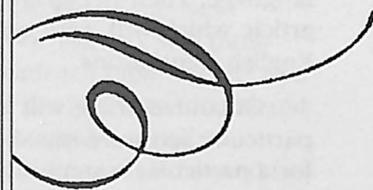


SERVING THE RELIGIOUS INFORMATION NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITIES WITHOUT BLOWING THE BUDGET: PART 2, SCRIPTURES

by J. Douglas Archer



f providing resources to answer questions about religion can blow your budget, just think of what it would cost to make available all the scriptures or sacred books of interest to people in the average Indiana community! Indiana may not be

as religiously diverse as New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago, but it is far more diverse than often thought. In addition to Christians and Jews, Indiana has its share of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Baha'is – not to mention followers of the major Chinese philosophies, Daoism and Confucianism.

AUDIENCE

This follow up to “Serving the Religious Information Needs of Our Communities without Blowing the Budget” (Archer, 2005) will help Indiana librarians collect scriptures to meet those needs at minimal cost. As with part 1, part 2 has a relatively narrow focus, perennially underfunded small to medium sized Indiana public libraries. It should also be of assistance to anyone building a basic collection of religious text since no one, regardless of the size of one's library, ever seems to have enough money to meet all community needs.

METHODOLOGIES

The strategy used here is to identify the minimum number of titles necessary to adequately represent the world's major (oldest, largest, and/or most influential) religious traditions. The specific needs of specific local communities will vary.

A second approach is to remember that paperback editions are available for almost all of these texts. If there is any doubt about priority, buy inexpensive paperback editions of potentially low priority titles. If titles wear out quickly, replace them with more durable editions as needed. Rather than think of this approach as wasting money, consider it cheap market research.

Occasionally there will be strong demand for additional reference materials related to specific texts. If the budget doesn't allow for such purchases, buy study editions of the texts that usually include notes, maps, concordances, and other helpful features.

Lastly, use the Web. Unlike some topics for which relevant electronic resources are expensive, free Web resources can be of great assistance in augmenting print collections of religious texts. If nothing else, earlier translations now in the public domain are readily available through services like Google Books, Project Gutenberg, and the homepages of individual religious bodies.

ASSUMPTION: THE INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM CONNECTION

As with part 1, a basic assumption of this exercise is that American public libraries “should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues” (American Library Association, 1996). The reason someone might want to refer to a particular sacred text should not be an issue. The library's concern is not the promotion of any or all religions – or none. It is to meet the reader's information needs. The fact that a citizen might want to refer to a particular scripture of his or her tradition or of someone else's is, in essence, no different than a dog owner asking for a book about dogs, or cats, or canaries.

SELECTION FACTORS

It must be admitted, however, that buying religious materials calls for a lot more sensitivity than buying books about pets. Selecting scriptures themselves is even more difficult. It is tempting to say, “Ask your local religious leaders.” While in some circumstances this may be the best (and perhaps the only effective) way of identifying the most appropriate version or translation of a given text, in general it would be irresponsible given the theme of this article..

Scripture selection is dependent on several factors. It is helpful to have a rudimentary understanding of the differing attitudes toward scripture of the major religious traditions. Some groups have one sacred book while others have many. Some view their book(s) as revelation while others view them as collected wisdom whether divine or human. In almost all cases, there are many translations of those texts from which to choose.

And, there is another problem. Readers of scripture vary from the casually curious to the dedicated scholar. The latter will require critical texts in the original language. Their needs are beyond the scope of this article which will, with one or two exceptions, stick to English translations.

Of course, there will at times be a need for a particular scripture translated into a particular language for a particular community. By knowing the language of the original and significant English versions of it, one should be in a good position to locate a needed translation. And, since such a need is most likely to arise within a given religious tradition and language community, contacting a local representative of that tradition and community should provide helpful and appropriate guidance.

There are many ways to categorize scriptures including tradition, language, and place of origin; claims to inspiration; and availability of translations. The primary method used here will be to organize scriptures by their traditions' attitudes toward them.

There are at least three such streams. There are religions of "The Book," religions of "Many Books," and religions of oral tradition. The latter are mostly indigenous traditions (e.g. Native Americans) whose stories have only recently been written down and printed. These stories are certainly not considered by their adherents to be any less sacred than those of other traditions. However, the resulting texts don't tend to have been as highly codified as the ancient written traditions – though the oral tradition may be just as ancient. The best thing to do for these traditions is to select a sampling of recent texts that exemplify their "voice."

