

# St Athanasius and The Holy Bible

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The expository works of Saint Athanasius were not as few as they appear, but only a few remain of them.

Some of them are unknown, not even according to their titles [1]. However, these remains highlight the interest of Saint Athanasius in the Bible, as is evident from the following points:

## First: The Bible is inspired by God

Saint Athanasius affirms in his writings that “all the Bible, whether the Old Testament or the New Testament, is a book inspired by God and useful for education, as St Paul mentioned in his first letter to Timothy (3:16), as well as St Peter in his second letter (21: 1). It is known that "in the early fourth century AD, a dispute arose about the books of The Bible, so Pope Athanasius set up a schedule of the correct books which are the ones that exist between our hands now, and the Churches of the East and the West followed his Arrangements, and all the false books fell.

## Second: the legality of the Bible

The legal sacred books that Saint Athanasius the Apostolic included are the following books:

1. All books of the New Testament (i.e. the twenty-seven books) with slight differences in the position of the letter to Hebrews, because it came in the canon of Saint Athanasius between the second letter to Thessalonians and the first letter to Timothy. This arrangement corresponds to the old arrangement of the new testament.
2. Twenty-two books of the Old Testament. This number is in agreement with the Alexandrian Jewish account, not according to the ancient Jewish text, which contains twenty-four books, in which the two books of Ruth and Jeremiah are mentioned separately, while Saint Athanasius includes the Book of Ruth to the Book of Judges and the Book of Lamentations to the Book of Jeremiah. It is noted that the canon of Saint Athanasius contains the following writings from the second legal books: the completion of the book of Daniel, then the book of Baruch, and the message of Jeremiah, which are joined to the book of Jeremiah.

These three books are considered in the Coptic Orthodox Church, among the second legal books.

## Third: Saint Athanasius exegetical books

Among the exegetical works of Saint Athanasius, only the following writings have been preserved, to this day:

1. Letter to Marklinus (Markell...noj) In the interpretation of Psalms. However, Marklinus is still an unknown figure to us. He was possibly a hermit writer and was keenly interested in the study of the Bible. In particular the book of Psalms. Saint Athanasius speaks on the lips of a pain-loving elder. Then he directs his letter to Marklinus as a son

to him. In this way, he wanted to clarify that the position of the Psalms is determined based on the traditional interpretation of the Church, and Saint Athanasius confirms that although the entire Bible is inspired and useful, but the Book of Psalms has the distinction of having included everything that was mentioned in other sacred writings: "Any of those books is like a garden that bears its own fruit. The Psalms, besides their own fruit, it also pours out the fruits of the other books."

Saint Athanasius, in his interpretation of the Psalms, gives great importance to the psychological conditions of the reciter or psalmist. The Psalms include referring to all situations, and they contain instructions appropriate to all conditions of the psalmist in his life.

The reality of the psalms reflects all situations and contains appropriate instructions for how to be benefited from it. Saint Athanasius organized the Psalms in groups on an educational basis. He also argues that the continued enjoyment of the sweetness of the psalms justifies the need for that Worshipers are given enough time to study the Psalms.

2. Hieronimus mentions Another work by St Athanasius which is titled "The Titles of Psalms" (t...tlwn tîn yalmîn per... ). Antonelli also mentions a book of St Athanasius with the same title. The truth of the matter, this book does not explain the titles of the Psalms, but it briefly explains the verses verse by verse. And more than this, according to The prevailing view, this work belongs to Aeschus of Jerusalem However, many passages of the original interpretation of Saint Athanasius still exist in book series, the most important of which is the series Issued under the title "Explanation of Psalms". (NikÁta Serrîn)

R.Devreesse added to these series fragments of the modern Greek language

Likewise, J. David added fragments in the Coptic language, but as fragments that do not form a complete continuous interpretation, a picture is given. It is not clear about the method in which Saint Athanasius used to extract the spiritual meaning of the text of the Psalms

3. An opinion in the psalms  
It precedes in order the aforementioned fragments. It is a brief introduction to the number of psalms  
And the difference between the Christian number and the Hebrew number.
4. Interpretation of Ecclesiastes ('Ermhne...a e,,j t<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>n 'Ekkhlsiasitik»n)
5. An interpretation of the Song of Solomon  
Photius mentioned them and praised their style. However, this work has been lost, except for a few fragments preserved in series. It appears that Photius considers the same interpretation of the two books because they appeared in one manuscript Barber manuscript ( Pg 569) mentions that St Athanasius has other expository works:
6. Fragments in Genesis ('Aosp£smata e,,j t<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>n Gšneshn) one of those fragments is in the Nicophorus series
7. A fragment in the book of Exodus (oen øposp£smata e,,j t<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>n oexodon) and it was also mentioned in the Nicophorus series.

