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Religion (Classes BL through BX)

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I. Scope

Materials covered by this statement comprise the collections in class BL-BX. While the General Collections (English, Romance languages, Russian) are the main focus of this statement, collection levels (0-5) both reflect and are augmented by materials in appropriate area studies and subject divisions as well (e.g. African and Middle Eastern Division, Asian Division, Law).

The Library of Congress acquires for its permanent collections works of research value in the philosophy of religion, the history and principles of religion; comparative religion; systems of theology and doctrine; law, liturgy, and rituals; religion and society: its historical, social and cultural role; and trends and developments of current or historic importance. Emphasis is placed on publications of scholarly and research interest at national or international levels. All religions and mythologies are collected. All languages are collected. All formats are collected.

II. Research Strengths

By virtue of its sheer volume, the strengths of the collections are many, yet the General Collections are particularly strong in United States religious history. The holdings in this area are exceptionally broad, comprehensive, and they abundantly document the American religious experience. Sectarian groups are well represented through books, journals and annual reports. The General Collections have a noteworthy and representative array of items reflecting the rise in new religious movements of the 20th century. Because of the influence of copyright deposit on the collection, there is a representative amount of religious materials on African American churches, clergy, and religion in the 20th century.

The General Collections have several thousand books and pamphlets, reports and letters by missionaries and missionary organizations. There are pamphlets and tracts, often bound together as books, published by tract societies of the 19th century such as the American Tract Society, the Religious Tract Society, and the Virginia Religious Tract Society to name a few. The General Collections also hold thousands of works by the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans, as well as a smaller number by other male and female religious orders.

In the General Collections, one finds a broad scope of materials relating to women in religion, including Buddhist monastic training for women; the spiritual life of Hindu, Moslem, and Jewish women; womanist theology; goddess religion; women missionaries; and lesbian clergy, to name just a few.

The Library's General Collections offer an outstanding starting point with its extensive holdings of the sacred texts and other basic writings of all major and many minor religions worldwide, including all significant editions and translations of the Bible, Talmud, Tripitaka, Vedas, Upanishads, and others, as well as large numbers of interpretive or reference works about them.

The Library of Congress has magnificent collections in Orthodox and Russian Orthodox materials. The Library of Congress has, in fact, the largest collection published by the Orthodox Church outside of Russia. All major scholarly works are represented, complemented by a comprehensive collection of liturgical texts and service books.

Judaism is well represented in 20th-century publications. Because of copyright deposit, the General Collections contain most 20th-century English language publications by Jewish presses in the United States and United States presses with titles on Jews and Judaism. The collections of the Hebraic Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division are especially strong in the areas of the Bible, rabbinics, liturgy, and responsa (collections of decisions in Jewish law by individuals or multiple authors).

Materials relating to the study of Islam in the General Collections are especially rich since the 1950s, providing good resources for graduate-level research. All major schools of thought are represented. The addition of the collections available in the Near East Section (in the vernacular) makes the collections for the study of Islam at the Library superb.

Buddhism and Hinduism are each represented by two to three thousand books in Western languages, some in microformat. These include doctrine, practice, studies, history, and translations of sacred books. These sources in the General Collections can support an undergraduate level of research. To study at a graduate level one must know the canonical languages of these religions. These canonical works can be found in the Asian Division, bringing collections for the study of Buddhism and Hinduism at the Library of Congress to a very high level.

Beyond the Area Studies collections noted above, many custodial collections hold exemplary collections. A few of these include the Canon Law collection in the Law Library, the Bible and Reformation collections in Rare Books and Special Collections and the papers of Reinhold Niebuhr (theologian), Henry Ward Beecher (clergyman, preacher, lecturer), Dwight Lyman Moody (Christian evangelist) in the Manuscripts Reading Room. *Religion Collections in Libraries and Archives: A Guide to Resources in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia 1998* (online version updated on an ongoing basis) contains detailed descriptions of research strengths in religion for the General Collections and all reading rooms throughout the Library of Congress. This guide can be found online at the Main Reading Room web page on the Library of Congress web site.

Descriptions of research strengths can be found in the following Collections Overviews: Philosophy and Religion, United States History, China, Hebraica and Judaica, Japan, Near East, Tibet, Law, and Rare Books and Special Collections.

III. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress collects at Level 4 for most areas within the BL-BX classification with some areas at Level 3 in an effort to maintain a strong research collection in all languages. Materials collected include current reference books, monographs, serials, microforms, and electronic materials, such as electronic databases, books, journals, and web sites (e.g. Papal Transition Web Archive). Electronic resources are collected, using criteria consistent with criteria used for other formats (e.g. *ATLA Religion Database, Index Islamicus, Bibliography of Asian Studies*).

Manuscripts, facsimiles of manuscripts, recordings, motion pictures, and other special format materials are acquired on their individual merits, in keeping with the appropriate Collections Policy Statements. Hymnology and liturgical music are acquired in conformity to the Collections Policy Statement on Music.

The Copyright Best Edition statement provides guidance for selecting materials for the religion collection.

