

Unit Three SECTION H - **THE BIBLE: LITERATURE AND SACRED TEXT**

PART ONE: THE BIBLE AS LIVING CLASSIC AND SACRED TEXT

Syllabus Objectives	<p><i>Knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have a knowledge of how the Bible came to be written <p><i>Understanding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have an understanding that the Bible has been, and continues to be, a classic text for Western civilisation. <p><i>Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify biblical motifs in art and literature• navigate the format and structure of the Bible <p><i>Attitudes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• respect for the Bible as a living, classic, and sacred text• an awareness and respect for the sacred writings of other major religious traditions• an awareness of the central place of the Bible in Judaeo-Christian traditions.
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PROCEDURE

Topic: 1.1 The Bible as living classic

Introduction: examples of classic texts from a variety of sources

Write the words a “classic text” on the chalkboard. Invite students to come to the board and note the examples that come to mind.

Discuss: How are the example you have given “classic text”?

Take feedback from students and explain that a classic text is one that has been recognized over time to be of high quality and of established value to a wide audience. Among a list of classic texts important for our cultural heritage one could include the Illiad and Oddysey of Homer, the Aenead of Virgil, St. Augustine’s Confessions, Dante’s Divine Comedy, Chaucer’s, Canterbury Tales, Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queen, Shakespeare’s plays, Milton’s Paradise Lost, James Joyce’s Ulysses, John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, to name but a few.

• *testing the Bible as classic.*

Discuss: How is the Bible a “classic text”?

Take feedback and conclude that all major religions have their own classic texts. Judaism has its Torah, Mishna and Talmud; Islam has the Quran or Koran and the Christian bible is one of the great classics of literature.

- It has had a profound influence on western religious thought, art, music and literature;
- It has been read for its wisdom and inspiration, its vision of the world, its moral guidance and its profound insights into human life.
- It is part and parcel of our cultural as well as our religious heritage and it has influenced individuals and societies down the ages.
- It was the first book to be printed (1455) and remains the most printed book in the world, with an estimated 2.5 billion copies distributed since 1815.
- It has been translated into all the major languages of the world.

• *the influence of the language of the Bible*

Research Assignment:

Distribute the following work cards and ask students to research the extent to which the Bible influenced the areas mentioned in the following work cards:

Work Cards:

<p><i>Research the Bible influenced on a piece of literature e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finnegan’s Wake</i> – J. Joyce • <i>Back to Methuselah</i> - G.B. Shaw • Medieval mystery plays (e.g. <i>Noah’s Fludde, Harrowing of Hell</i>) • <i>Canterbury Tales</i> - Chaucer • <i>Fairie Quenne</i> – Spenser • <i>Paradise Lost</i> – Milton • <i>Sennacherib</i> – Byron • <i>The Wasteland, Journey of the Magi</i> - T.S. Eliot • <i>Joseph and his Brothers</i> - Thomas Mann • <i>Hamlet</i> and <i>Othello</i> – W. Shakespeare • Etc. 	<p><i>Research the influence of the Bible on the English speaking world i.e. Look up the Bible and identify any words that have become part of the English language e.g.</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>(Gen 25:31)</td> <td>(Mt 16:19)</td> <td>(Gal 5:4)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Ex 21:24)</td> <td>(Mt 6:28)</td> <td>(1 Tim 3:8)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Lev 16:6)</td> <td>(Mk 8:33)</td> <td>(1 Tim 6:12)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Job 41:1)</td> <td>(Mt 5:13)</td> <td>(James 5:11)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Job 40:15)</td> <td>(Mt 3:11)</td> <td>(1 Th 5:2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Dan 5:5)</td> <td>(Mt 16:3)</td> <td>(Jn 20:25)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Dan 2:33)</td> <td>(Mt 26:41)</td> <td>Etc.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Jer 13:23)</td> <td>(Mt 25:15-22)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(Rev 16:16)</td> <td>Etc.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Etc.</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	(Gen 25:31)	(Mt 16:19)	(Gal 5:4)	(Ex 21:24)	(Mt 6:28)	(1 Tim 3:8)	(Lev 16:6)	(Mk 8:33)	(1 Tim 6:12)	(Job 41:1)	(Mt 5:13)	(James 5:11)	(Job 40:15)	(Mt 3:11)	(1 Th 5:2)	(Dan 5:5)	(Mt 16:3)	(Jn 20:25)	(Dan 2:33)	(Mt 26:41)	Etc.	(Jer 13:23)	(Mt 25:15-22)		(Rev 16:16)	Etc.		Etc.		
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<p><i>Research the influence of the bible on Speeches and Declarations e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) • American Declaration of Independence • “I have a dream...” speech of Martin Luther King • Inauguration speech of his Presidency in 1977 Jimmy Carter • Etc. 	<p><i>Research the influence of the bible on the lives of individuals and societies e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conversion of St. Augustine • Reformers such as Luther and Calvin • The translation of the bible into the languages of Europe • John Wesley (1703-91) • Etc. 																														
<p><i>Research the influence of the Bible on art e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Christian times - Roman catacombs & mosaics from the 4th and 5th centuries churches in Rome, Ravenna etc. • Early medieval mosaic works in churches in Constantinople etc. • Manuscript illumination • Irish High Crosses • Romanesque and Gothic sculpture • Stained glass windows of churches • Early Renaissance bible paintings 	<p><i>Research the influence of the Bible on music e.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas carols; Handel’s Messiah etc. • Composers - Henry Purcell, Mozart, Bach, Brahms etc. • Negro spirituals • Gospel songs 																														

