THE TWO BIG QUESTIONS OF BIBLE CANON RELIABILITY: COMPLETION & CORRUPTION

STUDY COURSE – SELECTION/TRANSMISSION – ISSUES/CONTROVERSIES

by David L. Burris

| Books	Protestant tradition	Roman Catholic tradition	Eastern Orthodox tradition	Armenian Apostolic tradition [N 1]	Coptic Orthodox tradition	Orthodox Tewahedo traditions	Syriac Christian traditions
Canonical gospels[N 2]							
Matthew	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 3]
Mark[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 3]
Luke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 3]
John[N 4][N 5]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 3]
Apostolic history							
Acts[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acts of Paul and Thecla [N 6][50][51]	No	No	No	No (early tradition)	No	No	No (early tradition)
Pauline epistles							
Romans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Corinthians to Paul and 3 Corinthians [N 6][N 7]	No	No	No	No – inc. in some mss.	No	No	No (early tradition)
Galatians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ephesians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philippians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colossians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laodiceans	No – inc. in some eds. [N 8]	No – inc. in some mss.	No	No	No	No	No
1 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Timothy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Timothy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Titus	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philemon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
General epistles							
Hebrews	Yes[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
James	Yes[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Peter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Peter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 10]
1 John[N 4]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 John	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 10]
3 John	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 10]
Jude	Yes[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 10]
Apocalypse[N 11]							
Revelation	Yes[N 9]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes[N 10]
Apostolic Fathers[N 12] and *Church Orders*[N 13]							
1 Clement[N 14]	No (Codices Alexandrinus and Hierosolymitanus)						
2 Clement[N 14]	No (Codices Alexandrinus and Hierosolymitanus)						
Shepherd of Hermas[N 14]	No (Codex Siniaticus)						
Epistle of Barnabas[N 14]	No (Codices Hierosolymitanus and Siniaticus)						
Didache[N 14]	No (Codex Hierosolymitanus)						
Ser'atā Seyon (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Te'ezaz (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Gessew (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Abtelis (Sinodos)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Book of the Covenant 1 (Mashafa Kidan)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Book of the Covenant 2 (Mashafa Kidan)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Ethiopic Clement (Qälëmentos)[N 15]	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No
Ethiopic Didescalia (Didesqelya)[N 15]	No	No	No	No	No	Yes (broader canon)	No

long ago,
many communities through many centuries

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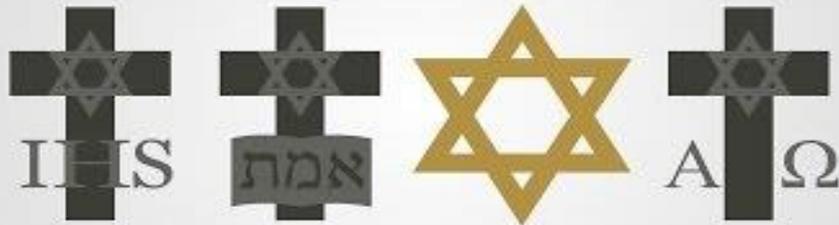
produced the Bibles
we have today

museum of the Bible

THE FALL OF ROME

Nothing to
see here
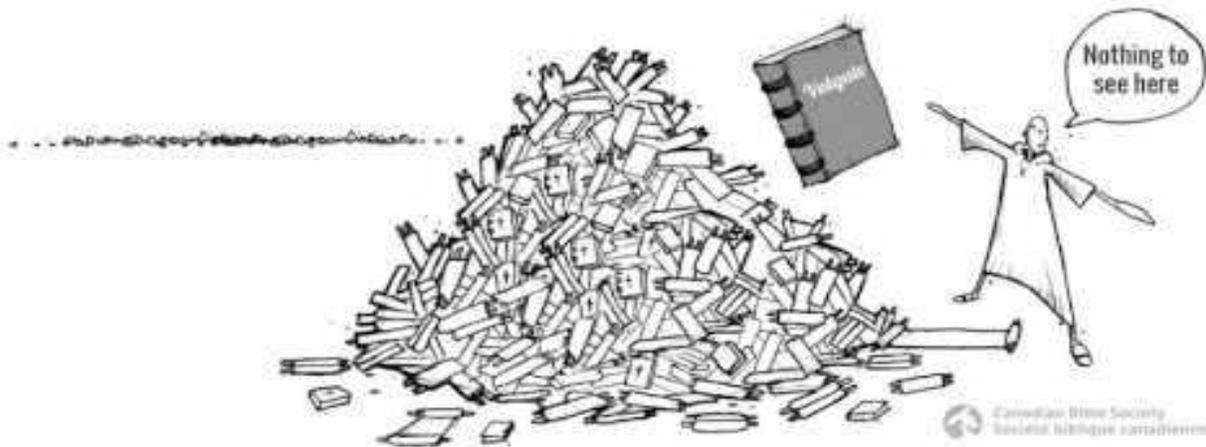
Canadian Bible Society
Société biblique canadienne

What is the Canon of the Scriptures?

- For Christians the books found in the Old and New Testament comprise the **Canon** of the Scriptures.

- The word Canon comes from the Greek **"kanon"** or Hebrew **"qaneh"** meaning a reed, rule, list or measuring stick. This word (s) was employed by ancient writers to denote a rule or standard.

- Therefore, the Canon of the Scriptures is the **authoritative list** of books that are acknowledged as **"divinely inspired"** by the Church, and are set as the standard for Christian teaching, preaching and edification.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
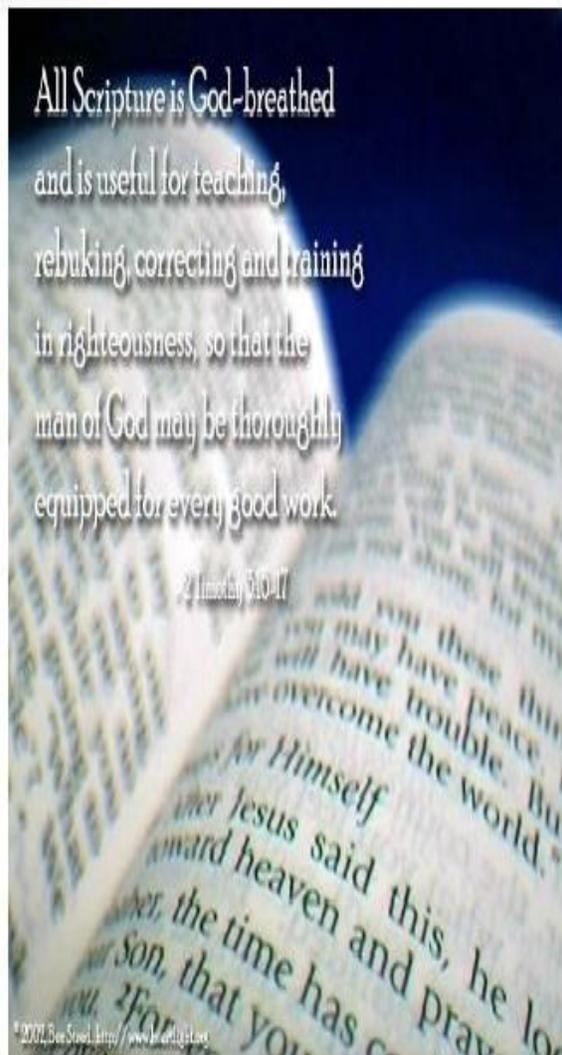
2 Timothy 3:16-17

The History Of Canon:
"Which Books Belong?"
The Divine Assurance Of 2 Timothy 3:16,17

1. The significance of this study is readily seen.
   a. There has to be a normative standard by which man can know the Divine will.
   b. The consequences of Scriptural inspiration are dramatic – IF Scriptures are God-given, then they are authoritative! IF Scriptures are not God-given, then our faith rests upon uncertainty. IF Scriptures are only partially inspired, then we are left perplexed without an acceptable way to know what is the Divine will (or even if there is a "divine will"!).
   c. If there is no normative standard in religion, then there will be chaos. This chaos will testify against the God we know from the Scriptures. Thus, the very existence of the God of the Bible is impacted by this topic!
   d. Sincere hearts will be the target of this issue. Some accept only 66 Books as inspired, others accept more, others accept less – who is right? We must do all we can to determine which books are from God (Jn 12:48).
   e. In essence this study series focuses attention upon <u>the most significant</u> doctrine in the Christian's faith.
2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 offers us the Divine assurance concerning the trustworthiness of God's Scripture.

a. The passage analyzed and discussed.
1) This is known as the "classic text" for biblical inspiration.
   2) "All Scripture is inspired of God" – The Greek word <u>THEOPNEUSTOS</u> (θεοπνευστοσ), or "inspired," literally means "breathed-out of God." This term means that the Scriptures that are "inspired" had their origin with God, coming directly from Him. Thus, only those writings that are "inspired" come from God!
   3) "Every" or "all" according to the context refers to the Old Testament writings. However, that which is affirmed specifically for the Old Testament is valid in principle for the New Testament! "The History of Canon" Lesson 1 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 2

4) God assures us that the writings (the words of the Scriptures) are inspired!

5) Because these writings originate with God, they are "profitable."

a) Every part has value for the reader!

   b) <u>For teaching</u> – it provides a foundation of divine Truth (Dt 4:36; Ps 94:12).

   c) <u>For reproof</u> – God's Word is able to produce conviction, refute error which exists because of ignorance (Jere 23:29; Hb 4:12).

d) <u>For correction</u> – It is able to lead the erring back to the right way.

   e) <u>For instruction</u> – It is able to build up and establish the believer by giving spiritual instruction (Ps 119:98-99, 130; 2 Ti 3:15).

f) <u>For completeness</u> – It brings salvation to man by giving one the knowledge of the Lord that is necessary to find forgiveness of sins (Jas 1:4).

   b. This passage makes a significant point regarding the writings of God to man – Any communication from God to man is "profitable"! The text specifically applies to the Old Testament, but its principle applies to ALL communications from God to man!

   c. The query that looms large – "How are we to know which writings are inspired and which are not?"

3. 2 Peter 1:19-21 offers us insight into the process of inspiration.

a. Examination of this passage.

   1) Peter's words explain the process of inspiration (1 Pt 1:10-12; 2 Pt 1:19-21).

2) Christ was destined to become the Author of our salvation (1 Pt 1:10).

   3) The salvation authored by Christ was explained by the Holy Spirit telling man. The Spirit communicated with the prophets, revealing to them the time and circumstances of the Messiah are coming (1 Pt 1:10).

   4) As the Holy Spirit revealed these facts, He "superintended" ("moved") the prophets in such a manner that they spoke/wrote what God desired to have communicated (2 Pt 1:21). Thus, mortals announced the unknown plans of God through their words/writings (1 Pt 1:12).

   5) The messages of the early prophets are identical – they all follow one thesis and no contradictions are found. This is because they were speaking/writing the "inspired" things of God! (1 Pt 1:12; 1 Ths 1:5).

   b. Peter's words clearly support the thrust of 2 Ti 3:16-17 – The Holy Spirit directly guided those who were to write down God's communication with mortals. This divine superintending assured man that God's Word would be revealed in an infallible manner. "The History of Canon" Lesson 1 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 3

c. Once again the nagging query arises – "How do we know what is the product of the Holy Spirit's superintendence? Do we rely upon the writing's self claim? Tradition? Council decrees?"

4. The determining factor deciding which literature is "inspired" and which is not inspired, focuses upon the "Canon of the Bible."

   a. The question of Canon asks, "How were the books of Scripture, those that were truly inspired by God, collected? What criteria were used to decide which were inspired? Why were some accepted while others rejected?"

   b. As we begin this study we need to emphasis terms and meanings:

      1) **CANON** (κανον) – Refers to a rule that serves as a measure. It is used in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15-16; Galatians 6:16.

      2) **APOCRYPHA** – These are writings omitted from the Hebrew canon but included in the LXX. It comes from a Greek term meaning "secret; hidden." These were officially accepted by the Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox at the Council of Trent (1546). They were dropped from Protestant Bibles in the 16th century. This category often adds 11 books to the Old Testament (three more are found in some Episcopalian and Lutheran Bibles).

      3) **PSEUDEPIGRAPHA** – This term literally means "things falsely ascribed" and are writings not permitted in any collection of Scriptures. These books are falsely attributed to influential biblical characters (Noah, Enoch, etc.) These were written from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. These writings target the unrevealed topics of Scripture and were favorite readings in the first century. These writings were read publicly for edification and were often included in the codex volumes with inspired Scriptures.

   c. God has specified that the collection known as "Scripture" include only those writings that are "inspired" (2 Ti 3:16-17).

   d. The judgment of "inspiration" thus depended upon the "canon" which measured the nature of the literary work. Hence, the "canon" became a powerful instrument! "The History of Canon" Lesson 1 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 4

5. The application of the "canon" to religious writings is a critical study.
   Since the issue of inspiration has such a great impact upon our religious beliefs and practices, it is not surprising to find that the "canonicity" of writings was a debated issue.
   a. Those claiming that canon is not relevant seek to evade Scriptural authority by claiming that many books of the Bible are "lost." As these "missing books" are considered there arises the query: "What happened to these lost books? How will we know if they are ever found?"
   b. Those claiming that "additional" revelations have been given to mortals and these "latter-day revelations" are "inspired" (i.e. Book of Mormon).
   c. Those claiming that religious writing of other world views are just are "inspired" as the Christian's Bible (i.e. Koran; Sacred books of Hindus; Talmud; Confucius; Buddha; etc.).

6. It is suggested by some that man can never know what material is truly inspired and which is not. This dilemma can be resolved so that man's perplexity is removed and faith is concretely settled
   a. The question of Canon is historically reliable and proven trustworthy.
   b. God does not want us to remain uncertain – His assurance stands today!
   c. The issue of Canon will help seekers find God's Word even when they are living in the midst of a pluralistic society!, Jr. Page 3

The Prophets' Inspired Messages!

📖 **A Definite Recognition**
Ex 4:11-16; 1 Sa 3:1; Is 6:8; Jere 1:4,9

📖 **A Non-Continuous Source**
Jere 1:2; 14:1; 25:1; 26:1; 28:11; 34:1; 39:15

📖 **Aware and Conscious**
Is 6:11; Jere 14:13; 15:15; Ez 9:8; 11:13; Da 8:26

C A N O N:
which books belong?

The Prophets' Inspired Messages!

📖 **Surpassed Writer's Comprehension**
Daniel 12:8,9; 1 Co 2:9; 1 Pt 1:10-12

📖 **Sometimes Imposed On Writers**
Jere 20:7-9; 1:7,9; Num 22:35

📖 **Sometimes Writers Were Unaware**
Lk 1:1-4; Daniel 12:8, 9

C A N O N:
which books belong?

The History Of Canon:
"Which Books Belong?"
"Inspiration: The Need And Process"

1. Why does modern man need an inspired record and why should he believe that the Bible is this volume.

2. Points that reveal the urgent NEED for an inspired message to man from God.

   a. Without an inspired communication man will follow the wrong way (Jere 10:23; Pr 14:12; Ps 25:4,5).

   b. Without an inspired communication man finds only tragic/sorrow (Jere 6:16; Ro 1:26-32).

   c. Without inspired communications man will not be able to know the divine will (Is 55:8-11). Thus man would never know the joys of salvation (1 Ti 1:12-17).

   d. There is historical data that testifies to the urgent need for man to follow the inspired record given by God.

      1) Our modern times reveal a tragic erosion of reverence for the Scriptures. Today the Scriptures are not seen as the inspired, inerrant revelation of God to mankind. Failure to acknowledge the inspiration of Scriptures has led to the rejection of biblical doctrines that has resulted in the depreciation of human life.

      2) When man believes the Scriptures are inspired, he lives better because his faith is the compass for his life.

   3) When man refuses to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, he will compromise and live devoted to self.
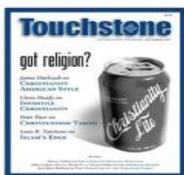
THEY SENT US THIS NEW TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE. THE "SCHOLARS" HAVE CUT OUT ALL OF THE PARTS THEY DECLARED UNTRUE.

The History Of Canon:
"Which Books Belong?"
Theories About Inspiration

1. The impact of Scripture's inspiration is illustrated by the three historical approaches to biblical authority. The way you view the inspiration of the Bible affects the way you use the Bible to govern your life. Here are three common approaches to biblical authority. Each reveals a significant clue about how one accepts Inspiration's claims.
   a. **The old liberal view**. This holds that the only part of Scripture that can be accepted is that which is capable of being explained via human reasoning. Thus, the miracles are purged or explained naturally. This basically rejects Inspiration and places human reason as the supreme authority.
   b. **The neo-orthodoxy (existential) view.** This is the willingness to accept only what appeals to the individual's feelings (emotions). Advocates claim that the Bible is not God's Word but it "contains" God's Word. The Bible becomes God's Word only when it has meaning for one's individual life. What may be "inspired" to one may be "uninspired" to another because it "does not speak" to him. This view erases all absolutes; every command becomes relative.
   c. **The conservative orthodox view.** This accepts the Bible as God's inspired Book. This view teaches that the Bible is the final authority in matters of life and religion (Jn 10:35).
2. We arrive at our view of biblical authority by the way we have concluded that Inspiration guided the writers. We have already concluded that mortal minds needed Inspiration to reveal divine Truth. This conclusion leads to the question that asks, "How, and to what degree, did Inspiration guide the writers of the Bible?" This question is critical to those seeking to follow God's will. This question introduces us to the discussion of various theories of Inspiration.
3. Historically the inspiration of the Bible has been explained by one of the following theories. Notice how each theory impacts biblical authority."The History of Canon" Lesson 4 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 2

a. **The Bible – A Human Book!** It is viewed as a remarkable book, but one authored totally by humans. Since mortals wrote it, it is not infallible.

1) It is suggested that the "inspiration" of the Bible is the same as found in Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, or Milton.

2) It claims that the Bible is a product of "natural inspiration."

3) This theory fails because . . .

a) The Person of Christ is greater than any creation of mortal minds. Christ's love, character, and purity surpass anything found in human literature.

b) The Scriptures are filled with supernatural traits that mark it as a distinctive, divine Book! (See Pache, p. 279ff for a listing of supernatural qualities of the Bible).

b. **The Bible – Partially Divine, Partially Human.** The obvious supernatural quality of the Bible makes any intelligent person admit that it has divine qualities. But some are unwilling to follow all biblical teachings and seek to negate biblical authority by claiming that only "parts" of the Bible are inspired. This theory is suggested several different ways.

1) Only the author's "thoughts," not words, were inspired. According to this theory, God suggested the ideas and then left man free to express them in his own words. This theory fails because . . .

a) Ideas can only be communicated via words.

b) Paul refuted this theory (1 Co 2:13).

c) Reason refutes this theory – If God could not guide the writers in their words, how could He guide their thoughts? Also, how are we to determine what are God's thoughts and what are man's?

d) Communication of thoughts requires the authors/speakers to understand what is being communicated. But Daniel (12:8,9), Caiaphas (Jn 11:51), and the old prophet (2 Ki 13:2) all spoke words that were neither comprehended nor willed!

2) Only the spiritual and moral things of Scripture were inspired while the historical matters were non-inspired. This suggests that God only revealed the things that were beyond man's ability to comprehend and then allowed the writers to record the rest. Thus, there are many errors, even legends and myths, in the Bible. This theory is answered –

a) The credibility of the Scripture is ruined because how can one grasp the whole Truth with any certainty?

b) The Bible affirms its value in all of its writings – historical as well as spiritual (1 Co 10:4,6,11; Ro 5:14; 1 Pt 3:21; Gal 4:24; etc.).

3) The Bible "contains" the Word of God but is not "the Word of God." "The History of Canon" Lesson 4 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 3

Many suggest the Bible contains myths, legends, and errors that no intelligent person would ever believe. Thus attempts to "de-mythologize" the Bible have occurred. This theory answered:

a) If error exists in the Bible, then the Bible cannot be God's revelation.

b) If this is true then there is no way for anyone today to sort out the error from the Truth. To attempt to decide what is inspired and what is not is to put oneself <u>above </u>Scripture!

c) These deny the miracle of Inspiration but contend for a greater miracle of "personal encounter" as God "makes" portions of the Bible "inspired" to modern readers.

c. **The Bible – Only Divine, having been dictated to man.** This theory suggests that each writer was wholly passive in writing God's revelation (i.e. a human tape recorder). This theory answered:

1) Such a theory fails to consider that individual personalities are very apparent in the writings of the Bible (cf Ro 9:1-5).

2) The writings show the customs, colors, and places of their times.

3) A uniformity should mark the Scriptures if it was all dictated, but such is not the case.

d. **The Bible – A Book that is Divine and human and has been produced infallibly by God's Holy Spirit overseeing the process of transmission.** This process is summed up by two terms – "Plenary" and "Verbal" inspiration.

4. The Bible's inspiration was complete – in the composition of the original MSS the writers were so guided that God guided even their choice of expressions.

a. **Plenary Inspiration** – Every word in the original MSS was perfect and lacking error.

1) This means that the inspired revelation is entire; complete so that nothing needs to be added to it (Rv 22:18-19).

2) "ALL" has been given to us as the authors received and recorded exactly what God revealed to them (Num 22:38; 24:13; Ps 119:42-43,86,89,96-97,160; Jere 1:9,17; 23:28; 26:2; 36:2; Rv 19:9; 21:5; 22:6).

b. **Verbal Inspiration –** Every word was influenced by God so that the words used were actually words selected by God Himself.

1) The sense of Scripture is inextricably linked to the words. If the words are not from God, then the Scriptures are not from God either! "The History of Canon" Lesson 4 John L. Kachelman, Jr. Page 4

2) Note: Jn 6:63; Jere 1:7,9; 15:19; 26:2; 36:2; 1 Co 2:13,16.

    c. **Note:** This plenary and verbal inspiration marks Scripture as the Word of God. Any writing that fails to demonstrate these qualities cannot be "inspired" and therefore is ill suited to be our religious authority. Any religious authority MUST pass this test!

5. Summary Observations

a. There is a divine wisdom that man is incapable of knowing.

b. God has revealed this wisdom to mortal minds.

    c. God's revelation was complete and guarded against all error because God's revelation would not be characterized with contradictions and errors.

    d. The Bible is marked with this divine protection and even its words are inspired.

e. Any other book, which claims to be man's religious authority, must also pass the test of inspiration. If it does not pass, it cannot be considered as a viable authority for one's religious beliefs/practices! **Thus**, "All Scripture (inspired by God) is profitable!"
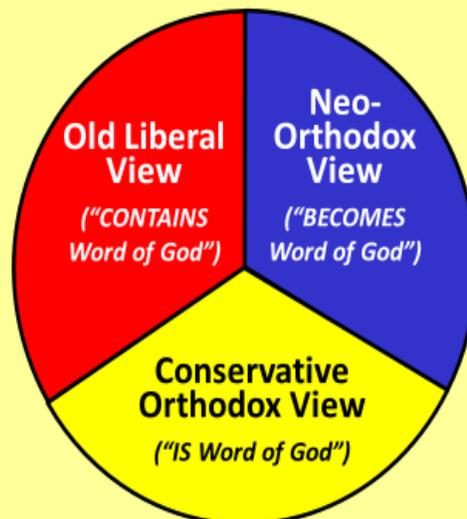
Historic Views Of Inspiration

📖 It is a totally human book!

📖 It is part divine and part human!

📖 It is only divine!

📖 It is both divine and human!

CANON:
which books belong?

The Completeness of Biblical Inspiration

📖 PLENARY – Perfect!

This means that the inspired revelation is entire; complete so that nothing needs to be added to it (Revelation 22:18-19)

CANON:
which books belong?

The Completeness of Biblical Inspiration

📖 VERBAL – Words Given!

The words used were actually words selected by God Himself.

If the words are not from God, the Scriptures are not from God
(John 6:63; Jeremiah 1:7, 9; 15:19; 26:2; 36:2; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 16)

CANON:
which books belong?

The Concept and Importance of Canonicity

The Concept and Importance of Canonicity

by Greg Bahnsen

Scripture as Final Authority

The Christian faith is based upon God's own self-revelation, not the conflicting opinions or untrustworthy speculations of men. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:5).

The world in its own wisdom would never understand or seek God (Rom. 3:11) but always suppress or distort the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18, 21). So, Paul concluded that "the world in its wisdom did not know God" (I Cor. 1:21), and he set in sharp contrast "the words which man's wisdom teaches" and those which "God revealed unto us through the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:10, 13). In light of that contrast, we need to see that the apostolic message did not originate in persuasive words of human wisdom or insight (I Cor. 2:4). The light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ was, as they said, "of God and not from ourselves" (II Cor. 4:6-7). Paul thanked God that the Thessalonians received his message "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (I Thess. 2:13). As Peter wrote, "no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Paul said of the sacred writings which make us wise unto salvation that every one of them is "God-breathed," inspired by God (II Tim. 3:15-17).

It is for this reason that the Scriptures are profitable for our doctrine, correction, and instruction. We must pay attention to the message which is divine - and all of it, as Jesus said: "Man shall live... by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). But God's people must *not* submit to uninspired words of men. "Thus, says Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not unto the word of the prophets... speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah" (Jer. 23:16). Nor should God's people allow their faith to be compromised by any philosophy which is "after the tradition of men... and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Christ Himself condemned those who "have made void the word of God because of [their] tradition" (Matt. 15:6). Human philosophy and human traditions have no place in defining the Christian faith.

The message of the Christian faith is, therefore, rooted in and circumscribed by God's own revealed word - not the authoritative words of men. Where is *God's Word* found? "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). God verbally revealed Himself in many ways: from His personal address to Adam or Abraham to the inspired preaching of Jonah, Amos, or Ezekiel. He also sent His word *in writing* to His people: from the tablets of the Mosaic law to the written message or Isaiah or Jeremiah. Even the word of God which was originally delivered orally needed to be reduced to writing in order for us to know about it and for it to function as an objective standard for faith and obedience. The word of false teachers was to be exposed by the previously inscribed law (Deut. 13:1-5) or written testimony (Is. 8:20).

The grandest expression of God's Word was found in the very person of Jesus Christ, who is called "the Word of God" (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13). Again, what we know of Christ is dependent upon the written word of the gospels by men like Matthew and Luke. Christ commissioned certain men to act as His authorized representatives, His apostles. He inspired them with His word (John 14:26), so they

spoke for Him (Matt. 10:40). It is noteworthy, however, that the oral preaching and teaching of the apostles were to be tested against the *Scriptures,* as we see from Paul's commendation of the Bereans (Acts 17:11). What the apostles themselves wrote was to be accounted as the very word of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Their written epistles came to have for the church the same authority as "the other scriptures" (II Pet. 3:16).

A key work of the apostles was precisely that of revelation: their confessing Christ, testifying to Him, interpreting and applying His person and work for the church (Matt. 16:18; John 15:27; 16:13; Acts 1:8, 22; 4:33; 10:39-41; 13:31). They did not speak by flesh and blood or according to human instruction, but rather by revelation of the Father and Son (Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:11-12), being taught of the Spirit (John 14:26). In virtue of this revelatory work, Christ builds His church upon the foundation of the apostles (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; cf. 3:5).

The teaching of the apostles was received as a body of truth which was a criteria for doctrine and life in the church; because this teaching was passed down to the church and through the church, it was called the "tradition" (what had been "delivered") or the "deposit" (to be distinguished from the uninspired traditions of men which the Bible elsewhere condemns (e.g. Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:3). The apostolic deposit or tradition formed a "pattern of sound words" for the church (II Tim. 1:13-14) which was to be guarded (I Tim. 6:20-21) as the standard for Christian life (II Thess. 3:6; II Pet. 2:21) and for all future teaching in the church (II Tim. 2:2). This apostolic tradition was found in both oral instruction and written epistle (II Thess. 2:15); obviously only the latter is available to us today.

In the very nature of the case, apostolic revelation did not extend beyond the apostolic generation, the "foundational days" of the church.[1] Thus Jude in his day could speak of "the faith" - meaning the teaching content of the Christian faith - as now "once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3). About this verse, F.F. Bruce comments: "Therefore, all claims to convey an *additional* revelation... are false claims... whether these claims are embodied in books which aim at superseding or supplementing the Bible, or take the form of extra-Biblical traditions which are promulgated as dogmas by ecclesiastical authority."[2]

The Question of the Canon

As we have seen from the Scriptures themselves, "the faith which has once for all been delivered to the saints" must be defined and circumscribed by God's revelation as it is found particularly in the written Word, from the law of Moses to apostolic deposit. The Christian faith is defined by all of Scripture, but only Scripture. From the Scriptures we may not add or subtract anything (Deut. 4:2; e.g. Rev. 22:18-19), lest our doctrine and conduct be governed by a defective standard. This, then, brings us to the question of what literary works ought to be recognized as the word of God -- the question of "the canon." The word "canon" denoted a rod used for measuring (defining) things. In the context of theological discussion, "the canon" is the term used to name that established list of authoritative writings which are the rule of faith and life for God's people.

The idea of a canon -- a set of writings bearing unique, divine, authority for God's people -- goes back to the very beginning of Israel's *history.* A covenant document which defined proper understanding of God, redemption, and life was placed in the ark of the covenant in the Holiest Place of the tabernacle, thus setting it apart from the words and opinions of men. Moreover, the notion of a canon is at the *theological* foundation of the Christian faith. Without revealed words available to God's people, there would be no exercise by God of Lordship over us as servants, and there would be no sure promise from God the Savior to save us as sinners.

Nature of Canonicity Distinguished from Its Recognition

What books properly make up the canon for the church? In answering this question, it is imperative that we not confuse the nature of the canon with the recognition of certain writings as canonical. The legitimate authority of canonical books exists independently of their being personally acknowledged as authoritative by any individual or group. The nature (or grounds) of canonicity is thus logically distinct from the history (or recognition) of canonicity.

It is the inspiration of a book that renders it authoritative, not human acceptance or recognition of the book. If God has spoken, what He says is divine in itself, regardless of human response to it. It does not "become divine" through human agreement with it.

Accordingly, the canon is not the product of the Christian church. The church has no authority to control, create, or define the Word of God. Rather, the canon controls, creates and defines the church of Christ: "...having been begotten again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible, by the word of God which lives and abides forever.... And this is the word of good news which was preached unto you" (I Peter 1:23-25).

When we understand this, we can see how erroneous it is to suppose that the corporate church, at some council of its leaders, voted on certain documents and constituted them the canon. The church cannot subsequently attribute authority to certain writings. It can simply receive them as God's revealed word which, as such, always has been the church's canon. Authority is inherent in those writings from the outset, and the church simply confesses this to be the case.

The Canon Not Identical with Special Revelation

In order for a book to be accounted canonical, it is necessary that it be inspired. However, while inspiration is a necessary condition of canonicity, it is not a sufficient one. Otherwise all of God's special (verbal) revelation would constitute the canon of the church; yet this is not the case, as we can see for a couple of reasons.

First, remember that not all special revelation was given in written form or subsequently committed to writing (e.g., many discourses by Jesus while on earth, John 21:25; private revelations to the apostles, II Cor. 12:4,7; Rev. 10:4; unpublished messages from New Testament prophets, I Cor. 12:28).

Second, we must note that not all of those inspired messages which were reduced to writing have been preserved by God's providence for use by His people through history, such as "The Wars of Jehovah," "The Book of Asher," Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians, etc. (c.f., Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; I Cor. 5:9; II Cor. 2:4; 7:8). Therefore, we should say more precisely that the canon of the Christian church is constituted by those inspired writings which God has preserved for His people in all subsequent ages.

Inspiration is Self-Attesting and Self-Consistent

Scripture teaches us that only God is adequate to witness to Himself. There is no created person or power which is in a position to judge or verify the word of God. Thus: "when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself..." (Heb. 6:13).

Accordingly, men are not qualified or authorized to say what God might be expected to reveal or what can count as His communication. That is why Scripture draws such a sharp distinction between

"words which man's wisdom teaches" and those "which the Spirit teaches" (I Cor. 2:13). The wisdom of man cannot be relied upon to judge the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:20-25). Indeed, in its natural condition, man's mind will always fail to receive the words of God's Spirit: "the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God...he cannot know them because they are Spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

Only God can identify His own word. Thus, God's word must attest to itself -- must witness to its own divine character and origin. "And you do not have His word abiding in you, for whom He sent you believe not. You search the scriptures..., and these are what bear witness of Me" (John 5:38-39).

Throughout the history of redemption God has directed His people to find His message and words in written form. Indeed, God Himself provided the prototype of written revelation when He delivered the tablets of law upon Mount Sinai. And when God subsequently spoke by His Spirit through chosen messengers (II Peter 1:21), their words were characterized by self-vindicating authority. That is, it was evident from their message that they were speaking for God -- whether the claim was *explicit* (e.g., "Thus saith the Lord...") or *implicit* (the arresting power or demand of their message as a word from the Lord of the covenant: e.g., Matt. 7:28-29).

Moreover, their messages were of necessity coherent with each other. A genuine claim to inspiration by a literary work minimally entailed consistency with any other book revealed by God, for God does not lie ("...it is impossible for God to lie," Heb. 6:18) and does not contradict Himself ("But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no," II Cor. 1:18). A genuine word from God could always be counted upon, then, to agree with previously given revelation -- as required in Deut. 13:1-5, "If there arises among you a prophet..., saying `Let us go after other gods...,' you shall not hearken unto that prophet....You shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice...."