Collection Policy - Guidelines for specific areas

- A. Religions. Mythology. Rationalism
- B. Sacred Writings and Related Works
- C. Denominational or Sectarian Publications - United States
- D. Denominational or Sectarian Publications - Foreign and International

A. Religions. Mythology. Rationalism

The Library of Congress acquires for its permanent collections current works of research value in the following subjects:

- philosophy of religion
- history and principles of religion
- comparative religion
- systems of theology and doctrine
- law, liturgy, and rituals
- religion and society: its historical, social and cultural role
- trends and developments of current or historic importance.

The Library collects at Level 4 national and international publications on world religions of interest to scholars. Minor and popular works in all languages will be collected at Level 3. Those publications dealing with local religious groups, practices, beliefs and controversies will be acquired:

If they relate to matters that have national or international significance or have attracted wide attention, or

If they have substantial value for cultural, historical, political, anthropological, sociological, or economic research.

The collections of other U.S. libraries will be taken into account, but the Library of Congress may, when desirable, duplicate individual titles in the holdings of denominational archives, theological libraries, and local repositories.

B. Sacred writings and related works

The Library will acquire all significant editions and translations of the Bible, Koran, Talmud, Tripitaka, Vedas, Upanishads, and other major sacred writings.

The following are not acquired, unless they include important commentaries or have other bibliographical significance such as fine illustrations:

- Variant editions and reprints of translations already in the Library's collections,
- Individual editions of the Bible, abridged editions and selections from sacred writings.

Materials from the above category are considered for acquisition for their linguistic value when they represent virtually the only available work in a given language. The Collections Policy Statement for Translations may also shed light on the acquisition of sacred texts.

All major reference works about the Bible and other sacred writing (dictionaries, concordance, glossaries, etc.) and scholarly commentaries are acquired. Other publications about the Bible and other sacred writings, intended for adults, are acquired on a highly selective basis; those for juveniles are not acquired, unless they represent outstanding examples of authorship and/or book production.

C. Denominational or sectarian publications - United States

The Library of Congress acquires the following publications of U.S. religious denominations at the national level:

- Yearbooks, annual reports, directories
- National periodicals of general circulation
- Liturgies, rituals, codes, protocols, disciplines, books of order, canon law and other legal materials
- Any major monographs

The Library acquires all histories of local churches and congregations as they reflect the regional or national history of the United States or of the denomination, and often contain substantial genealogical information.

Instructional materials (for adults and juveniles) should be gathered for the collections at Level 3, focusing on items published at a national level. Instructional materials often reflect for historians and educators the culture, history, present attitudes, biases and hopes of a denomination or religious group

Publications at the regional, diocesan, or local level are acquired only in exceptional cases, for example:

- Publications relating to local activities or circumstances of national interest.
- Important publications of denominations, congregations, etc., which lack a national organization.

The following are considered to be the responsibility of local or denominational libraries, and the Library of Congress will acquire them only on a highly selective basis:

- Devotional publications (unless of literary or historical value)
- Tracts and pamphlets of limited use

D. Denominational or Sectarian Publications - Foreign and International

Publications of religious denominations, sects, or other organizations necessarily vary according to the

country of origin. Emphasis is placed on publications at the national level, or those having national or international significance.

As a general principle, acquisitions are not limited to the predominant sect or sects within a given country, but include all those which may have significant religious, political, or social impact, including clandestine groups. Similarly, for countries where organized religions are officially discouraged or limited, the Library attempts to acquire those publications which provide information on the status and influence of significant religious groups or trends within the country.

Major publications of religious denominations of international scope (e.g., Roman Catholic) and of international religious organizations (e.g., World Council of Churches) in the categories of yearbooks, annual reports and directories are acquired in English, if possible, and also in the original language when desirable.

For developing countries, the provisions of the Collections Policy Statement for Developing Countries are to be followed. Published reports of missionaries, containing significant observations on social, economic, and political conditions in the areas in which they worked, are to be considered for addition to the collections.

Instructional materials for non-Western religious traditions (for adults and juveniles) should be gathered for the collections at an Instructional Level (3), focusing on items published at a national level.

IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future

Currently, items for the General Collections in the BL-BX classes are received through Copyright, exchange, the Library's Overseas Offices, approval plans, single item purchase, and gift. It is expected that each of these modes of acquisition will continue. Increasingly, however, publishers are ceasing their print publications which the Library of Congress received through copyright deposit and are moving to born digital formats which must be purchased. One example is Religion Index One which will exist only in digital format after 2008. In the future, the Library may need to pay for works in a new format that it previously received free of charge in paper.

The creation of digital products often means unprecedented access to works formerly available only in rare book or special collections. However, because of budget limitations, the Library may not be able to obtain excellent full-text and fully searchable databases such as The Digital Library of Classic Protestant Texts, The Digital Library of the Catholic Reformation, or Acta Sanctorum.

Serials:

Some serial titles are moving to a digital format while a number of new titles are forgoing print in favor of a born digital format, (e.g Theological Librarianship). Whether free or for fee, questions arise concerning the cost or possibility of "acquisition" and storage.

