



DIVINITY ACROSS HUMAN HISTORY

Prehistoric and Ancient Texts

Kesh Temple Hymn (c. 2600 BCE)- One of the oldest known surviving pieces of literature, a Sumerian hymn praising the temple of the god Enlil.

Instructions of Shuruppak (c. 2600 BCE)- An ancient Sumerian text consisting of proverbs and wisdom literature, providing moral and practical advice.

Sumerian Hymns and Prayers (c. 2600-2400 BCE)- Early religious texts from Sumer, consisting of hymns, prayers, and incantations dedicated to various deities.

Pyramid Texts (c. 2400-2300 BCE)- Ancient Egyptian funerary texts written on the walls of pyramids, intended to protect the pharaohs in the afterlife.

Epic of Gilgamesh (c. 2100 BCE)- One of the oldest known works of literature, originating from ancient Mesopotamia, detailing the adventures of the hero Gilgamesh.

Sumerian King List (c. 2100 BCE)- An ancient manuscript originally recorded in the Sumerian language, listing kings of Sumer and their supposed reign lengths.

Egyptian Coffin Texts (c. 2100-1600 BCE)- A collection of ancient Egyptian funerary spells written on coffins to protect the deceased in the afterlife, succeeding the Pyramid Texts.

The Book of the Dead (c. 1500 BCE) – A collection of Egyptian writings about the afterlife. Knowledge of the existence of this holy text was present since the Middle Ages.

Rigveda (c. 1500-1200 BCE) - The oldest of the Vedas, a collection of ancient Indian hymns composed in early Sanskrit, dedicated to various deities.

The Instruction of Amenemope (c. 1300 BCE) - Considered a masterpiece and an essential part of wisdom literature, it is often credited for its strong resemblance and relationship to the Bible's Book of Proverbs.

Samaveda (c. 1200-1000 BCE)- A Vedic collection of chants and melodies for liturgical purposes, derived mostly from the Rigveda.

Yajurveda (c. 1200-1000 BCE)- A Vedic text consisting of ritual offering formulas that were said by a priest while an individual performed ritual actions.

Atharvaveda (c. 1200-1000 BCE)- The fourth Veda, containing hymns, mantras, and incantations, largely for domestic rituals and the practical aspects of daily life.

Enuma Elish (c. 18th century BCE)- The Babylonian creation myth, which describes the creation of the world and the rise of the god Marduk.



Pre-Vedic and Early Vedic Period Texts

Proto-Indo-European Oral Traditions (before 1500 BCE)- Hypothetical reconstructed common ancestors of the Indo-European languages, with roots in mythological and religious traditions.

Harappan Script (c. 3300-1300 BCE)- Although undeciphered, the script used by the Indus Valley Civilization may have held religious or administrative significance.

Early Mesopotamian and Near Eastern Texts

Code of Ur-Nammu (c. 2100-2050 BCE)- One of the earliest known law codes, originating from the Sumerian city of Ur.

Code of Hammurabi (c. 1754 BCE)- A well-preserved Babylonian law code of ancient Mesopotamia, detailing laws and justice.

Ancient Texts (Pre-Common Era)

Upanishads (c. 800-200 BCE)- Philosophical texts central to Hinduism, exploring the nature of reality and the self.

Tao Te Ching by Laozi (c. 6th century BCE)- A foundational text of Taoism, discussing the Tao (the Way) and its manifestations.

Bhagavad Gita (c. 5th-2nd century BCE)- A 700-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the Indian epic Mahabharata.

Dhammapada (c. 3rd century BCE)- A collection of sayings of the Buddha in verse form, part of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism.

Torah (Pentateuch) (c. 6th-5th century BCE)- The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, foundational to Judaism.

Analects of Confucius (c. 5th-4th century BCE)- A collection of sayings and ideas attributed to the Chinese philosopher Confucius.

Avesta (c. 5th-4th century BCE)- The primary collection of religious texts of Zoroastrianism.



Classical and Medieval Texts (Common Era to 1500)

New Testament (c. 1st century CE)- The second part of the Christian Bible, detailing the life and teachings of Jesus and the early Christian Church.

Qur'an (c. 7th century CE)- The holy book of Islam, believed to be the word of God as revealed to Muhammad.

Guru Granth Sahib (1604 CE)- The central religious scripture of Sikhism, compiled by Guru Arjan.

