



St Catherine's Seminary is the name of the internal study and training program of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church

The Old Testament

Some people feel that the Old Testament has in some way been super ceded or replaced by the New Testament. This is not so. The Old Testament is the foundation upon which all else is built: what we call the O.T. is the scripture Jesus knew and quoted. To do away with it by claiming that later scripture is superior would devalue all that we know and much that Jesus taught. The O.T. is the basis of scripture of all the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam). Our (and their) spiritual origins are told in the Old Testament.

'Books of the Law'

Genesis

Genesis covers the very beginning, allegorically describing how the world and everything in it came about. The name 'Genesis' means 'beginning'. However, although the world was created good, evil begins affecting man - sin has entered the world. The early human race is dealt with here with suffering and 'fallen-ness'. Main characters are Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah. In later verses of Genesis, God calls a man called Abraham, and promises him that he will become the father of a great nation, residing in the 'promised land' given by God. Abraham's grandson, (Isaac's son) Jacob is given the name 'Israel'. He has 12 sons, who become the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel. One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, becomes counsel (advisor) to the King of Egypt. The Hebrews go to live there, and so begins a period of about 450 years of slavery. However, Genesis ends with a promise that God will continue to be concerned for His people, and continue to lead and judge them. Period covered: from the beginning to approx. 2000 or 1700 BC.

Exodus

Exodus the name means 'departure', and covers the end of the 450 years of slavery in Egypt, and what happened in the immediate aftermath. In four sections (1) Exodus describes how Gods agencies persuaded the Egyptians to free the Hebrews. (2) Then they traveled through the wilderness for about forty years, when God lead them to Mount Sinai. (3) There God made a covenant (a lasting promise) to the Hebrew people which gave them moral, civil and religious laws to follow. Finally (4) Exodus deals with the building and furnishing of a place of worship, with ecclesial laws for priests etc and worship. Moses being the central human character, God is at work releasing His people from their slavery, by giving them rules to follow. The Ten Commandments are the most famous part of this book. But perhaps more important,

the special relationship between God and His people becomes increasingly obvious in this book. Period covered: approx 1700 to 1500BC

Leviticus

Leviticus continues from Exodus, in giving the rules and regulations for worship and religious ceremony, and for the orders of priests who were responsible for them. Throughout, God is Holy, and the special relationship between God and His people is being (or needs to be) reinforced with worship and lives being lived in accordance to the "Holy God of Israel". In this book is the term 'Love your neighbour as yourself' which Jesus took and made the Second Greatest Commandment. Unfortunately Leviticus can be a bit hard going to read, as it is a sort of 'specification' of these rules and regulations. Period covered: approx 1600 to 1400BC

Numbers

This book tells the story of the Hebrews as they live a nomadic life and journey from Mt Sinai to the Promised Land, Canaan. It is a story of hardship and disobedience as the people rebel against God and Moses, His appointed leader. God on the other hand is faithful and consistent in his care for His people in the times of difficulty. The population was quantified in two census during this period and they were instructed in what to do when they crossed the River Jordan to enter the promised land. Moses is in the spotlight as is his impatient, but steadfast devotion to God, and to God's people who he leads. Period covered: approx 1600 to 1400BC

Deuteronomy

Means second rendition, and is another recollection of the previous 40 years. Moses reminds the Hebrews how God has lead them through the wilderness. He reminds them that this was because they were obedient and loyal to God. There is a review of the Ten Commandments, with Moses emphasizing the first commandment that the people serve God alone. The laws which will govern life in the promised land are reiterated. Moses reminds the Hebrews of the covenant God has made with them, and calls them to renew their commitment to it. Moses never makes it into the promised land, and is buried near the river Jordan east of Canaan in Moab. Joshua is commissioned as the new leader by Moses before he died. Jesus refers this book when he quotes "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" Deut 6.4 - 6.6 Period covered: approx 1500 to 1250BC

'Historical Books'

Joshua

Here is the story of the Hebrew invasion of Canaan, the promised land : the crossing the river Jordan, the battle and fall of Jericho, the battle at Ai. The land is divided up among the tribes. Much of the writings here record the division of land and who gets what, and who lives where. The book concludes when Joshua dies of old age at about the same time as Eleazer (son of Aaron) dies. A new leader will be chosen in the continuing story in Judges, next. Period covered: approx 1250 to 1150BC