When students have completed their research assignment ask them to present their findings to the rest of the class.

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on literature* and conclude that biblical characters, motifs and events from Genesis to Revelation have caught the imagination of writers of prose, poetry and plays of all ages e.g.

- The medieval mystery plays took a series of stories from the bible and wove them into plays, which provided popular instruction for the people (e.g. *Noah’s Fludde, Harrowing of Hell*).
- Shakespeare’s plays abound in biblical references e.g. *Hamlet* and *Othello* have more than fifty references each. The title of the play *Measure for Measure* is based on the words of Jesus in Mt 7:2 (N. Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays*).
- Biblical themes and allusions are also to be found in Irish writings such as those of Swift, Shaw, Yeats, Beckett and others.
- The extraordinary creature of the book of Job, the Behemoth finds a place in Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*.
- The early chapters of Genesis figure in G.B. Shaw, *Back to Methuselah*.
- In Irish Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee, is the central character of the short story by Ó Conaire, Pádraig (1956) ‘Teatrarch na Gaililí’ *Scothscealtaí*, ed. De Bhaldraithe, T. ed. Dublin: Sairséal agus Dill, 1956, 11-26.

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on the English speaking world* and conclude that in the English speaking world, the introduction of printing and the translation of the bible into English (Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva Bible, King James Version) made the bible much more accessible to English writers, and this in turn led to the increasing influence of the bible on the language. New terms and phrases became part and parcel of the English language, for example:

- Armageddon is a term that has become part of modern speech, film and literature. Mentioned in Rev 16:16 it was to be the scene of the final victorious battle that would see Christ and his followers victorious over the beast, the false prophet and the kings of the earth (Rev 19).
- Words and Phrases -

- Birthright (Gen 25:31)	- Keys of the kingdom (Mt 16:19)	- Fallen from grace (Gal 5:4)
- Eye for an eye (Ex 21:24)	- Lillies of the field (Mt 6:28)	- Filthy lucre (1 Tim 3:8)
- Scapegoat (Lev 16:6)	- Get behind me Satan (Mk 8:33)	- Fight the good fight' (1 Tim 6:12)
- Leviathan (Job 41:1)	- The Salt of the earth (Mt 5:13)	- Patience of Job (James 5:11)
- Behemoth (Job 40:15)	- The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:41)	- Thief in the night (1 Th 5:2)
- Leopard changing his spots (Jer 13:23)	- Render unto Caesar (Mt 25:15-22)	
- Writing on the Wall (Dan 5:5)	- Doubting Thomas (Jn 20:25)	
- Feet of clay (Dan 2:33)	- Baptism of fire (Mt 3:11)	
	- The signs of the times' (Mt 16:3)	

