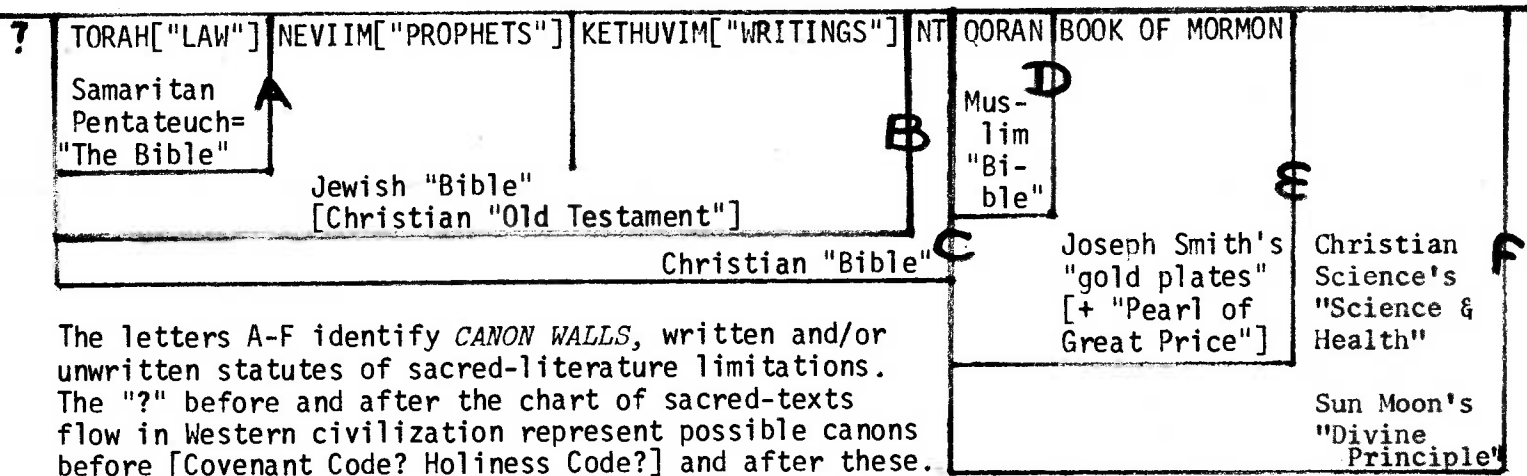


NB: The existential canon is some-thing else, viz. the writings one [and one's community] uses sacredly.

Sartre moved from faith in God to faith in literature to, now, faith in history, the Marxist vision. Faith in humanity is a fourth possibility. Faith in literature may be theist [as in Jewish, Christian, and other scribism] or, as Sartre, atheist. And it may be establishment [as Judaism and some Protestantism], quasi-establishment [as Mormonism and Christian Science], or countercultural [Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the Dead, Theosophy's The Secret Doctrine, and certain other occult texts].....This thinksheet concerns itself with, and displays, ONE FACT, viz. that social definition, i.e. setting community boundaries, includes the normativization of a certain very restricted portion of a community's oral and/or written literature; and once this normativization has occurred, efforts to add to the sacred texts will be rejected, along with the additions, by the community, on pain of its dissolution [i.e., the community's loss of identity]. In addition to displaying this one fact, this thinksheet contain ONE PLEA in the light of the sociological necessity illumined by that fact, viz. that book-communities, i.e. communities whose communal life ritually values community-defining sacred texts, find ways of common celebration overarching canonical differences ["canon" meaning the normativized literature of a particular community], in the interests both of our common humanity and of the freedom of the person to pass through conversion from one community to another. In sharpest focus, I'm concerned about Jewish/Christian dialog in general, and in particular my own involvements therein, as a teachers of Christians and Jews in mixed groups and as a co-teacher of many courses with rabbis [as well, of course, with Roman Catholic priests].

TIME-LINE



The letters A-F identify CANON WALLS, written and/or unwritten statutes of sacred-literature limitations. The "?" before and after the chart of sacred-texts flow in Western civilization represent possible canons before [Covenant Code? Holiness Code?] and after these.

WALL A defines the Samaritans now living as the true Israelities. In this "Buchreligion," as to greater or less extent all the religions of this flow are scribal, "people of the book," the sacredness of the text appeared in the priest's solicitude when I held the SP in my arms. Jews [by this account and religion] have polluted the sacred writings through additions.

WALL B is the Jewish scribal exclusion, especially of Christians, from Judaism. To survive, a community or people must "de-fine" [= set limits upon] its extent; and in transtribal cases --i.e., cases where peoplehood is not coterminous with geography, territory--holy books tend to be "heavies" in this process. If Judaism is to survive, Jews must feel about Christians the way Samaritans feel about Jews, that the outsider has committed corruption by addition.

WALL C defines, literarily, "Christian." The canonical knife was dull: we were 3 1/2 cs. into Christianity before the canon settled down. But while commentation is possible and necessary, no books essential to the faith can be added without pollution and community death.

WALLS D-F are examples of essential additions to the Christian Bible. I.e., they are writings their religions consider essential to true faith and therefore true life. It is therefore impossible, on pain of death, for Christianity to consider these religions Christian even though they claim to be fulfilments and/or repristinizations of Christianity. The same applies to religions providing a governing principle for reading the Bible and all else, e.g. Theosophy's "The Secret Doctrine" and the Rev. Sun Moon's "The Divine Principle."

As a liberal, I'd rather think about inclusion: this thinksheet must be about exclusion.