Judges

These were national leaders, charismatic, heroic, like Samson and Gideon (and others), not legal judges. However, the period between the invasion of Canaan and the establishment of the monarchy was a period of hostility and lawlessness. In these stories, we are reminded that survival depends on loyalty to God, and disobedience spells disaster. Even so, when the people are disloyal and disobedient, and disaster comes, God continues without fail to save his people, when they repent and turn to him. Period covered: approx 1150 to 1050BC

Ruth

This short book tells of Ruth a Moabite woman who marries an Israelite. Set in the lawless and violent times of the book Judges, Ruth tells of the blessing that can come from turning to God in times of trouble, as Ruth did when her husband died. Through devotion to God and her respect to her mother-in-law, Ruth is rewarded by finding a new husband from among her late husband's people, and in this union becomes Great-Grandmother to David, Israel's greatest King. Ruth's life went from foreigner to part of God's faithful, through obedience and faithfulness to God. Period covered approx 1150 to 1100BC

1 Samuel

Israel changes from a sort of federation of tribes to a nation under a monarchy, and the books of Judges and Ruth, along with both books of Samuel cover this transition. Samuel was the last of the great charismatic leaders they called judges. 1 Samuel records how the people had mixed opinions regarding a monarchy. Although popular, many felt that God was their King. However, both Saul the first king, and the people lived under the sovereignty of God and came under His judgement. So the themes of the other historical books, that is, that obedience and faithfulness brings success and honour, and disobedience brings disaster and turmoil continue in 1 Samuel. Justice is shown to prevail, though, and under the law of God, the rights of all people, rich, poor, and the earthly king alike are maintained. Period covered: approx 1100 to 1000BC

2 Samuel

It is obvious that 2 Samuel is a continuation for 1 Samuel. 1 Samuel covers the transition into monarchy, and 2 Samuel continues with possibly the greatest king Israel ever had: King David. David was king of Judah, in the south and later both nations Judah and Israel. David had many struggles from within his own people and from without, but he also had a struggle within his own personality. He was a man of deep conviction and faith in God, but could also be very ruthless and commit terrible sins to further his own desires and ambition. The themes that God controls all people is maintained as God sends a prophet Nathan, who confronts the earthly king with his misdemeanors. David's faithful side wins and he readily confesses his sins and accepts God's punishment for them. This so impressed his people that David became one of the most revered if not the most revered king the Hebrew people ever had. In subsequent years, in times of trouble and suppression, they would pray that God would send them a leader like him, a 'son of David' to rescue and save them. Period covered: approx 1000 to 950BC

1 Kings

This book continues the history of the Hebrew monarchy from the books of Samuel. 1 Kings deals with three main themes: Firstly, the succession of Solomon as king following the death of his father David. Secondly attention is paid to Solomon's reign and his obedience to God in the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the first time the Hebrew people had a permanent earthly focus for their religion. The third section deals with the schism which saw the Israelite nation divide into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. This third section gives stories of the kings who ruled the kingdoms until about 900BC. In 1 Kings (and in 2 Kings which continues the stories) the ruler of each kingdom is judged by his faithfulness. It is a clear message of success being a reward for loyalty, and national disaster being the punishment for idolatry. 1 Kings carries the accounts of God sending prophets to warn the people not to disobey God, nor to turn to idols. God's prophet Elijah challenges the priests of the (false) god Baal to a challenge (1 Kings 18). Period covered: 950 to 800BC

2 Kings

In 1 Kings the nation has split into two kingdoms. This book follows the story of these two kingdoms starting at about 900BC where 1 Kings leaves off and tracks the demise of the northern kingdom at the fall of Samaria in 722BC. About 200 years after the northern kingdom is overrun, the kingdom of Judah is captured by the Babylonians under their king Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC. The city of Jerusalem is all but destroyed, and many of its people are 'exiled' to Babylonia. Judah becomes a province of Babylonia and this book has an account from Gedaliah, governor of Judah the Babylonian province in its final verses. These national disasters are portrayed, as in the other historical books, as being a consequence of disobedience to God. However, as 2 Kings closes, God can be seen to be redeeming the situation: King Jehoiachin is released and a period of softening in relationships starts to emerge. God instructs his people throughout this period by his prophets. Elisha (Elijah's successor) being prominent in this book. Period covered: 800 to 650BC