The Old Testament Jews had to beware of false prophets, and caution was likewise necessary in the early days of the New Testament church because of misleading messages from false teachers -- words which were not revealed by God. For instance, Paul says "If any man preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). Spurious "apostolic" letters sometimes circulated and troubled the early church, as we see from Paul's words: "...be not unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report, or letter supposedly having come from us" (II Thess. 2:2).

It was necessary to instruct the church to "believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). And the criterion for judging was consistency with previous revelation -- whether the Old Testament (e.g., "Now these were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word [of Paul] with all readiness of mind, examining the [Old Testament] scriptures daily, whether these things were so," Acts 17:11) or the teaching of the apostles (e.g., I John 4:2-3; Gal. 1:9).

The Canon Historically Settled Under God's Providence

Those works which God gave to His people for their canon always received immediate recognition as inspired, at least by a portion of the church (e.g., Deut. 31:24-26; Josh. 24:25; I Sam. 10:25; Dan. 9:2; I Cor. 14:37; I Thess. 2:13; 5:27; II Thess. 3:14; II Peter 3:15-16), and God intended for those writings to receive recognition by the church as a whole (e.g., Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:4). The Spiritual discernment of inspired writings from God by the corporate church was, of course, sometimes a drawn-out process and struggle. This is due to the fact that the ancient world had slow means of communication and transportation (thus taking some time for epistles to circulate), coupled with the understandable caution of the church before the threat of false teachers (thus producing dialogue and debate along the way to achieving one mind).

Historical evidence indicates that, even with the difficulties mentioned above, the Old and New Testament canons were substantially recognized and already established in the Christian church by the end of the second century.[3] However, there is adequate Biblical and theological reason to believe that the canon of Scripture was essentially settled even in the earliest days of the church.

By the time of Jesus there existed a well-defined body of covenantal literature which, under the influence of the Old Testament prophets, was recognized as defining and controlling genuine faith. When Jesus or the apostles appealed simply to "the Scriptures" against their Jewish opponents, there is no suggestion whatsoever that the identity and limits of such writings were vague or in dispute. Confirmation of the contents of the Jewish canon is found toward the end of the first century in the writings of Josephus (the Jewish historian) and among the rabbis of Jamnia.

The New Testament church acknowledged the canonical authority of this Old Testament corpus, noting that "...not one jot or tittle" (Matt. 5:18) of "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke 24:44) was challenged or repudiated by our Lord. His full submission to that canon was evident from the fact that He declared "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). As Paul later said: "whatever things were previously written were written for our instruction" (Rom. 15:4).

The traditional Jewish canon was divided into three sections (Law, Prophets, Writings), and an unusual feature of the last section was the listing of Chronicles out of historical order, placing it after Ezra-Nehemiah and making it the last book of the canon. In light of this, the words of Jesus in Luke 11:50-51 reflect the settled character of the Jewish canon (with its peculiar order) already in his day. Christ uses the expression "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah," which appears troublesome since Zechariah was not *chronologically* the last martyr mentioned in the Bible (cf. Jer. 26:20-23). However, Zechariah is the last martyr we read of in the Old Testament according to Jewish *canonical* order (cf. II Chron. 24:20-22), which was apparently recognized by Jesus and his hearers.

As for the New Testament, the covenantal words of Christ -- which determine our lives and destinies (e.g., John 5:38-40; 8:31; 12:48-50; 14:15, 23-24) -- have been, through the power of the Holy Spirit, delivered faithfully to us by Christ's apostles: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26; cf. 15:26-27; 14:16-17; 16:13-15).

The very concept of an "apostle" in Jewish jurisprudence was that of a man who in the name of another could appear with authority and speak for that other man (e.g., "the apostle for a person is as this person himself," it was said). Accordingly, Jesus told His apostles, "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent me" (Matt. 10:40). And through these apostles He promised to "build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

We know that in this way there came about a body of New Testament literature which the church, "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20), came to recognize as God's own word, being the canon of their covenantal relation with Him. This recognition traces from the days of the apostles themselves, who either identified their own works as canonical (e.g., Gal. 1:1, 11-12; I Cor. 14:37), or verified the canonical authority of the works by other apostles (e.g., II Peter 3:16) and writers (e.g., I Tim. 5:18, citing Luke 10:7).

But whether or not each was given particular written attention by an apostle, the individual books of the New Testament came to be seen for what they were: the revelation of Jesus Christ through His chosen messengers. It is in this body of literature that God's people discern the authoritative word of their Lord -- as Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

To recapitulate: we know from God's Word (1) that the church of the New Covenant recognized the standing canon of the Old Testament, and (2) that the Lord intended for the New Covenant church to be built upon the word of the apostles, coming thereby to recognize the canonical literature of the New Testament. To these premises we can add the conviction (3) that all of history is governed by God's providence ("...according to the plan of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will," Eph. 1:11). So then, trusting Christ's promise that He would indeed build His church, and being confident in the controlling sovereignty of God, we can be assured the God-ordained recognition of the canon would be providentially accomplished -- which, in retrospect, is now a matter of historical record.

To think otherwise would be, in actual effect, to deprive the Christian church of the sure word of God. And that would in turn (a) undermine confidence in the gospel, contrary to God's promise and our spiritual necessity, as well as (b) deprive us of the philosophical precondition of any knowledge whatsoever, thus consigning us (in principle) to utter scepticism.

Application of Canonicity

In terms of the previous discussion, then, what should we make of the Roman Catholic decision in 1546 (the Council of Trent) to accept as canonical the apocryphal books of "Tobit," "Judith," "Wisdom," "Ecclesiasticus," "Baruch," "I and II Maccabees"?

Such books do not claim for themselves ultimate divine authority. Consider the boldness of Paul's writing ("if anyone thinks he is spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write is the commandment of the Lord" -- I Cor. 14:37-38; if anyone "preaches any other gospel that what we preached to you, let him be accursed" - Gal. 1:8). Then contrast the insecure tone of the author of II Maccabees: "if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do" (15:38). Moreover, when the author relates that Judas confidently encouraged his troops, that boldness came "from the law and the prophets" (15:9), as though this were already a recognized and authoritative body of literature to him and his readers. (This is also reflected in the prologue to Ecclesiasticus.) I Maccabees 9:27 recognizes the time in the past when "prophets ceased to appear among" the Jews.

The ancient Jews, to whom were entrusted the "oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), never accepted these apocryphal books as part of the inspired canon -- and still do not to this day.[4] Josephus speaks of the number of Jewish books which are divinely trustworthy, not leaving a place for the apocryphal books. Josephus expressed the common Jewish perspective when he said that the prophets wrote from the time of Moses to that of Artaxerxes, and that no writing since that time had the same authority. The Jewish Talmud teaches that the Holy Spirit departed from Israel after the time of Malachi. Now, Artaxerxes and Malachi both lived about four centuries before Christ, while the books of the Apocrypha were composed in the vicinity of two centuries before Christ.

When Christ came, neither He nor the apostles ever quoted from the apocryphal books as though they carried authority. Throughout the history of the early church, the acceptance of the Apocrypha was no better than spotty, inconsistent, and of ambiguous import -- the bottom line being that the books never gained universal respect and clear recognition as bearing the same weight and authority as the very Word of God.

The first early Christian writer to address explicitly the question of an accurate list of the books of the Old Covenant was Melito (bishop of Sardis, about 170 A.D.), and he does not countenance any of the apocryphal books. Athanasius forthrightly rejected Tobit, Judith, and Wisdom, saying of them: "for the

sake of greater accuracy... there are other books outside these [just listed] which are not indeed included in the canon" (39th festal letter, 367 A.D.).[5]

The scholar Jerome was the main translator of the Latin Vulgate (which Roman Catholicism later decreed has ultimate authority for determining doctrine). About 395 A.D., Jerome enumerated the books of the Hebrew Bible, saying "whatever falls outside these must be set apart among the Apocrypha." He then lists books now accepted by the Roman Catholic church and categorically says they "are not in the canon." He later wrote that such books are read "for edification of the people but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas." Likewise, many years later (about 1140 A.D.), Hugo of St. Victor lists the "books of holy writ," adding "There are also in the Old Testament certain other books which are indeed read [in church] but are not inscribed...in the canon of authority"; here he lists books of the apocrypha.

The apocryphal books were sometimes highly regarded or cited for their antiquity or for their historical, moral, or literary value,[6] but the conceptual distance between "valuable" and "divinely inspired" is considerable.

Thus the 1395 Wycliffe version of the Bible in English included the Apocrypha and commends the book of Tobit in particular, yet also acknowledges that Tobit "is not of belief" -- that is, not in the same class as inspired books which can be used for confirming Christian doctrine. Likewise, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1562) names the canonical books of Scripture in one separate class, and then introduces a list of apocryphal books by saying: "And the other books the Church doth read for example of life... by yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine."[7] This is likewise the attitude of most Roman Catholic scholars today, who regard the books of the Apocrypha as only "deutercanonical" (of secondary authority).[8]

The Protestant churches have never received these writings as canonical, even though they have sometimes been reprinted for historical value. Even some Roman Catholic scholars during the Reformation period disputed the canonical status of the apocryphal books, which were accepted (at this late date) it would seem because of their usefulness in opposing Luther and the reformers -- that is, for contemporary and political purposes, rather than the theological and historical ones in our earlier discussion.

Finally, the books of the Apocrypha abound in doctrinal, ethical, and historical errors. For instance, Tobit claims to have been alive when Jeroboam revolted (931 B.C.) and when Assyria conquered Israel (722 B.C.), despite the fact that his lifespan was only a total of 158 years (Tobit 1:3-5; 14:11)! Judith mistakenly identifies Nebuchadnezzar as king of the Assyrians (1:1, 7). Tobit endorses the superstitious use of fish liver to ward off demons (6: 6,7)!

The theological errors are equally significant. Wisdom of Solomon teaches the creation of the world from pre-existent matter (7:17). II Maccabees teaches prayers for the dead (12:45-46), and Tobit teaches salvation by the good work of almsgiving (12:9) -- quite contrary to inspired Scripture (such as John 1:3; II Samuel 12:19; Hebrews 9:27; Romans 4:5; Galatians 3:11).

The conclusion to which we come is that the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha fail to demonstrate the characteristic marks of inspiration and authority. They are not self-attesting, but rather contradict God's Word elsewhere. They were not recognized by God's people from the outset as inspired and have never gained acceptance of the church universal as communicating the full authority of God's own Word. We must concur with the Westminster Confession, when it says: "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings" (I, 3).

Footnotes

[1] The theological error of believing that special, verbal revelation or quasi-revelation continued beyond the time of the apostles is made equally by Roman Catholics (imputing inspired authority to papal "interpretations" and unwritten tradition) and Charismatics (teaching tongues and prophecy as gifts to be expected throughout the life of the church). Both the office of Apostle and the gifts which accompanied the ministry of the apostles (cf. II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4) were intended to be temporary, confined to the founding of the church. To be an Apostle, it was required to be a witness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:22; e.g. I Cor. 9:1) and to be commissioned directly by Him (Gal. 1:1), thus restricting the apostolic office to the first generation of the church. Paul indicated that he was the last of the apostles (I Cor. 15:7-9); his successor, Timothy, is never given that title. By the later New Testament epistles we have no further mention or discussion of revelatory gifts like tongues and prophecy, for with the completing (bringing to its end or "perfection") of that which was "partial" - namely, the process of revelation - the temporary revelatory gifts of tongues and prophecy had to "cease" (I Cor. 13:8-10).

[2] Bruce, F.F., *The Defence of the Gospel in the New Testament,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 80.

[3] For a good discussion of the evidence, see Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament,* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987).

[4] Fragments of three Apocryphal books are among extant Qumran texts, with no evidence that they were considered canonical even by the sect that produced them. Philo shows no sign of accepting them either. Sometimes appeal is made to the Greek version of the Old Testament (the "Septuagint") to suggest "the canon of the Alexandrian Jews was more comprehensive." F.F. Bruce goes on to say, "There is no evidence that this was so: indeed, there is no evidence that the Alexandrian Jews ever promulgated a canon of scripture" (*Canon,* pp. 44-45). Indeed, the Septuagint manuscripts we possess were produced by Christians much later, and extant manuscripts differ between themselves, some excluding books of the Apocrypha which Rome accepted, while others included apocryphal books which *even* Rome denied.

[5]Those who study the history of canonicity will trip themselves up badly if attention is not paid to the varying and unsettled use of terms at this point in church history (late fourth century). For instance, the term "apocrypha" itself carries different import between Athanasius and Jerome. Athanasius spoke of three categories of books: canonical, edifying, and "apocryphal" - meaning heretical works to be avoided altogether. Jerome on the other hand, used the term "apocryphal" for the second category of books, those which are edifying (and Rufinus termed them "ecclesiastical," since they could be read in the church). The same is true of the early use of the term "canon." Athanasius appears to be the first to use it in the strict sense that we do today; naturally, such usage was not immediately inculcated by all writers. Sometimes "canonical" was used broadly and indiscriminately to include what other authors more carefully delineated as the books of highest, inspired authority (the church's standard - "canon") *as well as* the edifying or "ecclesiastical" books which could be read in the church. We see this, for instance, at the provincial (non-ecumenical) Third Council of Carthage in 397, which explicitly identifies "the canonical writings" with what "should be read in the church" - and includes the works deemed "edifying" by Athanasius or "apocryphal" by Jerome. Contemporary Roman Catholic scholars recognize the varying use of the term "canonical" by speaking of the apocryphal books as "deuterocanonical."

[6]Roman Catholic apologists sometimes jump to canonical conclusions from the simple fact that the books of the Apocrypha were copied and included among ancient manuscripts or from the fact than an author draws upon them. But obviously a writer can quote something from a work which he takes to be true without thereby ascribing diving authority to it (for instance, Paul quoting a pagan writer in I Cor. 15:33).

[7]Roman Catholic apologists often misunderstand the Protestant rejection of the Apocrypha, thinking it entails having no respect or use for these books whatsoever. Calvin himself wrote, "I am not one of those, however, who would entirely disapprove the reading of those books"; his objection was to "placing the Apocrypha in the same rank" with inspired Scripture ("Antidote" to the Council of Trent, pp. 67,68). Likewise, Luther placed the Apocrypha in an appendix to the Old Testament in his German Bible, describing them in the title as "Books which are not to be held equal to holy scripture, but are useful and good to read."

[8]The preceding history and quotations concerning the canon can be pursued in F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture, passim*

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1 THE TWO CITIES

Dr. Jack Moorman, who spent many years in researching the question of Bible versions, has stated that the transmission of the Greek text of the New Testament is essentially a "tale of two cities", viz., Antioch and Alexandria. Dr. Moorman writes:
"Just as surely as the King James text was woven into the spiritual life of Antioch in Syria, so was the modern versions text in Alexandria. Today a person must decide whether he is more comfortable with a Bible whose roots go back to one or the other of these two cities...certainly Antioch has by far the most glorious heritage."

ANTIOCH: Here was the springboard for the Gentile church. It became the center for Gentile Christians just as Jerusalem was for the Jews. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" *(Acts 11:26)* . Antioch was the center for the outreach of the apostle Paul and his missionary journeys. Many of the disciples also visited Antioch. Antioch was the 'heartbeat' of Christianity.

ALEXANDRIA: The place where most of the modern texts and translations originated, had no such glory. It is true, however, that Alexandria became a center of intellectualism. Such men as Clement and Origen were active in this area. It was also noted as a place where every deviant sect was represented. Religious corruption and false doctrines were prevalent including Gnosticism, Arianism, pagan philosophy, etc. Alexandria was the place where the intellectuals of Christianity were attracted.

2 THE TWO ESSENTIALS

Since God has inspired his Word has He also preserved His Word? Has He preserved it for every generation?
The Westminster Confession(1646) states: "The Scriptures were immediately inspired of God and under His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages."
The Bible has the final say in the matter: 'The words of the Lord are pure words...Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.' *(Psalm 12: 6,7).*
If we accept the **Inspiration** of Scripture we must also accept that every word has been and will be **Preserved** through the ages in the church. Both together are essential doctrines.

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PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVATION OF THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

TRADITIONAL TEXT LINE
5210 MSS. †

- ANTIOCH
- APOSTLES
- ORIGINAL N.T.MSS. 30-90 A.D.
- SYRIAN MSS.(PESHITTA). 100-200 A..D.
- OLD LATIN & SYRIAC OF ORIGINALS.100-200 A.D.
- PAPYRI MSS. (85%=TRAD.TEXT) † 150-400 A.D.
- UNCIAL & CURSIVE MSS. (99%=TRAD.TEXT) † 150-1500A.D.
- LATIN BIBLES (WALDENSIANS ETC.) 1100 A.D.-1300 A.D.
- ERASMUS GREEK N.T. 1522 A.D.
- MARTIN LUTHER BIBLE 1522 A.D.-1534 A.D. *(GERMAN)*
- TYNDALES N.T.1525 A.D. COVERDALE BIBLE 1535 A.D. MATTHEWS BIBLE 1537 A.D. GREAT BIBLE 1539 A.D. *(ENGLISH)*
- STEPHENS GREEK N.T. 1550 A.D.
- GENEVA BIBLE 1560 A.D. BISHOPS BIBLE 1568 A.D. *(ENGLISH)*
- BEZAS GREEK N.T. 1598 A.D.
- **KING JAMES BIBLE 1611 A.D.**
- THE PURE WORD OF GOD

CORRUPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES (Gnosticism, Arianism, pagan philosophy)

BIBLE OF: WALDENSIANS: (ITALIC) DONATISTS; GAULS; CELTS. 120-1400 A.D.

WYCLIFFE N.T. (ENGLISH) 1380 A.D.

CONSTANTINE 312 A.D.

REFORMATION 1517 A.D.

ANABAPTISTS 1525 A.D.

PROTESTANTISM

CATHOLICISM

MENNONITES, DUTCH BAPTISTS QUAKERS.

REFORMED. LUTHERAN, PRESBYTERIAN, C.OF E.

ENGLISH BAPTIST

ROMAN CATHOLIC

ALEXANDRIAN TEXT LINE
45 MSS. †

- ALEXANDRIA
- PAPYRUS MSS.(P66,P75,ETC.) 200 A.D.
- CLEMENT 150-215 A.D.
- ORIGEN 184-254 A.D.
- EUSEBIUS 260-340 A.D.
- VATICANUS MSS. 331 A.D.
- SINAITICUS MSS. 331 A.D.
- LATIN VULGATE 382 A.D.
- JEROME 382 A.D.
- ALEXANDRINUS MS.450 A.D.
- RHEIMS-DOUAY BIBLE. 1582 A.D. *(ENGLISH)*
- GREEK NEW TESTAMENTS GREISBACH 1805 A.D. LACHMANN 1850 A.D. TREGELLES 1870 A.D. TISCHENDORF1870 A.D ALFORD 1872 A.D.
- WESTCOTT-HORT GREEK N.T.1881 A.D.
- **REVISED VERSION 1881 A.D.**
- A.S.V.,R.S.V.,J.B.,L.B.,T.E.V.,N.E.B.,N.I.V., N.A.S.V.,G.N.B.,N.R.S.V.,N.A.B.,C.E.V., N.B.V.,N.K.J.V..(footnotes.) JEH. WITNESS BIBLE.etc.
- CORRUPTED MODERN VERSIONS

3 THE TWO HERETICS"

CLEMENT: He accepted Greek philosophy and the Apocrypha as divinely authoritative. He was head of the catechetical school at Alexandria.and believed that salvation could be obtained through various means including baptism, faith and works, faith alone etc.

ORIGEN: He also became head of the catechetical school.A man of superior intellect he however denied the Bible's historicity, eternal punishment, the Holy Spirit's eternality, salvation by grace etc. He was given to the allegorizing of scripture.
* Data from; "Final Authority" by William P.Grady.

**4 THE TWO FALSE WITNESSES **

Discarded and hidden for 1500 years, these two corrupted manuscripts form the basis of all MODERN VERSIONS. They disagree with each other in over 3000 places in the Gospels alone. It is the **VATICAN MSS** (which include the Apocrypha that the translators mostly relied upon. Both had their roots in Alexandria and show the influence of Origen.
** Data from H.C.Hoskier's "Codex B and its Allies".

A total of 45 other manuscripts indicate some support for this text compared to 5210 which support the Traditional Text.†

John W. Burgon. states: "These are two of the least trustworthy documents in existence..." ('Revision Revised.')

5 THE TWO APOSTATE REVISIONISTS

Westcott and Hort Both were apostates.Westcott did not accept: Genesis 1-3; Bodily resurrection of Christ; Miracles and literal coming of Christ. Was partial to Romish ways. Hort did not accept the infallibity of Scripture. He also favored Darwin's theory of evolution Both men did not believe in eternal punishment or the vicarious atonement. *(Data from, 'Life&Letters', 1896.,1903.)*

6 CHANGES COMPARED WITH THE TRAD. TEXT."

GREEK WORDS: Added=306, Omitted=2987
VERSES: Omitted = 20
* Data from E.W.Fowler's "Evaluating Versions of the N.T."
Note; Most of these changes originate in the W-H text and most have been carried into the modern versions.

† Data from Jack Moorman's "Forever Settled."

WHY DID EARLY CHRISTIANS PREFER THE BOUND CODEX TO THE BOOKROLL?

EARLY CHRISTIAN BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS

[Marek Dospěl](#) May 27, 2019

On this late Byzantine (c. 1300 C.E.) wood panel icon, John the Baptist is identified in the top right corner with his traditional epithet, "the forerunner (of Christ)." Though mostly depicted as a man of wilderness, this icon shows him as a calm and noble figure. The tied bookroll in his left hand demonstrates the persistence of the bookroll in visual arts long after this book form had been superseded by the codex. Damaged by woodworm and flaked in three of the corners, the icon is currently on display in the British Museum (#1986,0708.1). *Photo: Public domain image, NC-SA 4.0.*

The books of the [Hebrew Bible](#) were originally all written [on scrolls](#). And the bookroll has remained the preferred book form in the Jewish liturgical use of the Torah to this day. As the word suggests, "scroll" is a rolled up book, made up of any number of sheets (of papyrus, parchment, or paper) glued together to produce a horizontal row of writing support that can be rolled from either end. The word "volume" (from latin *volvere*, "to roll") reflects this etymology, although the connection to the bygone book form is long lost.

When we say "book" today, we generally mean a tome of bound pages. Known as the ["codex,"](#) this common book form has always (over the past two millennia, anyway) looked the same—like any book on your desk. While the origins of the codex are not sufficiently explained, evidence shows that the preserved early Christian manuscripts are more often codices (plural of codex) than the then-established bookrolls. Why?

Some argue the codex had a technological advantage in that people could check different Biblical passages within a bound tome more readily than they could in a [bookroll](), which had to be rolled from one side to the other every time someone wanted to look up a passage. Another practical benefit of the codex was in its alleged larger capacity that allowed for the inclusion in one volume of all four gospels or all [Pauline]() epistles or the entire [New Testament](). One unintended effect of the latter was that the codex invited the imposition of a fixed order to the books it contained. Of all early Christian manuscripts, this intrinsic order is apparent in the established sequence of books of the Bible.

When pictured with a book, Jesus is often identified by the Biblical verse John 8:12 as "the light of the world." More light still needs to be shed on the beginnings of the codex, as it remains unclear why the codex (and not the bookroll) was the preferred book form to record the early Christian texts. This mural mosaic of Christ Pantokrator ("Almighty") in the Cefalù Cathedral, on Sicily, dates to the 12th century. *Photo: Per-Erik Skramstad/Wonders of Sicily.*

"It seems to me that the more cogent view is that the ancient Christian predilection toward the codex served to distinguish Christian books," offers Hurtado his judgment on arguably one of the most culturally significant innovations of Late Antiquity—the transition from bookroll to codex as the standard book format.

Tiny scraps are often all that remain of the early Bible manuscripts. This papyrus fragment (Rylands P52) likely dates as early as the second century C.E. Containing few verses from the Gospel of John, it is the earliest known manuscript of the New Testament. *Photo: Public domain image, licensed under PD-old.*

What books of the New Testament did the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists Quote?

The next time you hear lies about the Emperor Constantine only adding the books he liked to the Bible or how the Gospels were written hundreds of year after Jesus death just look at this chart.
Notice Clement quotes from the first 3 Gospels (John wrote his gospel in 95-98 AD) and how Justin quotes from all 4 Gospels in100 AD. Again notice how none of the "Gnostic Gospels" were quoted because they were written in 250-350 AD

The Early Church Father's References to the Books of the New Testament

	Clement of Rome	Justin Martyr	Polycarp	Didache	Papias	Barnabas	Hermas	Aristides	Muratorian Fragment	Athenagoras	Lyons	Clement of Alexandria	Hippolytus	Irenaeus	Tatian	Theophilus	Origen	Tertullian	Cyprian	Ignatius	Eusebius	
Date A. D.	95	100	110	125	130	140	150	175	175	177	177	180	200	200	200	200	230	240	250	250	275	Date A. D.
Matthew	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Matthew
Mark	●	●	●		●	●			●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	Mark
Luke	●	●	●						●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Luke
John		●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	John
Acts	●		●					●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	Acts
Romans	●		●					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Romans
1 Corinthians	●		●	●					●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians			●						●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	2 Corinthians
Galatians	●		●						●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	Galatians
Ephesians	●		●				●		●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Ephesians
Philippians	●		●						●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Philippians
Colossians								●	●			●	●	●			●	●	●		●	Colossians
1 Thessalonians			●						●			●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians			●						●			●	●	●			●	●			●	2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy			●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	1 Timothy
2 Timothy			●			●			●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	2 Timothy
Titus									●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	Titus
Philemon									●				●				●	●	●		●	Philemon
Hebrews	●		●						●			●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	Hebrews
James	●						●							●			●					James
1 Peter	●		●		●							●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	1 Peter
2 Peter																	●					2 Peter
1 John			●		●				●			●	●	●			●	●	●		●	1 John
2 John									●				●	●			●					2 John
3 John									●								●					3 John
Jude									●			●					●	●				Jude
Revelation		●			●	●			●			●	●	●			●	●	●		●	Revelation

1. "he [Graham N. Stanton, The Fourfold Gospel, p 322] points to a significant passage, often ignored in the literature, which shows that Justin must have reckoned with at least four gospels. In Dialogue 103.8 he refers to "memoirs" composed by Jesus' apostles and by those who followed them." As noted above, this remark corresponds to the evidence that the early church thought that two gospels were written by apostles (Matthew and John), and two by followers of apostles (Mark as the interpreter of Peter, as per the Papias fragment, and Luke as the companion of Paul). Stanton also argues that 1 Apol. 61.4 and Dial. 88.7 show that, apart from the Synoptics, Justin also knew John's Gospel, because the former draws on John 3:3-5 and the latter on John l:19-20. (Lee Martin McDonald, James A. Sanders, Editors: The Canon Debate; Peter Balla, Evidence for an Early Christian Canon: Second and Third Century, p 380, 2002)
2. The first author who clearly asserts that the church has no more and no less than four authoritative gospels is Irenaeus. (Lee Martin McDonald, James A. Sanders, Editors: The Canon Debate; Peter Balla, Evidence for an Early Christian Canon: Second and Third Century, p 380, 2002)
3. Graham Stanton has rightly argued that it is a good method to point to the source that is most explicit, and "to work back from the full flowering of a concept or a development to its earlier roots." If we find no sign of a major change in the view of the great church reflected in the previous sources, it can be argued that the situation clearly expressed around 180 C.E. by Irenaeus applies to earlier decades as well. Irenaeus employs analogies from both nature and scripture (e.g., the four winds and the four-faced cherubim of Ezek l; Haer. 3.11.8) to show that the church has to have no more and no less than four gospels. Additionally, "he reckons to `scripture' . . . Acts and the thirteen letters of Paul. 1 Peter and the two Johannine letters (l and 2) are appraised like the Pauline letters, while James and Hebrews are probably not so highly esteemed" (see, e.g., Haer. l.9.4; 2.26.l-2; 3.l.1). (Lee Martin McDonald, James A. Sanders, Editors: The Canon Debate; Peter Balla, Evidence for an Early Christian Canon: Second and Third Century, p 380, 2002)

Notes:
1. We take the view that all 15 letters of Ignatius are forgeries written about 250 AD. They are important, only in that they document 250 AD. If you look at the books Ignatius quoted from, only Hebrews is of any value because it was one of the disputed books. Otherwise, Ignatius is an insignificant witness in the Canon discussion.
2. Regarding the date of the Muratorian Fragment: The majority of conservative scholars still believe the evidence best supports the date of 175 AD.

Bibliography:
1. The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance, Bruce Metzger, 1987
2. New Testament Apocrypha, 6th edition. 2 Vols. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 1989
3. A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament, B.F. Westcott, 1855
4. General Introduction to the Bible, Norman Geisler and William Nix, 1986
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3. A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament, B.F. Westcott, 1855
                                                                        - *Steve Rudd Internet Site*

The Fragment of Muratori (mid-second century AD, Rome)	Codex Claromontanus (late third century AD, Egypt or North Africa)	Eusebius of Caesarea's Church History (early fourth century AD, Palestine and Asia Minor)	Letter of Athanasius (AD 367)
Accepted Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans I & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I & 2 Thessalonians I & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon I John 2 or 3 John (or both letters, counted as one) Jude Revelation Wisdom of Solomon [Epistle to the Hebrews and the letters of Peter not mentioned at all]	**Accepted** Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans I & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I & 2 Thessalonians I & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews* James I and 2 Peter I, 2, and 3 John Jude Revelation	**Accepted** Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans I & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I & 2 Thessalonians I & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews I Peter I John Revelation*	**Accepted** Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans I & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians I & 2 Thessalonians I & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James I and 2 Peter I, 2, and 3 John Jude Revelation
Recognized but Questioned Apocalypse of Peter	**Recognized but Questioned** Apocalypse of Peter Epistle of Barnabas The Shepherd of Hermas Acts of Paul	**Recognized but Questioned** James Jude 2 Peter 2 and 3 John	**Recognized but Questioned**
Rejected Laodiceans Alexandrians The Shepherd of Hermas	**Rejected** (All other writings)	**Rejected** Apocalypse of Peter Acts of Paul The Shepherd of Hermas Epistle of Barnabas Teaching of Twelve Apostles Gospel of Peter Gospel of Thomas Gospel of Matthias Gospel of the Hebrews Acts of Andrew Acts of John	**Rejected** (All other writings)

This chart shows that early Christians accepted the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John long before the critics claim, and that none of the so-called lost Gospels was *ever* accepted.

The Fourth-Century Consensus and Beyond

The first complete listing of our present canon of twenty-seven books comes from Athanasius in AD 367. He gave his rationale for this list in his opening paragraph. Here he decried those who had fabricated books bearing the names of the saints as authors and by so doing had led the "ignorant and simple . . . astray by evil thoughts concerning the right faith." Augustine, concurring with Athanasius's canonical list, gave his criteria for canonicity noting that he preferred "those [books] that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive." Neither Athanasius nor Augustine made appeal to any council, only to consensus. In the following decades numerous Latin fathers independently published their understanding of the limits of the New Testament canon. All agreed with the Council of Carthage (where the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament were finally canonized), Augustine, and Athanasius. This consensus effectively closed the canon in the West.

   Contrary to what is widely assumed, no early church council ever produced an official definition of the canon of the New Testament, or even addressed the issue. The early church *never* reached a conscious and binding decision as to the extent of the canon. Proof of this fact can be seen in the canons of the various churches of the empire.

   While the canon in the West proved to be relatively stable from the late fourth century AD, the canon in the Eastern churches varied, sometimes widely. The Syrian church at the beginning of the fifth century AD employed only the *Diatesseron* (in place of the four Gospels), Acts, and the Pauline Epistles. During the fifth century the Syriac *Peshitta* translation was produced and became the standard Syriac version. The *Diatesseron* was replaced by the four Gospels, 3 Corinthians was removed, and James, 1 Peter, and 1 John were included. The Apocalypse and the other Catholic epistles were excluded, making a twenty-two-book canon. The remaining books did not find their way into the Syrian canon until the late sixth century. While the Syrian church recognized an abbreviated canon for two centuries beyond the Western and the Greek speaking churches, the Ethiopic church recognized the twenty-seven books of the New Testament plus *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *1–2 Clement*, and eight books of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

   Even in the West the canon was not closed so tightly as to eliminate all discussion and questioning. A case in point is the apocryphal *Epistle to the Laodiceans*. In the tenth century, Alfric, the archbishop of Canterbury, lists the work as among the canonical Pauline Epistles. From the sixth century onward *Laodiceans* occurs frequently in Latin manuscripts, including many that were prepared for church use. The epistle was so common in the medieval period that it was included in several vernacular translations, including the Bohemian Bible (as late as AD 1488). It also appeared in the Albigensian Version of Lyons, and while not translated by Wycliffe personally, it was added to several manuscripts of his translation of the New Testament.

   On the eve of the Reformation, Martin Luther questioned the canonicity of James. Specific doubts about canon were also being expressed even by prominent figures in the Catholic hierarchy. Cardinal Cajetan, an opponent of Luther, expressed doubts concerning the canonicity of Hebrews, James, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. Erasmus likewise expressed doubts concerning Revelation as well as the apostolicity of James, Hebrews, and 2 Peter. As the Protestant Reformation progressed, it was Luther's willingness to excise books from the canon (especially Old Testament apocryphal books) that prompted the Roman Catholic hierarchy to formalize its consensus on the extent of the New Testament canon into a conciliar pronouncement.