8. Fragments of his interpretation of the book of Job ('Aposp̄smata Ἐρμηνείαι τῶν Ἰὸβ) it is kept in few series. It appears more likely to be from the sermons of Saint Athanasius than from a book of interpretation of the book. We do not have evidence from ancient sources that prove that Saint Athanasius wrote complete notes on any of the books of the new testament. And we have in the books of the New Testament exegetical parts of several places in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew and the first letter of Paul to Corinthians. These parts of Matthew and First Corinthians probably came from sermons, while the parts that were from Luke has come from his note. Despite this, we have an example of his interpretation of the verse of Luke (8:50) in his sermon on the suffering of The Lord and the Cross.

#### Fourth: Tradition and the Bible as a source for Christian teaching according to Saint Athanasius

Church tradition was a guide to him in his study of the Holy Books, as he diligently researched the writings of the ancient teachers, as he himself testified, declaring that he learned about the theology of Christ from the inspired holy teachers and martyrs. And he considered that the proper meaning of the verse is the church meaning ”

And in the letter of Saint Athanasius to Adelphius the Confessor, Bishop of Onophis, he says: “If they (ie the Arians) want to cling to their blasphemy, so that they may be satisfied with it alone .. because the faith of the universal Church acknowledges that the Word of God is the Creator of all Things and is its originator”[10]

In his letter to Epictetus, Saint Athanasius wrote the following: “I used to think that all words were invalid for all Heretics, regardless of their number, have ceased since the Council that convened in Nicaea, because the faith recognized in this Council Of the Fathers, according to the divine scriptures, is sufficient to expel all unbelief outside and to consolidate the faith of godliness in Christ. For who has ever heard these matters... Where did these matters come out ... or whoever heard in the church or among Christians in general that the Lord wore an imaginary and not a natural body. ”Because what they said (meaning the heretics) could not be said or heard from Christians. These are Strange sayings about the apostolic teaching from every aspect; “It is sufficient that this is the teaching of the universal Church.” And they say that God has become in a human body. As for the fathers who gathered at Nicaea, they also said that the Son himself, not the body, is of The same essence of the Father and that while he (the Son) is of the essence of the Father, they also confessed according to the Scriptures that the body is from (Mary); “The word is of the same essence of the Father, according to the confession of the Fathers.”

In his first letter to Sarabion, Saint Athanasius says:

[But in addition to that, let us look at the tradition, teaching, and faith of the Universal Church, which is from the beginning, which was What the Lord gave and the apostles preached and were kept by the fathers. On this (basis) the Church was established, and whoever falls from it will not be [A Christian and should not be called so anymore] [12]

Saint Athanasius' main concern was to appeal to the thought of the Church, to the "faith" that was Sincerely once proclaimed and preserved. The Arians have cited many passages from the book to provide evidence for what they fought for, which is that the Savior was a creature. In the answer of Saint Athanasius, the appeal to the "law of faith" was clear in his saying, "Let us reform, we who acquired the purpose of faith, the correct meaning of what they interpreted incorrectly. "[13] Saint Athanasius affirmed that the citation of Isolated passages from the Bible, apart from the intention of the whole book, is misleading. So the goal of the "faith" or the "goal" of the book is the theological doctrinal thrust found extensively in the "creed of faith" as preserved by the Church. Saint Athanasius enumerated "a creed of Faith "is the supreme principle of exegesis. He opposed the ideas of heretics through ecclesiastical thought, saying:“ I think, then, that this is the intention of the biblical text, and it is an entirely ecclesiastical intention. ”[14] However, this law has never been a“ foreign ”authority imposed On the Bible, it is the same "apostolic gospel" written in short in the books of the New Testament. St Athanasius indicates that the Bible itself is a "tradition", and he never mentioned the word tradition in the plural in his discussion with the Arians.[15]