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on Speeches and Declarations* and conclude that given the undoubted influence of the bible on individuals down the ages it is not surprising to find that the bible has influenced important speeches and declarations e.g.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognition of the 'inherent dignity' and of the 'equal and inalienable rights' of every human being. In the preamble to the Declaration the influence can be seen of Gen 1:26 where it is said that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God.

Or Case study: Read the following extracts from famous speeches and declarations.

<p><i>"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">- First Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights</p>	<p><i>"All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">- American Declaration of Independence</p>
<p><i>"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Martin Luther King 1963</p>	<p><i>"Here before me is the Bible used in the inauguration of our first President, in 1789, and I have just taken the oath of office on the Bible my mother gave me a few years ago, opened to a timeless admonition from the ancient prophet Micah: 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'" (Micah 6:8)</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">- Jimmy Carter inauguration speech of his Presidency in 1977</p>

Discuss: How do these speeches / declarations show the influence of the Bible?

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on Speeches and Declarations* and conclude that -

- The prophetic preaching on justice and the preaching of Jesus (e.g. Golden Rule, Lk 6:31; Good Samaritan, Lk 10:30-37) can be seen in the first article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The influence of Gen 1:26 may be seen in the American Declaration of Independence
- In his famous speech 'I have a dream' of 1963, Martin Luther King made Isaiah's dream of a new exodus (Is 40) his own as he spoke in prophetic tones.
- In the inauguration speech of his Presidency in 1977 Jimmy Carter used a famous quotation from Mic 6:8, the text of which lay open before him as he spoke. Carter referred to the text later in his speech when he said that he hoped that when his presidency had ended that people would say about America that that we had remembered the words of Micah and renewed our search for humility, mercy, and justice.

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on the lives of individuals and societies* and conclude that down the centuries, the bible has exercised an influence on individuals of all kinds such as artists, composers, and writers.

- Theologians have studied its pages and it has been read for its spiritual and moral guidance. It had a crucial role in the conversion of St. Augustine. For the Reformers such as Luther and Calvin the bible assumed an even greater importance with the bible alone being seen as normative for Christian faith and doctrine.
- The translation of the bible into the vernacular languages of Europe saw the influence of the bible growing in the lives of individuals. In 17th century Ireland William Ó Domhnaill, William Bedell and Robert Boyle combined to make the bible available in Irish to the people. Bible Societies emerged from the Protestant movement in Germany early in the 18th century and their influence gradually spread to England and beyond. In Ireland, their presence was a subject of controversy in the first half of the 19th century. John Wesley (1703-91) founded a religious society in England in the 18th century known now as the Methodists, its purpose to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. Other societies were founded by individuals deeply influenced by the bible (Baptists, Jehovah Witnesses, etc.).

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on art* and conclude that the influence of the Bible is evident from –

- Early Christian times in the Roman catacombs, in mosaics from the 4th and 5th centuries found in churches in Rome (S. Maria Maggiore, S. Paolo fuori le Mura) and Ravenna (S. Apollinare), and in the beautiful wooden doors of S. Sabina in Roma.
- Early medieval mosaic work in churches in Constantinople, Nicea, Thessalonika, Rome,
- Manuscript illumination (Vienna Genesis, Paris Gospel of St. Matthew, Vatican Bible, German codices)
- The Irish High Crosses (Monasterboice, Durrow, Kells, etc.),
- Romanesque and Gothic sculpture (Arles, Chartres, Nuremberg, Pisa, Siena),
- A stained glass window of churches such as Chartres and Rheims, and in the frescoes of Duccio and other artists in Italy. In more recent times there is the stained glass work of Harry Clark, Evie Hone and Marc Chagall and the contemporary art of Irish artist Patrick Pye.
- The early Renaissance bible cycles painted by Giotto or sculpted by Pisano and Ghiberti (Florence); Florentine frescoes of Masaccio in church of S. Maria del Carmine (Banishment of Adam and Eve, Tribute money), Donatello's passion cycle in the pulpits of S. Lorenzo, Fra Angelico's cycle of frescoes in S. Marco. As the Renaissance progressed and art flourished artists such as, Piero della Francesca, Perugino, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Tintoretto and Titian were inspired by biblical events and motifs. Michaelangelo left an extraordinary cycle of biblical paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel and much more besides (e.g. Last Judgement, Pauline chapel frescoes, David, Moses). Raphael painting of the Transfiguration. The bible offered inspiration to Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Rubens and others throughout Europe.