Likewise, by the end of the Reformation the major Protestant traditions also included a list of canonical books in their confessional statements. Although both Protestant and Catholic leaders had raised questions about several books, in the end they both formalized the same list of New Testament books. On the extent of the New Testament, both the Protestant and Catholic traditions finally agreed officially, although in practice neither had ever questioned the four Gospels or the Epistles of Paul.

When all is said and done, there has never been a serious attempt to add a book to the canon nor has there been an effort to excise any of the books agreed to by the early consensus. In the final analysis it must be admitted that the church did not create the canon but discovered it. The books that were recognized attained canonical status because no individual or organization could stop them from becoming so. In other words, these books possessed and continue to possess a self-authenticating quality by virtue of the testimony of the Holy Spirit as to their divine origin so that they individually and as a whole imposed themselves on the church as its final authority.[1]

AD300   AD350

c. 350
Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete Bibles still in existence, were circulated.

332
Emperor Constantine orders production of 50 vellum Bibles.

325
The Council of Nicaea condemns Arius and his teachings and produces an early version of the Nicene Creed which clearly describes Jesus as God.

250–450
The rest of the Gnostic Nag Hammadi documents are written and circulated.

320
Arius claims Jesus is a created being and not God.

337 Constantine dies.

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[1] Hays, J. D., & Duvall, J. S. (2012). *How the bible came to be (ebook shorts)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE'S
COMMITTEE OF CANON

AD 200-300 | Church Fathers

Church fathers accept the writings of the Gospels and Paul's letters as *canonical*.

- Canonical: from a Greek word referring to the *rule* of faith and truth

1500 BC   500 BC   AD 1   AD 500   AD 1000   AD 1500   AD 1900   AD 2000
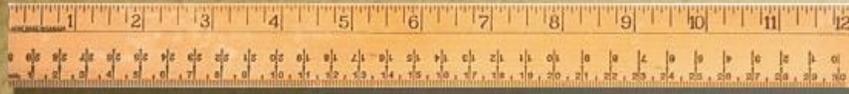
Scripture

The Facts:

✠ To be included in the Christian Scriptures, writings had to meet three requirements.

✠ These three requirements specifically *prevented* the manipulation of the canon by any single group.

Scripture

The Three Requirements for Canonization:

✠ (1) Because the apostles were the trusted eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection, the writing had to be directly connected to an apostle.

✠ (2) The writing had to be "orthodox"—it could not contradict the teachings of the Jewish Scriptures or of the Apostles.

✠ (3) The writing had to be accepted in churches throughout the known world—it could not be accepted only by one group of Christians.[14]
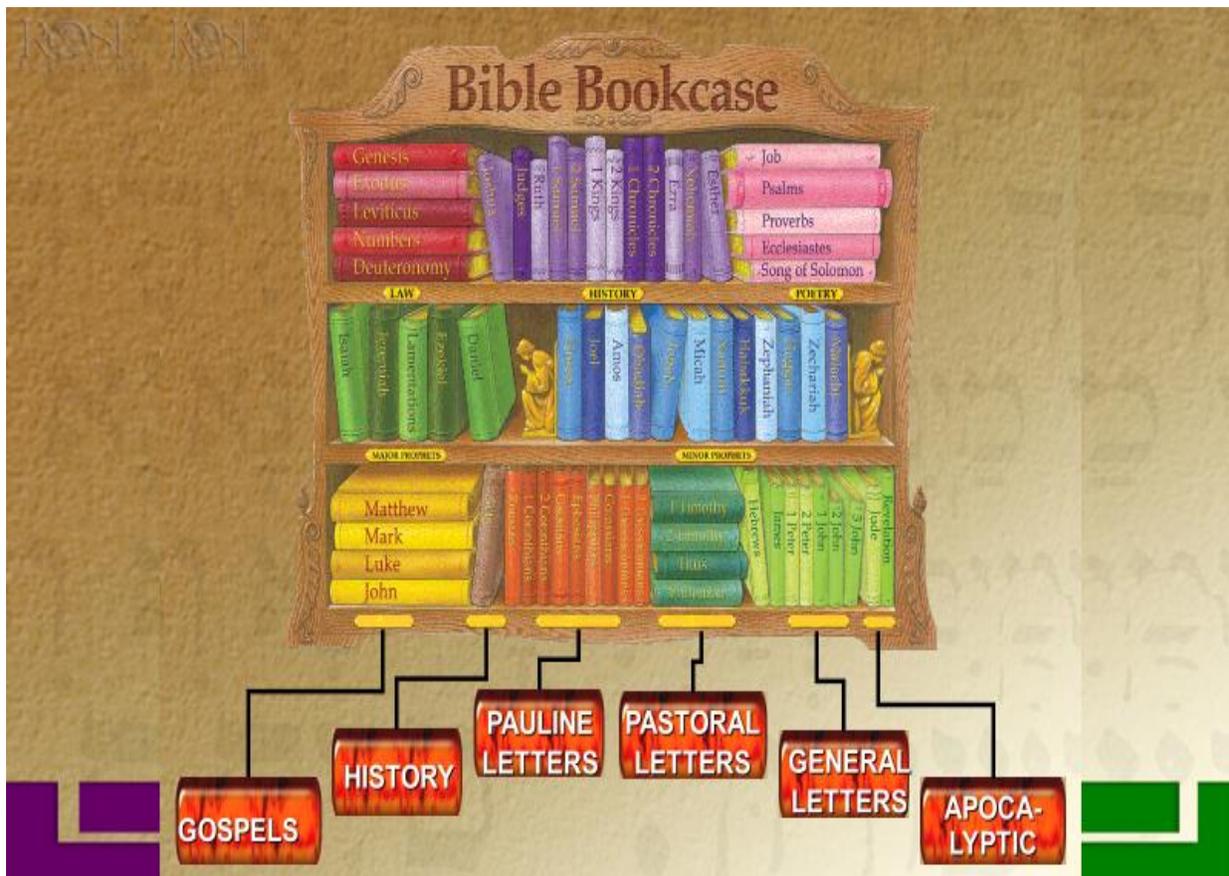
Bible editions timeline

-400   -200   A.D.➔

Latin

St. Jerome
Latin
Vulgate
383

Vg

the Septuagint
Old Latin
4ᵗʰ Cent.

OL

Two *Latin*

Luther *German*

Zwingli *German*

John Paul II
neo-Vulgate
1979

Greek

the Septuagint
Greek

LXX Gk

the Septuagint
by Theodotion
Greek

the Septuagint
by Symmachus
Greek

the Septuagint
by Aquila
Greek

forms text for
most surviving
manuscripts

English

Modern speech

Good
News
1966-76

TEV

New
Int'l
Version
1978

NIV

John
Wycliffe

Nicholas
Hereford
1ˢᵗ vers

John
Purvey
2ⁿᵈ vers
1397

Miles
Coverdale

Coverdale
1535

Great
Bible
1539

Bishop's
Bible
1572

King
James
1611

Revised
Version
1890

RV

Revised
Standard
Version
1950

RSV

New
Revised
Standard
Version
1950-90

NRSV

William
Tyndale
NT/Pent.
1530

John
Rodgers
*Matthew's
Bible*
1537

Richard
Taverner
*Revised
Matt. B.*
1539

RSV Catholic Edition
English
1966

Jerusalem
English
1966

Greek

Greek

Greek

Hebrew

Hebrew

Hebrew

Hebrew
Hebrew

the Targums
Aramaic

Tg

the Peshitta
Syriac

Syr

Masoretes
5ᵗʰ - 10ᵗʰ century

Masoretic
Text
consonantal

Heb

Masoretic
Text
pointed

MT

Hebrew
scriptures
Tanakh
1985

The Septuagint

Introduction: What Is the Septuagint?

The term *Septuagint* refers broadly to the ancient Greek versions of the Old Testament originally produced for Greek-speaking Jewish communities and later adopted by the Christian church. The term comes into English through the Latin word for the numeral seventy, *septuaginta*, a reference to the number of translators who, according to the tradition preserved by Philo, were the first to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Consequently, a common abbreviation for Septuagint is the Roman numeral seventy, LXX. This designation is first found in the phrase "from the seventy" included in scribal notes in the earliest Christian manuscripts of the Greek Old Testament.

How and When Was the Septuagint Produced?

The beginning of the ancient Greek version of the Hebrew Bible is believed to have been in Alexandria, Egypt, during the reign of the Hellenistic king Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 BC), when a translation of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch, was apparently produced. About AD 150, a document known as the *Letter of Aristeas* was written that describes the origin and production of this first translation as a defense of its authority and accuracy. Aristeas explains that King Ptolemy was gathering a copy of every book known at that time and commissioned a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for his library in Alexandria. While the historical accuracy of the *Letter of Aristeas* is questionable, the extant Greek version of the Pentateuch does exhibit vocabulary that is consistent with an origin in third-century Alexandria. The motive for the translation certainly involved the needs of the Greek-speaking diaspora community of Jews (i.e., those Jews who had been scattered across Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world).

   Aristeas claims that from Jerusalem six elders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel were chosen to produce the translation and were sent to Alexandria by the high priest Eleazer along with Hebrew scrolls from the temple. This tradition that seventy-two translators were originally involved in the work conflicts with Philo's later claim that seventy translators worked independently for seventy days and produced identical translations of the Pentateuch. In both cases, the number of translators is no doubt symbolic. The former, seventy-two, indicates that the translation was produced by representatives of all Israel, and therefore should be read by all Israel as its authorized version. The latter number, seventy, is likely an allusion to the number of elders who assisted Moses in the administration of the law (Exodus 24), expressing the view that subsequent translators of the law are also assisting Moses in its administration. The tradition preserved by Philo that the seventy worked independently and yet produced identical translations is his claim to the divine inspiration of the Septuagint, and therefore a defense of an authority for the Old Greek translation that is at least equal to or superior to that of the Hebrew Scriptures or to subsequent competing Greek versions.

The Greek translation of the Pentateuch probably does date from the third century BC in Alexandria, but it is unknown precisely when and where translations of the other books of the Hebrew Bible were produced. Nonetheless it is clear that over the next few centuries the remaining books of the Hebrew Bible were also translated into Greek. By the beginning of the New Testament era, the entire Hebrew Bible had been completed and was in widespread use. Keep in mind that this was a collection of scrolls (bound books, called *codices*, were not in use yet). The term Septuagint is usually used in reference to this collection of scrolls.

Over the next two hundred to three hundred years, however, additional Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible were also produced. These are referred to as "versions." The Christian scholar Origen (ca. AD 185 to ca. AD 254) knew of as many as six Greek versions for many of the books of the Old Testament. In addition to the original Septuagint/Old Greek version, Origen knew of three additional major versions by name—those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. Moreover, for the book of Psalms and a few other Old Testament books, he also knew the versions now referred to as the Quinta, Sexta, and Septima. Because Aquila's version was produced to closely follow the Hebrew text that had become the standard text in the early second century, Jewish communities tended to adopt Aquila's version over the older Septuagint/Old Greek version, which continued to be used and preserved by Christians. Origen himself produced a revised version of the Septuagint for the Christian church that brought its text closer to the Hebrew text used at that time. Later, Lucian of Antioch (died AD 312) produced yet another version. One question of scholarly debate is whether these versions were produced by revision of an existing text or new translation of the Hebrew.

The Septuagint and the Early Church

Though originally produced within Judaism, the Septuagint and other Greek versions are an important part of the heritage of the Christian church because the New Testament writers frequently quoted one of the Greek versions of the Old Testament. Therefore, the Septuagint and other Greek versions produced before Christ form the most direct literary and theological background for understanding the New Testament. Even though the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is the canonical text for the Protestant churches, methodologically sound exegesis of the New Testament writings must look to the Greek version of the Old Testament where it has been used in the New. As the early church expanded outside of Palestine, the vast majority of Christians could read the Old Testament only in a Greek translation, which, together with the Greek New Testament, stood as the Bible of the church for more than a thousand years. With the exception of a few individuals, such as Origen and Jerome, the church soon lost the ability to read the Hebrew Scriptures until the time of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, when the study of Hebrew was revived in the church. When the Roman Empire split in two at the end of the fourth century, the Eastern church continued to read the Greek versions as their Scripture, and the Greek Old Testament remains the canonical text in the Eastern Orthodox churches yet today.[2]

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[2] Hays, J. D., & Duvall, J. S. (2012). *How the bible came to be (ebook shorts)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

THE EARLY PARAPHRASTS

1. Anglo-Saxon paraphrasts—Cædmon. 2. Bede. 3. King Alfred. 4. Ælfric. 5. Anglo-Norman versions—Rolle.

ON the title-page of our English Bible there appears frequently the following note: "Translated out of the original tongues, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command." We shall see the full force of these words when we come to the history of our Authorised Version, but in the meantime they may remind us of a fact too often forgotten, that the English Bible, as we have it to-day, did not spring into existence all at once. It is the result of a long and continuous growth, and to those who know its history bears traces of the many ages and the many hands which have combined in producing it. To sketch that history in what at best must be imperfect outline is the aim of this text-book.

In commencing to do so the first thing that strikes us is a feeling of wonder that, long though the history of the English Bible has been, it has not been still longer. For it is a remarkable fact that Christianity and Christian ordinances had been introduced into our island for many hundreds of years before the people possessed the sacred Scriptures in a language which they could understand. To all but the priests, and the few learned men of those days, the Vulgate, or Latin version of the Bible, was necessarily a sealed book; and not till nearly the close of the fourteenth century do we find any deliberate attempt to give a complete translation of it in English. Previous to this, however, various attempts had been made by means of metrical versions or paraphrases in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman to diffuse the knowledge of parts at least of the sacred writings; and it may be well now to recall briefly the most important of these as paving the way for future translations.

§ 1. **Anglo-Saxon Paraphrasts—Cædmon.**—The first of the Anglo-Saxon paraphrasts regarding whom we have any reliable information is **Cædmon.** According to the old historian Bede, about the year 680 this Cædmon, a poor Saxon cowherd, returned one night sad and dispirited to the abbey at Whitby, because he had been unable to take his part in singing at a banquet. But, as soon after he fell asleep, there appeared to him a visitant who saluting him said: "Cædmon, sing some song to me." "I cannot sing," was the surprised answer, "for that was the reason why I left the entertainment." "Nevertheless," replied the other, "you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" he asked. "Sing the beginning of created beings," was the rejoinder. And thereupon Cædmon began to sing well-ordered verses to the praise of God. In the morning he was conducted into the presence of the Abbess Hilda, to whom he repeated the verses; and no sooner had he done so than all who heard acknowledged that "heavenly grace" had been conferred on him. And the Abbess commanded that he should be taught the whole course of sacred history, which he "converted into most harmonious verse; and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in their turn his hearers."

The paraphrases which Cædmon thus made comprised large portions of Old Testament history, and the main facts in the life of our Lord and the preaching of the Apostles, "besides many more about the Divine benefits and judgments, by which he endeavoured to turn away all men from the love of vice, and to excite in them the love of, and application to, good actions." The following lines from the runic inscription on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire, which has been identified as a quotation from Cædmon, may illustrate the nature of his work. The Cross of Christ is supposed to be telling its own story:—

> Beneath Him I quivered,
> But bow me I durst not,
> The Rich King upheaving
> They pierced Him with nails:
> On me see the deep scars,
> The bruises so shameful.
> I bore it all silent.

§ 2. **Bede.**—Other Anglo-Saxon versions of portions of Scripture followed. Thus in the eighth century the Psalter was translated by **Eadhelm,** Bishop of Sherborne, and by **Guthlac,** a hermit of Crowland near Peterborough, and the Gospels by **Egbert,** Bishop of Holy Island; but more important than any of these was the work of the **Venerable Bede** (d. 735), the most famous scholar of his day in Western Europe. He himself has told us that he translated the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer into Anglo-Saxon for the use of the less educated priests; while the last work on which he was engaged was a translation of the Gospel of St. John. Of the completion of this work his disciple Cuthbert has given so striking an account that, though well known, it may in part be repeated. The Tuesday before Ascension Day Bede, though suffering greatly, had spent in dictating, now and then among other things saying: "Go on quickly, I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Maker will not soon take me away." On the following day his weakness increased, but he was able to take a touching farewell of all his fellows, and passed the day joyfully till the evening. Then the boy who was acting as his scribe said: "Dear master, there is yet one sentence not written." "Write quickly," answered Bede. And when soon after the boy said: "The sentence is now written," he replied, "It is well; you have said the truth. It is ended." Shortly after, sitting on the pavement of his cell, and singing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," he "departed to the heavenly kingdom." Of the translation thus touchingly finished no remains have come down to us; but among the treasures of the Bodleian Library at Oxford may still be seen the old Græco-Latin MS. of the Acts of the Apostles which Bede is known to have used.

§ 3. **King Alfred.**—A royal translator comes next, **Alfred the Great,** and the spirit that prompted his efforts is well indicated in his own words: "I thought how I saw … how the churches were filled with treasures of books, and also with a great multitude of God's servants; yet they reaped very little fruit of these books, because they could understand nothing of them, as they were not written in their own native tongue." To supply this want the good king translated many notable Latin treatises, and gave further proof of his religious zeal by prefixing to his "Book of Laws" a translation of the Ten Commandments under the heading "Alfred's Dooms." The following translation of these "Dooms" will still be read with interest:—

The Lord spake these words to Moses, and thus said:

I am the Lord thy God. I led thee out of the land of the Egyptians and of their bondage.
1. Love thou not other strange gods above me.
2. Utter thou not my name idly, for thou shalt not be guiltless towards me, if thou utter my name idly.
3. Remember that thou hallow the rest-day. Work for yourselves six days, and on the seventh rest. For in six days Christ wrought the heavens and the earth, the seas, and all creatures that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: and therefore the Lord hallowed it.
4. Honour thy father and thy mother, whom the Lord hath given thee, that thou mayest be the longer living on earth.
5. Slay thou not.
6.Commit thou not adultery.
7. Steal thou not.
8. Say thou not false-witness.
9. Covet thou not thy neighbour's goods unjustly.
10. Make thou not to thyself golden or silver gods.

Alfred was further engaged, we are told, on a version of the Psalms at the time of his death, and his patriotic wish is often quoted that "all the first-born youth of his kingdom should employ themselves on nothing till they were able to read well the English Scriptures."

§ 4. **Ælfric.**—Other versions deserving of special notice are the "**Book of Durham,**" or Gospels of St. Cuthbert, and the "**Rushworth Gloss,**" interlinear Latin and Anglo-Saxon translations of the four Gospels, and the **Heptateuch** of **Ælfric** (about 1040 A.D.) a free rendering of the five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, and certain other Old Testament books. Ælfric's object in translating is clearly expressed in his homily *On Reading the Scriptures:* "Whoever would be one with God, must often pray, and often read the Holy Scriptures. For when we pray, we speak to God; and when we read the Bible, God speaks to us.… Happy is he, then, who reads the Scriptures, if he convert the words into actions. The whole of the Scriptures are written for our salvation, and by them we obtain the knowledge of the truth."

§ 5. **Anglo-Norman Versions—Rolle.**—The work of Bible translation naturally received a check during the confusion accompanying the Danish and Norman invasions. The check was however only temporary, and there are still extant MSS. in Anglo-Norman, or Middle-English as it is sometimes called, containing metrical paraphrases of considerable portions of Scripture, amongst which the most noteworthy are the **Ormulum,** a metrical paraphrase on the Gospels and Acts by one Orm (about 1150 A.D.), and the **Sowlehele** or Salus Animæ (about 1250 A.D.), which along with other religious poetry contains a paraphrase in verse of the leading facts of the Old and New Testaments. Apart from their other associations these MSS. are interesting as showing the change gradually passing over our language. Already we can see the rude but unmistakable beginnings of our modern English, and the version of the Psalter executed by **Richard Rolle,** the hermit of Hampole, who died in 1349, can still be read with comparative ease. Here, for example, is Rolle's version of our Psalm 23. We print it exactly as he wrote it.

PSALM 22 (23), ROLLE'S VERSION

Lord gouerns me and nathynge sail me want: in sted of pasture thare he me sett.
On the watere of rehetynge forth he me broght: my saule he turnyd.
He led me on the stretis of rightwisnes: for his name.
ffor whi, if i. had gane in myddis of the shadow of ded: i. sall noght dred illes, for thou ert
      with me.
Thi wand and thi staf: thai haf confortyd me.
Thou has grayid in my syght the bord: agayns thaim that angirs me.
Thou fattid my heued in oyle: and my chalice drunkynand what it is bright.
And thi mercy sall folow me: all the dayes of my lif.
And that i. won in the hows of lord: in lenght of dayes.

Rolle's version is further noteworthy as almost, if not quite, the first attempt at a literal *prose* translation. His method he has himself described: "In this work I seek no strange English but easiest and commonest and such that is most like to the Latin.… In the translation I follow the letter as much as I may, and where I find no proper English I follow the wit of the words, so that those that shall read it need not dread erring. In expounding I follow holy Doctors, and reason: reproving sin." Praiseworthy as Rolle's aim was, he was only able to fulfil it with reference to a small portion of Scripture, while it must be kept clearly in view that in what he did accomplish, he along with his predecessors was thinking of the convenience of the clergy rather than of the needs of the common people. The very idea of a people's Bible does not seem yet to have occurred to any one. It is the more striking that within forty years from this time the whole Bible was actually translated into English with the express design of its becoming the common property of the nation. The man to whom this was due, and who in consequence ranks as the first of our Bible translators, was **John Wycliffe.**[3]

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[3] Milligan, G. (1895). *The English Bible: A Sketch of Its History* (pp. 1–7). London: A. & C. Black.

Why *These* Books?

The Compilation of the Canon of Scripture

Writing to a young pastor named Timothy, the apostle Paul makes an important statement:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17, italics added).

This passage points out two very important facts about the Word of God. First, that God has "inspired" *all* scripture. In chapter one you read that the word *inspired* as it is used in this verse means that God, through the Holy Spirit, spoke His own words through the human writers of scripture.

Second, Paul communicated to Timothy that he, as well as every other believer past and present, could depend on the words of scripture as being the promises and warnings, the instructions and guidelines, that God has given to show believers how to live a growing, victorious life of faith.

But how can we know for certain that every word of every book in the Bible is indeed "inspired" and therefore "profitable for doctrine, reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"?

At the time the canon of scripture—meaning the list of books considered "inspired" and authoritative, the books that met God's perfect standard—was established, there were many, many letters and "Gospels" making their way around what was then the Christian world. But nowhere in the Bible does God tell us specifically which books He intended to be partof His written Word.

So how do we know that the books of our Bible are the right ones? The answer lies in the great care God put into making sure all the words He inspired the biblical writers to record were kept in the blessed book He has prepared and given us.

That work, of course, began with the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Canon of Scripture

The Hebrew scriptures—also known as the Old Testament—were written from the time period from about 1400 BC through around 400 BC, when the prophet Malachi recorded his book. All of these books were written in Hebrew and passed down from generation to generation of Jewish people, who from the time of their writing accepted them as the authentic, inspired Word of God.

Between 400 BC and the birth of Christ, several other books—known as the Apocrypha (see sidebar)—made their way into Jewish popular culture. But while the vast majority of Jews didn't accept these books as scripture, most valued these works as good literary sources of history and some spiritual insight.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the canon of Hebrew scripture was pretty much decided. The Jews recognized that Moses, the prophets, and other writers were God's messengers and therefore accepted their work as the inspired Word of God. About AD 90, Jewish elders met at the council at Jamnia (in Judea, near the Mediterranean coast) and affirmed the Hebrew canon, at the same time rejecting the books of the Apocrypha as scripture.

Around AD 95, Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian and priest, recognized the Hebrew canon as the books now included in the Old Testament. (Like thecouncil at Jamnia, he listed just twenty-two books, not thirty-nine, but that can be accounted for by the way books were kept in ancient times.)

By the mid-third century, the church was in almost complete agreement about the Hebrew canon of scripture—which is underscored by the fact that nowhere in the New Testament is any book outside the accepted Hebrew canon quoted, whereas the Old Testament is quoted extensively. There was, however, some debate about the books of the Apocrypha, which to this day are still included in some Roman Catholic Bibles but are not considered part of the canon in Protestant circles.

What about the Apocrypha?

If you've had a chance to peruse a Roman Catholic Bible, you may notice that it contains several more Old Testament books than most Protestant Bibles. These extra books make up what is referred to as the Apocrypha, which means "hidden." These books, as well as additions to the books of Esther and Daniel, were written mostly in the years between the writing of Malachi, the last Old Testament book (approximately 400 BC), and the birth of Jesus Christ. The books in the Apocrypha are as follows: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees.

The Jewish people had continued on next page… great respect for the books of the Apocrypha but never accepted them as part of the Hebrew (Old Testament) canon. Likewise, few first- or second-century Christians believed those books belonged in the canon of scripture—as evidenced by the fact that the New Testament quotes the Old Testament many times, but never mentions anything from the Apocryphal books.

Though there are many errors and contradictions in the Apocrypha, some of the books provide excellent extra-biblical historical information. For example, 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees tell the story of a Jewish national liberation movement during the second century BC that won the Jews their independence from the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose repression of the Jews and their religious practices sparked the violent revolt.

Even after the books of the Hebrew canon were completed, God was far from finished communicating with His people—and far from finished overseeing the complete list of books He wanted in His Bible.

Many Were Written, but Few Were Chosen

By the end of the first century of the Christian era, every book of what would later be known as the New Testament was completed. At least eight different people (depending on who wrote Hebrews) received the God-given words they recorded forthe various churches and individuals to whom they ministered.

But the evidence points out that these people also produced other writings, most of which have long since been lost. For example, 1 Corinthians 5:9 tells us that the apostle Paul had written an earlier letter to the Corinthian church. Knowing that, it's hard to imagine that Paul, Peter, James, Matthew, and other New Testament writers didn't produce other writings not now included in the New Testament.

In addition to the "extra-biblical" writings of the apostles, there were scores of documents written during the first few centuries of Christianity that weren't included in the canon of scripture—some because they were written too late to be included, and others whose content was highly questionable, or patently heretical, or whose authorship was suspect.

Finally, there were writings by the earliest of the church leaders, including Clement (died around AD 99), the first-century bishop of Rome, who wrote a letter to the church at Corinth around AD 95. Ignatius (around AD 35 to around 110), a bishop of Antioch in Syria, also sent letters to the Ephesian, Magnasian, Trallian, Roman, Philadelphian, and Smyrnan churches, as well as to Polycarp (around AD 70 to around 155), the Greek bishop of Smyrna.

What to Leave in, What to Leave Out

Though the canon of scripture wasn't officially recognized—at least by any human institution—until the fourth century AD, the early church recognized the authenticity of certain letters and books far earlier than that. During the first few centuries of Christianity, the church had several criteria for recognizing a writing as being truly inspired. Some of these criteria applied to the writers themselves (for example, was the writer recognized as a true prophet of God whose authority was confirmed by the presence of miracles?), and some applied to the writing itself (for example, does the writing tell the absolute truth about God, and without contradiction or deceit?). All of the books the church used and recognized as inspired during those early years met those criteria.

The process of canonizing the New Testament books began during the times of the apostles, some of whom recognized one another's writings as inspired, and therefore scriptural. For example, the apostle Paul quoted the writings of Luke and referred to them as being scripture on a par with the Old Testament (see 1 Timothy 5:18; compare with Luke 10:7). Peter acknowledged that Paul's writings were truly inspired, even likening them to "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16).

Also, the early believers of that time recognized the writings of the New Testament apostles and others as scripture. These early Christians immediately recognized the apostles as men divinely appointed and gifted to communicate God's Word to the world around them. That is why the Bible tells us that they "welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13), and why they obeyed the apostles' instructions to spread their writings to believers throughout the known world (see Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27).

The process of acknowledging the canon of New Testament scripture continued during the time of the early church fathers—between the first and third centuries AD Clement, in his writings to various churches, made mention of at least eight books that are included in the New Testament; and Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged seven books. Circa AD 108 Polycarp,a personal disciple of the apostle John, acknowledged fifteen New Testament books. Later, Irenaeus (around 130–200), the bishop of Lyon in Gaul (now France), mentioned twenty-two New Testament books, giving special attention to Paul's epistles, which he wrote about more than two hundred times.

Finally, Hippolytus of Rome (around 170 to around 236), one of the most prolific writers in early Christianity, recognized twenty-two. In those days, efforts were occasionally made to compile a canon of scripture. The first known list of New Testament scripture is called the "Muratorian Canon," which was discovered in the eighteenth century and believed to date to the second century. It included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 3 John. (During that time, those three books, as well as 2 Peter and 2 John, were not yet universally accepted as scripture.)

Acknowledging What Is Already the Truth

As the Christian faith began to expand and churches became more established, the rise in false teachers—as well as some Christians' acceptance of those teachers—moved the faithful leaders in the church to realize that they needed to make a stand against those errors and formally acknowledge which writings were truly the inspired Word of God.

By the beginning of the fourth century, most of the books now in the New Testament had long been treated as scripture. But a few books still required further examination and approval before they could be declared a part of the canon.

Around AD 363, approximately thirty Christian leaders from Asia Minor met at the Council of Laodicea. Among the several items on the agenda at this meeting was the formal adoption of the canon of scripture. This council held that only the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha, and the twenty-seven books in the New Testament to this day could be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo in 393 and the Council of Carthage in 397 followed suit, affirming the same twenty-seven books as the New Testament canon.

These councils didn't arbitrarily choose the twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament, and they didn't just choose the ones they liked best. The process of adopting the canon included putting each "questionable" book through a rigorous five-part test to make certain it deserved a place in the Bible. Here is the essence of each of the five questions asked about each book before it was accepted:

Is the book's author a true apostle or closely connected to one or more of the apostles? For example, Matthew and John, both of whom wrote Gospels included in the canon, were in that group of twelve original apostles whom Jesus appointed. Mark and Luke were not among that group, but they both had close relationships with apostles—Mark with the original Twelve during Jesus' earthly ministry and later with the apostle Paul; and Luke with Paul, whom Luke accompanied on his last missionary journey (see chapter 1).

Does the body of Christ at large accept the book as inspired? As pointed out earlier, by the time of the councils of Laodicea, Hippo, and Carthage, the church as a whole had already acknowledged most of the scriptures contained in the New Testament as inspired. These writings were already in wide circulation in the churches and were accepted as the Word of God.

Is the book consistent with accepted Christian doctrine? In chapter 2 we discussed how God, through the centuries, has passionately and jealously guarded His written Word against the many possible human errors. When the councils acknowledged the canon of the New Testament, they did so with a keen eye on the message of those books, thus ensuring that no contradictory teachings or doctrines found their way into the canon.

Does the book's content reflect the high moral and spiritual principles that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit? Many of the books making the rounds in Christian circles at that time reflected a tolerance or acceptance of either the pagan practices or false teachings of the day. The church leaders at these councils knew those things would never pass muster with the teachings of Christ or of the apostles. Only those books that faithfully reflected the character and standards of Christ Himself and of His apostles were considered for inclusion in the canon.

Missing the Cut… and Why

At the time of the councils that acknowledged the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as part of the canon of scripture, there were countless "Gospels," letters, and other manuscripts making their way around the region. Many of those books were rejected because they were written too late, and many others didn't make it into the Bible because they contained erroneous or heretical teaching, or because their authorship was in question. Here are just a few of the better-known examples of books that didn't make the cut:

The Gospel of Thomas—This book contains 114 sayings attributed to Jesus, some of which resemble some of His sayings in the four Gospels, and some of which don't appear in any form in the Gospels or which plainly contradict what is written in them. The early church leaders knew this and deemed this book a forgery, and they rejected it out of hand.

The Gospel of Mary—In this book, Mary Magdalene is portrayed as an apostle who receives special teachings from Jesus. Much of the teaching in this book was patently Gnostic (Gnosticism was a heresy that held, among many other errors, that Jesus Christ was not the divine Son of God), so it found no acceptance from the early church fathers.

The Gospel of Judas—This is a Gnostic gospel that records supposed conversations between Judas Iscariot and Jesus. This "Gospel," contrary to the four in the canon of scripture, portrays Judas not as the betrayer of Jesus Christ but as a man who acted purely out of obedience to Christ's stated instructions.

The Apocalypse of Peter—This book, which early church leaders rejected because they doubted its authorship, gives the reader a detailed account of hell, but it also suggests a way out of hell for sinners even after their death. That was problematic for church leaders, because it suggested that people could do whatever they wanted during their lives and still be saved from hell.

The Canon of Scripture—Who *Really* Decided?

As you've read through this chapter, you've seen some of the events that led to the acceptance of the biblical canon. You've read how what was once a list of countless documents was pared down until it became what we have today: an error-free and contradiction-free Bible that holds perfectly to God's message of salvation for humankind.

How, you may be asking, did such a large number of people—people with the same kinds of flaws and weaknesses we all have today—come to the agreements necessary to produce such a perfect piece of work as the Holy Bible? The answer lies in the guiding hand of God in bringing the process to completion.

All the way through the process of producing the Bible—from the actual writing of the scriptures clear through to the Christian church's recognition ofthe books God intended to comprise His written Word—you can see the hand of God, working to make sure His message to His people and to a fallen world became exactly what He intended it to be.

No one man or group of men simply *decided* what books would be kept in the canon of scripture and which would be rejected. That happened when God Himself, using the guidance of His Holy Spirit, allowed people to understand which of the books written in the first few centuries of Christianity were truly inspired, or "God-breathed." In other words, the inclusion of the books we have in the Bible today was God's decision and God's work, not man's.[4]

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[4] Sumner, T. M. (2009). *How did we get the bible?*. Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books.