RELIGIONS OF "THE BOOK"

The four traditions of "The Book," Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism, traditionally view their scriptures as revelations from God or as the "Word of God." While the meaning of that phrase varies within and among these traditions, the result in each case is a tightly defined, relatively small set of authoritative texts treated as one book. The selection of specific translations (or versions) of these books often produces heated debate. Extremely careful selection is, therefore, crucial.

THE JEWISH BIBLE

For Judaism and Christianity "The Book" is, of course, the Bible. Yet different texts are meant by that title. The average Christian knows the Jewish Bible as his or her Old Testament.

The Jewish Bible consists of the written Torah (the first five books of Moses or the Pentateuch), the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets) and the *Kethuvim* (The Writings such as Psalms and Proverbs). Taking the first letter of each of

these collections gives TNK which is written out as TaNaKh or Tanakh. Tanakh, or simply the Bible, is the name used within much of Judaism when referring to the scriptures.

Many people are unaware that Orthodox Judaism holds both the written Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and the oral Torah (given verbally by God to Moses but written down after centuries of oral transmission) to be of equal importance. The oral law is recorded in the Talmud along with centuries of rabbinic commentary upon it. It would be impossible in the scope of this treatment to speak to the information needs the Talmudic student – and those needs would be for the traditional Hebrew and Aramaic texts. If one lives in a community with a large Orthodox population and the demand for such texts is great, there will most certainly be experts available within that community who will be more than competent to give advice and counsel.

It should be obvious, but often isn't, that simply having a Christian Bible on hand does not meet the need for a Jewish Bible even though the Jewish scriptures will be included in it. In addition to the fairly obvious problem of judgmental labeling ("Old" as opposed to "New") and differing ways of presenting the text, the faith commitments and assumptions of the translators make an inevitable and crucial difference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The standard modern version of the Tanakh based on the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text was published by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) in 1985. If there is a significant demand for a Hebrew text, the JPS has also published a Hebrew-English edition which can meet the needs of readers of either or both languages. A 2004 study edition is available from Oxford University Press. Choose one.

Tanakh: A new translation of the holy scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text. (1985). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh: The traditional Hebrew text and the new JPS translation. (2nd Ed.). (1999). Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

The Jewish study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh translation. (2004). New York: Oxford University Press.

CHRISTIAN BIBLES

There are at least three Christian biblical traditions, Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. The New Testament (written originally in Greek) of all three traditions contains the same books. However, they differ as to which Jewish books are included. This is due to the use by early and medieval Christians in both the Greek

East (Orthodox) and Latin West (Catholic) of different versions of a 4th century BCE Greek translation from Hebrew of the Jewish Bible known as the Septuagint.

The Septuagint was prepared in Alexandria, Egypt, for the large Greek speaking Jewish diaspora. Since it was done *before* the contents of what is now known as the Kethuvim (Writings) portion of the Jewish Bible had been finalized within Judaism, some books that made it into Christian Bibles did not make it into Jewish Bibles.

Protestants follow Jewish practice or at most include these “extra” books in a separate section known as the Apocrypha. The Orthodox Christian tradition includes all of them in the Old Testament while the Catholic Church includes most of them in the Old Testament but notes that they are “deuterocanonical” (of a second order). The result is three slightly different collections of “Old” Testament texts for the three traditions.

In moving from the content (books) of the Bible to English translations, things become both simpler (for Catholics and Orthodox) and more complicated (for Protestants). Both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have clearly sanctioned modern translations. When looking for a Catholic Bible, the New American Bible (NAB), available in paperback and in various study editions is the obvious choice. For Orthodox the New Revised Standard Version (see below) fits the same bill.

Protestants, being extremely diverse and lacking a central authority, present something of a problem. The King James or Authorized Version (first printed in 1611) was for generations the standard translation among Protestants with unrivaled influence on English language, literature, and culture. However, it is no longer in widespread use except among the most conservative or traditionally minded of Christians. Since the middle of the 1800s, there has been an ever growing flood of new, more accurate and often more engaging translations from which to choose. A reader can find everything from folksy, slang-filled paraphrases to highly accurate but stilted literal translations. The choice is almost endless.

With a bottomless bucket of money, a library could afford to have as many of these versions as desired to meet the varying tastes of its local community. The versions written by single translators such as Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* or the older *Living Bible* (a paraphrase of the KJV by Kenneth Taylor) are often the most popular. Their distinctive points of view and lack of official oversight allow for the use of truly creative, dynamic language resulting in fresh interpretations of traditional texts. Official translations usually done by large teams of scholars with editorial committee oversight tend to be more literal and less far adventurous in their renderings.