Case Study: Present students with slides of how different artists approached the same biblical theme e.g.

- Moses sculpted by Michaelangelo (Rome) or Rembrandt (Moses breaking the Tables of the Law)
- The Prodigal Son of Rembrandt and Rubens
- The crucifixion scenes of Masaccio and Rubens
- Rembrandt's Descent from the Cross and Michaelangelo's Pieta
- The Emmaus supper of Caravaggio and Rembrandt

Assignment: Compare the way in which the different artists approach the same biblical theme.

Or

Visits or present students with slides of High Crosses

Assignment: Retell the biblical stories that are represented on a particular High Cross.

Discuss: What is the relationship between the scenes depicted on the particular High Cross?

Take feedback on the *influence of the bible on music* and conclude that the bible has provided inspiration for musicians from time immemorial – for classical composers and for authors of more popular compositions e.g.

- Handel's oratorio *Messiah* could be described as a collage of texts from the Old Testament prophets and psalms, the New Testament infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke and from other NT texts that speak of Christ.
- The 17th century composer Henry Purcell found inspiration in the Song of Songs (*My Beloved Spoke*) and Jeremiah (*Let Mine Eyes run down with Tears*); Mozart in the Gospel of John (Agnus Dei); Bach in the Magnificat (Lk 1:46ff.) and in the gospel passion narratives; Brahms in *A German Requiem* included quite a few biblical references.

- Negro Spirituals, Gospel Songs (<http://www.bibleasmusic.com>/<http://ingeb.org/spiritua.html>
<http://singers.byu.edu/repertoire/year.html>)

Case Study: Read the text of Handel's *Messiah*

Identify where Handel has taken texts from the Prophets or the Book of Psalms

Take feedback from students.

Discuss: How did Handel use and interpret the texts taken from the Prophets or the Book of Psalms?

Written Questions:

1. Explain why we can say the bible is a classic text.
2. Give **one** example of how the Bible has influenced either a constitution or a declaration of independence
or
Give **one** example of how the bible has influenced a piece of art or a piece of music.
3. Describe one way that Scripture has influenced the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

Outcome: As a result of studying this section, students should be able to

- Identify characteristics of a classic text (one which is recognised over time to be of high quality and of established value to a wide audience)
- Recognise the Bible as such a text
- Point to biblical influences on a variety of other literature:
 - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - constitutions and declarations of independence
 - famous speeches
- Give an example of biblical influences on the lives of individuals and societies
- Give an example of biblical influences on a piece of art or a piece of music.

Topic 1.2 The Bible as sacred text

The Bible as revelation

While Jews and Christians see the Bible as the word of God written by inspired authors, it is also the work of human authors, and the methods used to study any piece of literature must be applied to the study of a biblical passage or book.

The first step in this study is to recognize the types of writing of the passage or book. As an obituary in a newspaper differs from a biographical sketch of the same person, or a match report differs from a news item, so too the description of the Exodus in the song of Moses is very different from its description in the narrative of the book of Exodus. Equally a psalm is very different from a piece of historical writing (e.g. Books of Kings), and a gospel from a letter of Paul.

Assignment: Find examples of the following types of writing in the Bible.