Canon in the Postapostolic Church

Tradition and Authority

The apostolic fathers (the church leaders immediately following the apostles) recognized that the authority given to the apostles by Christ was unique and that in the most complete sense the apostles could have no successors. Thus the apostolic fathers recognized a definitive break in authority. Those leaders of the generation after the apostles, such as Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (ca. AD 50–107), acknowledged that the apostles belonged to a clearly marked and now completed stage between the Lord and the then-contemporary church.

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (ca. AD 70–160), described the problem faced by the early generations of church leadership in determining which (oral) traditions of the Lord were authentic and which were spurious. His answer centered on apostolic authority: if a saying or interpretation can be clearly traced to an apostle, it could be accepted as genuine and authoritative.

The concept of an authoritative Christian tradition can be traced back into the New Testament itself. Paul speaks of the chain of receiving and delivering a body of teaching (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Cor. 11:23). It is therefore not surprising to see in this early period both written works and oral tradition existing side by side in some sort of authoritative fashion. Tradition was grounded in apostolic authority, which had its origin in the Lord himself. In the early decades of the church, apostolic tradition was an authoritative voice in the infant and early church.

In the immediate postapostolic period we find a great stress on apostolic tradition alongside apostolic writings that had not yet begun to be collected into any kind of formal New Testament canon. As the apostles died, this living stream of tradition grew fainter. The written documents became progressively more important to the ongoing life of the church.

The Collection of the Books

The earliest canonical list that we know of was composed by the radically anti-Jewish heretic Marcion (ca. AD 100–165), who accepted only a truncated version of the Gospel of Luke (he excised the infancy narratives) and ten of Paul's epistles (from which he purged all Jewish references). Two observations need to be made about Marcion's list. First, while Marcion's teaching would have been in large measure congruent with gnostic perspectives, his canon included only part of the works received by the church and did not include any "gnostic" works such as the Gospels of Thomas or Mary or the Acts of Peter or the like. Most likely these books had not yet been written, but if they did exist, they were not accepted because of their obvious recent origin. Thus his list, though incomplete, does testify to the authority of the books he included. Second, Marcion's canon acted as a goad to the church to publish a less eccentric and more complete list of its recognized books. At this time there were collections of the Gospels and of the Pauline Epistles that were circulating, but no formal lists had yet been published. Marcion's canon prompted the church to act.

In the latter half of the second century the Muratorian Canon was published. This list includes the four Gospels, Acts, Paul's thirteen letters, Jude, Revelation, 1 John, and at least either 2 John or 3 John or both. So before the end of the second century, at least twenty-one New Testament books were listed as authoritative. The author of the list also notes several other books that were circulating. He comments that these other books fall into three categories: (1) those books that were disputed—that is, accepted by some churches but rejected by others; (2) those that were

edifying for use but not authoritative; and (3) those that were to be rejected as heretical. The author lists one disputed book (*The Apocalypse of Peter*) and one that is edifying but not authoritative (*The Shepherd of Hermas*), noting that it was of recent origin. He also lists several other books that were heretical and recent and therefore not to be read in the churches.

By the end of the second century there was a remarkably high degree of agreement concerning the vast majority of the New Testament. The twenty-one- or twenty-two-book core remained stable, though the fringe books of the New Testament canon remained unsettled for centuries. This high degree of unanimity concerning the greater part of the New Testament was attained independently among the very diverse and scattered congregations not only throughout the Mediterranean world but also over an area extending from Britain to Mesopotamia.

The development of the canon had reached a "status quo." While in some places certain books achieved local temporary canonical status, these aberrations were few and short-lived. In about AD 320 Eusebius presents a list that is nearly identical with that of the Muratorian Canon in the second century.

Persecution and Canonicity

During the first three centuries of its existence, the church came under repeated persecutions. In the third century the imperial strategy against Christianity shifted; instead of merely coercing individuals to recant their faith, now, in order to destroy the movement, the inquisitors targeted their apostolic books for destruction. This provided a renewed urgency in determining what was and was not inspired and authoritative. The bishops (generally the guardians of the Scriptures in the early church) needed confidence that the books they were willing to die for were indeed Scripture.

The Criteria of Canonicity

Apostolic Origin and Apostolic Doctrine (Orthodoxy)

Documents read in the early church worship services were to be doctrinally pure. This concern for true doctrine can be seen within the New Testament itself. First John identifies as "antichrist" those who deny the humanity of Christ. Paul warns the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 of the dangers of false teachers, as do both Jude and 2 Peter.

Similar concern is seen within the early church. Serapion, bishop of Antioch (ca. AD 200), rejected the *Gospel of Peter* since its teaching was nonapostolic, saying, "For we, brethren, receive both Peter and the other apostles as Christ; but we reject intelligently the writings falsely ascribed to them, knowing that such were not handed down to us."

Emphasis on the necessity of apostolic authorship (either directly or through an author's association with an apostle) was declared by Papias (ca. AD 130) who connected the Gospel of Mark to the authority of Peter. Likewise, it was acknowledged that Luke–Acts, while not written by a member of the inner apostolic circle, nonetheless preserved and propagated apostolic doctrines and had direct apostolic connection to Paul.

The question of the necessity of apostolic origin for a book to be considered canonical is demonstrated by the decades-long debate over the status of the book of Hebrews. In the Greek-speaking East the book was generally considered Pauline and accepted as canonical, whereas in the Latin-speaking West the book was not regarded as Pauline and thus was not initially considered canonical. While the acceptance of Hebrews into the canon was a longer process than

the Pauline Epistles, it was ultimately recognized that the work could be traced to a Pauline mode of thought and had the "ring of truth" of apostolic doctrine.

We see here the image of a church fully engaged with verifying the authenticity of its roots. There was no simple credulity to accept even purported apostolic documents at face value. It evaluated those claims both on the basis of external historical evidence and internal consistency with the received apostolic tradition and the undisputed received works that were regarded as having divine authority.

Catholicity and Canonicity

Catholicity is related to the acceptance of a book by the majority of the churches. In the early fifth century Vincent of Lerins articulated the "Vincentian Canon" as a means for determining what was genuinely Christian as opposed to that which was sectarian, idiosyncratic, or heretical. Vincent's canon did not refer to the authoritative collection of Scripture but rather to that which has "always, everywhere, and by all Christians been believed [about God's self-disclosure]." The Vincentian Canon reflects the early church's underlying commitment to catholicity.

Back in the second century, some appealed to secret traditions (e.g., *The Secret Gospel of Thomas*) for practices and teachings. These largely gnostic works were uninterested in the historicity of the faith and in Jesus's death and resurrection. Instead they focused on his public sayings as well as his purported secret teachings that he had not entrusted to the masses, or even to all of the apostles. The appeal to catholicity challenged the new "gospels" that arose during the second and third centuries. The church leaders argued that these documents failed the test of catholicity as well as the test of apostolicity and were thus not authoritative.

Public Worship and Canonicity

The early church included from its birth the public reading of Scripture (at first the Old Testament) as part of its worship, a practice inherited from the synagogues. Paul also gave instructions for his epistles to be read publicly in the assembly. The Gospel of Mark gives us a hint (Mark 13:14, possibly addressed to the public reader) that Mark expected the same of his writing. About a century later Justin Martyr describes Christian worship as including the reading of "the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets." Thus, the four Gospels had come to be regarded as Scripture (on the level of the Old Testament) certainly as early as the second century.

In such a context the public reading of a document was an implicit endorsement of its authority and its canonicity. Significantly, fewer than fifty years after Paul had written his epistles to the Corinthians, Clement of Rome urged his Corinthian readers to "take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle." This indicates that both he and his readers viewed it as authoritative.[5]

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[5] Hays, J. D., & Duvall, J. S. (2012). *How the bible came to be (ebook shorts)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.

The Canon of Sacred Scripture

By **Wayne Jackson**

Bible scholars refer to the "canon" of the Scriptures. What is meant by that expression? The term "canon" is an anglicized form of the Greek *kanon*. Originally, the word had to do with a straight rod or rule, to which a builder would compare his work for trueness.

Gradually, the term came to be employed figuratively of a "norm or standard." In his letter to the Galatians, Paul referred to the "rule" (*kanon*) by which Christians are expected to live (6:16). Eventually, the expression came to signify that which has "passed the test."

When, therefore, the word is applied to the books of the Bible, it denotes those documents which, over a period of time, have passed the test of critical examination, hence, warrant the designation "sacred scripture." In his **Commentary on Matthew**, Origen (c. A.D. 185-254), one of the Greek "church fathers," alluded to the "canonized Scriptures" (Sec. 28). Today, the "Canon" refers to those 66 books which constitute the common Bible.

But this introduces several questions. Who determined which books were to go into the Bible? Exactly when did that occur? And what are the Apocryphal books?

The Standard of Determination

The question of: "which books belong in the Bible?" was determined gradually and on the basis of *evidence*. By "gradually" we mean that there was not a definite historical date when a synod or council made a determination — "these are the true biblical books!" Rather, over a period of years, by the application of reasonable tests, the documents truly inspired were separated from those works that are spurious. The evidence leading to this decision is classified as *external* and *internal*.

External evidence has to do with the testimony of those who had access to the documents originally. How did they view them, and why?

Internal evidence relates to the nature of the material itself. Does it claim to be from God? Is it internally consistent? Does it harmonize with other documents that are perceived to be inspired? Is it characterized by a lofty tone, i.e., that "essence" which one would expect in a narrative that claims inspiration? Does it bear the marks of factual accuracy?

These sorts of things, as applied by reasonable minds, ultimately separated the genuinely sacred books from those unworthy of that recognition.

Old Testament Books

Jewish tradition traces the collection of the Old Testament books to the time of Ezra (mid-5th century B.C.). It may have been a while later before the entire "canon" was actually recognized. By the time Christ was born, there were two versions of the Old Testament.

The Hebrew canon consisted of the 39 books that currently make up our Old Testament — though in the Palestinean version they numbered only 24 (due to a different arrangement — some books being combined).

The Septuagint version (a Greek translation from the 3rd/2nd centuries B.C.) contained various other documents which were "bound up" with the regular 39 books of the Hebrew Bible (the number of these extra books varying in different editions). While these additional books, called the Apocrypha, reflected some historical matters, they were not perceived as "inspired" by God, and, significantly, were never sanctioned by Christ nor any New Testament writer. Some of them, though, are incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible. For a review of this, see "The Apocrypha: Inspired of God?" elsewhere on this web site.

One of the most significant evidences for the sacred nature of the Old Testament books is the manner in which they are quoted, or alluded to, in the New Testament, having the sanction of Christ and his sacred penmen.

According to one computation (Horn, p. 173), the New Testament contains 433 direct quotations from the Old Testament. No less than 30 of the 39 books are definitely quoted, with numerous additional allusions.

Moreover, it is not just the fact that the Old Testament is quoted, it is the *way* in which it is quoted that is significant. The technical phrase, "It is written" (used of an *inspired* work — cf. Thayer, p. 121) is employed in 73 New Testament passages. In some 21 New Testament passages, the Old Testament documents are referred to as "scripture."

Quotations from at least 11 of the Old Testament books are attributed to God or the Holy Spirit. For example, Peter, quoting from Psalm 69, says that "it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the *Holy Spirit spake* before by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:1 6ff). In some 46 New Testament passages, the names of 10 Old Testament books (or authors) are mentioned.

Again, let us emphasize that no Apocryphal book from the LXX is given endorsement, even though the New Testament writers were familiar with these books.

New Testament Books

The New Testament authors considered their writings to be as authoritative as those of the Old Testament scriptures. For example, Paul quotes from the book of Deuteronomy (25:4), and the Gospel of Luke (10:7), and classifies both of these as "scripture" (1 Tim. 5:18).

Peter places "all" of Paul's "epistles" in the same category as "the other scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:16). The word "other" translates the Greek *loipos* which denotes "the *rest of any number* or *class* under consideration" (Thayer, p. 382). Too, note how Peter puts the "apostles" in the same category as the "holy prophets" of Old Testament fame (2 Pet. 3:2).

The ancient church was unanimous in its acceptance of most of the New Testament books; for a while there was some dispute over James, 2nd & 3rd John, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation. Too, during this time period (2nd/3rd centuries), other books, which had generated some interest (e.g., the "Epistle of Barnabas," the "Shepherd of Hermas") were being eliminated. By the 4th century, it was a settled issue that the currently accepted 27 books of our New Testament, and only these, are canonical.

It was not a matter of any official council "deciding" which books would be acknowledged as "inspired"; it was a matter of critically examining, sorting, sifting, and identifying what had become perfectly obvious.

The writings of the New Testament were so profusely quoted by the ante-nicene "fathers" (AD. 325 and back), that it is said that if the whole New Testament were destroyed, it could be reproduced entirely from their citations — with the exception of about a dozen verses (Hastings, p. 12).

Conclusion

We may have every confidence, therefore, that the sixty-six books which compose our present Bible are the true embodiment of the Word of God.

Part_Two
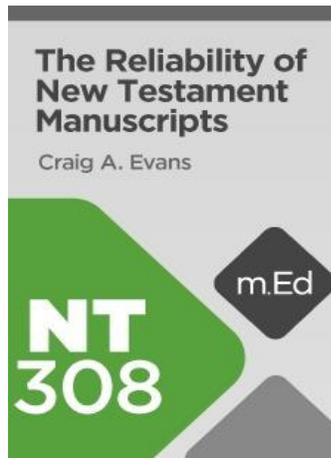
I. PAPYRI BOOKROLLS
II. ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS
III. ANCIENT LIBRARYS
IV. SCRIBAL SCHOLARSHIP
V. COPYIST AUTOGRAPHS
VI. SOURCE TRANSLATIONS

The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts

Craig A. Evans

NT 308 m.Ed

Papyrus 52

The quality of the Greek NT manuscripts can be seen by simply looking at them, reviewing the oldest ones that we have, and I've done that. I begin now with Papyrus 52, and I just want to make a few comments about it. It is in Manchester, England, if you want to see it for yourself. It is a small fragment, [the] size of a large postage stamp, and on one side we have a few words and phrases from John 18, beginning in verse 32. And then, if you flip it over, it continues with a little later in John 18. The value of it is—if you have a chance to see it, you'll notice that it's neatly inked, neatly lettered; very straight lines; a proper margin at the top; and the style of writing puts it in probably the mid-second century. Some scholars date it to perhaps as early as 120 or 130. Most would agree that it's prior to 150, and put it about 140.

Now if you compare it to writings from a similar period of time—secular writings written by professional scribes—you'll notice that P52 is [of] equal quality. The point I'm making here when I say this is, [there's an] idea that because Christianity was an illegal religion, sometimes persecuted in some places in the Roman Empire, that the scribes therefore hired to make copies of Scripture would be so poorly trained, perhaps even incompetent, that early copies of Christian Scripture would be very poorly done—unreliable, inaccurate, rife with errors, and so forth. But when we look at the manuscripts themselves, not theories but the actual artifacts themselves, we discover that that simply is not true. P52, our earliest fragment, compares very well to non-Christian papyri produced in the same period of time.

Papyrus 52 Compared to the Petaus Collection

If we just look at a number of other papyri, I think I can make that point even clearer. For example, if you look at the Petaus collection, also found in Egypt—Petaus was a village scribe. We've found among his papers one that's numbered 121, a practice sheet, and about a dozen times he writes out the same line: "I, Petaus, village scribe, have handed in …" If you look at it, it's terribly executed. The lines are not straight. They wander; they meander. Some of the letters—you can't even make them out. In fact, he misspells some of the very words that he's written over and over again. I'm not aware of any early Christian manuscript that looks like this.

Papyrus 52 Compared to the "Letter of a Prodigal Son"

We have another example. This one—you could call it the "Letter of a Prodigal Son." In fact, just like in the parable, the young man that writes this letter says to his mother, "I know that I have sinned." He desires to be reconciled to his mother. He's in debt—he owes people money. He's reduced to wearing rags, and he's full of regrets and full of sorrow. The interesting thing is, if you ever have a chance to look at this particular papyrus, you'll notice how poorly written it is—grammatical errors, misspellings, sloppily constructed letters. Again, the point is, I don't know of anything written by early Christian scribes that compares to this kind of sloppiness.

Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 209

Sometimes it's pointed out that the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 209, which has been given the Greek papyrus number of P10, is an example of poor scribal execution. It's Romans 1:1–7, but this is hardly fair. It actually isn't a Greek NT manuscript; it's a businessman's paper. On the back side, we have his business agenda and notes, and on the other side, perhaps whiling away the time as he was waiting for a meeting, or perhaps just simply practicing his knowledge of Scripture, he apparently wrote from memory the first seven verses of Romans, and along the way accidentally omitted most of verse 6. So instead of being an example of poor NT scribal scholarship, it's actually just the opposite—a rather remarkable testimony to the knowledge of Scripture a layman possessed, who was not attempting to write out a copy of Romans.

Papyrus 1

If we just waltz through some of the oldest papyri that we have, we will see a consistent pattern. For example, Papyrus 1, which was one of the very first papyri discovered by Grenfell and Hunt when they went to Oxyrhynchus, Egypt in 1896. Papyrus 1 begins with Matt 1:1–12, and you flip it over to the other side and it continues at verses 14–20. Now, it's in poor shape. There are holes in it and so forth, but when you look at it carefully, you see neatly executed letters, nice straight lines, and no glaring errors or mistakes.

Papyrus 45

Papyrus 45 preserves about one-half of the four NT Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—again, well executed: nice straight lines, clearly written-out letters, and overall, a very good manuscript.

Papyrus 46

P46 also dates to about the same time, [the] beginning of the third century. [It's] a collection of Paul's letters, neatly executed—pages are numbered, proper margins, straight lines—no evidence of carelessness or sloppiness, but first-rate work.

Papyri 64, 66, and 67

P64: small fragments of Matt 26 in Magdalen College, Oxford. These fragments also could date to the very end of the second century. Some even date them as early as AD 170 or 180. Neatly executed letters. Now we're not talking about high-end penmanship here, or calligraphy. We're just talking about proper, workmanlike, scribal execution.

P66, another example of early third-century Christian scribal practice: John's Gospel, beautifully executed.

P67: fragments of Matthew. The same thing. If you look at these fragments, you'll see neatly executed letters, straight lines—what you [would] expect in scribal professionalism.

Papyri 75, 77, 87, 104, and 121

P75: another important copy of the Gospel of John, [with] the same characteristics as the other manuscripts—neatly done, professionally done, and it compares very well to its own contemporaries. We have some fragments in P77, fragments of the Gospel of Matthew. P87: fragments of (not well attested) Philemon, also dating to the third century. P104, from Matthew, although very fragmentary—again, we can see neatly executed penmanship. The legibility of the letters—crystal clear, properly done. P121: fragments of John 19.

NT Manuscripts Compared to Secular Ancient Manuscripts

So how do these manuscripts compare, then, to the penmanship that we see in the second century and the early third century in the eastern Roman Empire? Quite comparable. There are some manuscripts in the secular world, the non-Christian world, that would be of higher grade, high-end, where calligraphy is very important—fancy, beautiful, artistic-style manuscripts. It's true [that] Christians didn't have that kind of financial wherewithal. There was a greater economy and [pragmatism] on the part of the early Christian communities and their scribal activity. But if you actually look at the manuscripts, you see no evidence of sloppiness, carelessness, incompetence, which some have alleged in recent years. No, you see first-rate scribal execution.

There's no reason to think that these early copies of Christian Scripture were somehow inferior or incompetently done [and] therefore unreliable, [so that] we don't really know how the original text read. There [are] no grounds for this at all.[6]

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[6] Evans, C. A. (2014). *NT308 The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The New Testament Compared to Other Works

If the Greek NT manuscripts are numerous and very old and very reliably copied, we must ask then the question, how does the NT manuscript record compare to the record of other ancient manuscripts? That's a good question, and when we answer it, we will be very surprised, and I think we will learn a lot. You'll be impressed to know that the NT record compares very well.

Julius Caesar's *Gallic War*

Take, for example, Julius Caesar and his *Gallic War*. He composed it in the 50s BC. What do we have? Now, Julius Caesar is the founder of the imperial Roman legacy. All we have are ten fairly well-preserved manuscripts. The oldest dates to about AD 850.

Think about that. One of the most important Romans ever to live in antiquity, he wrote *Gallic Wars*—which made him famous in elite circles in Roman society—and all we have are ten fairly well-preserved manuscripts, and the oldest one is 900 years removed from when he wrote the original.

Livy's *Roman History*

Or how about Livy? Livy, the Roman historian? He was born around, we think, 59 BC and died, we think, around AD 17—so, a turn-of-the-era scholar. He wrote *Roman History*, of which about one-third survives. So in this case, we don't even have the entire work. Two-thirds of it is missing. Well, of this one-third that survives, our oldest manuscript, which contains parts of books 3, 4, 5, and 6—this oldest manuscript dates to about AD 350. In other words, [it's] more than 300 years removed in time from when he originally wrote, and it isn't even complete. Most of his work is lost.

Tacitus' *Annals and Histories*

How about Tacitus, the Roman historian, author of *Annals* and *Histories*, writing sometime around AD 110, 115? The oldest manuscripts of these works date to the 9th and 11th centuries (AD)—in other words, 800 years and 1,000 years after the original. Tacitus' minor works, like *Agricola* and *Germania*, same thing. These two important works [are] preserved in a 10th century codex—in other words, some 800 years after the writing of the original.

Thucydides and Herodotus

Or Thucydides, the great Greek fifth-century-BC historian? His *History* survives, and our oldest manuscript dates to about AD 900, or about 1400 years after the time of the original. Or Herodotus, also a fifth-century [BC] Greek historian? His *Histories* survives, and the oldest manuscript [dates] to about AD 800, or about 13 centuries or so after the original.

The Superior Preservation of the New Testament

So what we have are classical works. Classical historians read them, study them, take them seriously—yet the manuscript tradition is rather weak compared to the NT manuscript tradition. The classical manuscripts are late and few in number, yet no recognized classical historian doubts the general reliability of these manuscripts, even if they were produced 1,000 years or so after the original. That's what so impresses me about the Greek NT manuscript tradition.

And if we're referring to the Gospels, we have virtually the entire Gospel text about 200 years or so after the time of the writing of the originals. We don't just have a handful of manuscripts—we have hundreds that are old. We have thousands that predate the Gutenberg printing press, which means that through comparison and examination, reconstruction, and hard work—what's called textual criticism—we can with confidence reconstruct the text as it was originally written, or at least come within about 99 percent of it. This is a record of preservation that by far and away surpasses that of all other texts from antiquity.[7]

Book	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	# Of Extant Manuscripts
Iliad by Homer	800 B.C.	100-200 A.D.	900 years	650
Annals of Imperial Rome by Tacitus	116 A.D.	850 A.D.	700 years	1
The Jewish War by Josephus	90 A.D.	900-1100 A.D.	900 years	9
Greek New Testament	40-100 A.D.	200-300 A.D.	100-200 years	99
Greek New Testament	40-100 A.D.	350-800 A.D.	250-700 years	306
Greek New Testament	40-100 A.D.	125-1000 A.D.	25-900 years	5,664
Other Languages	40-100 A.D.	350-1000 A.D.	250-900 years	18,000

Number of New Testament Manuscripts

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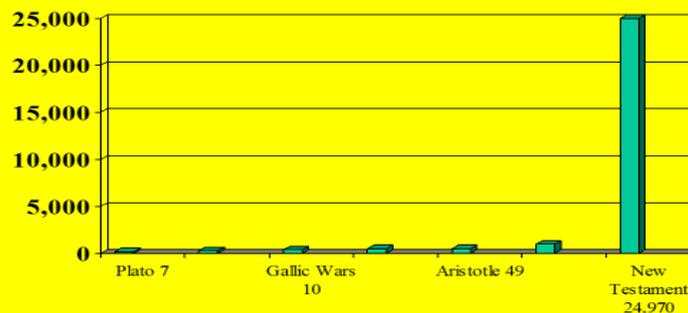
[7] Evans, C. A. (2014). *NT308 The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

How Long Do Manuscripts Last?

We come now to a very important question, and that asks, how long did the manuscripts last? Now, I have here in mind the originals, the autographs, but also the earliest copies.

Just for illustration, let's think of Matthew. Let's suppose Matthew's Gospel was written in the year 75. It might have been written some years earlier, maybe even a few years later, but we'll just say, in the year 75. How long did it last? How long did it circulate?

I asked a professor, when I was in grad school many years ago, this very question. "How long do you think the autographs lasted?" I asked. "Oh," he says, "I don't know—10, 20 years." The answer, at that time, seemed reasonable to me. We think of our cheap paperbacks, read several times—the spine begins to crack; pages start to fall out. Surely these precious documents would have been eagerly read by many people over and over again.

So after 10 or 20 years, maybe the original Matthew was falling to pieces and was discarded, and other copies were made, and so on. In fact, if—let's say every manuscript lasted about 10 years, and then there was a copy made, and that copy lasted 10 years, and another copy was made. Over the course of 150 years—or from, say, the year 75 to 225—we could have as many as 15 generations. Each time there's a new copy made, probably some more scribal errors are introduced; more variance enters into the text.

So after 15 such generations, who knows? Maybe the text of Matthew in AD 225 would be very different from the original Matthew that was composed by the evangelist in the year 75. So this is the backdrop, just—that kind of assumption. Is there evidence that shows that that is so? Or perhaps the evidence shows something else?

Libraries in the Ancient World

Well, in a recent study published in 2009, there was an analysis of 53 libraries from antiquity that have been recovered intact. And what I mean by that is, the entire library: the actual literature itself—the various books—as well as supporting documentation, private letters, and things like that. The entire collection was dumped at the same time. So when scholars were sifting through the dry sands of Egypt, or whatever the location is, all of these books were found together.

Of course, this is wonderful, because the books then can be studied together. We not only have copies of literature, but we have letters that have dates on them. We have correspondence talking about the books—requests that a new one be copied, or a request that one that had been loaned out be returned, and so forth. And so this kind of information has enabled scholars to reconstruct the history of the library, as it were.

Now, I'm talking about 53 libraries—not archives, business papers, and that sort of thing, but libraries, [consisting] of literature. The smallest library that's been analyzed had 12 books in it, and some of the largest have close to 1,000 books. Many of these libraries that were found intact were recovered from the dry sands of Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, where about a half million texts were recovered from 1896 on into the 20th century, when the digging finally came to an end.

The Answer for the Longevity Question

What we've learned is that these libraries contained books that were in use, before being retired or discarded—were in use anywhere from 150 years to 500 years. It was noticed that most of these books fell in the 200- to 300-year range before being retired or discarded or thrown out. This has enormous implications for our understanding of the NT manuscripts and [for] our question: How long were they used? What was their longevity before they were retired or thrown out?

Implications for the New Testament Manuscripts

This would mean that the original Matthew—written in 75, let us suppose—could possibly still have been in circulation as late as AD 225. This is extraordinary. In other words, when P45, which I mentioned briefly in the previous lecture—when Papyrus 45, which contains chunks, about half or so of the four NT Gospels—when that scribe put pen to paper and composed that, sometime around AD 210 or 220, the original Matthew and the original Mark and Luke and John could still have been in circulation, being copied, influencing the text of the NT. So the idea that there was this was wide gap, this broken link between the originals, written in the first century, and our oldest extant copies that we now possess, that you and I can go see in museums and libraries around the world—instead of a wide, 150-year gap, where who knows what changes may have taken place, we may well have had the originals lasting right on into the third century itself.

Reasons for the Longevity

Now, of course, as I got to thinking about this 2009 study by George Houston—after I picked myself up off the floor, I realized, now, wait a minute. That's not so strange.

Materials Used by Scribes

Books in antiquity were valuable. They were precious, and they were made of very durable materials. They were made out of papyrus, which obviously lasts a long time; otherwise, we wouldn't be digging them up in the dry sands of Egypt and in various tombs and other locations. After all, we have papyri documents reaching back to 1,000 BC, so it is endurable stuff—but also animal skins, parchment, vellum, and so forth last a long time.

The Practice of Scribes

It isn't just that, but look at the practice—say, at Qumran. Qumran was destroyed either in the year 68 or 73. The library was still in circulation, still being used. Over 200 Bible scrolls, and what do we find when we look at them? Well, many of these Bible scrolls, perhaps as many as 40, were somewhere between 200 and 300 years old when the Romans destroyed the compound at Qumran near the Dead Sea. This is the same practice that's been observed involving the libraries that George Houston has studied. Books were used for a long, long time.

The Practice of Early Christians

What about the early Christians themselves? We have some evidence there that's very important. For example, the great codices—Vaticanus, which dates to the early fourth century, and Sinaiticus, which also dates to the early fourth century—they were used for hundreds of years, and we know that because they were re-inked. In the case of Vaticanus, in places where the original ink had faded—these pages were re-inked, we estimate, about 500 years after the book had originally been produced.

Tertullian

We even have evidence from the church fathers. Tertullian, writing around the year 190, in a tractate called *Prescription against the Heretics*—in chapter 36, he complains of the heretics who mutilate the text, and he says, "If you don't believe me, then check out the autographs of Paul's Letters," and he mentions a few letters by name, "which you can find in Hierapolis, in Asia Minor."

The autographs? Tertullian wrote in Latin, and the word he used was *authenticæ*. Well, some translators couldn't believe that he should be taken literally. Maybe what he meant was the original Greek, as opposed to a mutilated copy or a translation. But *authenticum*, or in the feminine plural, *authenticæ*—referring to Paul's Epistles (another feminine plural), it literally means "autographs." Well, thanks to George Houston's study and the discovery of how long books were in circulation—their great longevity—perhaps we should take Tertullian's remark at face value. Maybe that's literally what he meant, that there were actual autographs in circulation, still available for study in a place like Hierapolis.

Bishop Peter

In fact, another bishop, writing in the early fourth century—Bishop Peter—he says the same thing about the Gospel of John, that the original could still be seen at Ephesus. Well, at one time, this struck us moderns as far-fetched. We couldn't imagine a book lasting 150 or 200 or 225 years, but the evidence from Egypt and from elsewhere suggests that that's exactly the way it was, so we should have no reason to think that the NT writings would be an exception.

The original Letters of Paul, the original Gospels—these would have been precious for early Christians. They would have held on to them for as long as they could. For them to have existed 100 or even 200 years or more would not be surprising at all. But the important point that I'm making is: As long as they existed, they would have been copied.

So the originals would not have simply influenced the first copies in the first century, but would have been the template, the archetype for copies in the second century as well and perhaps even on into the third century. This encourages our view that the Greek text was quite stable. There were not wild fluctuations, changes, subtractions, and additions, but a very reliable and very stable text.[8]

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[8] Evans, C. A. (2014). *NT308 The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Ancient Writers and Multiple Autographs

Let's raise now another question: How many autographs? You might think, 'Wait a minute—there would be 27. There are 27 books of the NT, so there'd be 27 originals, right? Everything else would be a copy.' Well, it's a little more complicated than that. Papyri from Oxyrhynchus and elsewhere show that multiple autographs were written before documents were circulated. What typically would happen is, the draft would be written out, it would be carefully proofread, and then another draft would be written out, and this one would be signed, if it was a letter, and that is where we get "autograph." But then a copy would be retained, so at the very least, there'd be two copies—two originals, and by "original" I mean written out by the sender, by the author (or his scribe, who did the writing [while the sender did] the dictating). There'd be at least two composed under his nose, on his desk, that would go out with his stamp of approval. They in fact might not be identical, but obviously they'd be very, very close.

Multiple Autographs and the New Testament

With the 27 books of the NT, the reality is, there probably were at least 54 autographs—one set sent out for circulation, and one set retained. Actually, it's even more than that. Letters, by their very nature—especially circular letters, like probably Ephesians, maybe 1 and 2 Peter; perhaps also James; perhaps some of the other letters by Paul—would have two, three, four copies made that were then sent out and circulated. This would mean, if I can hark back to the previous lecture, that the chances of an autograph surviving 100, 150, or even 200 years would be greatly increased, because there is not just one that might get lost or perhaps deliberately destroyed, but by having a second or third, we have, in effect, backup. We have redundancy, which would increase the chances for survival. This is a very important observation to make, and so we should not think then that the autographs disappeared after just 10 or 20 years, but rather [that they] circulated for a long time, influencing, even controlling, the textual tradition in subsequent years.

The Practice of Ancient Scholarship

Of course, George Houston's fascinating study of these 53 libraries from antiquity showed us more things than merely longevity. His study showed that manuscripts were collected, compared, corrected, circulated, interpreted, and read publicly. In fact, in some cases very sophisticated commentary accompanied the documents: philological notes, exegetical notes, explanatory glosses—the kind of sophisticated interpretation we've come to expect in modern commentaries. We should never condescend and assume that people who lived 2,000 years ago weren't very bright, or were naive and gullible.

Scribal Scholarship and the New Testament

We should assume that NT scribal scholarship was very similar to the secular scribal scholarship we see in the 53 libraries that George Houston has studied.

Evidence from Paul's Practice

In fact, there is some evidence for thinking that way. I remind you of Acts 19:9, where Paul quit the synagogue, "taking the disciples with him, and then argued daily in the lecture hall"—the *scholē* or school or university—"of Tyrannus." In other words, Paul had no trouble transitioning from a synagogue setting that had become hostile into a Greek or Hellenistic school, where he could lecture, and presumably where copies of Scripture could be made, even copies of Paul's letters. Where there could be study—grammatical and philological study—and so forth.