#### [Fifth: The need for a pure mind and the likeness of the saints in the study of the Bible](#)

In his book "The Incarnation of the Word", Chapter 56, St. Athanasius says "to stand on the text of the Holy books, by deepening your thoughts on it and sincerely. You learn from it, with the most complete and clear, the full details of what we have said. However, reading and understanding holy books require the reader to live a virtuous life. And in this Saint Athanasius says these Phrases: “The search of the books, and to know them the true knowledge, require a good life, a pure soul, and the virtue of Christ. Even if the mind is guided by it and illuminated by its way, it is able to reach what it aspires to, and perceive it as the Human nature ability to learn about the word of God. Because without a pure mind and likeness of the saints, man cannot comprehend The sayings of the saints. As if someone wants to see the sunlight, he must wipe his eyes and wash them cleansing himself. To be similar to what he desires, so when the eye is enlightened, it can see the sunlight. Or as if someone wanted to see A city or village, and he must come to it to see it. Likewise, someone who wants to comprehend the thinking of those who talk about God, to begin by washing and purifying himself, by changing the course of his life, and to approach the saints themselves by imitating their deeds, so when He shares with them their behavior in the common life, he would be able to understand also what God revealed to them. "

#### [Sixth: His approach to his interpretation of the Bible with practical examples](#)

The remaining models from the writings of Saint Athanasius reveal his personality as a great interpreter who knows how to formulate with Clarity and accuracy his views on the texts he interprets, relying on the historical preliminary examination of the texts, to advance to the spiritual and ecclesiastical Interpretation of texts. As the recessed professor, Basileus Stoyaynes says in his introduction about his letter to Marklinus, in the interpretation of the Psalms, “St. Athanasius Almost did not refer at all to the individual alone, but always referred to him, As a member of the Church. "

In his allegorical interpretation, he moves away from extremism, and no instruction has been completed in his curriculum based on one verse or a few verses. Rather, he was like a peasant plowing the whole Bible “and he believed that the heretics deceive the simple by presenting fragments from the Holy book and ignore other parts of it. They pretend like their father the devil (John 8:44) that they are studying and extracting the language of the book. to deceive others with their deceit.”(18)

And Saint Athanasius believes that when studying any topic of the Bible, it is necessary to examine this topic using all of its locations in the Bible so that the judgment can be made completely. And so when he took up the topic of The Holy Spirit in his first message to Sarabion, for in order to prove that the Holy Spirit is not a creature, he studied the verses that came about the Holy Spirit and concluded:

[Tell us then, is there a passage in the Divine Bible in which it was referred to the Holy Spirit by simply the word "spirit" Without adding a word or letter to it, such as God, the Father, or “Christ” himself or “the Son”, or “from God or the instrument of identification“ the ”? it is not called a spirit, but rather the spirit, or the full term“ Holy Spirit ”or“The spirit of truth "meaning" the spirit of the Son "who says" I am the truth "(John 14: 6), so that as soon as you heard the word "spirit "you assumed It means "the Holy Spirit". In summary, we say: that unless you add the definition tool “the” or “one of the previous additions”, The word “spirit” cannot refer to the Holy Spirit]. He also said to them: [Can you answer the question that was presented to you? If you find anywhere in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has just been called the word "spirit" without The aforementioned additions, without the previous recorded adjectives. You are not able to answer because you will not find any traces of that in the Holy Bible]

Saint Athanasius continues his struggle against the heretics, saying: [Then search also for what was included in the Gospels and the writings of apostles ]

Then he says [Look how all the scriptures refer to the Holy Spirit] [21]. And again he says: [Where have they found in the Holy Scriptures that the Holy Spirit was referred to as an angel ... although the Holy Scriptures did not speak of the Spirit as an angel, so what excuse can they have for such boldness] [22]

Saint Athanasius believes that the worst thing is that we invent new words that contradict the words used in the Holy Bible.

In the Council of Nicaea, he strongly emphasized the importance of the Bible when he said: [It is unacceptable and inappropriate that We invent other images of God, other than those used by the Bible, which are, on the one hand, neither leads to sainthood nor related to the book. If they were in fact denying everything written in the Bible, then they would have departed from Christianity. And everyone would possibly have called them “God-deniers,” and “warriors against Christ”] [24

On the other hand, Saint Athanasius warns of the need to pay attention to the immediate context of every sentence and expression, and to highlight the correct intended of the writer

accurately, and this is what he refers to in his first letter to Sarabion, where he says after the discussion [I think then That this is the purpose of the biblical text] [25]. Saint Athanasius points out that the Arians ignore the "purpose" of the Holy book [26] because they care about what is said and ignore its meaning. And the term "purpose" in Saint Athanasius was parallel to the word "Design" by Saint Irenaeus, to refer to the basic idea, correct design, and the intended meaning [27]. And in his explanation Of the verse "having become so much better than the angels" (Heb. 4: 1) St. Athanasius said in detail the following:

[And now it is appropriate as we work in all the Holy Scriptures, so it is necessary for us to work here also, so we must understand honestly: the era about which the apostle wrote and the person and subject about whom he wrote about so that the reader does not find himself ignorant of these or other sayings, far from the true meaning. Therefore, that eunuch who loves knowledge when he got to know This, he pleaded with Philip, saying: "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" (Acts 8:34) Because he was afraid to deviate from the straight meaning and understand speech about another person through his reading. And also the disciples, Because of their desire to know when what the Lord had said would happen, begged him, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3) Also when they heard from the Savior what he had said about the end, they also wanted to know its time. (See Matthew 24:36), so that they do not go astray, and also so that they can teach others, for after they knew, they corrected the Ideas of Thessalonians who were about to go astray] [28]

As an example of his method of exegesis, as a spiritual interpreter, he sees that the Psalms are in respect to the chanter, as a mirror in which he sees himself And his psychological states, and that the various forms of psalms reflect all the requirements and needs of life. For example, there Psalms in narrative form (Psalm 114), others in the form of instructional tips (Psalm 32), there are Psalms in the form of prophecies (Psalm 16), and there are psalms in the form of prayer (Psalm 6), and others in the form of confession (Psalm 51), in addition to psalms in the form of Praise and being grateful (Psalm8)

In summary, Saint Athanasius finds in the book of Psalms a picture of human life in all its states and thoughts. the Psalms are not missing anything that is found in a person. So whatever you are looking for, whether it is repentance, confession, help in distress or Experience or persecution, whether you survived intrigues and conspiracies or on the contrary, you were sad for whatever reason, whether you see yourself advanced and your enemy defeated, and you want to praise and thank and bless the Lord. In all this, the Holy Psalms show you what you are doing.

1. Group of Fathers of the Church Who Wrote in Greek: Saint Athanasius, Part V, Thessalonians 1975, pg. 13  
(.'Ellhnej Patšrej tÁj 'Ekkllhs...aj, "Agioj 'Aqan£sioj, tÒmoj 5, Qes/n...kh 1975, sel.13.)
2. Rev. Manasseh Youhanna: The History of the Coptic Church, Mallawi, Third Edition 1982, p. 168
3. Greek Patrology, Part III, B. Christo, Thessaloniki 1987, p. 497.499  
(.'Ellhnik» Patrolog...a, tÒmoj G/ . Panagièth Cr»stou. Qes/n...kh 1987, sel.497-499.)
4. See the book Exegesis of the Psalms by Saint Augustine, a letter in the Psalms by Saint Athanasius. House of Consecration in Helwan, 1961, pg. 2
5. De vir. Illustribus 87.
6. PG 27, 649-1344.
7. M. Faulhaber, G. Mercati.
8. Mupibiblos 139.
9. Father Tadros Yaquob: The Coptic Orthodox Church: church of Science and Theology. the Church in sporting, Alexandria 1986 Pg.8
10. Christ in the Letters of Saint Athanasius, a piece from the Greek, Professor Samuel Kamel and Doctor Noshi Abdel-Shaheed, House of Consecration for the Service of the kraza, 1981 PG.30
11. The previous sources Pg. : 37•36•34•33
12. Messages on the Holy Spirit to Bishop Sarabion, translated by Dr. Morris Tawadros, Dr. Abdul Shaheed advised the Center of Fathers Studies, First Message: 28
13. Saint Athanasius: Against the Arians 3: 35
14. Saint Athanasius: Against the Arians 1:44
15. See this quote by Father George Florovsky: The Bible, the Church, and the Tradition An Orthodox Point of View Translated into Arabic: Father Michel Najm, the publication of The Light 1984 Chapter Five.
16. Saint Athanasius: Incarnation 57: 3,2,1
17. The group of the Greek Fathers of the Church, volume V Thessalonica 1975 pg.11
18. Father Tadros Jacob: Same reference, pg.83
19. The first letter to Sarabion 5,4
20. Sarayoun 1:6
21. Sarayoun 1:7
22. Sarayoun 1:11
23. Sarabion 1: 17
24. on the Council of Nicaea 12: 15
25. Sarayoun 1:54
26. Sarayoun 2: 7
27. Dr. Morris Tawadros, Doctrinal Theology, Part 1, the library of the Youth diocese 1994 pg.94
28. versus the Arians 1: 54