<i>Type of writing</i>	<i>Bible e.g.</i>	<i>Type of writing</i>	<i>Bible e.g.</i>	<i>Type of writing</i>	<i>Bible e.g.</i>
Stories	_____	Heroic sagas	_____	Genealogies	_____
Prayers	_____	Historical lists	_____	Poems	_____
Hymns	_____	Infancy stories	_____	Songs	_____
Parables	_____	Sermons	_____	Proverbs	_____
Myths	_____	Law codes	_____	Letters	_____

The recognition that the bible contains various types of writing is crucial for its interpretation. To appreciate the message of the text it is necessary first to establish its literary form or genre. An appreciation of the human quality of the scriptures and the human processes by which they were produced is necessary for the interpretation of these sacred writings which emerged from the religious experience of the Jewish and Christian communities and were written by human authors using a great variety of literary forms.

While the bible was, and continues to be, a classic text for Western civilization and may be studied and read from a literary point of view, applying literary methods common to the study of literature, it is also for Jews and Christians a religious text of profound religious significance: the Hebrew Scriptures for Jews, the whole Bible for Christians. For them the Bible is the Word of God, that is, a collection of sacred writings inspired by God, written by divinely inspired authors who tell the sacred history of God's dealings with humanity. It

communicates God's message to humanity, a message of truth which 'guides and inspires, challenges and consoles' (New Jerome Biblical Commentary).

• *the formation and understandings of the canon*

Write the term "The canon of scripture" on the chalkboard and brainstorm the students understanding of the term.

Take feedback and conclude that the term 'canon' comes from the Greek word 'kanon' which signifies a rule or norm. The Canon of Scripture refers to a collection of sacred writings believed to be inspired by God and seen as normative for faith and practice. The acceptance by Jewish and Christian communities of such writings as normative for them was part of an evolving process that began after the Babylonian exile and continued up to the 3rd or 4th centuries of the common era (CE) and even beyond.

Read *Student Work*: The canon of scripture:

For the Jews the canon of scripture is the Hebrew writings of the Old Testament

From about the time of the exile to the first century CE the Law, the Prophets and the Writings emerged as normative, governing the life of the Jewish people. That the canon was still evolving may be seen from the existence at the end of the first century CE of Palestinian and Alexandrian lists of the books accorded canonical status. The Palestinian canon contained books written in Hebrew. The larger Alexandrian canon reflected dependence on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

The need to draw up such a list was created in part by the crisis brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, the dispersion of the Jewish communities and the use by the Christians of the Jewish scriptures. An attempt to define a canonical selection of Jewish writings probably occurred at Jamnia (c. 90 CE), but it was some time before the Jewish canon of 39 Hebrew books finally emerged.

For Christians the canon of scripture refers to the collection of books in the Old and New Testaments

Christians came to accept as canonical a collection of 46 Old Testament books, that is, those books on the Alexandrian list. The Reformation led to the acceptance by the reformers of the Jewish canon of 39 books. This left seven books outside their canon, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus or Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, as well as passages from the books of Daniel and Esther. The emergence of a New Testament canon of 27 books was also an evolving process over a long period. That the Old Testament writings were seen as sacred in the time of Jesus is clear from the New Testament (2 Tim). Reliable accounts of the career and teachings of Jesus, of his miracle and of his passion, death and resurrection were needed by the community's teachers, preachers and missionaries. With the gradual disappearance of those who had known and heard Jesus there was a need for more permanent written accounts this led to the emergence of the gospels. The need to exercise oversight over the faith of early Christian communities led to the emergence of a second type of literature, namely, letters written to communities to help them live out in the face of various difficulties the faith which they had adopted. These letters came to be publicly read in the early Christian communities (Col 4:16). Other works were also produced (Acts, Revelation) and continued to be produced right through the 2nd and 3rd centuries (writings such as letters, gospels and apocalypses). The process of deciding which books were authoritative and normative for the faith and life of the Christian community and which were not was a process of the community itself.