Evidence from the Practice of Rabbis

I remind you that this is in keeping with the results reached by Saul Lieberman in his book *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (1962), where he shows that rabbinic principles—and Paul was trained as a rabbi, as a Pharisee, at the feet of Gamaliel—that rabbinic principles of study and exegesis are indebted to Greek academics. This more recently has been reaffirmed in a work by Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE*. It's the same thing, and so Hellenistic principles of pedagogy and study overlapped with rabbinic principles of study, and that would include scribal activity. Fair-minded comparative study shows that the scribes who copied NT Scripture were far more competent than village scribe Petaus, who found it difficult to write legibly and spell correctly.

The Practice of Ancient Scribes

We could ask another question, just for fun: Could we recover autographs? Is it possible to find Paul's original letter, say, to the Thessalonians, or to the Galatians? Actually, I think it would be. Why? Well, we have autographs that have been found in Oxyrhynchus and elsewhere, and we know they are autographs simply because, after several pages of professional scribal handwriting, when we come to the greetings and the signature, the handwriting changes. It becomes large, clumsy, and sloppy. For example, in one secular papyrus—a letter—it says, "I wrote in my own hand." The author wants to note that the entire letter was written by him and not just by a scribe. And yet in other letters it will say, 'I, so-and-so,' and then it will note [that] actually it's been written by the hand of a scribe, because the author of the letter does not know letters—hasn't ever learned how to make letters correctly.

Compare this to what Paul says at the end of 2 Thessalonians 3:17: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine. It is the way I write." Paul, I think, says that because in 2 Thessalonians 2, he complains of a rumor that has started on the basis of a letter supposedly by him or Paul's own scribe, Tertius, who wrote Romans for him. It says this in Romans 16:22: "I, Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord." At the end of 1 Corinthians, Paul says this—1 Corinthians 16:21, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand." Or Colossians 4:18: "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand." Or Philemon 19: "I, Paul, write this letter with my own hand." Or in Galatians 6:11, Paul says, "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand."

Can the Autographs Be Recovered?

I think it would be likely that a Pauline autograph would be readily recognized. Do you think we'll actually find one? Well, I'm skeptical. Why? Because Paul didn't write a letter, so far as we know, to the Christians at Oxyrhynchus. He didn't write a letter to somebody who lived in an arid setting, where a letter written 2,000 years ago had a pretty good chance of surviving. He wrote his letters to Greece, to Asia Minor—at least one to Rome, in Italy—and those places get rainfall. Those places are not dry deserts. There'd be little chance for an original letter to be left in the city trash and then survive for 2,000 years.

No, I don't think we'll ever recover a Pauline autograph. But if by some fluky chance a NT autograph—especially if it's a letter with a distinctive signature—should it turn up in the dry sands of Egypt, should it have gone to a place like that near the Dead Sea in Israel, for example, then at least theoretically I think it would be possible to find one and identify it.

Now, we have—I mentioned in the previous lecture—just to recap, we actually do have historical evidence, claims, that the autographs, some autographs of the NT, existed a long time. I remind you of Tertullian, writing about in the year 190 in a work called *Prescription against Heretics*. [In] chapter 36 he claimed that some of the autographs—and remember, in Latin, *authenticæ*—some of the autographs of Paul's letters were still available for examination in order to refute heretics and others who had altered the text of Paul's writings. Then a chap named Peter, bishop of Alexandria (he died, we think, around the year 311)—in his writings, of which only fragments survive—in fragment number five, he claims that the autograph of the Gospel of John was still available in his time, in Ephesus.

Even if this is incorrect and it was not the autograph, for him to say that would imply, I think, at the very least, that it was a very, very old copy, probably dating back to the early second century, which would lead some to think that it might have been the actual original that the apostle penned in the 90s. This is very important evidence, not only that there were multiple autographs, but [that] the autographs lasted a long time, and that they were passed on by scribes who were careful. We actually have numerous fragments of very early copies of Scripture, and we find that they were well done, well executed, and at the level that would be expected of any professional scribe.[9]

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[9] Evans, C. A. (2014). *NT308 The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Early Translations of the New Testament

Before concluding, we need to also know that the NT is preserved in a number of translations. Not only do we have 5,800 pre—Gutenberg Bible, pre—Gutenberg printing press, handwritten manuscripts in Greek, but you also have some 10,000 Latin translations that are early. We also have a number of translations in Syriac, Georgian, Coptic, and Ethiopic; in fact, another 10,000 or so of these manuscripts—when you add it all up, more than 25,000 old copies or originals of the NT.

In fact—one more point—even if all of the Greek NTS were lost, and all of these translations I just now mentioned somehow disappeared, we could reconstruct almost the entirety of the Greek NT from patristic quotations and commentary. In other words, the NT is the best-attested book by far from antiquity. Its text is stable. Its manuscripts are numerous and very old and very competently written.

We have every reason to have confidence that the modern Greek NT we have today, on which our modern translations are based, is very, very close to the originals, the autographs.

Conclusion

So allow me to conclude: The Bible manuscripts are early, they are numerous, and they're available not just in Greek—the original language—but in several languages. The manuscripts are accurate. They reflect the work of competent scribes who collected and compared.

When we look at these manuscripts and compare them to other non-Christian manuscripts and traditions—well, maybe I should say there is no comparison. Of 20,000 lines of the Greek NT— according to Professor Bruce Metzger, long-time respected textual critic at Princeton Theological Seminary—of the 20,000 lines that make up the Greek NT, only 40 lines are in doubt, and not one of those lines contains anything that relates to important NT or important Christian teaching.

I conclude again by saying the NT is well preserved. The text is stable. The text of the NT reflects the original text, and therefore, when we read it and study it, we should have great confidence: This is indeed what Jesus originally taught, and what His disciples originally wrote.[10]

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[10] Evans, C. A. (2014). *NT308 The Reliability of New Testament Manuscripts*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

BIBLE, ANCIENT VERSIONS OF THE Translations of the Old and New Testaments into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Greek, and other languages. The word "versions" also describes groups of manuscripts that are similar in variants and form. The ancient versions of the Bible demonstrate the dissemination and history of the biblical texts, especially in the early Christian era.

Role of the Versions

The Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions reflect the spread of Christianity beyond the Greek-speaking population of the Roman Empire. The later versions are often associated with Christianity spreading through missionary efforts (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 181). The versions provide data for reconstructing how the biblical text was transmitted in later periods, as well as how it was modified (Metzger, *Recent Contributions*, 369). They are useful for determining the regional form used in various parts of Christendom (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 182).

Greek Versions of the New Testament

Even before translations were made, there were different forms of the original-language text in circulation. This is true of both of the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Most of the New Testament Greek manuscripts can be divided into three families of texts called text types, although some manuscripts align more closely with a fourth, disputed text type. Manuscripts of the same text type contain similar variant readings. The four New Testament text-types or families are:

1. The Western type—contains striking omissions and significant expansions. The fifth-century Codex Bezae is this text type.
2. The Alexandrian type—the most carefully transmitted text-type. This is known because of the consistency between fourth-century witnesses like Codex Vaticanus and the Bodmer Papyri.
3. The Byzantine type—characterized by the conflation of variant readings and the harmonization of the Gospel accounts to each other.
4. The Caesarean text—considered to be a midway point between the Alexandrian and Western types, but its existence as an identifiable form is contested (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 213–6; Epp, *The Twentieth-Century Interlude*, 89–90).

Another form of Greek New Testament texts is the lectionary, which divides pericopes—sections of the text—and rearranges them in the fixed order of readings of the liturgical calendar. Extant lectionaries agree closely with each other. The conservative and archaic nature of liturgy means that the readings even in late manuscripts are likely very old (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 30–31). When this order of readings or lectionary use came into being is uncertain. Metzger has argued for an origin in the fourth century, while Aland and Aland have argued that it could not have existed before the fifth century. Certainly before the standardized form emerged, there were several lectionary systems (Osburn, *The Greek Lectionaries*, 62–3, 7).

For further information, see these articles: Textual Criticism of the New Testament; Western Text; Alexandrian Text; Byzantine Text; Lectionary.

Versions of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Written in Hebrew

The text of the Hebrew Bible was not standardized when the canon was first established, and even as late as the eighth—ninth centuries AD there were variant forms circulating in Rabbinic circles (Roberts, *The Old Testament Text*, 27). Though hypothesized from the variant forms in the Greek Septuagint translation, proof that different forms of the Hebrew text were in circulation was not discovered until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found outside of Qumran (Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 114–16). While some of the texts exhibit unique features of the Qumran copyists, most reflect the readings that would later become the Masoretic Text. It is named for the Masoretes, who added the vowel markings, punctuation, and critical notes used today (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 76–78).

Other manuscripts from Qumran reflect the variants found in the Greek Septuagint, though it is questionable whether these were similar enough to each other to constitute a distinct family (Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 116).

Also found among the Qumran manuscripts is a textual type that is a precursor to the Samaritan Pentateuch. While the Samaritan manuscripts known to us contain ideological modifications—namely the emphasis on Mt. Gerizim as the holy location of God's temple—it was based on a textual tradition present in Israel. The pre-Samaritan prototypes found near Qumran lack the theological modifications but possess the other characteristic features—harmonization of contradictions and the elaboration of command—fulfillment formulae (Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 81–87).

For further information, see these articles: Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, History of Text; Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls, Biblical; Pentateuch, Samaritan.

Septuagint

The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that became the authoritative version for many Greek-speaking Jews. It also became the Old Testament of the early Christians. Because the term "Septuagint" can also refer to any of the Greek versions, this version is sometimes called the "Old Greek." Its name—Latin for "70"—derives from the story of its origin, as presented in the *Letter of Aristeas*, that 72 Jewish elders were summoned from Israel by the king of Egypt to translate the Pentateuch. Later Christian elaboration adds that the entirety of the Hebrew Bible was translated and each of the 72 miraculously arrived independently at the same translation (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 14–15). The story is legendary: the translation grew out of the liturgical needs of an Alexandrian Jewish community that no longer spoke Hebrew. Nonetheless, the overall homogeneity in the Pentateuch indicates a small number of translators and the form of Greek demonstrates that they were local to Egypt (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 14–17).

Not only did the Septuagint facilitate worship by Jews in the Alexandrian synagogues, but it also was the medium through which the Hebrew Bible was made known to the Graeco-Roman world (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 18). Early Christians adopted the Septuagint as Scripture, which led some Jewish people to suspect that it was corrupted by Christians (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 102).

Some features are unique to the Greek translation and are not found in the Hebrew. While the Pentateuch is homogeneous, the other books display a variety of approaches to translation. Differences in vocabulary indicate a number of independent translations over a period of time. Some books were translated freely, sometimes even paraphrased, while others were translated strictly and literally.

While Job and Jeremiah are shorter in the Septuagint, Esther and Daniel are considerably longer. The additions to Daniel consist of two additional stories and a hymn, and Esther contains six extra sections. The Septuagint is ordered by literary character—historical, poetic/wisdom, prophetic—and includes material that did not become canonized in Judaism—Tobit, 1–4 Maccabees, Wisdom of Jesus ben-Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 17–18).

Theological alterations are present in the Septuagint, but not systematic. Distinction between Judaism and pagan religion is sometimes made through word choice; for example, the differentiation of Jewish and pagan altars with different words. Some words are altered to make them more significant to religion, e.g., Prov 1:7: "*Fools* despise wisdom and instruction" became "*The ungodly* despise wisdom and instruction." Esther contains features absent in the Hebrew: prayer, concern for Jewish dietary concerns, and references to God (Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible*, 258–65). The Septuagint uses the word "Lord" (κύριος, *kyrios*) in place of the divine name Yahweh (יהוה, *yhwh*), though the presence of the Hebrew name in some manuscripts has caused some to believe that the replacement with "Lord" is secondary (Pietersma, *Kyrios or Tetragram*, 87–88). The Septuagint also reduces the anthropomorphic depictions of God (Roberts, *The Old Testament Text*, 175).

A number of later Greek translations exist, the most important of which is Theodotion's. At the end of the second century AD he made a revision of the Old Greek text with the aid of a Hebrew manuscript of the proto-Masoretic family, which had become the dominant form in Jewish circles. Evidence of this use is visible in the large presence of Hebrew words transliterated rather than translated (Robert, *The Old Testament Text*, 123–25). By the time of the early Church, the Old Greek Septuagint text of Daniel in particular was considered deficient and the Theodotion text largely replaced it (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 17). Only two manuscripts containing the original Septuagint translation of Daniel have survived—all others have been replaced. Origen further attempted to purify the Greek Old Testament through the creation of his *Hexapla*, which contained six parallel columns: Hebrew, Hebrew transliterated with Greek letters, and four Greek translations already in existence (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 19).

For further information, see these articles: Greek Versions of the Hebrew Bible; Septuagint.

Other Ancient-Language Versions

As Christianity spread to communities that did not speak Greek, the Old and New Testaments were translated into different languages. Of these, the earliest and most important are the Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions. These were translated directly from Greek and sometimes with reference to the Hebrew (in the case of the Old Testament). The later versions—Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, Slavonic, Ethiopic, and Arabic—were either derived from one of these earlier translations or their textual origin is debated.

Latin Versions

In the western part of the Roman Empire, the Latin version was the most important non-Greek version. Although it certainly goes back earlier, the earliest evidence that we have of a Latin translation of the Bible are the citations of Cyprian (ca. AD 250). Though Tertullian cites the Bible in Latin at the end of second century AD, it is not certain whether the translations are his own. What is known as the "Old Latin" represents the work of many different translators. It is usually very literal and unpolished. The books of the Old Testament were probably translated from the Septuagint (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 140). The occurrence of

Latin and Greek side by side indicates that translation began in bilingual congregations where Greek and Latin were both read, rather than Rome, where the Church still spoke Greek into the third century (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 30–31).

In AD 383, Pope Damasus urged Jerome to produce a uniform and dependable Latin text. Regarding the Hebrew highly, Jerome translated the Old Testament with reference to Hebrew manuscripts and adjusted the Latin wherever it misrepresented the Hebrew. He also produced three versions of the Psalms: the first two by comparing different Latin manuscripts against the Septuagint and then one directly from the Hebrew. The latter never attained the popularity of the other two. Jerome's Latin version became known as the Vulgate—meaning "common"—and supplanted the Old Latin, influencing manuscripts where it didn't outright replace them (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 32–35; Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 76). Even though the Vulgate would become the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church for a millennium, it was initially met with resistance since its readings were often markedly different from the Old Latin (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 143). The latest surviving Old Latin manuscript is the 13th-century Codex Gigas, which only retains the "Old Latin" readings in Acts and Revelation (Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 182–83).

For further information, see these articles: Vulgate; Old Latin Versions.

Syriac

Syriac was the language of several eastern churches. The sheer number of Syriac translations indicate the level of Christian activity in Syria. The first Syriac Gospels were not just a translation, but a harmony of the four Gospels into one called the *Diatessaron* (διὰ τεσσάρρων, *dia tessarrōn*, "through the four"). It is debated whether Tatian, writing between AD 150 and 165, originally wrote it in Greek or Syriac. Its presence was felt most in Syria, where it became the dominant version until the fifth century (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 26; Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 188). It was especially influential in the time of Ephrem (AD 310–373) and today survives in continuous-text form only in citations made in Ephrem's commentary (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 189). The commentary exists in full only in Armenian translation, but a large portion found in Syriac in a fifth-century manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library has demonstrated its accuracy. In the *Diatessaron*, the content of the four Gospels was arranged according to similar context—whether by episode, parable, dialogue, or teaching (Metzger, *Recent Contributions*, 352, 354). A tendency toward encratism—an asceticism marked by abstention from worldly pleasures—appears in some readings (e.g., removal of the reference to wine given to Jesus in Matt 27:34; Metzger, *Early Versions*, 33).

The first translation of the four Gospels individually is referred to as the Old Syriac. It is referenced according to the names of the two surviving fifth-century manuscripts: Curetonianus and Sinaiticus (also known as Codex Syriacus and different from the Greek biblical manuscript also known as Codex Sinaiticus). It may have been translated around AD 300, but continued to undergo revision and never reached a stable form (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 189–90).

The Peshitta—which means "simple" (possibly in comparison to the Syriac version of the six-column Hexapla)—replaced the Diatessaron as the official text of the Syriac Church sometime before it split into two churches in the fifth century AD (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 193). Whether its Old Testament was translated by Christians or Jews is debated (Gordon, *Hebrew and Ancient Versions*, 253; Cook, *Composition of the Peshitta*, 149, 153). The influence of the Septuagint is seen in the inclusion of the non-Hebraic books of the Old Testament Apocrypha, though the extant manuscripts vary in order and contents. The New Testament is more consistent, but omits the texts rejected by the Syrian Church: 2–3 John, 2

Peter, Jude, and Revelation (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 26–27). The Peshitta often omits words and phrases that proved difficult to translate, caused inconsistencies, or offended the translator's sensibilities (Gordon, *Hebrew and Ancient Versions*, 257–9).

The sixth-century Philoxenian and seventh-century Harclean versions both were revisions of the Syriac with reference to the Greek text (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 231). The Harclean is also the first Syriac version to possess all of the Catholic Letters and Revelation (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 71).

The Palestinian Syriac/Aramaic texts exists in three fragments of a lectionary containing Paul's letters, the Gospels, Acts, James, and 2 Peter. They represent an eclectic set of readings (Metzger, *Early Versions*, 78–79).

For further information, see these articles: Syriac Language; Diatessaron; Codex Syriacus; Peshitta; Syro-Hexapla.

Coptic

Starting in the fourth century AD, translations in Coptic—the final stage of the Egyptian language—became a substantial portion of the Christian manuscripts in Egypt. This was promoted by the growth of Christianity and monasticism in the countryside, beyond the Greek-speaking urban centers (Wisse, *The Coptic Versions*, 133, 135). There are seven Coptic dialects into which the Bible has been translated. The Sahidic is the oldest and the Bohairic is the most completely preserved (Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 36–37). While it frequently shows a relation to the Old Latin, it lacks the characteristic lengthy additions. The early manuscripts were quite varied in their readings, but over time became more standardized (Metzger, *Early Versions*, 134–5).

Later Versions

The Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, Slavonic, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions of the Bible were created later. They are not as useful as the Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic versions for tracing the history of the biblical text. They help us trace the history of Christian development, though, and are still used in some churches today. In the cases of the Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, and Old Church Slavonic, the Bible was the first text to be written in the language and required the creation of an alphabet in order to translate it.

The Armenian version—nicknamed "Queen of the Versions" for the beauty of its manuscripts and its lofty language—exists in more manuscripts than any other version but the Latin Vulgate. At times, it contains books considered noncanonical elsewhere: Joseph and Aseneth, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and a pseudepigraphal letter to the Corinthians in the name of Paul, often called *Third Corinthians* (Metzger, *Early Versions*, 161–62).

Some Georgians embraced Christianity in the fourth century AD, and subsequently they created their own translation. Other than its mixed character and the fact that it was not translated all at once, little about the circumstances of the Georgian translation is known (Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 83; Blake, *Ancient Georgian Versions*, 271).

The Gothic text was translated by Wulfilas ca. AD 341 after he was consecrated Arian bishop of Gothland (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 206). It is helpful for understanding early interpretation because it contains cola and section breaks that indicate how the text was divided and punctuated (Metzger, *Recent Contributions*, 369).

The Bible was translated into Slavonic for Christian converts in modern-day Bulgaria in the ninth century (Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 208).

The Ethiopic (or Ge'ez) translation was created somewhere between the fourth and seventh centuries AD (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 84). Christianity reached Ethiopia by the fifth century, but whether missionaries from Syria or Egypt came first is difficult to determine. Little is known about the circumstances of the translation, though it was probably made from the Greek of the *Hexapla*. It lacks 1–4 Maccabees and Ezra—Nehemiah, but is unique in adding *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* (Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 138). The Old Testament translation is often quite literal (Knibb, *The Ethiopic Translation*, 119), but the New Testament often exhibits great freedom in simplifying and abbreviating passages (Metzger, *Early Versions*, 234).

The Arabic is the latest of the ancient versions. The manuscripts are incredibly diverse, apparently translated many times from many different languages (Metzger, *Early Versions*, 260–1).

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CANON, BOOKS IN CODICES An overview of the books that are present in early biblical codices—majuscule codices—but are not included in most modern Bibles and why. Surveys books in ancient Bibles that are not present in most modern Christian canons.

Introduction

Presently, there are a variety of canons among the global church, with the narrowest canon existing in the Protestant tradition and the widest existing in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition. When at least three major Christian traditions (such as Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Syriac traditions) agree that a book is classified as canonical, it can be said that this book occurs in "most" modern Bibles. But there are several books that exist in the canons of two or fewer Christian traditions. Some of these books are in ancient Bibles and some are later additions to the canon. The later additions of books to a canon are the development of tradition, not necessarily a reflection of ancient circumstances.

However, there are some books that are in ancient Bibles and not in modern Bibles; there are also some books that are in modern Bibles but only in the Bibles of two modern traditions or fewer (i.e., they are represented by a "minority" viewpoint among the global church). This article surveys these books. For a book to be surveyed in this article it must occur in an ancient Bible or be listed as accepted in a canon list; it must also only be found in the canon of two or fewer modern Christian traditions. This definition is adopted to avoid anachronistic tendencies and to limit the scope of this survey to books that once were in a canon but no longer are canonical for most modern Christians.

Two ancient codices (bound Bibles)—Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus—contain ancient texts no longer included in most modern Bibles. In addition, a scribal list in Codex Claromontanus (D$^\text{p}$)—known as a stichometric catalog—contains books that are not in the majority of modern Bibles. This article does not examine particular canonical lists, since there are no additional books listed as "accepted" in ancient canonical lists that are not already surveyed here.

Other majuscule (uppercase) codices—signifying their early date—are not included in this article. This is because these codices do not contain any additional books that are absent from the majority of modern Bibles.

The books listed in this article that are related to the Old Testament period likely did not become part of Bibles for the majority of the church because they were not part of the Septuagint tradition at large (they were just included in specific traditions related to these Bibles or a specific region). Writings related to the New Testament period were likely excluded due to their lack of direct (or agreed-upon) apostolic source (i.e., one of the apostles).

Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century AD)

4 Maccabees

Fourth Maccabees was likely used for a time because of its genre connection to later works about Christian martyrdoms; the work is also philosophical in nature. As martyrdom works became less popular, and as the church grew further away from its Jewish foundation, 4 Maccabees likely fell out of popularity. Also, the early church fathers rarely cite 4 Maccabees, which suggests that its inclusion in early Bibles may in part have been due to its bearing the same name as three other included books (1–3 Maccabees). The book's gruesome depictions may have contributed to it eventually being dropped out of Bibles. In addition, the period of history covered by 4 Maccabees is covered in 2 Maccabees.

Collectively, these factors likely led to its exclusion from most Bibles. Today, 4 Maccabees is not considered canonical in the Greek Orthodox tradition, but it is included in some Greek Orthodox Bibles as an appendix; however, it was transmitted early on in Syriac and is still canonical for the Syriac tradition churches.

(For further information about 4 Maccabees, see this article: Maccabees, Fourth Book of the.)

Shepherd of Hermas

The *Shepherd of Hermas* was one of the more popular books in early Christianity. We have more witnesses to it than any other writing in the Apostolic Fathers. In his work *On Modesty*, Tertullian calls *Shepherd of Hermas* "apocryphal" and "of adulterers" (chapter 19). Although he made this statement after joining the heretical Montanist movement (ca. AD 208), Tertullian here likely reflects a viewpoint held by others. The *Muratorian Fragment*—an early list of books the church was using (ca. late AD 100s or AD 350–375)—also rejects the *Shepherd*. However, the *Muratorian Fragment* rejects it because "Hermas wrote the Shepherd very recently in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the … chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the prophets, whose number is complete, or among the apostles, for it is after [their] time" (lines 73–80). Likewise, the church historian Eusebius (ca. AD 260–340) states that *Shepherd* is "disputed by some" and thus "cannot be placed among the acknowledged books." But he notes that "others … consider … it quite indispensable, especially … those who need instruction in the elements of the faith." He also notes that it "has been publicly read in churches, and … some of the most ancient writers used it" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.3). Similarly, the church father Rufinus (ca. AD 399) emphasizes that the *Shepherd* is "ecclesiastical," meaning it was used in the church but perhaps not authoritatively.

One likely reason the *Shepherd* was rejected from the canon is because the text was not written by an apostle or someone who knew an apostle. In addition, individuals like Tertullian considered it to be too lenient about certain sins. (However, it is difficult to accurately value Tertullian's influence at this stage of the church since he was already sympathetic to the heretical Montanist sect.) The fact that the *Shepherd* was only read aloud in "some" churches, and thus did not grow to authoritative status throughout the Church, also likely led to it not being included in future Bibles. Ultimately, it was rejected despite being favored by several church fathers, including Athanasius (ca. AD 296–373), who suggests its use for teaching, and Didymus the Blind (ca. AD 313–398), who often quoted it as authoritative. Much more than a few people favoring a book was required for a book to remain a part of future Bibles.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* has also been included in some Ethiopian Orthodox Bibles in the past but is largely viewed as additional, noncanonical material.

(For further information about the *Shepherd of Hermas*, see this article: Shepherd of Hermas.)

Letter of Barnabas

Eusebius ranks the *Letter of Barnabas* as among the "disputed" writings, but also at another point calls it "spurious" (*Ecclesiastical History* 6.14; 3.25). Clement of Alexandria cited it as authoritative in his writings, and he even wrote a commentary on it (according to Eusebius); Jerome seems to have viewed it the same way (although Jerome does call it apocryphal; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14; *On Illustrious Men* 6).

Barnabas was likely not included in later Bibles because it was not used often enough or widely enough in churches, with its influence primarily being confined to the Egyptian church. This factor, combined with some of the odd interpretations of the book (based on typology), likely led to its exclusion.

(For further information about *Letter to Barnabas*, see this article: Barnabas, Letter of.

Placement in Codex
In the Codex Sinaiticus, the *Letter of Barnabas* and the *Shepherd* are placed after Revelation, and likely function as a type of appendix. They may have been included due to their wide usage and because they pertain to the development of Christian thought. *Barnabas* was used early and authoritatively by Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 170), and *Shepherd* by Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus (ca. AD 170–80), both of whom were highly influential. Although *Barnabas* and *Shepherd* are included with the New Testament writings in Codex Sinaiticus, they are likely only included for convenience—similar to how biblical commentary is included in modern Bibles.

Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century AD)
In addition to 4 Maccabees, the following books are present in Codex Alexandrinus:

- Third Maccabees
- *14 Odes*
- *First Letter of Clement*
- *Second Letter of Clement*
- *Psalms of Solomon*

Codex Alexandrinus also includes the writings of two church fathers about the Psalms—a letter of Athanasius to Marcellinus about the Psalms and a summary of the Psalms by Eusebius (McDonald, *Formation of the Bible*, 86). Both are located just before the Psalms. These texts are included as a type of commentary on the Psalms.

Third Maccabees
The Greek and Syriac Orthodox churches affirm 3 Maccabees as canonical. Unlike the other books discussed in this article, 3 Maccabees never really fell out of authoritative status. It was just not as popular as 1 and 2 Maccabees, which were transmitted in the Latin Vulgate and thus became canonical in the Roman Catholic tradition. The most likely reason 3 Maccabees did not gain as much traction in the early church as 2 Maccabees is because of its repetition of much of the same plot and themes.

(For further information about 3 Maccabees, see this article: Maccabees, Third Book of the.)

14 Odes (Liturgical Canticles)
These *Odes*, appearing after Psalms in Codex Alexandrinus, primarily consist of other parts of the Bible (e.g., Exod 15:1–19), but they also include the Prayer of Manasseh and a few additional hymns. However, there are major textual variants between the Odes and the biblical text from which they were extracted (Miller, "Let us sing to the Lord"). The Odes are unique in that they assemble New Testament, Old Testament, and deuterocanonical material. Their purpose was likely to collect scriptural songs in one place for liturgical use.

The placement of Odes following Psalms in Codex Alexandrinus suggests they were likely included because of their worship or liturgical value. Alexandrinus is the only known ancient Bible codex that includes Odes; however, they also regularly appear after the Psalms in Greek manuscripts after the fifth century. Most of these manuscripts are Psalters: books of the Psalms and Odes bound together for liturgical use. The Odes were likely excluded from later canons because they primarily repeat material present in other parts of the Bible.

The Odes are not always included in modern Eastern Orthodox Bibles and older Syriac Bibles, but they are often considered canonical for the Eastern Orthodox tradition and they may be considered canonical in the Syriac tradition churches. Note that the book of Odes is different from the *Odes of Solomon*, which are not included in Codex Alexandrinus.

(For further information about *Odes* and the *Prayer of Manasseh*, see these articles: Odes, Book of; Prayer of Manasseh.)

First Letter of Clement

Eusebius (ca. AD 260–340) remarks that *1 Clement* is widely known, respected, and used—calling it of "remarkable merit" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.16). From early on in church history, it appears that *1 Clement* was widely used in churches and taught often. However, since *1 Clement* was written later than the New Testament books—just past the apostolic era—it ultimately ended up with a lower classification of authority. Thus, it eventually stopped being included in Bibles.

(For further information about *1 Clement*, see this article: Clement, First Letter of.)

Second Letter of Clement

Second Clement is often described as the earliest Christian homily or sermon outside of the New Testament. Its focus is Isa 54. (The exposition of Isa 54:1 in chapter 2 provides an example of exposition in the early church.)

Eusebius states that *2 Clement* is "not recognized" like *1 Clement* and that he does not know of any of "the ancients" making "use of it" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.38;). Since *2 Clement* is considered pseudonymous—and is really more of a sermon—it wasn't able to remain in the same category as *1 Clement*, and thus it fell out of use entirely, even earlier than *1 Clement*.

Both of the letters bearing Clement's name are placed after Revelation, like an appendix, in Codex Alexandrinus.

(For further information about *2 Clement*, see this article: Clement, Second Letter of.)

Psalms of Solomon

The *Psalms of Solomon* (not to be confused with *Wisdom of Solomon* or *Odes of Solomon*, which are different works) are listed in the table of contents of Codex Alexandrinus but are not in the codex itself. They likely fell out because of damage to the codex.

Wright notes how the *Psalms of Solomon* and *Odes of Solomon* were received, stating that in the sixth century AD list *Synopsis Sanctae Scripturae* of Pseudo-Athanasius, the *Psalms of Solomon* and *Odes of Solomon* are listed as "antilegomena," meaning that they were disputed writings. Likewise, Wright notes that they are listed after the "canonical" and "deuterocanonical" books in Anastasius of Sinai's *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, indicating that they were viewed as pseudepigraphal. Nonetheless, in the ninth-century list of Nicephorus' *Stichometry*, they are listed as apocryphal, not noncanonical (Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," 639).

Since the *Psalms of Solomon* were placed in the back of Codex Alexandrinus, they were likely included as a liturgical resource and not considered authoritative at the same level as other books in the codex prior to Revelation. It is likely the messianic allusions in *Psalms of Solomon* that led to them being popular enough to be included as a type of appendix.

The *Psalms of Solomon* appeared in some Greek Orthodox and Syriac Bibles in the 10th–16th centuries, but do not usually appear in modern Bibles of those traditions and seem to be considered noncanonical by those churches today. Note that the *Psalms of Solomon* are different from the *Odes of Solomon*, which are not included in Codex Alexandrinus.

(For further information about *Psalms of Solomon*, see this article: Psalms of Solomon.)

Codex Claromontanus (ca. fifth—sixth century AD) List

In addition to the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Letter of Barnabas*, the *Acts of Paul* and *Apocalypse of Peter* are present in a list of biblical books contained in the middle of Codex Claromontanus. The list contains counts of the number of sentences (or lines) in each book, for the use of scribes. Since the list is bound into the biblical manuscript, discussion of it is included here. The list contains a dash next to the titles of 1 Peter, *Letter of Barnabas*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Acts of Paul*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*, which may indicate that they were viewed as having lower authority.

Acts of Paul

Eusebius remarks that he has not found the "so-called Acts of Paul" among the "undisputed writings" (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.2). Jerome (ca. AD 345–420) classifies *Acts of Paul* as "among the apocryphal writings" in his *Lives of Illustrious Men* because of the text's claim that Paul baptized a lion (chapter 7). Jerome claims that Luke would have surely recorded this event in his account (Acts) had it actually occurred (compare Tertullian, *De baptismo* 17). Likely because of issues like this, *Acts of Paul* was ultimately viewed as inauthentic. This view is affirmed by the fact that the *Acts of Paul* are not included in a single other canon list from the early church or early Bible.

Some versions of *Acts of Paul* also include the pseudepigraphal *3 Corinthians*, which was formerly canonical for the Syriac and Armenian churches.

(For further information on *Acts of Paul* and *3 Corinthians*, see these articles: Acts of Paul; Corinthians, Third Letter to The.)

Apocalypse of Peter

The *Apocalypse of Peter* is included as part of the list in the *Muratorian Fragment*, placed after the Revelation of John, suggesting that it was viewed (like in the list in Codex Claromontanus) as a type of appendix. The *Muratorian Fragment* also remarks "though some of us are not willing that the latter [*Apocalypse of Peter*] be read in church" (line 72; trans. Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 307). Eusebius likewise states that he does not know of any church writer appealing to the testimony taken from the *Apocalypse of Peter* and thus calls it a "spurious" writing (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.3; 3.25). Nonetheless, it appears that Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 170) affirms its inclusion.