Luckily for librarians on a tight budget, two of these official translations seem to have won the day among Protestants as both authoritative and readable, the New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The NIV was translated by a team from the International Bible Society and is favored by evangelicals while the NRSV was translated by a group sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Jesus Christ in the U.S.A. and is favored by ecumenicals. [Both *evangelical* and *ecumenical* labels are gross over-simplifications and totally unfair but nevertheless helpful.] Since the National Council of Churches is made up of both Protestant and Orthodox Churches, the NRSV is an officially sponsored English version of the Bible – when printed with all of the Apocrypha – for Orthodox Christians. The NRSV has the added benefit of reflecting the language of the KJV/AV tradition up-dated when necessary for contemporary comprehension.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given its historical significance, it is almost inconceivable that a library would lack a copy of the King James (Authorized) Version. The American Bible Society sells copies for practically nothing. The difficult task is deciding which modern translations to add to it.

The ideal solution would be a translation acceptable to Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians. If you are willing to accept a slightly older translation, an Ecumenical or “Common Bible” edition of the Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books first published in 1973 will work for all but evangelicals. Being sponsored by the National Council, it had both ecumenical Protestant and Orthodox approval from the start and later received a Catholic imprimatur. Unfortunately for our purposes, the NRSV was not so fortunate. While a “Common Bible” edition was published, it did not receive an imprimatur due to inclusive language concerns.

Though out of print, many copies of the RSV Common Bible are available through Amazon.com and other online vendors. Add to it a copy of the NIV and you have covered almost all constituencies.

SUMMARY

A minimal collection of Christian Bibles could include the King James or Authorized Version (KJV/AV), a New International Version (NIV), and a Revised Standard Version (RSV) – Common or Ecumenical Edition. A slightly larger but more up to date set of translations would include a copy of the King James or Authorized Version (KJV/AV), New International Version (NIV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), and New American Bible (NAB). The American Bible Society, Zondervan, and Oxford University Press are three

significant publishers of these versions. Since prices and features vary greatly, it will be best to look at their online catalogs – or at those of their competitors – when putting together a selection that fits the needs of the local community.

ISLAM: THE QUR'AN OR KORAN

Unlike the Bible, there is only one textual tradition for the Qur'an. This simplifies selection immensely. However, Islamic tradition also holds that the only true version of the Koran is in Arabic. All attempts at translation are human interpretations. The traditional view is that, if one really wants to encounter the Word of God, learn to read classical Arabic.

Since no translation can really substitute for the Arabic original, there has been less emphasis until recently on translation. In addition, no translation is an official substitute. Lastly, almost all of the readily available modern translations are one person efforts. Consequently, there is significant variation among them. One translation (or interpretation) just won't do. A library needs to have at least two and preferably three English versions for comparison. Given the desire among Muslims to make the Qur'an widely available, many inexpensive editions are available.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If there is a strong demand for the Qur'an in Arabic, meet the needs of both the Arabic and English reader by acquiring a parallel Arabic-English version of the Koran. All of the following English versions are available with parallel Arabic text. And, given the wide variation of interpretation represented in these and other available translations, buy at least two English versions.

The Meaning of the glorious Koran. (M. M. Pickthall, Trans.). Imprint varies.

The Koran interpreted. (A. J. Arberry, Trans.). Imprint varies.

The Koran. (1990). (N. J. Dawood, Trans.). NY: Penguin.

al-Qur'an: A contemporary translation. (1984). (A. Ali, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

An Interpretation of the Qur'an. (2002). (M. Fakhry, Trans.). NY: New York University Press.

The Quran: A new interpretation. (1997). (C. Turner, Trans.). Richmond, England: Curzon.

The Sikhs: *Adi Granth*

For orthodox Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib is the continuation, record, and heir of their first ten gurus. While it is not worshiped (only the one God is wor-

ship), it is venerated, occupying the central spot in all Sikh temples. English translations are rare and generally expensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Until relatively recently, Sikhs have been concentrated in the Punjab of India and Pakistan. However, there is a growing international diaspora with communities spread throughout the United States, including Indiana. If needed, the following edition is currently in print.

Adi Granth or the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. (3rd Ed). (1997). (E. Trumpp, Trans.) New Delhi: Munshirm Manoharlal Pub Pvt Ltd.