1 Chronicles

Both books of Chronicles cover the same part of the history of Israel as the books of Samuel and Kings. However, Chronicles come from a different perspective. 1 Chronicles tries to show that even though disaster has fallen upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (by the peoples own disobedience) God is still true to his promise, his covenant with them. God is maintaining the people, albeit under restriction, in order that a restoration may be made later. David and his son Solomon's achievements are remembered. Reforms are introduced by Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah. There was also still a core of people faithful to God. 1 Chronicles gives accounts at some length about the worship held in the Temple, the structures of the Levites and priests, and the rituals held there. David is painted as the true founder of the Temple, and Solomon being the man who carried on this vision to make it happen. Period covered: 1000 to 950BC

2 Chronicles

This book continues with the story of King Solomon's rule until his death. Most of 2 Chronicles is concerned with the history of the southern kingdom of Judah until it was overrun at the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC. However, parts of this book record a revolt, a tale of division, when the northern tribes rebel against Rehoboam, son of King

Soloman, making a unified Israelite nation in the future less likely. Period covered: 950 to 590BC

Ezra

Ezra is a sequel to the Chronicles. The start of God redeeming the situation portrayed in 2 Kings (remember Chronicles cover the same periods as Kings and Samuel) is continued in Ezra as this book describes the return of some of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. The restoration of the Temple and re-commencing of worship there are described. The religious heritage of the Hebrew people is slowly being restored, and Ezra, an expert on religion leads a further significant group of exiles 'home' to Jerusalem. Period covered: 590 to 400BC

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judah by the Persian Emperor. This book tells of his return to Jerusalem to pick up that work. The walls of Jerusalem are built up again, and the religious activities within the city (and surrounding Judah) are boosted not least by the fact that their governor has deep reliance on God and prays regularly to Him. Ezra is an expert on the Law of God who gives a solemn delivery of those Laws to the people. The later verses in the book record some of the things Nehemiah did as governor. Period covered: 590 to 400BC

Esther

Set at one of the Persian Emperors palaces, a Jewish woman called Esther saved many of her people from destruction by demonstrating great courage and devotion. Esther played a political game with King Xerxes, ruler of the Persian Empire. She became queen and persuaded the king into writing of letters allowing the subdued Jewish people to gather into groups for self defence. She later persuaded the king to execute the official Haman who was trying to destroy the Jews. Along with Moredecai a Jew who worked his way up to be the king's second man (assistant), Esther played a lead role in the Jews defeating their enemies. Period covered: 500 to 450BC

Books of Poetry and Wisdom

Job

Job is good, but he suffers disaster. He loses his children, his property and is struck down by disease. Contemporary wisdom of his day has it that as God rewards good and punishes evil, then by implication, Job must have committed sin and offended God. Job is not convinced. He does not let his faith in God wane in the wake of these afflictions. Job cannot understand how God can let so many bad things happen to him and he boldly challenges God. God responds, but not in the way Job expected. God through poetry and symbolism shows Job God's power and wisdom. Job is overwhelmed, acknowledges Gods wisdom and power and is sorry for the words Job used to God. In the end Job is restored to his position with increased wealth. Job's friends are reprimanded by God for failing to understand how their friend suffered. In this, Job learned that God is greater than the religion that depicts him. Very powerful poetry and symbolism make this a remarkable book used by those who go through enduring times. Period covered: not precisely known, the story developed over the period 1000 to 350BC

Psalms

Psalms are songs or hymns. This book is a hymn book and has a wide range of themes and sources. Psalms were used by everyone, and therefore of course, Jesus. The New Testament writers assumed a knowledge of psalms and the psalms have been used in Christian worship from the very beginning. Period covered: not precisely known, the story developed over the period 1000 to 350BC

Proverbs

Is a book of moral, religious and social teachings. It is mostly single sentences. Today we would refer to this as 'bite-size' chunks of common sense, wisdom and helpful advice. Much common sense can be found here, and its timeless teachings are as profound today as when they were first taught, even those whose imagery is a little dated. Advice for everyone, from the poorest to the king are found here. They give us an insight into the world of the ancient Israelite teachers, and the world they were living in. Period covered: not precisely known, the story developed over the period 1000 to 350BC