Since the *Apocalypse of Peter* alludes to Clement of Rome as its author (or at least the recipient of the revelation from Peter), it probably fell out of use, along with the *Letters of Clement*, for the same reasons. Yet even after the book's rejection, it continued to be used for its liturgical elements. As the church historian Sozomen (ca. AD 400) comments, it was "considered altogether spurious by the ancients, [yet] is still read in some of the churches of Palestine" when people "observe a fast in memory of the passion of the Savior" (7.19). The *Apocalypse of Peter* is likely included in the list in Codex Claromontanus because it was used as a liturgical work, for very specific purposes, and thus was copied—at least at times—by the scribes who created the initial list.

(For further information about *Apocalypse of Peter*, see this article: Apocalypse of Peter.)

Additional Writings

Any writings not mentioned in this article, and not included in a current Christian canon, never made it into an early, extant Christian Bible.

Books excluded from the canons of some modern Christian traditions—but included in the Septuagint or the Latin Vulgate—are often labeled "Old Testament Apocrypha." (For information on these books, and why they are excluded from the canons of particular traditions, see these articles: Apocrypha, Old Testament; Canon, Old Testament; Canon of the Bible, Traditions of the.)

Additional texts, such as *Gospel of Judas*, *Gospel of Mary*, and *Gospel of Thomas*, were never bound into a collection with other biblical writings or included in a canonical list. The reluctance of ancient Christians to copy these texts and include them in collections with other sacred texts indicates that these texts were not deemed authoritative. These books were likely unpopular because they were widely known to be false writings, written for sensational purposes or to perpetuate the beliefs of a group of heretics.

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CANON, TIMELINE OF FORMATION OF An overview of the major events, canon lists, people, and bound books that resulted in definitions of which books are canonical and authoritative for the church and which are not.

Introduction

This article outlines the major events and progression of thought that led to the formation of the Christian Bible—particularly the New Testament—we have today. An examination of the timeline of the formation of the biblical canon, including the inclusion and removal of particular books, naturally results in the conclusion that the progression of events is global in scale—that is, global in the sense of the known world of the time—and often involves rather disconnected groups of Christians drawing the same conclusions.

In addition, a study of the formation of the canon reveals that particular books that eventually came to be canonical were in flux for quite some time. These books are 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, James, Jude, Hebrews, and Revelation. (It appears that Revelation remained in flux for longer than any of the other books that eventually became canonical.)

Understanding Canon Studies and Canon Process

Since the only conclusions that can be drawn in historical study are based upon the available evidence, which is often piecemeal, the conclusions in this article are no different. The very nature of this reconstruction also assumes the end result—a complete Bible that all Christians agree upon. (Different Christian traditions have different Bibles, but all Christian traditions agree on a central group of texts.) In this regard, it is apparent that many (perhaps most) early church fathers didn't intend to settle the debate over what should and should not be included in the "canon" of the Bible—up until Augustine of Hippo—but rather were attempting to keep heretical teachings out of the church and offer their own opinions regarding what should be read in churches and when. They weren't necessarily trying to offer definitive answers, as the church's hierarchy was a rather loose structure during the early period of the formation of the Bible.

The early church fathers were not insistent on deciding what is in the canon because they were also guided in other ways. What eventually came to be known as the biblical text was central to the faith of the early church fathers, but they were also guided by the Holy Spirit and the tradition passed down from the apostles that they called the "rule of faith," essentially corresponding to the Apostles' Creed. (This statement is a generality, but its application to the process of canonization is sound and an important distinction.) Thus, when a timeline of events that led to the formation of the Bible is assembled, such as the one in this article, it is anachronistic by nature. The timeline format also favors isolating particular events that may or may not have been as momentous as they appear in the timeline. Furthermore, assembling such a timeline suggests that the events of canon formation were intentional (which they appear not to have been until the time of Augustine) and that they happened in isolation, which they certainly didn't. Many things were happening at any moment during the period of canon formation, which prevents any event in this timeline from occurring in isolation.

Early church historian Eusebius is perhaps most helpful in understanding the process of canonization. Eusebius puts forward a list of "New Testament" books, "disputed" books, and "spurious" books. Eusebius then says that he has done so "in order that we might be able to know both [the writings affirmed by the church] and also those which the heretics put forward under the name of the apostles; including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or even some others besides these, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles.

   To none of these has any who belonged to the succession of ecclesiastical writers [that is, church writers] ever thought it right to refer in his writings. Moreover, the character of the style also is far removed from the apostolic usage, and the thought and purport of their contents are completely out of harmony with true orthodoxy and clearly show themselves that they are the forgeries of heretics. For this reason they ought not even to be reckoned among the spurious books, but are to be aside as altogether absurd impious" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.6–7, translated in Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 309–10). Among the spurious works, he includes the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Teachings of the Apostles* (the *Didache*), and possibly Revelation ("if it seems right"). He also notes that some include the Gospel of the Hebrews. Eusebius' division shows the canon in flux, by dividing books into four general categories: "universally acknowledged" and thus "New Testament" (*homologoumena*), "disputed books, yet familiar to most people of the church" (*antilegomena gnorima de oun homos tois pollois*), "illegitimate" or "spurious" (*notha*), and "rejected" (*athetousin*).

   Here and elsewhere in his writing, Eusebius seems to have in view different levels of authority: New Testament; possibly New Testament; orthodox but not New Testament (i.e., fine according to some, but not to be viewed at the same level of authority as the New Testament); and completely rejected as heretical (compare Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 202–06; see Eusebius' comments on the *Shepherd of Hermas* in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.6). Although the early church fathers and other writers over time used different terms, these levels of distinction seem to have been at play throughout the process of canonization.

   Thus, it does not seem to be the heretical books but rather books in the third category (the "spurious" books) that surfaced in and out of canonical lists and early Christian Bibles. Overall, these "spurious" texts seem to have been viewed as books that could be included as a type of appendix (or used in personal study/discipleship). These books were later dropped from canonical discussion altogether based on a lack of usage or larger consensus; however, some of these books may have continued to be used in certain settings, without being regarded as canonical. For example, the canon affirmed by the Third Synod of Carthage (AD 397), after listing the canonical books, notes, "On the anniversaries of martyrs, their acts shall also be read" (but this is not necessarily a reference to the apocryphal acts, since these books had largely been rejected). (For further details on which of these books were under discussion, see both the timeline below and this article: Canon, Books in Codices.) The real question, though, concerning the formation of the canon is about which books were disputed and eventually still made it into the New Testament canon.

Disputed Books

To explain why the disputed books mentioned above were disputed (Eusebius' second category), a retrospective understanding of the process of canonization has to be formed. Based on a study of the early church fathers, the process of New Testament canonization can be understood as involving primarily issues of apostolicity, orthodoxy, catholicity (wide usage), and traditional usage (in public worship and discipleship; see Gamble, *New Testament Canon*). Most of the approved writings of the New Testament met three or four of the criteria early on. All of the books that would become the New Testament were undisputedly orthodox. It is not the authority of these books that was disputed; it was their use in all church settings, everywhere.

Revelation
Revelation was disputed on the basis of it not being used widely enough in the church of the time, difficulty interpreting and understanding it, and some questions about its authorship. (The Greek Orthodox church to this day does not use Revelation in liturgical settings, even though it is understood as canonical, likely because of the difficulties with understanding Revelation.)

Church father Eusebius says of Revelation that it "is rejected by some, but others count it among the recognized books"; as such, he included it among his list of the "New Testament" and among his list of "spurious books," noting that it could be included in either "if it seems right" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.2, 4, translated in Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 309). Here, Eusebius is referencing his earlier mention that about Revelation, "the opinions of most men are still divided. But at the proper time this question likewise shall be decided from the testimony of the ancients" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.24.18).

In this regard, Eusebius notes that church father Dionysius of Alexandria says about Revelation, "Some before us have set aside and rejected the book altogether, criticizing it chapter by chapter, and pronouncing it without sense or argument, and maintaining that the title is fraudulent" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.1). Dionysius then goes on to say that some suspect it is actually authored by "Cerinthus [the heretic], who founded the sect which was called after him the Cerinthian, desiring reputable authority for his fiction, prefixed the name.… But I could not venture to reject the book, as many brethren hold it in high esteem. But I suppose that it is beyond my comprehension, and that there is a certain concealed and more wonderful meaning in every part.… And I do not reject what I cannot comprehend, but rather wonder because I do not understand it" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.2–4). Following this, Eusebius records that Dionysius interprets the book of Revelation, concluding that "this book is the work of one John, I do not deny. And I agree also that it is the work of a holy and inspired man. But I cannot readily admit that he was the apostle"; he instead argues that it must be the work of another John (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.6–27).

The viewpoint that Revelation was written by Cerinthus the heretic is itself a viewpoint originally proposed by heretics: Church father Epiphanius notes that the group he calls the "Alogi" denied John's Gospel, his epistles, and Revelation and thus ascribed all of the writings in John's name to Cerinthus as their excuse for denying them. Epiphanius then shows how the writings attributed to John directly disagree with Cerinthus' viewpoints, making their argument completely void (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.3–4). Thus, although the viewpoint of Cerinthus' affiliation with Revelation was easily denied, the issue seems to have led to the additional speculation about Revelation's authorship by Dionysius and Eusebius.

Dionysius' evaluation may be what leads Eusebius to make the point that (according to Papias, whose words came to him via Irenaeus) there were two people in the province of Asia known by John, one of which was the apostle and the other of which he calls the "presbyter" who was "outside of the number of the apostles" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.4–5). Eusebius then notes that "it is probable that it was the second, if one is not willing to admit that it was the first [John, the apostle] that saw the Revelation, which is ascribed [in Revelation] by name to John" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.6).

The open question about Revelation's authorship among some (especially whether it was apostolic or not) is probably what led to its narrower circulation in the eastern church, and then later debate (compare Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.18.2; 3.28). This problem may have been further intensified by debate about its interpretation (compare Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.24).

This is what makes Augustine of Hippo's advocacy for Revelation so interesting: Augustine seems able to cross the eastern and western bounds of the church, and thus help ensure its inclusion in the canon during a time when many early Christian Bibles were being assembled.

Hebrews
Nearly all of the New Testament books were connected to the apostles in some way (whether they were written by someone who directly and personally knew Jesus or someone who was an associate of an apostle), but the fact that some of the disputed books were not attributed to apostles shows that this alone was not enough. Nonetheless, the importance of apostolicity cannot be underestimated, as the case of Revelation shows. It also seems that the difficulties of authorship are what contributed to disputes over Hebrews. According to Eusebius, fellow church father Gaius "when curbing the recklessness and audacity of his opponents in composing new Scriptures, he mentions only thirteen epistles of the holy Apostle, not numbering the Epistle to the Hebrews with the rest; seeing that even to this day among the Romans there are some who do not consider it to be the Apostle's" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.20.3).

Eusebius also notes that church father Clement of Alexandria held that Hebrews "is Paul's, but that it was written for Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue, and that Luke, having carefully translated it, published it for the Greeks; hence, as a result of this translation, the same complexion of style is found in this Epistle and in the Acts: but that the [words] 'Paul an apostle' were naturally not prefixed. For, says [Clement of Alexandria], 'in writing to Hebrews who had conceived a prejudice against [Paul] and were suspicious of him, [Paul] very wisely did not repel them at the beginning by putting his name" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.2–3). He goes on to cite Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria's teacher, saying, "since the Lord, being the apostle of the Almighty, was sent to the Hebrews, Paul, through modesty, since he had been sent to the Gentiles, does not inscribe himself as an apostle of the Hebrews, both to give due deference to the Lord and because he wrote to the Hebrews also out of his abundance, being a preacher and apostle of the Gentiles" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.4).

In line with this, early church father Origen offers his opinion that "the thoughts of Hebrews are those of the apostles, but the style and composition belong to someone who remembered the apostle's teachings and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore, if any church holds that [the work] is by Paul, let it be commended for this also. For it is not without reason that the men of old time have handed it down as Paul's. But who wrote the Epistle, in truth, God knows. Yet the account that has reached us is … some saying that Clement [of Rome] wrote the Epistle, and others, that it was Luke, the one who wrote the Gospel and the Acts" (Origen, *Homily on Matthew* [according to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.9–10], translated in Metzger, *New Testament Canon*, 308–09; in contrast, Tertullian mentions Barnabas as the author of Hebrews in *Modesty*,20).

Eusebius elsewhere notes, "And the fourteen letters of Paul are obvious and plain, yet it is not right to ignore that some dispute the Epistle to the Hebrews, saying that it was rejected by the church of Rome as not being by Paul, and I will expound at the proper time what was said about it by our predecessors" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.4).

But Hebrews was eventually affirmed in that it met at least three of the four major items usually discussed: orthodoxy, widespread usage (catholicity), and its appropriateness for usage in discipleship and worship settings. This is perhaps best seen in a note in the canon list of Amphilochius of Iconium that some say Hebrews is "spurious, not saying well for the grace is genuine" (Amphilochius, *Iambics for Seleucus*).

But this did not necessarily settle authorship of Hebrews: Augustine seems to have wavered in his viewpoint of authorship of the book, first citing as by Paul, then wavering, and then referring to it as just anonymous (see Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 237n15).

James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude

Fitting to their name as the Catholic Epistles (meaning universally used letters), eventual traditional usage and circulation is what also allowed James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude to reach their place in the canon. But this, too, took time: 1 Peter and 1 John both were recognized as canonical before their counterpart books: 2 Peter, 2 John, and 3 John. The apostolic connection of 2 John and 3 John was disputed, with 2 Peter being disputed on the basis of it not being widely recognized as by Peter. The remaining two disputed books, James and Jude, both were understood to be connected to Jesus' half-brothers, allowing for their acceptance as apostolic in a very rough sense (not of the 12 apostles or of the Apostle Paul, but by those who were leaders in the apostolic church who also personally knew Jesus, with James actually called an "apostle" by Paul; see Matt 12:46–47; John 2:12; Gal 1:19). Yet, the book of James was, at least by some, disputed as being authentically by him.

2 John, 3 John, and 2 Peter. The books of 2 and 3 John were not always considered to have verifiable enough affiliation with John the apostle to be included in canonical lists; their length may have also been an issue, as Origen notes both that "not all say that these [John's letters] are genuine" and that "two of them [2 John and 3 John] are not a hundred lines long" (Origen, *Homily on Matthew*, according to Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.9–10, translated in Metzger, *New Testament Canon*, 308–09). Origen also notes that "Peter has left one acknowledged epistle, and possibly also a second but this is disputed" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.8). Likewise, Didymus the Blind seems to reference the epistle of John, not even qualifying it as the first, but he also quotes from 2 Peter (Metzger, *New Testament Canon*, 213). Jerome seems to parallel this viewpoint in a way, affirming 2 Peter (noting that Peter used different interpreters as necessary), but disputing the authorship of 2 John and 3 John as from the apostle (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 1; *Epistle to Hedibia* 120, Question 11; also see Metzger on Jerome's understanding of Hebrews, Revelation, and 2 Peter in *Canon of the New Testament*, 235–36).

Parallel to the discussion surrounding the authorship of Revelation, Jerome offers the viewpoint that the Gospel of John, 1 John, and Revelation are by John the apostle but that "the other two [2 John and 3 John] are said to be the work of John the presbyter to the memory of whom another sepulchre is shown at Ephesus to the present day, though some think that there are two memorials of this same John the evangelist"; he then relates this to Papias' account (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 9; compare *Lives of Illustrious Men* 18; the referent of simply "he" who wrote Revelation is slightly ambiguous, but the connection to Patmos and the author dying 68 years after the passion of Christ seem to connect Revelation with John the apostle). It is this sort of authorship debate that kept 2 John, 3 John, and 2 Peter in flux for a time, until they were widely used and accepted to the point that they became undisputed canon.

James and Jude. Jerome notes that "James … wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles and even this is claimed by some to have been published by some one else under his name, and gradually, as time went on, to have gained authority" (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 2), going on to affirm that Hegisippus, "who lived near the apostolic age," wrote, "After the apostles, James the brother of the Lord surnamed the Just was made head of the Church at Jerusalem" (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 2).

In addition, Jerome remarks that because Jude's short epistle "quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch it is rejected by many. Nevertheless by age and use it has gained authority and is reckoned among the Holy Scriptures" (Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men* 4; citations from Jerome based off of Metzger's annotations, *Canon of the New Testament*, 235; compare Jude's regular usage by Lucifer of Calaris noted by Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 232–35). Like 2 John, 3 John, and 2 Peter, it is the traditional and wide usage of James and Jude that took time (e.g., Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 19.152). All of this debate shows a sensitivity to pseudonymity and an emphasis on the need for New Testament writings to be not just works the church could affirm as orthodox, but also works connecting to the apostolic tradition and showing wide circulation and traditional usage in worship settings.

The remainder of the canonization process is best understood by examining the events that contributed to the formation of the New Testament canon of today. For further discussion of the biblical canon, see these articles: Canon, Old Testament; Canon, Books in Codices; Canon, New Testament.

Explanation of the Timeline

All dates in the timeline below are approximate, and when there is an era being spanned, the date is pushed back to the end of the era or approximate date. At times in this article, "exact list" is used when it's easy to understand what the early church fathers meant by phrases like "Paul's fourteen letters" (which would have included Hebrews) or the "seven Catholic epistles," which would have included 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, James, and Jude.

Much of this data has been gathered and adapted from the work of McDonald (*Formation of the Bible*) and Metzger (*Canon of the New Testament*). If there are errors present—which a later scholar may deem there to be—it's likely due to drawing on secondary sources where the primary sources were not accessible (as is the case for much in church history) or where a translation that mistranslated a phrase was drawn upon. As there are no easily accessible transcriptions of the texts of the early church fathers, most scholars reconstructing this period of history draw on the translations of others.

Timeline

Date	Region	Development
1–40		Many Old Testament books are recognized, although some—like Esther—are still debated. Some apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books circulate among Christians.
32		Jesus' death and resurrection.
50–100		New Testament books are written.

70–250	East and then West	The church rises in Jerusalem and the rest of the East before moving west. The church is well established in Rome by the mid-second century.
95–200		Apostolic Fathers write their homilies and epistles.
95–96	West: Rome	Epistle of *1 Clement* is written in the name of the church in Rome.
100–199	West: Lyons (Southern Gaul)	Church father Irenaeus, who taught the unity of Old Testament and New Testament, shapes early Christian thought about Scripture. Irenaeus believed the gospel was first orally preached and then committed to writing that was preserved by church leaders. In his writings, he quotes from the four Gospels, Acts, all of Paul's letters except Philemon, all of the Catholic Epistles except for 2 Peter, 3 John, and Jude, and from Revelation.
100–199	West: Carthage	Tertullian describes "the rule of faith" (*regula fidei*)—the common fundamental belief of the church, received by the churches from the apostles and orally transmitted. It resembles the Apostles' Creed. Tertullian defends Paul's letters and cites all of the writings of the New Testament except for 2 Peter, James, and 2–3 John.

130	West: Rome	Justin Martyr quotes from the Gospels and alludes to Revelation.
155–324	East and West	The entire church sees the canonical Gospels as a closed collection. The letters of Paul, the Acts of the Apostles, and the book of Revelation are accepted as authoritative. Hebrews and the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude are not recognized by the entire church.
170	Unknown	The Muratorian Canon discusses universally accepted books: the four Gospels, Acts, 13 epistles of Paul, Jude, two or three letters of John, the Wisdom of Solomon, Revelation, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. The *Shepherd of Hermas* is mentioned as good, but not apostolic. Does not include Hebrews, James, or 1–2 Peter.
180	East: Antioch	Theophilus, sixth bishop of Antioch, writes commentary on the four Gospels; he also writes treatises against Marcion and Hermogenes.
230	East	Origen's canon lists 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Hebrews, James, and Jude as doubtful, but includes Revelation. Treats the *Didache* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* as Scripture.

256–257	East: Syria	Tatian writes the *Diatessaron*, a writing that weaves the four Gospels into one account. This provides proof that the Syrian church regarded the four Gospels as authoritative.
300	West	Scribal list included with Codex Claromontanus excludes Philippians, 1–2 Thessalonians, and Hebrews but includes *Barnabas*, the *Shepherd*, *Acts of Paul*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*—yet these last four are included with a dash next to them, which may indicate that they were viewed as having a lower level of authority.
325–375	East	Codex Sinaiticus—a Greek Bible that, in its extant form, contains most of the Old Testament and the entire New Testament, as well as the Apocrypha and some early church writings (which can be understood as a type of appendix).
325–375	East	Codex Vaticanus—a Greek Bible that in its extant form contains most of the Old Testament, most of the New Testament, and the Apocrypha. May have also contained some other early Christian writings but is damaged halfway through the New Testament, so uncertain.

325	East	Eusebius of Caesarea reports that the Eastern church doubts the authority of the Catholic Epistles and Revelation. In response, lists of sacred books are drawn up by Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Amphilochius of Iconium, Didymus the Blind, and Epiphanius of Salamis.
330	East	The canon of Eusebius of Caesarea lists James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2–3 John, and Revelation as disputed. Lists several apocryphal gospels and apocryphal acts as heretical. Rejects writings from the apostolic fathers as part of the New Testament. No direct mention of the epistle to the Hebrews, but Eusebius may have included it among his general "Epistles of Paul."
347–420	West	Jerome translates the Bible into a unified Latin version, the Vulgate. He relies on the original Greek and Hebrew versions as he translates the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the current New Testament.
350	East	The canon of Cyril of Jerusalem declares the New Testament contains only four Gospels, and warns of others that are forged and hurtful. Cyril excludes Revelation, rejects the *Gospel of Thomas*, and raises questions about Jude.

363	East	Synod of Laodicea approves canon and decrees, "Let no private psalms nor any uncanonical books be read in the church, but only the canonical ones of the New and Old Testament." Later lists show that they included all of the books in the modern New Testament except Revelation.
367	East: Alexandria	Canon of Athanasius—in his 39th Festal Letter, Athanasius lists the exact New Testament canon accepted today; his Old Testament list groups Esther with the works now called deuterocanonical.
370	West: Northern Africa	The Cheltenham Canon excludes James, Hebrews, and Jude.
377	East	Epiphanius makes a list of authoritative books and includes Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. Excludes Revelation.
390	East	The canon of Gregory of Nazianzus excludes Revelation.
393	West	At the Synod of Hippo, Augustine begins arguing for the 27 books of the New Testament we have today, and it appears that they affirm the books of the canon of today, based on an abridged version of the 393 proceedings recorded at the Third Synod of Carthage in 397.

394	West: Rome	Rufinus, a translator, provides a list that exactly agrees with today's New Testament and lists Shepherd, *The Two Ways* and the *Preaching of Peter* as good for teaching purposes.
394	East: Turkey	The canon of Amphilochius of Iconium presents the exact list of today, but acknowledges that some have questions about 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation. Amphilochius specifically notes that most say Revelation is spurious and that some say Hebrews is "spurious, not saying well for the grace is genuine."
396–397	West	Augustine leaves decisions of authority of books up to the churches and advises that higher regard ought to be afforded to books that have wider usage or usage by those of more authority.
397	West	The Third Synod of Carthage lists today's New Testament, including Revelation, when recording the abridged version of the 393 proceedings.
400	West	Augustine's canon, for which he began arguing at the Synod of Hippo, lists today's exact New Testament.

400–425	East	The Syrian church's version of the Bible, the Peshitta, is formed. This canon includes 22 writings. It excludes 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Revelation (however, in modern Syrian churches, a later Syriac translation is supplied for these five books).
400	East	Syrian catalogue at St. Catherine's excludes 1–2 Corinthians, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, James, and Revelation. Includes Hebrews.
405	West: Rome	Pope Innocent excludes Hebrews. He also states that he denies the truth of many other early writings, including the *Gospel of Thomas*. However, it's possible that Innocent actually included Hebrews, based on later accounts (the difference is between his citing of 13 Pauline letters or 14—the 14th would have been Hebrews.)
419	West	Another synod at Carthage affirms Revelation as part of the 27-book New Testament. They also affirm acts of martyrs for reading.
450	West	Codex Alexandrinus—a Greek Bible containing all of the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, originally all of the New Testament, and some early church writings (as a type of appendix).

551	East and West	Junilius, a Roman official and biblical interpreter, excludes 3 John.
562	East and West	Cassiodorus, a Roman statesman, excludes 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, and Hebrews.
600	West	Isidore, Bishop of Seville, provides a list that agrees exactly with today's New Testament.
987	East	Euthymius revises and completes the Georgian New Testament. By this date, the book of Revelation is finally translated into Georgian and included as part of the Georgian church's Bible.
1100–1198	East	Armenian church's use of Revelation shifts. The acceptance of the book of Revelation is still in flux, originally included only as part of the apocryphal *Acts of John*. Eventually, via a council at Constantinople, Revelation is accepted as part of the regular canon.
1522	West	Luther publishes German translation of the New Testament. He classifies books in three categories of authority, but stresses that he does not wish to impose his opinion on others. He places Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation at the end of his Bible because he doubts they have apostolic and canonical character.

1530–1536	West	Erasmus denies that Paul wrote Hebrews and doubts that the *Epistle of James* is written by James the apostle. However, he says, "If the Church were to declare the titles they bear to be as canonical as their contents, then I would condemn my doubts, for the opinion formulated by the Church has more value in my eyes than human reasons."
1546	West	Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic council that affirms the 27 books of the current New Testament.
1559–1647	West	Protestant church confessions identify 27 books of the New Testament. French Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession, and the Westminster Confession of Faith identify 27 books of the New Testament.
1563	West	The Thirty-Nine Articles issued by the Church of England identify the Apocrypha as separate from the Old Testament.

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CANONICAL CRITICISM Approach to biblical criticism. Focuses on the canonical function of the text as it has been received and transmitted through communities for which it is authoritative as Scripture.

History

Canonical criticism was pioneered by Brevard S. Childs and James A. Sanders. It was also influenced by Hans Frei's work on the effects of culture and Enlightenment ideals on the task of biblical studies. As an interpretive method, canonical criticism often includes elements of other critical methods, including historical criticism and form criticism. However, rather than emphasizing the historical origins of the text, canonical criticism typically focuses on the final canonical or established form of the Bible and the way in which communities receiving it have used the text. Although canonical critics originally focused on Old Testament interpretation using this method, both Testaments are within its purview.

Childs and Sanders have debated the designation "canonical criticism," a term that was coined by Sanders in 1972 (Sanders, *Torah*, ix). Childs rejected the term in 1979, arguing that there should be a differentiation of the canonical approach from other forms of biblical criticism developed in the 1950s and 1960s (Childs, *Canonical Shape*, 54–55). He favors the designation "canonical approach." For Childs, this approach does not stand parallel to other critical methods since its end is "establishing a stance from which the Bible can be read as sacred scripture" rather than focusing solely on historical matters (Childs, *Introduction*, 82). Sanders later defended his choice of wording, primarily against those purporting that "the matter of biblical authority falls properly outside the province of historical study" (Sanders, *Canon and Community*, 21).

Central Concepts and Practitioners

Canonical criticism is primarily a *theological* approach to the biblical text in that it seeks to analyze ways the canon was and is authoritative for the community shaping it. In this sense, it is inherently a critique of the historical-critical method, which Childs and Sanders argue runs the danger of locking the biblical text in the past and isolating each Testament. Although canonical criticism reflects somewhat of a recovery of certain elements of pre-critical exegesis, it still takes seriously Greek and Hebrew (and Aramaic) textual traditions, since they serve as evidence of communal interpretation. Because the canon is entrenched in a community, canonical critics thus also comment on the dynamics between the text and its interpreting community. Further, canonical criticism assumes that as a result of the process of canonization, the hermeneutics necessary to interpret biblical texts can be found within the text itself, and these should be used before philosophical or otherwise foreign theological systems. The authority of the text resides only in the full canon, by which every biblical text must be read. Scripture is not simply an amalgamation of stories, but a "discussion" within itself (Childs, *OT Theology*, 15). Both Testaments must be held together for interpretation, or the meaning gleaned from a text may be truncated.

Brevard S. Childs

For Childs, though historical investigation into the creation and amalgamation of a biblical text is useful to a certain degree for interpretation, in the end the "history of the canonical process does not seem to be an avenue through which one can greatly illuminate the present canonical text" (Childs, *Introduction*, 67). The function of the text as it is now formed takes precedence over its functionality in the process of its formation.

In his seminal volume describing the state of the burgeoning interest in biblical theology in the mid-20th century, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, Childs outlines his concern that biblical exegesis in faith communities has become more reliant on historical-critical questions for discerning biblical truth than the text itself. Applying this lament to the status of the Prophetic literature in the realm of exegesis and theological extrapolation, Childs notes that despite "impressive gains" resulting in the application of historical-critical methodology to biblical theology, there have been many detractors:

- the literary-critical interjection of categories of "genuine" or "non-genuine" onto the literature
- the form-critical "atomization" of the literature into increasingly smaller portions for the sake of precise speculation as to the literature's origins
- the redactional and sociological politicization of the literature, rendering it "into a type of political propaganda" (Childs, *Canonical Shape*, 47).

Rather than accepting the historical-critical method's understanding of the transmission of a text as "updating" earlier traditions, Childs' canonical approach highlights "the process by which a biblical text is actualized" (Childs, *Canonical Shape*, 49). Historical theological reflection is built into this process, but it is typically stripped away when historical-critical methods are used to exegete the biblical text. In the case of Prophetic literature, for example, to "assume that the prophets can be understood only if each oracle is related to a specific historical event or located in its original cultural milieu is to introduce a major hermeneutical confusion into the discipline and to render an understanding of the canonical Scriptures virtually impossible" (Childs, *Canonical Shape*, 53).

Childs' first major application of the canonical approach following *Biblical Theology in Crisis* is his commentary on Exodus, published in 1974. In the preface, he states that "the purpose of this commentary is unabashedly theology. Its concern is to understand Exodus as scripture of the church" (Childs, *Exodus*, ix), immediately setting it apart from contemporary commentaries predominately occupied with historical-critical matters. In this commentary Childs first addresses critical textual and translational matters, including the early historical transmission of the text. Then he addresses the final form of the text and its canonical context. Finally he examines the New Testament's use of the passage, historic Jewish and Christian interpretation, and the broader significance of the passage for the church as a whole.

Two other early primary works have helped define Childs' contribution to the canonical approach: *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979) and *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (1984). *Introduction* serves as an extensive overview of each book of the Old Testament canon, applying much of the methodology employed in the *Exodus* commentary. Childs includes a list of commentaries and a thorough bibliography relevant to each book. He then handles the text in three sections: historical-critical problems, including dating, authorship, and structure; the canonical shape of the book, including the canonical role of each division within the text; and theological implications of his canonical analysis. In *The New Testament as Canon*, Childs shifts from his focal area of the Old Testament to the New Testament, recognizing that although this is not his area of expertise, nevertheless his "position regarding a canonical approach to the Bible remained incomplete and vulnerable without attention to the remaining part of the Christian Scriptures" (xv).

Childs devotes much energy to an historical analysis of introductory works on the New Testament from the last several centuries of biblical scholarship, concluding that little attention has been paid to the significance of the New Testament within the canon as a whole and within the faith communities who hold the text as authoritative.

James A. Sanders

Sanders emphasizes the process of canonization for the sake of interpretation rather than simply the final form itself. Whereas Childs seeks to apply a hermeneutic organic to the use of the text's final form, Sanders is primarily concerned with the hermeneutic that helped historically to construct the text. Sanders holds that the "primary character of canon or authoritative tradition … is its adaptability; its secondary character is its stability" (Sanders, "Biblical Criticism," 163). The essence of canonical criticism, then, is the process of "discerning the hermeneutics used by the ancient biblical thinkers and authors in adapting the early authoritative traditions to their contexts, [and] for their people" (Sanders, "Biblical Criticism, 163). Thus, by analyzing the biblical text canonically, the interpreter values the process whereby a text became normative throughout the entire history of the text's creation and transmission in addition to its final form.

In *Torah and Canon* Sanders details his belief that the tools of the historical-critical method should not be overshadowed so drastically. Written as a mediating voice between Childs' canonical approach and more strictly historical and literary critical approaches, Sanders applies canonical insights into an analysis of the Torah as a "canon within the canon" (xv). His thesis concerns the actual contents of the Torah and how, though the modern Torah concludes with Deuteronomy, older collections conclude with Joshua. According to Sanders, in a canonical context, the story of Israel has been reinterpreted. The canonical approach furthers the work of critics using other methods, essentially resuming where redaction criticism must end, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the text. The canonical shift of the story of Israel by editors during the Babylonian exile thus bespeaks of a community reintegrating themselves with the overall narrative, altering the focus of the text from the occupation of the promised land to the dominance of the Law. The Torah of the Old Testament is linked with the New Testament as a whole through Jesus Christ, the "Torah incarnate" (121).

Sanders' follow-up to this work, *Canon and Community*, serves as a more hermeneutically-focused and systematic study of canonical criticism and is a longer exploration of the issues raised in his review of Childs' *Introduction*. In the latter, Sanders expresses discontent with Childs' focus on the final product of the process of canonization at the expense of the process. His strongest objection is that Childs bases his approach on an unrealistic picture of the stability of the canon (Sanders, "Canonical Context," 190). Sanders unashamedly contends that he considers "biblical historical and literary criticism a gift of God in due season. It is only when it is abused or taken as an end in itself, or when it does not keep issues of authority clear, that it generates problems" ("Canonical Context," 192). *Canon and Community* thus has a two-fold purpose: to understand the role of both the canonical process and canonical hermeneutics within the method. The canonical process is the historical path of a text's shaping throughout antiquity; canonical hermeneutics is the attempt to use the interpretive decisions throughout that history in modern biblical study.

