ISBN: 9960717313).

Al-Bukhari, Muhammad b. Ismā'īl. *Sahīh al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam*. Translated by Muhammad Asad. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: A. S. Noordeen, 2003. (ISBN: 1-85024-007-8).

Another possibility:

Al-Nawawi, Muhyi al-Din. *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith: An Anthology of the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*. Translated by Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies. Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 1997. (ISBN: 0-946621-65-9).

Another famous collection of Hadith, Arabic with facing English translation.

### Shi'ite

Al-Kulayni's Al-Kafi is an important Shi'a collection of Hadith partly available in English translation, though the translations might be difficult to find in print.

Al-Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub. *Al-Kafī*. Translated by Muhammad Hasan al-Rizvani. Karachi, Pakistan: 1995.

Al-Kulayni, Muhammad b. Ya'qub. *Al-Kafī*. 2 vols. New York: Islamic Seminary. No Date.

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## THE BRIEFEST OF THE BRIEF

Collecting all the volumes mentioned here should provide a good starter collection of sacred books. However, for a ready

reference collection of the most popular titles or as a list to hand to an interested patron, here is a very brief list of titles selected from the bibliography above that are representative and inexpensive:

- Johnson, W. J., trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*.
- Olivelle, Patrick, trans. *Upanisads*.
- Lopez, Donald S., ed. *Buddhist Scriptures*.
- Carter, John Ross and Mahinda Palihawadana, trans. *The Dhammapada: The Sayings of the Buddha*.
- *The Jewish Study Bible*: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh translation.
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books*. (NRSV translation)
- Abdel Haleem, M. A. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*.

## Bibliography

The following sources were used to develop the title list:

- Coward, Harold G. *Scripture in the World Religions: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.
- Oxford University Press. *Buddhism. Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.
- . *Hinduism. Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.
- . *Islamic Studies. Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, n.d.
- Rosen, Jeremy. *Understanding Judaism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2003.
- Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. *Understanding Buddhism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2006.
- Snodgrass, Mary. *Encyclopedia of World Scriptures*. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2001.
- Whaling, Frank. *Understanding Hinduism*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic, 2010.
- Yaran, Cafer S. *Understanding Islam*. Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2007.