Ecclesiastes

For some people this is the most negative of all books of the Bible. For us that is its value. If all books of the Bible were of a similar disposition and outlook, it would be less of a collection than if challenges of alternative views are considered. The writer is termed the 'Philosopher' and he reflects on the injustices, frustrations and contradictions of the human existence. He concludes that "life is useless". Then as if to contradict himself he advises people to work hard, be diligent and enjoy the gifts of God. Many readers over the years have taken comfort from reading beyond the initial negative impressions of this book. Here mirrored, is all our suffering and all our doubt. If our faith can embrace this doubt, and learn from what it says to us, then our faith will be immeasurably the greater. Because of its obviously different approach and its refreshing honesty, Ecclesiastes is one of my favourite Old Testament books. Period covered: not precisely known, the story developed over the period 1000 to 350BC

Song of Songs

Also called the Song of Solomon in some translations as it is attributed to him in the Hebrew. A series of love poems, this prose has been taken by the Jews to represent the relationship between God and his people, and by Christians as a picture of Christ's relationship with his church. A book with a totally different feel than the one that precedes it. Period covered: not precisely known, the story developed over the period 1000 to 350BC

The Books of the Prophets

Isaiah

This book is in three parts and appears to come from three distinct and separate sources, each with a clearly individual style. They combine to paint a picture of God at work through the agency of the prophet Isaiah who lived in Jerusalem around 750-700BC . The first section (up to chapter 39) tells of the time when Judah was

threatened by Assyria its powerful neighbour. Isaiah had to convince the people that Assyria was not their only enemy, but that their own sin and disobedience was a very real threat to their survival. In a graphic and vivid way Isaiah calls the whole Israelite race to live in justice and righteousness. Failure to live this way would result in doom. As part of this, the prophet predicted a time when a descendant of David would be world King and bring about a world wide peace. Chapters 40 to 55 gives the story of the exiled people, crushed, subdued, hopeless, far away in Babylon. God's intention to free his people, their homecoming to Jerusalem and their restored renewed life are promised. In addition, God's intention that the Hebrew people will be part of God's plan for every nation is developed. The term "Servant of the Lord" originates here and is one of the best known of the Old Testament. This second part is sometimes called 'Deutero-Isaiah'. The remaining chapters have a different style again. Aimed mainly at those who were already back in Jerusalem, it re-assures them of God's promise for their nation. Righteousness, justice and observing the religious codes, particularly about the Sabbath are re-iterated. Jesus commenced his ministry by quoting a passage from Isaiah (Is. 61. 1 - 2). Period covered: 850 to 400BC

Jeremiah

This was another major prophet predicting doom and destruction unless the people changed their ways and turned back to obedience. Jeremiah had a long ministry and lived to see his predictions come true with the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, and the exile. Jeremiah did predict the end of the exile and the return to Judah. Described as sensitive, he must have disliked rebuking the people, but felt that for everyone's good the truth must be told to them. An emotional man, he spoke with a deep conviction, often pointing beyond his own time and circumstances to a time when God's people would have the laws of God 'written on their hearts' (Jer. 31. 31 - 34). There are five strands to the book: Jeremiah's calling to be a prophet; God addressing the nation via Jeremiah, much of God's messages being addressed to the Kings of Judah at the time; The recollections of Jeremiah's assistant, Baruch; God addressing Judah's neighbouring nations; and a historical account of the fall of Jerusalem and the commencement of exile. Period covered: 720 to 550BC

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was a prophet of deep faith with a profound sense of imagination. Many of his teachings were delivered in vivid symbolic actions, rather than in just the spoken word. He emphasized the need for inner renewal, of the heart, and much of his insight came to him as dreams and visions. Because he was of the Priestly order, as well as being known as a prophet, he held highly the worship of the Temple and of 'holiness'. However, in this book we have an account of a prophet who lived away from Jerusalem, as he was in Babylon at the time of the exile. His messages gave hope to those held in Babylonia, and he was there among them. His prophecy also kept those still at Jerusalem focused on the time when the nation and the Temple would be restored. In six parts: 1, Ezekiel's call to be a prophet; 2, warnings about the fall of Jerusalem as a result of God's judgment on the people; 3, warnings to the nations which oppress and mislead God's chosen people; 4, the Promise of hope for the future; 5, A vision of the nation and Temple restored. Period covered: 560 to 500BC

Daniel

The writer of this book encourages the Jews, who are exiled, persecuted and oppressed. Symbolic stories, accounts of dreams and visions describe how God will restore his people, and bring down the oppressor. The first part of Daniel tells how he and his fellow-exiles triumph over their enemies, the Babylonians and Persians. Encouragement for the future is given then by a series of prophetic visions, telling of the fall of the oppressor nations and the victories to come for God's people. Period covered: 530 to 500BC