Adi Granth (1604 CE)- The first rendition of the Guru Granth Sahib, including hymns by Sikh Gurus and other saints.

Early Modern Texts (1500-1900)

Bhagavata Purana (c. 10th century CE)- A sacred text of Hinduism, focusing on the worship of Vishnu and his avatars, particularly Krishna.

Tao Tsang (c. 1445 CE)- The Taoist Canon, a vast collection of texts on Taoist teachings and practices.

Popol Vuh (c. 1554-1558 CE)- The Mayan creation myth, detailing the mythology and history of the K'iche' Maya people.

The Florentine Codex (c. 1540-1585 CE)- A comprehensive ethnographic research study in Mesoamerica by Bernardino de Sahagún, documenting the Aztec culture, including their spiritual beliefs and practices.

The Huarochirí Manuscript (c. late 16th century CE)- A Quechua document detailing the mythology and religious traditions of the indigenous peoples of the central highlands of Peru, including Incan beliefs.

Gnostic Gospels (c. 2nd-4th century CE)- A collection of early Christian texts discovered in the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, including works like the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Mary among other important writings.

The Bible – There were numerous versions of the Bible that existed prior to the King James Version, which was published in 1611. Some of them included:

- **The Septuagint (LXX)** - A Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, created in the 3rd-1st centuries BC.



- **The Latin Vulgate** - A Latin translation commissioned by Pope Damasus I in the 4th century AD and translated by St. Jerome.
- **The Peshitta** - The standard Syriac version of the Bible, translated in the 5th century AD.
- **The Slavonic Bible** - The first Bible translated into a Slavic language, produced in the 9th-10th centuries.
- **Wycliffe Bible** - 14th century translation to English
- **Tyndale Bible** – 16th century translation to English
- **The Geneva Bible** – 16th century and one of the most historically significant translations of the Bible into English, preceding the King James Version by 51 years.

The King James Bible (1611 CE)- An English translation of the Bible commissioned by King James I of England, known for its literary and historical significance. Post King James versions include:

- **New American Standard Bible**- The New American Standard Bible is a literal translation from the original texts.
- **New English Bible**- The New English Bible was a translation undertaken by the major Protestant churches of the British Isles. Scholars translated from the best Hebrew and Greek texts, aiming to present the full meaning of the original in clear and natural modern English.
- **New International Version** - The most widely used of any modern Bible version.
- **New King James Version**- The New King James Version was first published in 1982 and is a modernization of the King James Version of 1611, using the same underlying Greek text for the New Testament.
- **New Revised Standard Version**- The New Revised Standard Version is a thorough revision of the original RSV by an ecumenical team of scholars. The translators made full use of contemporary biblical manuscripts, resulting in a clearer understanding of many obscure passages. It uses gender-inclusive language (making it clear where the original texts include both males and females).
- **The Revised English Bible**- The Revised English Bible updates the New English Bible, retaining the latter's elegant literary style, but removing its archaisms. The REB employs a modest amount of inclusive language and is good for public reading. Like the NEB before it, the REB is a British translation, sponsored by all the main Christian denominations.
- **Tyndale**- William Tyndale's seminal contribution to the development of the Bible in English is universally recognised. Translating directly from the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, he produced a text of enduring quality that underpinned Bible translations in English from the sixteenth century to the present day.



- **Revised Version-** The Revised Version was produced in the nineteenth century by British and American scholars, benefiting from the discovery of some early and important manuscripts which threw new light on many aspects of biblical scholarship. It was the first real revision of the KJV and the basis for the American Standard Version of 1901.

The Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith (1830 CE)- A sacred text of the Latter-Day Saint movement.

Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy (1875 CE)- The central text of the Christian Science religion.

Modern Texts (1900-Present)

Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda (1946 CE)- A spiritual classic detailing the life and teachings of Yogananda and the Kriya Yoga tradition.

A Course in Miracles (1976 CE)- A modern spiritual text that outlines a self-study curriculum to achieve spiritual transformation.

The Urantia Book (1955 CE)- A spiritual and philosophical book that discusses God, science, religion, teachings of Jesus, history, and destiny.

The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation by Stephen Mitchell (2000 CE)- A modern translation of the ancient Hindu scripture.

Sources:

Google (various queries)

ChatGPT (various queries)

Cambridge University Press (<https://www.cambridge.org>)