The late 2nd or early 3rd century 'Muratorian Canon' provides information on the books that were then regarded by the Christian communities as canonical. Origen (c.185-251) and Eusebius (c.260-340) are later witnesses to the emergence of a New Testament canon. In 367 a list of the canonical books of the New Testament as we know it finally appeared, drawn up by Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.

Gospels and letters continued to be produced until well into the second century. As a consequence Christian communities were engaged in a continuing process of deciding which books should be accepted by the community as 'canonical' and which should not. A number of criteria were important in deciding this:

- 'canonical' writings were those that were publicly read in the community and writings on which the community placed a high value

- ‘canonical’ writings were those that were in some sense of apostolic origin i.e. they were quoted in ancient (early Christian) writings
- ‘canonical’ writings were those that passed the Rule of Faith (the common faith of the Christian community)

Piece of Literature Omitted from the Canon e.g. Gospel of Thomas - a second century collection of sayings of Jesus (for a translation of the text see <http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html>)

A 4th century text of the *Gospel of Thomas* in Coptic was discovered in Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945 and published in 1957. This gospel contains 114 sayings nearly all of which are introduced by the phrase ‘Jesus said’. Most of the sayings are brief and terse; many are enigmatic. There is no narrative, only a minimum amount of dialogue. About half of the sayings are similar to sayings in the canonical gospels. It also contains some parables (e.g. Sower, Lost Sheep). The Gospel of Thomas offers valuable comparative material for a study of the sayings of Jesus. It is possible that some of its sayings come from an early independent oral tradition - many are shorter, and theologically less developed than their parallels in the canonical gospels. Parables are found without elaboration or explanation.

Assignment:

Compare the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Sower in the Gospel of Thomas with their parallels in the canonical gospels.

biblical interpretation today – archaeology

Since the early 19th century

Archaeological discoveries throughout the Middle East have helped throw light on –

- Biblical chronology
- Israel’s history, its laws, and customs
- Everyday life in ancient times
- Places mentioned in the bible
- The biblical narrative itself

Archaeological discoveries from the ancient Near East have thrown light on -

- The creation stories of Genesis (e.g. Enuma Elish and the Epic of Gilgamesh mentioned below in Myth)
- The law codes of Ex 21-23 (Code of Hammurabi, displayed in the Louvre, Paris; text at http://i-cias.com/e.o/texts/political/code_hammurabi.htm)
- The psalms (texts found in Ugarit in present day Syria contain poetry very similar to some of the poetry in the psalms)

Assignment:

Compare the laws of the Code of Hammurabi (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/hammenu.htm>) with biblical laws.

Present students with slides or extracts from the Qumran texts (<http://faculty.smu.edu/dbinder/archaeol.html>) and explain that the archaeological discoveries made at Qumran from 1947 onwards have been very important for biblical studies. Every book in the Old Testament except Esther is represented in the fragments found in Qumran. The documents found there have brought much new information on the state of the text of the Old Testament before the birth of Christianity.

Archaeological investigation continues at sites throughout Palestine associated with the New Testament (<http://faculty.smu.edu/dbinder/archaeol.html>) e.g.

- An inscribed slab found at Delphi and having a reference to Gallio (Acts 18:12-17) helps to date the letters of Paul.
- Caesarea (a monument erected by Pontius Pilate and bearing his own name - <http://www.materdei.ie/logos/>; <http://www.livius.org/pi-pm/pilate/pilate08.html>)
- Jerusalem (some of the ruins of the temple reconstructed by Herod and destroyed in 70 CE were still to be seen, as, for instance, the Wailing Wall;
- The discovery in burial caves near Jerusalem in 1968 of the remains of a man who had been crucified before 70 CE shows how people were crucified at that time (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/crucifixion.html>)

- Galilee (a 1st century Galilean fishing boat was discovered in the mud of the Sea of Galilee in 1986; see <http://www.kchanson.com/ARTICLES/fishing.html>)

biblical interpretation today – redaction criticism (Higher level only)

Review Junior Certificate Sample Lesson Plan Section B Part 2 or

Present the students with two different accounts of the same event (e.g. Different newspaper accounts of a game, film etc.) Using two different voices read the two different accounts and discuss:

How are the two accounts similar?