The Minor Prophets

Hosea

This prophet worked in the northern kingdom of Israel, in the restless period leading to the fall of Samaria in 721BC. Hosea was married to a woman called Gomer. His marriage was troubled and his wife unfaithful. Hosea used this to picture the idolatrous and unfaithful behaviour of the people towards God. Hosea predicted that judgment would fall on the people as a result. The theme that God would finally restore the nation and would not abandon them. Period covered: 830 to 770BC

Joel

We don't know a great deal about this prophet. As he tells us of a Palestinian drought and famine caused by locusts in a setting of the Persian Empire. Estimates put the time as about 550 or 450BC. Joel reported that the problems were a sign that the 'Day of the Lord' was coming, a time when God would punish those who do not follow his will. Joel predicts the restoration of God's people, and predicts the restoration of every person, with God sending his spirit on all people. Period covered: 460 to 400BC

Amos

Amos came from a town in the southern kingdom of Judah, but he delivered his message to the Northern kingdom of Israel at around 760 to 720BC. Whilst there was security, prosperity and wealth, Amos told that this was the privilege of the wealthy and at the expense of the poor. There was injustice and oppression of the poor, while the wealthy practised religious piety, and enjoyed their spoils. Amos told that their religious observance was insincere, and the security for the community fragile. Amos prophesied with courage and conviction; he told that God would punish the nation. Amos begged the people to turn to justice and truth. He asked that "Justice flow like a stream". He goes on "Perhaps the Lord will be merciful to the people of this nation who are still left". Period covered: 850 to 780BC

Obadiah

Judah's long standing enemy Edom rejoiced when Jerusalem fell in 586BC. More than that, they looted the fallen city and in so doing assisted the invader. Obadiah prophesied that Edom would be punished and defeated, along with other nations who attack Israel. Period covered: 530 to 500BC

Jonah

This book has a narrative, and that sets it apart from the other prophetic books, describing the life of Jonah, who was reluctant to follow God's commands. After being sent to Ninevah (the capital of the Assyrian Empire), arch enemies of the

Israelites; Jonah did not want to go and deliver God's message, and convinced himself that God would not actually destroy the city. After a series of events, including the famous 'Jonah and the Whale' story he finally obeyed, but sulked when God did not destroy the city after all. God's power and command of his creation are portrayed, but mostly God's forgiveness, even of Israel's enemies is displayed. God would rather forgive, than destroy. Period covered: sometime between 850 and 580BC, but unable to be determined precisely.

Micah

Micah was a prophet from a provincial town in Judah at the time of Isaiah. He prophesied that Judah would face the same consequences as Amos said the Northern Kingdom of Israel would face. The common cause was unrighteousness and injustice. However, the book ends with a message of warning, but also a picture of hope and universal peace under God. Period covered: 850 to 780BC

Nahum

Jonah sulked when God did not destroy Ninevah, however God did destroy the city, but after Jonah's lifetime at around 620BC. The book of Nahum is a poetical narrative celebrating the fall of the ancient enemy of Israel, and it is taken as a judgment of God upon this cruel and oppressive enemy. Period covered: 720 to 670BC

Habakkuk

Telling of the time when the Babylonians were in power, Habakkuk asks God why He is inactive whilst the cruel Babylonians kill and oppress God's people. God's message to Habakkuk and of course to all Israel, was that He would act, when He chooses. Meanwhile they are to remain faithful and await that time. Period covered: 660 to 586BC

Zephaniah

Covers the familiar themes of judgment and punishment, but with restoration and hope for the future. Period covered: 710 to 650BC

Haggai

The message of God came through this prophet in 520BC. Having returned from the exile and now living in Jerusalem, the city was being rebuilt but the Temple still had not been. This prophecy urges the reconstruction of the Temple promising that prosperity and peace will come about if it is. Period covered: 480 to 400BC

Zechariah

This prophet links the restoration of the Temple and of the wider city of Jerusalem with the coming Messiah. Period covered: 490 to 400BC

Malachi

This message comes from around 440BC. The Temple has been rebuilt. Malachi challenges the priests and people to renew their faith in God and the covenant. There is corruption and poor practice which needs to be addressed: not living according to God's ways, not making right offerings or worship. Malachi prophesies that the Lord will come to judge the people, and send a messenger to prepare the way for that. This

book concludes the Old Testament by saying that the Day of the Lord is coming.
Period covered: 480 to 400BC

Draft A