Critics and Criticisms

Canonical criticism, still relatively new in the field of biblical criticism, has faced various critiques from the wider theological world. Christopher R. Seitz summarizes the primary faults typically lodged against the canonical approach in *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*. He argues that this approach:

- fails to take seriously enough "the facts of history."
- implements a "dogmatic lens" that obscures the historical milieu of a text and offers an overoptimistic account of the text's transmission.
- overemphasizes the text's role on the shaping of the community, holding it as authoritative.
- fails to properly acknowledge the importance of the redactors of a text.
- grants too much weight to the final form of a text compared to other stages in its development in light of the concept of original inspiration.
- focuses too much on the Old Testament at the expense of the New Testament.
- focuses too much on the New Testament's portrait of God at the expense of the Old Testament's (34–35).

James Barr has been the most outspoken critic of the canonical approach. In his review of Childs' *Introduction*, Barr remarks on "the length to which Childs presses his case, the lack of room for compromise in his thinking, the uncertainties of his own method, and his failure to see the likely limitations of it" (Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 12). He argues that "every one of the forty-odd chapters says the same thing. A review of critical scholarship leads up to the elements of progress and of disagreement that result [sic]" (Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 12). Barr criticizes Childs' vague use of the word "canon" and fears that Childs' "post-critical" stances will aid conservatives seeking to dismiss historical-critical contributions to the field rather than apply them at a higher level (Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 15). Further, Barr magnifies Sanders' worry that the canonical approach wrests the biblical text from history altogether; he states that Childs "reads into the minds of the redactors and canonizers his own passionate hermeneutical interest" (Barr, "Childs' Introduction," 17). John Barton wonders similarly how Childs can speak of any canon at all without necessarily speaking of the "varied and inconsistent" nature of the Old Testament that should primarily grant meaning to the word "canon" (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 99, 171).

Barr produced two longer works in part treating Childs and Sanders' canonical approaches: *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* in 1981 and *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* in 1983. Both treat the weaknesses listed in his review of Childs' *Introduction*, but *Holy Scripture* stands as the most systematic rebuttal; Barr lists 12 objections to the canonical approach in an appendix. He locates the largest problem with Childs' assumption that the biblical theology movement of the 1950s and 1960s was in need of steering the context of the movement from the academy back to the church. He contends that the approach Childs has pioneered is too exclusive to be of wider use within the field of biblical criticism, as is evidenced by Childs' failure to treat seriously the New Testament on an equal footing; he surmises that the attraction of the canonical approach resides in its "appeal to religion, to religious sentiments and instincts, rather than an interest in evaluative theology" (Barr, *Holy Scripture*, 104).

Although Barr suggests that the canonical approach would appeal especially to conservative scholars, there are critics among their ranks. John N. Oswalt, for example, is concerned that the canonical approach seems to ignore "vexed questions relating to the historical validation of revelation" (Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism," 325). Childs and Sanders seem to imply that "the canonical form of the text is the only one in which full inspiration resides" (Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism," 318). Thus, as Oswalt determines, "to say that we should look upon what the Bible tells us about its origins with the greatest skepticism and yet accept what it tells us about God with childlike faith demands a compartmentalization of thought that is fallacious" (Oswalt, "Canonical Criticism," 320).

Other Examples of Canonical Criticism

James Luther Mays on Psalm 118
Mays applies Childs' exegetical insights in the *Introduction* to Psalm 118 in a 1988 *festschrift* for Childs (Mays, "Psalm 118"). He focuses on this particular psalm because of its liturgical use in both Judaism and Christianity, which offers further insights into the text not immediately available through historical-critical analysis alone. Since form-critical analysis has allowed the genre and religious use of this psalm predominately to inform textual meaning (including the translation of certain verbs), Mays contends that this psalm is merely "understood and interpreted as an artifact of ritual proceedings in Judah" (Mays, "Psalm 118," 302). He argues that instead of interpreting the text through a canonical approach, interpreters should focus first on the psalm's role as "scripture." They must take foremost care to interpret the psalm as it resides within multiple levels of context and co-text: the Bible as a whole, the Old Testament as a whole, the Psalms as a whole, and this particular psalm's co-text.

Much of Mays' analysis makes use of other texts to help interpret the setting and meaning of Psalm 118, especially other psalms, the relation of its language to Exodus 15, and the similarity of Psa 118:17 to certain prophetic proclamations. Mays holds that the form-critical questions of the original setting of the psalm are unnecessary for a modern understanding of it; what is clear is that the community receiving it recognized it as a psalm of praise and used it as such. Mays admits that "questions that arise in the process of exegesis resume those found in the commentaries of a Luther or a Calvin (and even at times of the Midrash on Psalm 118) more often than do modern critical commentaries" (Mays, *Psalm 118*, 309). Furthermore, these questions allow for a certain ambiguity in the final interpretation of the text; since there are multiple possibilities for how a community over time could have read a text, there is no one "fixed" meaning to this particular psalm.

David Trobisch on the Relation between Acts 15 and Galatians
In a 1999 *festschrift* for Brevard Childs, Trobisch analyzes the reports of the Council of Jerusalem in Galatians 2 and Acts 15. Trobisch summarizes various historical-critical responses to the matter in which all, to some degree, focus on reconstructing the historical background for the text in a way that pits one text against the other. However, some choose to ignore the issue completely. Trobisch's answer is to suggest that from a canonical perspective, "it is important to keep one obvious reading instruction in mind: information referring to the same event but being recorded in two separate books is not presented to prove to the readers of the collection that one account is correct and the other false" (Trobisch, "Council," 333).

By analyzing the final form of the text, Trobisch believes the final redactors of the New Testament are conveying that readers should "rely on the letters of Paul as the primary source and to read Luke's book of Acts as a trustworthy narrative, which might shed some light on the events preceding and following this letter" (Trobisch, "Council," 334). Trobisch then places the texts side-by-side to delve into the theological significance of the language of each account. He concludes from a canonical standpoint that the reliability of Luke's information concerning Paul's letter to the Galatians is not of primary importance; what is to be grasped from Acts is the readership's belief "that Peter and Paul were not opponents and that they both were active missionaries in Rome…. this belief is expressed by the layout and structure of the canonical edition of the New Testament, and especially by the supporting views of the book of Acts" (Trobisch, "Council," 338).

Robert W. Wall on James 4:13–5:6
In an edited volume focused on strategies for New Testament interpretation, Wall addresses how the New Testament may be read within the purview of the canonical approach. Wall applies the canonical methodology of both Childs and Sanders to an interpretation of Jas 4:13–5:6. He establishes James' place within the New Testament canon first as an epistle supporting the Gospel accounts, and then within the New Testament's second collection of letters supporting and balancing the Pauline corpus. By using a canonical approach to interpreting the New Testament, Wall contends that the historical imbalance of focus on Paul's corpus—and the historical tendency to hold James and Paul in opposition—may be alleviated. Both James and the writings of Paul are actually bolstered by the recognition of real theological differences and the refusal to place them into contention; together, their teachings must be held in "creative tension" (Wall, "Reading," 392). Wall investigates how James' practical teaching to his community on wisdom, anger, speech, and poverty relates to Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. These texts would have been integral to the liturgical life of his community, particularly during the Feast of Tabernacles. Because of James' place in the biblical canon, they remain relevant for a present-day church in need of balancing biblical views on sanctification and justification, for example, or spiritual and social transformation.

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Comparing Manuscripts

Each copy of a manuscript is unique not only in appearance, but also in the wording of the text itself. The study of these differences, known as textual criticism, begins with the study of the individual copies. Differences in texts may have been the result of the individual scribe's errors. There are four kinds of differences in any manuscript when it is compared to another:

1. omitting text
2. repeating text
3. writing one word for another
4. changing word order

One of the most common mistakes is the tendency to omit text; thus every individual copy will probably contain a slightly shortened version of the text(s) it contains. Scribes also adopted spelling (especially of vowels) to reflect their pronunciation. Changing word order was also common, and may have happened when a scribe realized he had omitted a word, choosing to add it in a word or two later.

These inevitable human errors often went unnoticed. However, there were also deliberate alterations, which were most common in the first few centuries. Such changes include grammatical improvements, such as preferring a singular verb with a neuter plural subject, or the removal of solecisms. They also include changes to the meaning, harmonisation of one Gospel to another, and even insertion or removal of phrases or longer pieces of text.

While many manuscripts have survived from the Byzantine period, it is often fairly easy to distinguish their relationship, and to place them in groups or families—sometimes even identifying that one is a copy of another. However, because so few copies have survived from the earliest centuries, it is much harder to understand their relationship. As this is the period of the most significant textual change, much scholarship is spent on the study of these oldest copies and their relationship. One of the most significant such relationships is that of P75 and Codex Vaticanus.

Access

Mass digitization of manuscripts is transforming the world of manuscript studies. This is accompanied by developments in online resources of transcriptions, linked images, metadata, and analytical tools. Digitization is of two kinds of collections:

1. Institutional collections, in which the manuscript holdings of a library are published on the internet.
2. Logical collections, in which the manuscripts of a particular work are made available in a single place, such as the Virtual Manuscript Room.

Transcriptions, sometimes linked to images, are available in New Testament Transcripts and in the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP) editions of John.

Significant Manuscripts

The following are some of the most significant manuscripts:

- Chester Beatty Papyri:
- P45—Written in the third century; contains the Gospels and Acts. Its copies of Mark are the oldest in existence.
- P46—Written circa 200; the oldest copy of Paul's letters. It contains almost complete pages of most of the letters (Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*).
- P47—Written in the late third century; the oldest manuscript with extensive fragments of Revelation. Its text has similarities to that found in Codex Sinaiticus.
- Bodmer Papyri:
- P66—Usually said to have been produced in the early third century, although a date in the fourth has recently been proposed. Contains extensive portions of John and provides insights into John's textual history.
- P75—Produced in the early third century, though a fourth century date is also worth considering. Contains extensive portions of Luke and John and provides insights into John's textual history. (Fee, *Papyrus Bodmer II (P66)*; Martini, *Il problema della recensionalità del codice B*).
- P127—A fourth-century copy of Acts; the oldest discovered version of a freer version of the story (*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1–45).
- Codex Sinaiticus (01)—The most remarkable of the ancient copies as a piece of book production (see "Codex Sinaiticus Project" for a full transcription with other material; Parker, *Codex Sinaiticus*).
- Codex Alexandrinus (02)—Dated to the fifth century; in much of the New Testament contains an early version of what was to become the Byzantine text.
- Codex Vaticanus (03)—Generally regarded as the most accurate ancient copy (Andrist, *Le manuscript de la Bible*).
- Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (04)—A palimpsest; that is, the original script was scraped off and a different text added later. The original script contains the Bible. It has an especially important text in Revelation.
- Codex Bezae (05)—Written circa 400; a manuscript of the Gospels and Acts in Greek and Latin. Its version of the Gospels is often harmonizing, and it is the most important copy of the freer text of Acts (see Parker, *Codex Bezae*).
- Codex Claromontanus (06)—A sixth-century copy of Paul in Greek and Latin.
- The Freer Gospels (032)—A fifth-century manuscript that contains a distinctive text in many places (Hurtado, *The Freer Biblical Manuscripts*).
- 041—Written in the ninth century; a leading member of a large group of Byzantine manuscripts of the Gospels.
- 1 (12th century) and 1582 (copied in 948)—The two most important copies of a family of Gospel manuscripts which contain an old (pre-Byzantine) form of the text (Anderson, *The Textual Tradition of the Gospels*).
- 13—Dates to the 13th century; a leading member of another family with an old form of the text.
- 35—Dates to the 11th century; a complete copy of the New Testament. Contains a carefully produced and carefully copied text transmitted through the later Byzantine period.
- 1739—By the same scribe as 1582; a copy of Acts and all the Letters.

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NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS Copies of the New Testament that were produced or reproduced by hand.

Introduction

The term "manuscript" comes from the Latin words *manu* (meaning "with the hand") and *scripta* (meaning "written"). Prior to Gutenberg's printed version of the Latin Bible in 1454–1455, all copies of the New Testament were written by hand. Originally, all New Testament texts were written in Greek. By the year 500, these texts had been translated into Syriac, various dialects of Coptic, Latin, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, and perhaps Ethiopic. In the subsequent millennium, it was translated into many vernacular languages and dialects of medieval Christendom, including the Middle East. This article will discuss only Greek manuscripts.

   Gutenberg worked in the mid-15th century. The first printed Greek New Testament, edited by Erasmus, was made in 1516. However, manuscript copies continued to be made through the 16th and into the 17th century and beyond, occasionally even in the second half of the 19th century. There continues to be a market for calligraphic Bibles, such as Saint John's Bible.

Classification

The manuscripts are divided into four classes:

1. Papyri, indicated with an Arabic number following the letter P, either Roman P or black letter *P*.
2. Majuscules (sometimes incorrectly called "uncials"), indicated with an Arabic number following a zero. In the past, they were listed with a complicated sequence of Roman, Greek, and even Hebrew uppercase letters.
3. Minuscules (sometimes incorrectly called "cursives"), indicated with an Arabic number.
4. Lectionaries, indicated with an Arabic number following the letter L, either upright uppercase Roman, upright lowercase Roman, or italic lowercase Roman.

As of March 17, 2011, the following number of manuscripts existed:

Papyri	127
Majuscules	322
Minuscules	2,907
Lectionaries	2,452
Total	5,808

In the 17 years since this list was last issued in a printed book, the numbers have grown by:

Papyri	28
Majuscules	16
Minuscules	51
Lectionarie	49
Total	144

This list typically grows by two or three new discoveries a year for the following reasons:

- The publication of papyri in the Oxyrhynchus series which, due to the size of the collection, has been running for over a century (26 items)
- Chance discoveries in libraries.

The numbers are not precise; some entries contain two separate manuscripts incorrectly identified as one (e.g., P44) or two bound together (e.g., minuscule 180). Some manuscripts are spread over a number of entries because they are in different libraries (e.g., 070).

Papyri
Manuscripts classified as "Papyri" are those that are written on papyrus, a reed that was sliced into strips and glued into double-thick sheets. This material was the most common writing material of Roman and Late Antiquity. It has survived only in the driest conditions, and all the examples have been recovered from deserts—mostly in Egypt. Existing copies of parts of the New Testament written on papyrus date from the second to the seventh centuries. The most significant manuscripts are those dating circa 200–400. From the second quarter of the fourth century, parchment began to gain ground as the preferred material on which to copy the New Testament, and papyrus became a cheap alternative for producing a lower quality product.

Majuscules
All majuscule manuscripts are written in a version of the class of script known as majuscule, using parchment as the material. Broadly conforming to what we would call uppercase lettering, majuscule was the dominant script from the fourth to the eighth centuries. The most recent majuscule containing a part of the New Testament is dated to the early 11th century.

Minuscule
All minuscule manuscripts are mostly written in minuscule, a script similar to what we would call lowercase. A minuscule manuscript may contain some elements of text, such as headings and other paratext, in a majuscule display script. The oldest dated manuscript containing a part of the New Testament is dated May 7, AD 835. The older minuscules were written wholly on parchment. Paper began to be used in the 12th century onwards, and manuscripts were written on a mixture of parchment and paper (gatherings were often composed with inner sheets of paper and an outer sheet of parchment to protect them) or, only paper. The most recent copies date from the 19th century.

These three classes (papyri, majuscule, miniscule) are, with a few exceptions, manuscripts containing the text of a book or books in the proper order. They are known as continuous text manuscripts. The minuscules may be further classified as those consisting of the New Testament text alone, and those also containing a commentary. The latter contain a variety of commentaries of the type known as catenae—excerpts taken from the writings of early Christian writers, most frequently John Chrysostom. The best known is the commentary on the Gospels by Theophylact, written in the late 11th century. Some of the catena manuscripts are among the most significant and influential copies of the New Testament books they contain.

Lectionaries
Lectionaries contain the text divided into the readings and the order in which they are read in the church's year. Many of the oldest are written in majuscule, and the transition to minuscule parallels the transition for continuous text manuscripts. The introduction of paper parallels its use in continuous text manuscripts. Lectionaries are divided into two main classes:

1. Synaxaria (singular synaxarion), following the cycle of weekly readings from Easter through the year. Since the date of Easter is not fixed, the number of weeks is not fixed. A synaxarion contains readings from either the Gospels or the Praxapostolos (Acts and the Letters). A minority contain both.
2. Menologia (singular menologion), in which the readings for each day are dated by month according to the civil calendar. This sequence can include Saints' days, and readings from nonbiblical texts.

The book of Revelation was never included in the lectionary.

Two Limitations of The Normal List

In two respects the list, as it has developed since the days of Tischendorf and his successor Gregory, that is to say the second half of the 19th century, is deficient. There are various papyri containing New Testament text—sometimes written for use as amulets or for other specific purposes—which are not included, while some written for similar reasons are present. With regard to commentary manuscripts, the criteria for their inclusion are not always rigorously followed, while detailed research has found copies that have not been included in the list.

As a result, it is difficult not to reach the conclusion that the criteria for defining manuscripts as copies of the New Testament will never be totally consistent.

Age

Most manuscripts date between the ninth and 15th centuries, with the majority dating 11–15th century (over 2,000 copies). Until the 19th century, almost no copies older than the ninth century were studied. Significant fourth-century copies then became known to scholarship or more easily available. Older copies on papyrus believed to be written in the third and even the second century were found in the 20th century. The oldest copy now known is a tiny fragment of John's Gospel, dated to around AD 150 (P52).

Contents

Few manuscripts contain the whole New Testament. Four important ancient copies are complete Bibles:

1. Codex Sinaiticus, mid-fourth century
2. Codex Vaticanus, mid-fourth century
3. Codex Alexandrinus, mid-fifth century
4. Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, mid-fifth century

Approximately 50 of the entire New Testament copies date between the late ninth and the 15th centuries (of which a few are complete Bibles). Another 250 manuscripts contain the entire New Testament except for Revelation. The greatest number of continuous text manuscripts is copies of the Gospels. With the exception of fragmentary manuscripts, whose original contents are uncertain, the following numbers of manuscripts exist:

- About 2,000 Gospel manuscripts
- Just over 400 of Acts and the Catholic Letters
- Just over 500 of Paul's Letters (many of these contain Acts, the Catholic Letters, and Paul)
- About 220 copies of Revelation

The oldest complete copy of the whole New Testament is Codex Sinaiticus. Codex Vaticanus is missing Heb 9:4 onwards, and therefore lacks Philemon, the Pastoral Letters, and Revelation. These two remain the oldest complete copies of each individual book (and where Vaticanus is missing this position is held by Sinaiticus alone). The older copies, nearly all written on papyrus, are very fragmentary. The most substantial are:

- P45–30 leaves of the Gospels and Acts
- P46–86 leaves of Paul's letters
- P66–78 leaves of John
- P72—a book of 95 leaves whose contents include 1 and 2 Peter and Jude
- P75–64 leaves of Luke and John

Even of these, many pages are damaged or difficult to read. After Codex Alexandrinus, the next oldest complete copies of any book date from the ninth century. In addition to biblical text, and apart from the commentary copies, many manuscripts contain further text (often called paratext), such as:

- lists of chapter headings
- introductions to particular books
- marginal comments
- colophons, recording the scribe's name, the date of completion, the place and sometimes even information about the manuscript from which it was taken.

A collection of descriptive material, known as the Euthalian Apparatus, accompanies Paul's Letters. Furthermore, many minuscules contain a lectionary apparatus so that readers can find the readings of the day. Byzantine manuscripts also frequently contain miniatures, decorated headbands to each book and portraits of the evangelists. Some other books, such as the Rossano Gospels of the sixth century, contain illustrations.

Textual Division
Ancient books contained less punctuation than modern books and was provided at the scribe's discretion. But during the fourth century, many early Christian works acquired divisions. The most complicated system divided each Gospel into numbered paragraphs and set the numbers in tables so that readers could find parallel passages. This system is called the Eusebian Apparatus, named after Eusebius of Caesarea who developed it, other books were divided into numbered paragraphs. From the ninth century, the degree of punctuation increased and became more consistent.

Order of Books
The order adopted in English translations follows that of the Latin New Testament. The sequence in Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and later complete New Testaments is Gospels—Acts—Catholic Letters—Paul. Revelation always comes last. There was some variation in the order of the Gospels (Matthew—John—Luke—Mark was also a popular sequence in the fourth century) and of Paul's Letters within these units. There is no variation in the order of the Catholic Epistles.

Format
Almost all copies of New Testament books are written in the codex format; only a few are rolls. This contrasts the proportion for other Greek texts of the second to the fourth centuries, most of which are in rolls. This distinguishes New Testament writings and had important implications for the development of the canon and the way early Christians used books. Because a codex can contain more text than a roll, it was possible to copy all the Gospels or of Paul's writings into a single papyrus volume. With the adoption of parchment in the fourth century, it became possible to write even an entire New Testament, or even an entire Bible, in one volume. Moreover, the codex format made it possible for readers to leaf through other passages without losing their place and thus to compare passages (for example in different Gospels).

The rather large majuscule scripts required a large amount of parchment. Additionally, the complete copies require a huge format; the Codex Sinaiticus, with a page size of 43 × 48 cm, is the largest Greek New Testament manuscript in existence. Because of this, most copies contained less text. An expansion in book production in the 10th century (with an unchanged parchment supply) led to the adoption of the smaller majuscule scripts. Byzantine book sizes are typically in a smaller format of approximately 15 × 11 cm, or a larger one of 23 × 16 cm; commentary manuscripts tend to be somewhat larger. Byzantine books have either one or two columns to the page, with approximately 20 lines in a column in the smaller format.

Production
In the ancient world, books were produced to order. Only with printing did the practice of printing anticipating demand become normal. Most manuscripts were produced by a single scribe who was copying from another manuscript (an exemplar). Scribes first prepared the exemplar for copying, perhaps by checking the contents, reading it to assess the spelling and correct any obvious errors. They would then calculate the layout and space required, prepare the writing materials (cut up papyrus sheets, or in the case of parchment, mark up the layout with a sharp point and dry lines), and then copy sheet by sheet. At the end, the whole volume would have been bound.

While it is also possible that a reader could have dictated a copy to a single scribe, the idea of mass dictation in a monastery library is highly improbable. It is possible that a reader may sometimes have dictated a copy to a single scribe.[16]

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[16] Parker, D. (2016). New Testament Manuscripts. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Understanding the Scribes

Grasping the roles and function of the scribes can be difficult due to the presence of the vocation in many civilizations, time periods, and realms. Their education, especially their ability to read and write, enabled them to fill many roles within the government, religious activities, and households. Therefore, their roles and functions as portrayed in the New Testament, Jewish literature, and other sources from the ancient Near East vary. Not every scribe or group of scribes performed all the roles and functions that scribes have exercised in different locations and eras in the ancient world.

Ancient Sources

Scribal practices were common in ancient Near East civilizations and early Israel. In ancient Mesopotamia, the administrative, political, and teaching functions of a scribe went together with more routine tasks of copying, collating, and annotating manuscripts. Scribes occupied highest posts as royal secretaries in charge of correspondence, counselors, and high officials. Egyptian boys were trained early to read and write, and they became apprentices to scribes or high officials. Their training involved copying, reciting, and memorizing material (Saldarini, "Scribes," 1012).

In ancient Israel, scribes arose to meet the needs of Judaean and Israelite monarchies beginning in the 10th century BC. According to Fishbane, the difference between the Israelite scribes and their neighbors was the scribes' involvement in religious activities and with religious texts (Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 24). Scribes appeared in King David's royal council (2 Sam 8:16–18), with King Solomon (1 Kgs 4:1–6), King Joash (2 Chr 24:11–12), and King Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:18, 37). Fishbane assumes that scribal skills were learned in various guild families (1 Chr 2:55) and enabled scribes to serve different state and administrative responsibilities (Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 25).

Certain scribes aided in military conscriptions (2 Kgs 25:19) and others, such as Shemaiah, oversaw priestly rotations (1 Chr 24:6) and provided services to the temple (2 Chr 34:13). Other scribes served as diplomats and sages. In addition to their administrative services, scribes copied, maintained, transmitted, and collated literary texts. Fishbane claims that scribal practices can be discerned from annotations to priestly regulations found in Leviticus and Numbers. These regulations were rendered in short collections or series, which indicates the presence of formal conventions of an established scribal tradition. Fishbane also cites superscriptive titles and summary colophons that are present in other ancient Near Eastern texts (Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation, 27–28*).

During postexilic times, Ezra, the priest and scribe, served as the figure for postexilic restoration, national revival, and reform (Ezra 7:6–26; Neh 8:1–9). The emphasis was on studying the Torah and teaching the Law to the returned exiles (Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 36).

Jewish Literature

In Jewish literature, Ben Sira (Sirach 38:24–39:11) forms a picture of an ideal scribe. The scribe is characterized as someone who is wise and has time to study the law and the wisdom of the ancients. The scribe serves among rulers, travels to foreign lands, and intercedes for people. The scribe is filled with the spirit of understanding, manifested by the word of wisdom that comes from the Lord based on what he learns. Famous scribes in Jewish literature include Enoch, the scribe of righteousness (1 Enoch), and Baruch, the community leader whose authority exceeds even Jeremiah's (2 Baruch).

Scribes are depicted as heirs to prophets, interpreters, and visionaries with links to the apocalyptic and wisdom traditions. Scribes also are associated with the Hasidims (a group of separatists known as the "righteous" or "pious"; see Greenspoon, *Between Alexander and Antioch*, 343) who offered themselves willingly for the law (1 Macc 2:42; see 7:12–14). A leading scribe, Eleazar, died for the law as an example to younger Jews, after he refused to eat pig meat from a pagan altar (2 Macc 6:18).

Josephus

The writings of Josephus mainly reflect the Graeco-Roman notion of a scribe as a secretary, clerk, or official in various levels in government (Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 129–43). He uses the term "scribe" to refer to officials at all levels, from village (village scribes with low social status whose profession was to write documents and copy texts; *Jewish War* 1.479) to royal court (*Antiquities* 7.318–20), and he does not use "scribe" to indicate an organized group dedicated to the law. Scribes served as military officials (*Antiquities* 6.120–21) and for administrators of Herod's kingdom. Diophantus, a scribe of the king who dealt with correspondence of the king (*Jewish War* 1.529), is an example of a high official position. Josephus also writes of a scribe in the council of Aristeus who was executed with other prominent men by revolutionaries (*Jewish War* 5.532). Temple scribes were exempted from several taxes (*Antiquities* 12.3.3). Entire schools of scribes may have existed in Israel as far back as the reigns of David and Solomon (*Antiquities* 7.319, 364). One type of scribe mentioned by Josephus differs from the Graeco-Roman notion: the sacred scribe who was an experienced interpreter of signs (*Jewish War* 6.291).

Josephus also explains how carefully the Jewish scribes copied scripture. He notes that scribes were careful not to add, remove, or alter any syllable, and that they regarded their texts as decrees from God that they needed to abide by and perhaps to die for due to their reverence for them (*Against Apion* 1.37–43).[17]

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[17] Tan-Gatue, P. (2016). Scribe. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, … W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Part_Three

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■ DESIDERIUS ERASMUS AND THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT

In 1514, some sixty years after the invention of movable-type printing, the first Greek New Testament was printed. It was produced as part of a huge joint Bible publishing project in Spain, organized by Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros and carried out in the town of Alcalá, whose Latin name was "Complutum." There they produced a printed polyglot Bible with Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin texts, called the Complutensian Polyglot. The fifth volume out of six (the sixth had a Hebrew lexicon and grammar), and the first of the six to be printed, contained the Greek New Testament (along with a bilingual Greek-Latin lexicon), while the first four volumes contained the Old Testament in Hebrew, the Latin Vulgate, and the Septuagint.[88] Although this text was printed in 1514, it was not distributed or published until 1522 because of political delays in getting papal approval of the project. The textual basis of this Greek New Testament has never been firmly agreed upon, although it probably made use of Vatican manuscripts. These manuscripts appear to have been dated from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and this reflected the Byzantine text—that is, the text that had come to be used throughout the eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire and was reflected in the vast majority of extant manuscripts, especially those known at the time.

The distinction of being the editor first to publish, even if not to print, the Greek New Testament fell to the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus. In 1514 he apparently was finally convinced by the publisher Froben to produce such a text while on a trip to Basel. In Basel, where he undertook to produce this text, he made use of a total of about a half dozen minuscule manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. He relied primarily upon two twelfth-century minuscules (2 and 2ap [2815], and Ir [2814] for Revelation) with the Byzantine text-type (with the exception of one manuscript, Minuscule 1, which was not Byzantine but which he apparently did not use very much). In a few places, such as the last six verses of the book of Revelation, and some other places (e.g., Acts 8:37; 9:5–6) where his manuscripts had muddled text and commentary (not an uncommon feature of minuscule manuscripts), Erasmus retroverted from the Latin Vulgate into Greek. The end result was not only a book full of numerous typographical errors, no doubt due to haste and the difficulty of the typesetters working off of the edited manuscripts themselves, but also a book that contains numerous instances of Greek devised by Erasmus and not found in any actual ancient Greek manuscript. Not only did Erasmus produce an eclectic text, but he also created one that introduced readings into the Greek New Testament that have been retained in some subsequent editions to this day.[91] Nevertheless, Erasmus published this volume in 1515, and then a further four editions (1519, 1522, 1527, 1535). The significance of this event is marked by Erasmus's own words, found in the preface:

> I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the common tongue, should be read by the unlearned. Christ desires His mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I could wish that even all women should read the Gospel and St Paul's Epistles, and I would that they were translated into all the languages of all Christian people, that they might be read and known not merely by the Scots and the Irish but even by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough, that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveler might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them.

This is a noble purpose that to a great extent mitigates the failings of the actual edition itself.

One important story regarding Erasmus and the preparation of his edition bears repeating. When his first edition appeared, he was accused by Stunica (Diego Lopez de Zuñiga) (c. 1531), one of the editors of the Complutensian Polyglot and the chief editor of the New Testament, of excluding the trinitarian words found in 1 John 5:7–8: "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth." Erasmus's response was that these words were not found in any of the manuscripts that he had consulted for his Greek New Testament or subsequently. One of the manuscripts that he apparently consulted subsequently was Codex Vaticanus (03 B), which Erasmus asked a friend to examine for him, after which he received a letter, dated June 18, 1521, copying out the text and confirming that there was no such passage. Erasmus—precipitously and unwisely, we now see—said that he would include these words (the so-called Johannine Comma) if they could be found in a single Greek manuscript. Lo and behold, such a manuscript appeared, now known as Gregory 61, held in the Trinity College Dublin library. It appears to have been written in 1520 in Oxford by someone named "Froy" or "Roy." Erasmus fulfilled his obligation and put the Johannine passage in his third edition of 1522, but with a footnote that indicated his doubts regarding its authenticity.

Erasmus was right to question its authenticity. It appears that for the Complutensian Polyglot, in which most of these words appear, these verses were translated from the Latin Vulgate. As Stunica himself admitted when asked by Erasmus regarding his manuscript support, "You must know that the copies of the Greeks are corrupted; that OURs [i.e., the Latin], however, contain the very truth." The Greek manuscript that Erasmus was shown (Gregory 61), reflecting Latin, which has no article, did not have articles before "father," "word," and "spirit," which Erasmus corrected in subsequent editions.[96] Metzger notes that this passage has been found only in three other manuscripts: Gregory 88 (twelfth century), in which it is written marginally in a seventeenth-century hand; Tischendorf ω 110 (sixteenth-century copy of the Greek text of the Complutensian Polyglot); and Gregory 629 (fourteenth century or later). The so-called Johannine Comma does appear in the Latin treatise *Liber apologeticus* (fourth century), attributed to Priscillian or Instantius. The Johannine Comma appears for the first time in Latin Vulgate manuscripts around AD 800. According to Metzger, "The *Comma* probably originated as a piece of allegorical exegesis of the three witnesses and may have been written as a marginal gloss in a Latin manuscript of I John, when it was taken into the text of the Old Latin Bible during the fifth century."

■ TEXTUS RECEPTUS

Other publishers soon published versions of Erasmus's Greek text of the New Testament. Several of these to note include the four editions published by Robert Estienne (Stephanus) (1503–1559). The third edition (1550) followed Erasmus's later editions and included a critical apparatus that referred to other manuscripts, including Codex Bezae (05 D) when it was apparently located in Italy. This edition was widely used in England, and it formed the basis for the English theologian Brian Walton's (1600–1661) Polyglot Bible, with the fifth volume including the Greek New Testament (1657). The fifth volume includes variant readings from Codex Alexandrinus (02 A), and the sixth volume, an appendix, contains a critical apparatus with variants from Stephanus's edition and fifteen other manuscripts. Stephanus's fourth edition (1551) was the first edition that included the enumeration of verses. Théodore Beza (1519–1605), the early Reformer, published nine editions of the Greek New Testament. However, even though he owned a number of manuscripts, such as Codex Bezae (05 D) and Codex Claromontanus (06 Dp), these were not used in any significant way in preparing his editions, which tended to follow that of Stephanus.

The Authorized Version (1611) probably made use of Beza's editions. The famous Elzevir publishing house published an edition of the Greek New Testament that followed Beza. In the preface to the second edition (1633) they referred to "the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted" (*textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*) (trans. Metzger). From this statement, we get the term "Textus Receptus." Due to the strength of this statement, and the fact that this and related editions had established themselves as the Greek text of the New Testament, the Textus Receptus became the basis for all of the major Protestant translations until 1881, while Roman Catholics continued to use the Latin Vulgate. John Fell (1625–1686), the English theologian during the Civil War (1642–1651), used the second Elzevir edition for an edition that included a critical apparatus with variants from over one hundred manuscripts and versions, including Codex Vaticanus (03 B), although a number of these manuscripts, Vaticanus included, are cited en masse rather than individually.[18]

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[18] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 37–41). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

The Manuscript Basis of the Greek New Testament

The brief outline above of the major printed editions of the Greek New Testament leads to further questions regarding the basis of the Greek New Testament. There are two major considerations to pursue: the traditional texts and the various manuscript types.