How are the accounts different?

Take feedback from the students and note their responses on the chalkboard.

Discuss: Why are there differences between the two accounts?

Explain that redaction criticism focuses on the contribution of the editor or redactor of a text, endeavouring to discover the redactor's concerns and ideas. Redaction criticism may be applied to Old Testament writings as well as to those of the New Testament where it is used primarily in relation to the synoptic gospels.

Redaction Criticism has been a feature of the study of the synoptic gospels since the 1950s in the wake of studies on the gospels of Mark (Marxsen), Luke (Conzelmann) and Matthew (Bornkamm, Barth and Held).

Redaction criticism works on the theory that Mark's was the first gospel, and that Luke and Matthew made independent use of Mark and a sayings source called Q.

e.g. 1 *Student Work: Gospel accounts of "The Baptism and temptation of Jesus"*

Matthew 3:13-4:11	Mark 1:9-13	Luke 3:21-4:13
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Using three different voices read the gospel accounts of "The Baptism and temptation of Jesus" in Matthew Mark Luke using the NRSV, Jerusalem or Good News Bible.

Discuss: How are the accounts of "The Baptism and temptation of Jesus" similar?

How are the accounts different?

Student Assignment:

Each student silently rereads the accounts underlining words that are in common with one colour and words that are particular to a gospel with a different colour.

Take feedback from the student assignment on the chalkboard as outlined below:

"The Baptism of Jesus and temptation"

Matthew 3:13-4:11	Mark 1:9-13	Luke 3:21-4:13
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Note the points that are in common with one colour and those that are particular to a gospel with a different colour.

Discuss: At what points does one gospel have more or less to say about the Baptism than another?

What points in the story do they all have in common?

Why are there differences in the versions of this story?

Which of the Gospel accounts appears to have most points in common with the others?

Take feedback on these questions and conclude that a systematic comparison of how Matthew and Luke used Mark led to the detection of the theological tendencies, concerns and interests of the individual evangelists.

e.g. 2 *Student Work: Gospel accounts of "The Parable of the Sower"*

Matthew 13:3-8	Mark 4:3-8	Luke 8:5-8
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Using three different voices read the gospel accounts of "The Parable of the Sower" in Matthew Mark Luke using the NRSV, Jerusalem or Good News Bible.

Discuss: How are the accounts of "The Parable of the Sower" similar?

How are the accounts different?

Divide the chalkboard into three columns as below:

Matthew 13:3-8	Mark 4:3-8	Luke 8:5-8
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Note the points that are in common with one colour and those that are particular to a gospel with a different colour.

Discuss: At what points does one gospel have more or less to say about the *Parable of the Sower* than another?

What points in the story do they all have in common?

Why are there differences in the versions of this story?

Which of the Gospel accounts appears to have most points in common with the others?

Take feedback and conclude that it is possible to detect Mark's concerns and interests through a study of particular passages of the gospel.

Redaction Criticism developed from its early focus on the changes which the evangelists made to their sources to take more account of their overall arrangement of their respective gospels, the order in which the material is presented, the links between individual scenes and the inclusion or not of specific material. This has highlighted further the contribution of the evangelists in choosing, arranging and editing the contents of their gospels. The evangelists were individual authors in their own right who selected, arranged and edited the material at their disposal from a definite viewpoint and with a definite purpose in mind and did so in the context of a community and for a community with its own particular concerns.

Written Question:

1. How was the canon formed and give an example of a piece of literature omitted from the canon.
2. Explain how redaction criticism has had an influence on biblical interpretation.

Outcomes: As a result of studying this section, students should be able to

- Describe how some people understand the Bible as Word of God, and how this belief informs their attitude to the Bible
- Outline how the canon was formed
- Give an example of a piece of literature omitted from the canon
- Give an account of two archaeological discoveries and their significance for understanding the Bible
- Give a general account of how redaction criticism has had an influence on biblical interpretation