The Library of Congress owns many large sets published in the era of acidic paper. As these become brittle, microform or digital replacements will need to be acquired.

V. Collecting Levels

The following list, arranged according to the major Religion sub-classes of Class B of the Library of Congress Classification, indicates the collection intensity levels (0 through 5) to be followed in acquiring materials on religion.

While most major religious groups are noted below, the list is not exhaustive. A level 4 is assumed if a classification is not specifically noted.

LC Classification		Collecting Levels
BL1-BL980	Religion (general) /mythology	4
BL1100-BL1295	Hinduism	4
BL1300-BL1380	Jainism	4
BL1500-BL1590	Zoroastrianism, Pareeism	4
BL1600-BL1695	Semitic Religions	4
BL1830-BL1883	Confucianism	4
BL1899-BL1942.85	Taoism	4
BL2017-BL2018.7	Sikhism	4
BL2216-BL2227.8	Shinto	4
BL2390-BL2490	African Religions	4
BL2500-BL2592	American	5
BL2700-BL2790	Rationalism, Atheism	4
BP1-BP253	Islam	4
BP300-BP395	Baha'i Faith	4
BP500-BP597	Theosophy, Anthroposophy	3
BS1-BS399	Bible	
	Texts and versions	5
	Variant editions	2
	New translations	5
BS410-BS2970	Works about the Bible	5
BQ1-BQ9999	Buddhism	4
BR1-BR136	Christianity	4
	Devotional works and tracks	2
BR140-BR1500	Church history	5

BR1690-BR1725	Biography	4
BM1-BM65	Judaism Periodicals, yearbooks, societies, etc.	4
BM70-BM127	Study and teaching, religious education	3
BM150-BM199	History (general)	4
BM201-BM449	History by country, region	4
BM480-BM509	Pre-Talmudic and Talmudic Jewish literature	4
BM510-BM518	Midrash (texts and critical works)	4
BM525	Cabala	4
BM600-BM645	Dogmatic Judaism	4
BM650-BM747	Practical Judaism, including liturgy and ritual	4
BS1-BS399	Bible Texts and versions Variant editions New translations	5 2 5
BS410-BS2970	Works about the Bible	4

Doctrinal Theology

Note: The Library attempts to acquire all of the important current periodicals, reference books and scholarly works on the major topics in doctrinal theology. However, the Library acquires only selected works on topics of narrow doctrinal interest or on controversial topics. Tracts, sermons and pamphlets are not acquired unless the topic or theologian's work is of historical or theological importance.

LC Classification		Collecting Levels
BT19-BT33	Doctrine and dogma	4
BT40-BT60	Philosophical theology	3
BT65-BT83	Doctrinal, dogmatic and systematic theology	4
BT88-BT92	Authority	3
BT95-BT97	Divine law. Moral government	3
BT98-BT180	God	3
BT198-BT590	Christology	3
BT595-BT693	Mariology	3
BT695-BT748	Creation	3
BT750-BT810	Salvation. Soteriology	3

BT819-BT891	Eschatology. Last Things	3
BT899-BT940	Future state. Future life	3
BT960-BT985	Invisible world	3
BT990-BT1010	Creeds, confessions, covenants,	4
BT1029-BT1039	Catechism	3
BT1095-BT1255	Apologetics. Evidences of Christianity	3
BT1313-BT1480	History of specific doctrines and movements	4

Practical theology

NOTE: The Library collects only the major works in most of the categories of practical theology. However, it attempts to develop a research-level collection in the categories of hymnology, ecclesiastical and church theology, church law, the ministry and the clergy, and missions. LC Classification Subject/Intensity Comments

LC Classification		Collecting Levels
BV1-BV4	Practical theology (general)	3
BV5-BV168	Worship	3
BV170-BV199	Liturgy and ritual	4
BV301-BV525	Hymnology	4
BV590-BV650	Ecclesiastical theology	4
BV597-BV628	Church theology	4
BV659-BV680	Ministry and clergy	3
BV759-BV765	Church law	4
BV800-BV873	Sacraments	3
BV900-BV1450	Religious societies	3
BV1460-BV1612	Religious education	3
BV2000-BV3705	Missions	4
BV3750-BV3799	Evangelism	4
BV4000-BV4470	Pastoral theology	3
BV4485-BV5095	Practical religion. Christian life	3
BV5015-BV5095	Asceticism and mysticism	3

BX1-BX9	Ecumenical movement	4
BX100-BX750	Eastern and Oriental Avoid repetitive material in liturgy and ritual	4
BX800-BX4795	Roman Catholic Church Avoid repetitive material in liturgy and ritual	4
BX2315-BX2333	Relics, shrines, saints	3
BX2400-BX4556	Monasticism	4
BX4717-BX4795	Dissenting sects	3
BX4800-BX9999	Protestantism	4
BX4872-BX4924	Individual sects (Pre-Reformation)	3

Revised by the Humanities and Social Sciences Division, November 2008.