RELIGIONS OF MANY BOOKS

The great religions originating in South and East Asia (Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism) each possess dozens if not hundreds of sacred texts. Few if any Indiana libraries can afford or would need to collect all of the texts of a single tradition much less all of those traditions. The fact that these religions approach their texts a bit differently than those religions of a single book will actually allow librarians to be simultaneously selective and responsible. Few if any readers will expect to find every text in a local library. Having copies of the signature works and a collection of sample texts should be adequate.

Before proceeding further, it should be noted that just because these religions have many texts and don't consider them to be revelation (the Word of God) in the same way that the religions of The Book do, does not mean that they value them any less. They simply value them in different ways. Their texts represent to them the wisdom of the ages and of the sages providing a window to the divine.

Hinduism

Hindu religious texts can be divided into many categories, the most common of which are the Vedas (ancient Sanskrit hymns), the Upanishads (meditations upon the Vedas), epics such as the *Mahabharata*, including the *Bhagavad Gita* (that relate stories of gods and heroes), bhakti or devotional literature, and various meditations credited to particular figures or schools of thought.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The most familiar texts and those most likely of interest to our communities are the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Here is a sampling of available, inexpensive editions of three versions plus two general collections from which to choose. Purchase at least one collection and one each of the *Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita*. Imprints may vary.

Hindu scriptures. (1996). (D. Goodall, Ed.). Berkeley: University of California.

The Hindu tradition. (1972). (A. T. Embree, Ed.). NY: Vintage.

The Principal Upanishads. (2003). (Swami Nikhilananda, Ed. & Trans.). Mineola, NY: Dover.

The Upanishads: Breath of the eternal. (1957). (Swami Prabhavananda & F. Manchester, Eds.). NY: New American Library.

The Upanishads. (1965). (J. Mascaro, Trans.). NY: Penguin.

Bhagavad-Gita: The song of God. (2004). (Swami Prabhavananda & C. Isherwood, Eds.). Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.

The Bhagavad Gita. (2000). (W. J. Johnson, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's counsel in time of war. (1986). (B. Miller, Ed.). NY: Bantam.

Buddhism

No single collection of texts representing the teachings of the Buddha or of his early followers is completely common to all of the varied forms of Buddhism. However, the Tripitaka or Tipitaka, "the three baskets," is widely accepted. The three collections listed below contain selections from all of the major traditions. There are also three versions of the Dhammapada, a short collection of the Buddha's sayings taken from the Tripitaka/Tipitaka. Many additional collections and editions are in print.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These titles are all available in paperback editions. Acquire at least one collection and one copy of the *Dhammapada*. Buy two of each if at all possible. Imprints may vary.

Buddhist texts through the ages. (1995). (E. Conze, Ed. & Trans.) Oxford: One World.

The Teachings of the compassionate Buddha. (1982). (E. A. Burtt, Ed.). NY: New American Library.

The Buddhist tradition in India, China & Japan. (1972). (W. T. De Bary, Ed.). NY: Vintage.

The Dhammapada: A new translation of the Buddhist classic. (2005). (G Fronsdal, Trans.). Boston: Shambhala

The Dhammapada: Verses on the way. (2004). (G. Wallis, Trans.). NY: Modern Library.

The Dhammapada: With introductory essays. (1996). (S. Radhakrishnan, Trans.) NY: Oxford University Press.

Taoism

Some consider Taoism to be more of a philosophy than a religion. In either case, with Confucianism and traditional folk religion, it forms the religious underpinnings of Chinese life and culture. The traditional founder of Taoism is the ancient sage Lao Tzu and the text attributed to him is the *Tao Te Ching*. Lao Tzu's teachings were further recorded and expanded upon by his most prominent follower, *Chuang Zu* (which is also the name of his book). Just to confuse things a bit, in the newer transliteration system of Pinyin, Lao Tzu becomes Laozi, *Tao Te Ching* becomes *Dao De Jing*, and Chuang Zu becomes *Zhuangzi*. There are, of course, many other significant writings in these traditions, but inexpensive English translations of them are far more difficult to acquire.

Recommendation:

There are many paperback editions available of the *Tao Te Ching*. Buy one copy of it and a second if possible before adding the *Chuang Tzu*.

Tao Te Ching. (1997). (D. C. Lau, Trans.). NY: Columbia University Press.

Tao Te Ching. (2007). (R. B. Blakney, Trans.). NY: Signet Classics.

Tao Te Ching: Lao Tzu. (2001). (D. Hinton, Trans.). Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

Chuang Tzu: The inner chapters. (1998). (D. Hinton, Trans.). Washington, DC: Counterpoint

The Book of Chuang Tzu. (2007). (M. Palmer & E. Breuilly, Trans.). NY: Penguin.

Confucianism

As with Taoism, Confucianism is a philosophy or a religion depending upon one's point of view. With Taoism and traditional religion, it is the other foundation of Chinese life and culture. It was founded on the teachings of another great ancient sage, Confucius (Pinyin – K'ung-fu-tzu or K'ung-tzu), and expanded upon in the writings of his follower Mencius (Pinyin – Mengzi). The basic teachings of Confucius are contained in his *Analects* and expanded on by Mencius in a collection usually title simply *Mencius*. By the way, there is no transliteration problem with "analects" because that term is already a translation from the Chinese. There are, of course, many additional imprints of the *Analects*. There are also many writings by later figures, but they are less accessible. The goal remains: minimum coverage at minimum cost.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As with Taoism, buy at least one copy of the *Analects* and two if possible before moving on to *Mencius*. The *Analects* are much easier to obtain.

The original analects: Sayings of Confucius and his successors. (2001). (E. B. Brooks & A. T. Brooks, Trans.). NY: Columbia University Press

The Analects of Confucius. (1998). (S. Leys, Ed. & Trans.). NY: W.W. Norton.

Analects of Confucius. (1999). (D. Hinton, Trans.). Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

Mencius. (1999). (D. Hinton, Trans.). Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

Mencius. (2005). (D. C. Lau, Trans.). NY: Penguin.

OTHER TRADITIONS

In addition to the ancient "great" religions, there are at least two other religions of more recent origin that should be represented in most if not all Indiana public library collections of scripture.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

Mormons affirm the Christian Bible and the *Book of Mormon* as their scriptures. It is the only scripture listed here that originated in the United States. That origin and the Church's size and growing political influence all argue for inclusion of a copy of its foundational holy book in library collections. The translation into English by Joseph Smith of golden plates found in upstate New York is the official text. There are no other translations and only one textual tradition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several editions are available from the Church and from commercial publishers; select one.

The Book of Mormon: An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. (1981). (J. Smith, Jr., Trans.). Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Book of Mormon: Another testament of Jesus Christ. (1981). (J. Smith, Jr., Trans.). Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Imprint varies.

The Book of Mormon: A reader's edition. (2005). (G. Hardy, Ed.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press,

Baha'i

An offshoot of Shia Islam in the mid-19th century, the Baha'i faith has spread around the world. The writings of its founder the Bab ("Gateway"), Iranian Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, and his follower, Mirza Hoseyn 'Ali Nuri, are central. The latter declared himself to be the messenger of God predicted by the Bab and was from then on referred to as Baha-Ullah ("Glory of God"). All sacred scriptures of the world's religions are affirmed. While no single text by the founders seems to

be considered new scripture, two collections by Shoghi Effendi Rabbanim the great-grandson of Baha-Ullah give a taste of their teachings..

RECOMMENDATIONS

If possible, get both texts. If not, either will provide that taste.

The Kitab-i-Iqan: The book of certitude. (2003). (S. Effendi, Trans.). Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trusts, U.S.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas: The most holy book. (1993). (S. Effendi, Trans.). Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, U.S.

OTHER TRADITIONS, OTHER TEXTS

There are bound to be other traditions and texts of interest to particular Indiana communities and, therefore, candidates for purchase. The primary entry for any given religion in *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions* (1999) will identify the basic texts in its concluding paragraphs.

COLLECTIONS OF SELECTIONS

Any small selection of texts from a much larger body of works of necessity does an injustice to the variety and depth of experience recorded in that larger collection. That said, if the money just is not there, one of the following will at least give a flavor of the traditions represented. Many are out of print, but all are readily available on the Web whether new or used.

The world's great scriptures; An anthology of the sacred books of the ten principal religions. (L. Browne, Ed.). Various editions

The portable world Bible. (R. O. Ballou, Ed.). Various editions.

Sacred books of the world. (A. C. Coates, Ed.). Various editions.

A world religions reader. (1996). (I. S. Markham, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Sacred texts of the world: A universal anthology. (1982). (N. Smart & R. D. Hecht, Eds.). NY: Crossroad.

World scripture: A comparative anthology of sacred texts. (1995). (A. Wilson, Ed.). St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

The world's wisdom: Sacred texts of the world's religions. (1991). (P. Novak, Ed.). San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

CONCLUSION

Following the minimum recommendations, a representative but minimally adequate collection of

sacred texts could be build with the purchase of approximately 15 titles unless one settles for a collection or two of selections. If that's too much for one year, take two.

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- Merriam-Webster's encyclopedia of world religions*. (1999). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

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