■ WHAT SHOULD WE THINK OF THE TRADITIONAL TEXT?

This brief history of major published editions of the Greek New Testament clearly raises the question of which edition should be used in study of the Greek New Testament today. This is not such an easy question to answer. A reader who wants the text that represents a particular translation wants the Greek text that was used to make that translation. Up to 1881, that would invariably, at least in English, have been a form of the Textus Receptus, except in Catholic circles, where the translation was of an edition of Jerome's Vulgate (which I will discuss in chap. 3). After 1881, the vast majority of translations use a Greek text similar to that developed by Westcott and Hort. A reader who wants a text that reflects the earliest manuscripts wants a text based on the Alexandrian majuscules, such as Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and Codex Vaticanus (03 B). A reader who wants the text that represents the text of the Byzantine church and continues to be used in the Greek Orthodox tradition wants a form of the Byzantine text. A reader who wants the text that represents the text of the overwhelming majority of manuscripts, when all of the 5,813 or so manuscripts are taken into account, wants the Majority text.

The distinction between the Textus Receptus, on the one hand, and the Majority text or the Byzantine texts, on the other hand, is one worth making here, if only briefly. All of these Greek texts are often referred to as forms of the "traditional text." The Textus Receptus is any form of the Greek text that goes back to the edition of Erasmus and the several late manuscripts that he used. The Textus Receptus is a more restricted and limited form of Byzantine text, but it is not the Byzantine text as found in the edition of Robinson and Pierpont, or the Majority text found in the edition of Hodges and Farstad. Daniel Wallace notes that Hodges and Farstad's edition of the Majority text differs from the Textus Receptus in 1,838 places.[129] Aland and Aland list fifteen verses that they indicate are in the Textus Receptus but not in the Nestle-Aland critical edition. Four of those—Luke 23:17; Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:6b–8a—are not found in the Majority text (Farstad and Hodges) or the Byzantine text (Pierpont and Robinson) either. I note also that the portions where Erasmus or others translated from Latin back into Greek, such as the final six verses of Revelation and 1 John 5:7–8 (the Johannine Comma), are also not part of the Byzantine text or the Majority text.

While use of the Textus Receptus has greatly declined, the Majority or Byzantine text continues to have some who support its use—besides use by Orthodox church communities. Robinson has recently argued at length on behalf of the Byzantine text. He rejects modern eclectic texts, such as those of Westcott and Hort or Nestle-Aland, as "simply hav[ing] no proven existence within transmissional history," as the modern eclectic text does not conform to any extant manuscript or other versional or patristic data.[133] Instead of arguing for eclecticism (when manuscripts are compared to arrive at the reconstructed earliest form of the text), Robinson argues for what he calls "reasoned transmissionalism" that evaluates all of the internal and external evidence. He proposes a number of criteria. I will state them at some length because most are probably not as familiar to readers as are some of the criteria used in eclectic textual criticism.

The internal criteria that Robinson proposes include (1) accepting the reading that gives rise to the others, the more difficult reading, the reading that conforms with authorial style, and the reading with "transcriptional probability"; (2) rejecting readings that harmonize or assimilate to other passages, reflect "scribal piety" or theologically based changes, and reflect transcriptional error; and (3) showing no preference for either shorter or longer readings.

Robinson's external criteria include (1) rejection of conjectural emendation due to the quantity of evidence; (2) suspicion of "sporadically" occurring readings, especially when only in a single or small group of manuscripts or other ancient sources; (3) consideration of a variety of evidence, including various versions or church fathers, or differing text-types; (4) reduction of the raw numbers of manuscripts where possible (such as Family 1); (5) weighing rather than counting manuscripts; (6) seeking readings with "demonstrable antiquity"; (7) rejection of the notion of one or a small group of preferred manuscripts and rejection of the "exclusive" following of the oldest evidence; and (8) "transmissional considerations," which "coupled with internal principles point to the Byzantine Textform as a leading force in the history of transmission."

A closer look at these criteria exposes particular difficulties in their formulation. One obvious problem is that several of the internal and external criteria are qualified in ways that aid the Byzantine text or dismiss the Alexandrian text-type. For example, the internal criterion regarding the more difficult reading is qualified to exclude difficult readings "created by individual scribes" not in keeping with the transmissional history, which transmissional history is based on the Byzantine text; or the external criterion regarding "demonstrable antiquity" makes sure that the lack of early attestation for a reading found in the Byzantine tradition does not exclude a reading from being posited as early; or the endorsing of the idea that once minuscules (of which the vast majority are Byzantine) were copied, their preceding majuscule text was usually destroyed leads to inevitable arguments from silence regarding readings found in the Byzantine tradition; or the external criterion concerning "exclusive" following of the oldest evidence dismisses following the oldest manuscripts. A second difficulty is that a number of the external criteria (the second, third, and seventh), essentially, are ways of restating the numerical superiority of Byzantine manuscripts. The number of manuscripts is a single factor, not a determining one, and must be kept in perspective. A third problem is that Robinson, in effect, accepts simply a numerical argument when he discusses the "essence of a Byzantine-priority method."[137] A fourth difficulty is the obvious bias of the last external criterion regarding the Byzantine text-type, especially when there is no independent manuscript, versional, or patristic evidence for the Byzantine text-type before the fourth century that is not found in other text-types, such as the Western text. Harry Sturz has argued that there are Byzantine readings in early papyri; however, this argument does not prove a Byzantine text-type, but only that there are readings in the papyri that are found in Byzantine texts—they are virtually always found in other text-types as well.

Let us look more closely at the arguments used in defense of the various forms of the traditional text. Defenders of the Textus Receptus, and by extension of the Majority and the Byzantine texts, often do so on three grounds.

(1) The first is a doctrine of verbal inspiration that includes providential preservation of the text until today. For defenders of the Textus Receptus, this view includes the preservation of that text, and often extends to the Authorized (King James) Version as well. This viewpoint goes far beyond any traditional view of inspiration, especially when it extends inspiration to translation—even apparently translation by Erasmus from Latin back into Greek. Sometimes verses are cited in defense of this position—such as Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:17–18; John 10:35; 1 Peter 1:23–25—but at other times this viewpoint is defended simply as a theological presupposition.[142]

In either case, the notion is problematic, as it seems to require more than the doctrine of inspiration can provide. Furthermore, it requires more than the prooftexts exegetically indicate, especially in light of historical evidence of the manuscripts themselves, which have variants in them—even the Byzantine ones, and even the ones used by Erasmus (to say nothing of the other textual difficulties mentioned above). In fact, this position regarding textual preservation is self-contradictory, as it does not endorse the preservation of the non-Byzantine manuscripts, when many of these are even older and have been preserved longer than the Byzantine ones; or, if one is a Textus Receptus advocate, this position does not endorse preservation of most of the Byzantine tradition itself (which has manuscripts that differ), or vice versa if one is a Byzantine advocate (note the differences between the Textus Receptus and other forms of the "traditional text" noted above).[144]

(2) The second ground of defense is a numerical argument that posits that the text of the New Testament should be the one found in the "majority" of manuscripts. It is true that the vast majority of the 5,813 today extant Greek New Testament manuscripts follow the Byzantine text—in fact, it may be as many as 95 percent. However, as Wallace indicates, the Byzantine text has not always been in the majority. It is only in the majority cumulatively. There was no Byzantine text for the first four centuries, and it did not become the majority text until the ninth century. Further, Wallace contends that the Byzantine text as found in the editions of Hodges and Farstad and of Pierpont and Robinson follows a Byzantine form not found in the majority of manuscripts until the fifteenth century. Besides all of this, there is no inherently logical reason to believe that the majority of manuscripts contain the original or earlier reading, especially when that text-type does not appear until the fourth century.

(3) The third line of defense is that advocates for the traditional text often discount internal evidence—hence their appeal to external evidence, and its numerical value—arguing that the internal reasons are subjective compared to the objective evidence of countable manuscripts. Despite necessarily arguing that the other text-types are corrupt and thus should have their readings dismissed, advocates of the Majority or Byzantine text are still confronted with the problem of needing to use internal criteria to adjudicate between readings in their own manuscripts. For example, for Romans 5:1 Byzantine manuscripts can be found for the *omicron* in ἔχομεν or the *omega* in ἔχωμεν. The pericope of the woman caught in adultery—one of the hallmark passages for advocates of the traditional text—has sufficiently diverse witnesses to require special treatment in most discussions, including the printed editions.[149]

There have been essentially no new arguments advanced since Westcott and Hort for the traditional-text hypothesis, and the reasons advanced clearly remain unconvincing.[19]

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[19] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 51–57). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

■ THE THREE TEXT-TYPES

In the previous discussion I have often referred to various text-types. Throughout the development of modern textual criticism there have been different ways of examining and categorizing manuscripts, as well as there being different ways in which they are used in textual criticism. In fact, the field of textual criticism today is in somewhat of a state of flux, as the methods of categorizing and using manuscripts are undergoing serious reevaluation. This is not the place to recount the history of this discussion, or necessarily to adjudicate the current state of play. For the sake of this volume, I will merely recount quickly some of the major theories regarding manuscripts and their relationships, before outlining the theory of text-types that I am following here. Parker provides a brief and succinct, though not always altogether clear, exposition of the major theories.

Besides the Majority text theory, which I have already discussed above, there are at least four other major theories of manuscript categorization worth discussing. First, some have used theories of local origin. B. H. Streeter (1874–1937), the English biblical scholar and philosopher, is known for his work on developing the theory of local origins of manuscripts, based upon his study of the Gospels. Most scholars today, while perhaps recognizing general geographical origins or relationships among manuscripts, are skeptical that these can be used to identify textual types. This is because there are inconsistencies among manuscripts, even those that are from the same purported geographical location, to say nothing of the difficulty, if not sometimes impossibility, of establishing geographical origins. The result is often a circular argument by which the place is assumed on the basis of a manuscript's text-critical character.

Second, others have identified archetypal or genealogical relationships among manuscripts, sometimes called a "stemmatic" approach. In stemmatics, attributed to Lachmann, the origin of a variant is described on the basis of a stemmatic relationship among the extant manuscripts, while also accounting for missing manuscripts. Kurt Aland combined these two approaches in his local-genealogical approach, which is also a form of reasoned eclecticism (as are all of the approaches discussed here). However, whereas this kind of genealogical relationship is still used in other types of textual criticism, such as classical studies,[154] and is to a large extent being revived in the coherence-based genealogical method (CBGM) that originated at the Alands' Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, the huge number of New Testament manuscripts (and the reliance upon being able to process all of this information), as well as the missing stages in the tradition at key places (hence reliance on Byzantine manuscripts), make this impractical for the time being.

Third, a number of quantitative methods have been developed. The New Testament scholar and textual critic Colwell developed what has come to be known as the Claremont Profile Method. Manuscripts are compared in terms of their variants and then categorized on the basis of the percentage of agreement that they have among themselves. With increased technological resources, this method may prove more effective in the future, although it does a better job of profiling manuscripts than it does of adjudicating individual variants.

Fourth, the newest development in text-critical analysis is the CBGM. According to this method, the textual critic attempts what are called "substemmata" on the basis of individual variants, and from the results of these individual variants a description of the relations among the manuscripts becomes possible. This approach is being used in the production of the latest major text-critical project of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, the Editio Critica Maior.

There are some limitations to this approach, not least of which is the difficulty of utilizing it on an individual basis without the kinds of resources available to the Institut when wanting to evaluate a particular variant—not to mention that it has produced minimal results so far in application to the Catholic Epistles in the Editio Critica Maior. There is also the difficulty with what is meant by "coherence." Parker contends that "it is not wedded to a preconceived method" of analysis, whether the use of manuscripts (external criteria) or possible scribal issues (internal criteria).[156] However, there are the questions of how one uses these criteria, what is meant by "coherence" (is it merely statistical?), whether all variants should be treated as equal, whether variants should be treated in isolation from their manuscripts, and what role the individual textual critic plays in the process. As a result of these recent developments, some textual critics, of whom Parker is one of several, have called for the abandonment of the traditional text-types. They see problems regarding the length of time over which they were created, the different criteria by which they are grouped together and identified as a text-type, and the lack of cohesion among the individual manuscripts.[158]

Although many would now dispute the use of text-types as a means of classifying manuscripts, the fact that they still appear to form the underlying basis for much of the previous discussion of textual criticism, I believe, makes them relevant, especially for my discussion here. Nevertheless, I can only offer a brief synopsis of the origin and development of the Greek New Testament textual tradition. Many, if not most, scholars today would still recognize three text-types: the Alexandrian, the Western, and the Byzantine. I will treat them in reverse order, along with the Caesarean.

■ Byzantine

The Byzantine text-type has already been discussed in relation to the traditional text. The Byzantine text-type emerges as a distinct text-type only in the fourth century. After the fall of Rome in AD 380, the center of gravity of the Roman Empire shifted to the east, where Greek remained the language of communication and there was a need for manuscripts in Greek, a situation that continued until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in AD 1453. Westcott and Hort proposed that Lucian of Antioch (d. AD 312) was responsible for the recension that we now know as the Byzantine text by combining readings from earlier text-types. Although few have held to this theory, it has recently been revived as a means of accounting for earlier readings in the Byzantine text-type that do not require the existence of an independent text-type. The great preacher and writer John Chrysostom arrived in Constantinople from Antioch in AD 398 and brought with him the form of the New Testament text used in Antioch that we would now identify as the Byzantine text-type. Largely through his influence, the Byzantine text-type began to gain widespread currency in the Byzantine Empire. Increased institutionalization of religion in the empire, including the copying and preservation of manuscripts, led to less freedom and more rigidity in the Byzantine textual tradition. Rather than there being more diffuse readings with increased copying, as we find in the Alexandrian tradition, the Byzantine text-type tends toward homogenization.[164]

■ Caesarean

The fortunes of the Caesarean text have been mixed, just as it is posited as a mixed text combining Western and Alexandrian textual readings. Streeter was the first to identify the Caesarean text as one that Origen had used at Caesarea. Streeter's theory of local texts, noted above, identified five different text-types, each in a physical location, of which this was one.

The manuscripts often put in this type include Mark's Gospel in $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ and Codex Washington (032 W), Codex Koridethi (038 Θ), and Families 1 and 13. Others have modified this theory by, for example, finding its origins in Egypt. Larry Hurtado, however, has shown that the Caesarean text at best is a secondary (or derived) and not a primary text-type,[167] and so most textual critics no longer recognize it and do not treat it as one of the three major or distinct text-types.

■ *ALEXANDRIAN AND WESTERN*

Many, if not most, textual critics today (see the discussion above) believe that there were two major early text-types that can be ascertained, the Alexandrian and the Western. A number of scholars see the Alexandrian and Western text-types as being equally early, with both having their origins in the second century. What we now call the Alexandrian text-type is Westcott and Hort's Neutral text, consisting of Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), plus their Alexandrian text. This text-type is also represented by a number of early papyri, such as $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ and [75]. The Western text has some early papyri, most of them fragmentary, and Codex Bezae (05 D), as well as the Old Latin and Old Syriac versions, which date possibly to the end of the second century.

Those who have argued since the time of Westcott and Hort that the Western text-type is at least as ancient as the Alexandrian base this position primarily on evidence related to the book of Acts, where we have two versions of Acts to compare. Some scholars, such as the classical philologist Friedrich Blass (1843–1907) and others since his time, argue that the Western text of Acts was written before the Alexandrian text, as it is supposedly more Lukan in style. In response, questions have been raised about such a stylistic method of analysis. Instead, many textual critics see the Western text as derived from the Alexandrian, which accounts for the diffuseness of the evidence of the Western text in a number of different and inconsistent manuscripts. There are also a number of other features of the Western text that appear to be late, including theological additions,[170] harmonization, and paraphrase. I have examined the early Greek papyri and parchments that are claimed to attest to the Western text of Acts. I studied nine such manuscripts for what have been identified as distinctly Western readings. I found that in the nine manuscripts there are textual variants, as one might expect. However, where a given manuscript does not agree with both Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and Codex Vaticanus (03 B), it is not unusual to find the manuscript agreeing with one of them. There are variants in these manuscripts that appear in Codex Bezae (05 D), but in some instances in Sinaiticus (01 א) and/or Vaticanus (03 B) as well. An even smaller number of variants can be characterized as distinctly Western, and these are confined to only two of the nine manuscripts, [38] (AD 300) and 48 (late third century), the latter of which appears to be mixed. I conclude from this that the so-called Western text-type was a definably later development when compared to the Alexandrian text-type, and it tends to draw upon a number of variants out of a wider number that came to be identified with this tradition.

The Alexandrian text-type was identified by Westcott and Hort as the earliest, on the basis of both external evidence of age and internal evidence regarding readings. Previous scholarship has suggested a number of different possible recensions of the Alexandrian tradition. They range from a gradual process of recension in the second and third centuries, or a recension by Origen in the early third century, to a recension by Hesychius in the early fourth century.

However, with the discovery of the Greek papyri, especially the publication of $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ in 1961 and the contrastive $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ in 1958, theories regarding the recensional nature of the Alexandrian text-type as a whole have been discounted.[176] $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, although dated by the original editors from around AD 175 to 225, is a carefully copied manuscript that is homogenous with Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and thus shows that the text found in Vaticanus was already in existence in the second century. $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$, dated originally to no later than the beginning of the third century AD (i.e., c. AD 200), but possibly to the mid-second century and probably AD 200 at the latest (the same for 75), however, shows sloppy recensional activity that changes and then corrects the text.[179] This points to the fact that, with $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ as a recensional contrast, the text of $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ and Codex Vaticanus (03 B) does not reflect recensional activity but reflects a stable tradition. Thus, the manuscript evidence, as found in the major majuscule codexes, and then confirmed by early papyri, points to the Alexandrian text-type as the earliest (and a very stable) textual witness. It is the Alexandrian text that has been the basis of virtually all major critical texts of the New Testament from Westcott and Hort to the present.[20]

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[20] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 57–64). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Eclectic or Single Manuscript?

In light of the use of the Alexandrian text-type as the basis of our modern printed Greek New Testaments, some scholars have come to argue that we now have, if not quite the original Greek text, at least one that is very close to it. For example, Aland and Aland refer in their introduction to several categories of texts. One is "the ancient text, presumably the original text. As a working hypothesis this is the text of Nestle-Aland[26]." A statement such as this requires further examination.

The text of NA[25], by the Alands' own estimate, is different only in 700 places from the original edition of Nestle's text of 1898, and different from Westcott and Hort's edition only in 558 places. The supposedly more radical NA (the twenty-seventh edition is the same textual edition) has been changed only in 176 places, but it rejects 980 possible places where the earliest papyri have another reading, including rejecting readings from $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$. As a result, Robinson has estimated that the current Nestle-Aland edition is 99.5 percent the same as Westcott and Hort's edition.[202]

There are three major considerations to weigh here. The first is the minimal role that the papyri have played in the development of the modern critical Greek New Testament. At the time that Tischendorf published his eighth edition in 1869–1872, and Westcott and Hort published their New Testament in 1881, there was only one Greek New Testament papyrus known and published, and it only in part. Nestle used Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, along with Weymouth, and then Weiss. Weymouth was also a compilation text of previous editions. By the time Weiss published his edition in 1900, only about seven papyri had been published. To date, 127 papyri numbers have been assigned, but 41 of these after NA[26]; however, at least 20 of these 127 numbers probably should be excluded because the papyrus is not a continuous text of the New Testament (and instead is a lectionary, talisman, commentary, or the like) or duplicates another number. Of those 107 or so remaining, as many as 63 were inscribed before the copying of the major codexes (although as many as seven of these may not qualify as continuous text manuscripts). However, even if all of the possible papyri had been taken into account, there is some question of how that would have influenced the resulting text, as the papyri tend to be highly fragmentary (there are only a few relatively complete New Testament books) and do not so much represent a text as support readings and push back in time readings found in the major codexes. As a result, according to Petersen, there is no single place indicated in the critical apparatus for the Gospels in the NA/UBS text where a textual reading is supported on the basis of papyri or papyri and patristic evidence alone.[205]

The second consideration is that the major codexes are the basis of our eclectic critical texts, both in their origins as critical texts and so far as their further development indicates. As noted above, the basis of the Westcott and Hort critical text was their so-called Neutral text of Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and Codex Sinaiticus (01 א). Nestle used Westcott and Hort's text along with Tischendorf's eighth edition, which was heavily influenced by his discovery and the publication of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) in 1862, an event that had occurred since his publication of his seventh edition in 1859. Thus, when Nestle made decisions by comparing editions, the two primary sources of information and the basis of his edition were the major codexes, in particular Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and Codex Sinaiticus (01 א). The influence of the papyri since then has been negligible.

The third consideration is to reinforce that the major critical editions are eclectic texts, and therefore they do not conform to any extant ancient manuscript. Ever since Tischendorf, including Westcott and Hort, Nestle, and the rest, the resulting critical text is one formulated on the principles of reasoned or rational eclecticism. This means that a range of both external and internal evidence is weighed, and text-critical decisions are made, with the result that no single early manuscript

conforms to the reconstructed eclectic text. In that sense, the critical text of the New Testament today is only as old as nineteenth-century scholarship.

In light of this, I recommend that those seeking the original text of the New Testament consider seeking it through individual manuscripts. As I stated in an earlier publication, "I would suggest that we recognize what tacitly is the case and move away from an idealized eclectic text that never existed in any Christian community back to the codexes that still form the basis of our modern textual tradition.… These codexes represent the Bible of a given Christian community, and while they may not represent the text as it came penned from the author, this is probably as early as we can get while still preserving the integrity of the New Testament." For the entire New Testament in Greek, the earliest complete Greek New Testament is that of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), since Codex Vaticanus (03 B) is lacking part of the book of Hebrews and beyond (which presumably included the Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, and Revelation). For individual books within the New Testament, one could use the individual books in Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), and those in Codex Vaticanus (03 B) for everything up to Hebrews. A few papyri manuscripts might possibly qualify. These papyri perhaps would include 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Hebrews, except for up to six verses in each, missing at the bottoms of pages, in $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ (Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians are more fragmentary); and possibly 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude in $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$.

This proposal makes sense in several ways. If Westcott and Hort's edition is clearly based on the two major codexes, and the current text is 99.5 percent the same—that is, with all of the other evidence that has been brought to bear, including papyri and all else, only 0.5 percent different— it seems as if we are already in essence using the text of the two major codexes. If our goal is to seek the earliest text that we legitimately can find, without abandoning the claim to be seeking the original even if we know that we can only get back so far, then it makes sense to use the earliest actual texts that we can find. These manuscripts preserve texts that were actually used in the early church and, though not the originals, in some cases get back to actual texts that date to the early fourth century, if not earlier, such as AD 200 or earlier for $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ and AD 300 for $\mathfrak{P}^{72}$. These actual texts were written and used in the early church, and in reality they get closer to the original autographs in terms of quantifiable evidence than a text edited in the nineteenth, twentieth, and now twenty-first centuries.[21]

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[21] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 72–75). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

A Reconstructed History of the Transmission of the Greek New Testament before the Major Codexes

At some point in the first century the books of the New Testament were written. This statement is controverted by some scholars who want to place particular New Testament books in the second century. I do not believe that this is accurate, and I believe that there is substantial evidence that points in the opposite direction. However, my purpose here is not to discuss the original date of composition of the books of the New Testament, but to discuss their textual transmission and how that fits within a reconstruction of the formation of the New Testament.

The New Testament is conveniently divided into three major subcorpora. For the sake of discussion, I will begin with the Gospels and Acts, then go to the Pauline Epistles, and then make a few comments on the rest of the New Testament. For each subcorpus of the New Testament I will offer my reconstruction of the transmissional history of this body of books, so far as it is possible from the available manuscript and related evidence.

The Gospels and Acts

Tradition regarding Jesus circulated orally for a short period of time. The first and only sustained evidence that we have of the words and tradition of Jesus, however, is in Greek or embedded in Greek documents. Whatever languages Jesus spoke, and the proportions in which he spoke them, very early these words were put into Greek. In fact, on the basis of the extant evidence, it is difficult to imagine that Jesus's words were ever widely recorded or transmitted in any language other than Greek, as there is no extant evidence of anything but early Greek New Testament documents. If there was a document called "Q,"[15] and if it was in written form, then it appears that it would have been written in Greek. Regarding Synoptic origins, the Markan priority and two/four-source hypothesis still commands the most assent.[17] This hypothesis seems to work on the basis of Mark being written in Greek and used in Greek by Matthew and Luke. Even if another hypothesis is adopted, the documents seem already to have been in Greek.

The estimated dates for the composition of the Gospels vary considerably, but all agree that they were written in the first century. Acts was almost certainly written in the first century as well. I think that Acts was written around AD 64/65, while Paul was in prison and before he was either released or killed. If this is so—and I think that it is the most plausible explanation of the ending of Acts and the traditional view regarding authorship and Paulinism—and if Acts was written after the Gospel of Luke, then Luke's Gospel was written before AD 64/65. If that is so, then Mark was written before this date as well.[21] Matthew may have been written later, but since Matthew's apocalyptic account (chap. 24) gives little specific historical information that correlates with the fall of Jerusalem and seems to have made use of the same body of common tradition as Luke's Gospel, it seems to me to have been written around the same time as Luke's Gospel. Virtually all scholars agree that John's Gospel was the last written and that this would have occurred, at the latest, around AD 90. It may have been written earlier. However, even if I am wrong on this reconstruction, the evidence seems to indicate that John's Gospel was the last of the Gospels and was written somewhere around AD 90, on the basis of $\mathfrak{P}^{52}$, the small fragment of John's Gospel (18:31–33, 35–38) found in Egypt, and that the other Gospels and Acts were written sometime before this.

The second century is usually viewed as a tunnel period in which we think we know very little about the development of early Christianity, and especially of the documents connected with it.

However, there is surprisingly strong manuscript evidence worth considering that indicates that sometime in the second century the fixed corpus of four Gospels and Acts was firmly established. Here I will examine some of the evidence that points in this direction. If this evidence is convincing, it establishes a strong, even if not absolutely continuous, line of transmissional continuity from the original documents to the abundance of later manuscript evidence.

$\mathfrak{P}^{45}$

This is one of the most important early papyri of the Gospels and Acts. We know that by the time $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ was written, the four Gospels and Acts appear to have been treated as a fixed corpus of material. $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, one of the Chester Beatty papyri (P.Chester Beatty I), was purchased in 1930–1931 and published by Frederic Kenyon in 1933–1934. The manuscript appears to have been part of a papyrus codex of an estimated 224 pages. The manuscript has been dated to the first half of the third century (c. AD 200–250) by Kenyon and a number of other papyrologists. The manuscript contains portions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts, and apparently nothing more. On the basis of wear of the individual pages, and the ordering found in earlier manuscripts, it is possible that the manuscript was arranged in the order Matthew, Luke, John, Mark, Acts. This is not surprising. Although most manuscripts follow our now usual canonical order, the Western or Latin church apparently had a different order, as evidenced by the fifth-century Codex Bezae (05 D), which follows the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark. $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ seems to have an order that reflects the period before a fixed order within the subcorpus was determined. The character of the individual books varies. Mark has characteristics of the late fourth- or early fifth-century Freer Gospel (032 W), Codex Bezae (05 D), and some Old Latin manuscripts, as well as what some used to call the Caesarean text. Matthew, Luke, and John are a mix of Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and Codex Bezae (05 D), while Acts reflects the Alexandrian text-type. Thus, by the early years of the third century, we have the four Gospels and Acts in a single codex of some size. Acts is not always linked to the Gospels in later manuscripts, however. It is found after the Gospels in Codex Vaticanus (03 B) and the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus (02 A), and in lists from the Council of Laodicea (AD 363), Cyril of Jerusalem (fourth century), the Council of Carthage (AD 397), Amphilochius of Iconium (fourth century), Philastrius (fourth century), Rufinus (fourth/fifth century), John Chrysostom (fourth/fifth century), the Syriac Canon (fifth century), Peshitta (Syriac) (fifth century), and John of Damascus (seventh/eighth century). However, Acts is found separate from the Gospels in Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and the sixth-century Latin Codex Fuldensis (09 F), and in the lists of Epiphanius (fourth century), Jerome (fourth/fifth century), and Eucherius (fifth century).

TATIAN'S *DIATESSARON*

There are other bodies of evidence to consider, however, that push our knowledge of the transmission of the Gospels even earlier. One of these is the *Diatessaron*. The *Diatessaron* was created by Tatian (c. AD 120–180), a disciple of Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) in Rome. Tatian took the four Gospels—the same four found in the later $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$—and harmonized them apparently around the Johannine narrative into a form that was widely used in the church, possibly sometime around AD 150–172, before his expulsion from Rome (although many if not most scholars now opt for it being compiled after the expulsion, AD 173–185). It appears that the Gospels in the Latin church were early on known in the form of Tatian's *Diatessaron*. There has been dispute over the original language of the *Diatessaron*, whether Latin, Greek, or Syriac, as knowledge of it is

significantly later and only in indirect form. There are a number of sources or witnesses to the *Diatessaron*: a commentary on it in Armenian by Ephraem of Syria in the fourth century, an Arabic translation surviving in six manuscripts from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries, a single manuscript of a Persian harmony, Syriac versions, Gospel quotations in later writers, Old Armenian and Old Georgian versions of the Gospels, Manichaean documents, Kontakia of Romanos Melodus, Arabic and Karsuni Gospel manuscripts, the sixth-century Codex Fuldensis (actual date, AD 541–546) in Latin that uses the *Diatessaron* in the Vulgate text for its Gospel (there was probably an earlier Old Latin version), the Liège harmony and its medieval Dutch and Middle High German, medieval Italian harmonies, Middle English harmony, and western poetic sources (obviously, not all of these are of equal value). The evidence seems to indicate that the *Diatessaron* was originally written possibly in Greek or more probably in Syriac, but that is not crucial to what it tells us.

This document, or at least its reconstruction, tells us two probable things and possibly a third. The first is that the number of authoritative Gospel texts was established by the time Tatian created his harmony. Some note that there may have been other texts, even extracanonical Gospels, included in Tatian's harmony (the so-called fifth source). Victor of Capua (sixth century), in his preface to the Codex Fuldensis, refers to Tatian's work with the title *Diapente* ("through five"), a reference that has proved perplexing to scholars. Some have, as a result, wished to identify this "fifth source." However, Victor also says that Tatian, according to Eusebius, "combined one gospel out of the four, for which he composed the title 'Diapente.' " Many possible explanations of this title have been suggested, including Victor's making an error (see below on Eusebius), but that it refers to noncanonical Gospels is unlikely (was it only one noncanonical Gospel [*Gospel of the Hebrews*, *Protevangelium of James*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*, among others, have been suggested], or does he lump all the possible sources together?). It is more likely that the title refers to a fifth Gospel that has been created out of the four. Tatian's was not the only *Diatessaron* known. Eusebius refers to one by a virtually unknown Ammonius of Alexandria (late second to early third century) based upon Matthew with the other three Gospels alongside. Theophilus of Antioch (late second century), according to Jerome, also "put together into one work the words of the four gospels." Eusebius himself is the one who names Tatian as the author of the *Diatessaron*. He states that Tatian "brought together a certain combination and collection—I do not know how—of the gospels, he called this the Diatessaron." Eusebius claims that Tatian called it a *Diatessaron*, and this Greek name was used of the work even in its Syriac forms. Tatian's work, like that of the other harmonizers, was perceived to be a harmony based upon the four Gospels. It may be true that there was some influence of extracanonical sources, but this is, if anything, relatively minor. Many of the possible other sources are better explained as theologically based or possibly even later additions, so that the actual number of possible instances of extracanonical influence is relatively slight, certainly nothing that calls into question that the attribution of the work as a compilation of the four Gospels accurately describes what readers perceived. Or, one might ask, if the reference is to four, what four Gospels were meant other than the four now canonical Gospels? As Metzger states, "The amount of extra-canonical material that seems to have been present in Tatian's Diatessaron hardly justifies the opinion of some scholars that Tatian made extensive use of a fifth, apocryphal gospel when he compiled his Harmony."[43] More to the point regarding all of the early harmonies mentioned, of which the *Diatessaron* is the only one for which we have substantive evidence, "The *Diatessaron* supplies proof that all four Gospels were regarded as authoritative, otherwise it is unlikely that Tatian would have dared to combine them into one gospel account. At a time when many gospels were competing for attention, it is certainly significant that Tatian

selected just these four—nor does the presence of an occasional extra-canonical phrase or clause in the fabric of the *Diatessaron* neutralize this consideration." If the *Diatessaron* was originally written in Greek, then these four Gospels were already established as the four Gospels to use. If it was written in Syriac, then the four had almost assuredly already been established so as to be translated from Greek into Syriac for Tatian to harmonize. In either case, it shows the firm establishment of the four Gospels as a corpus by the mid-second century, if not earlier.

The second probable conclusion is that the *Diatessaron* was most likely created by Tatian before he was branded a heretic in AD 172 for adopting views that led him to join the Encratites (i.e., the Continent or Self-Controlled). The basis for this conclusion is that even though Tatian was branded a heretic, his *Diatessaron* continued to find widespread use in a variety of churches, and the Gospels were transmitted in this form to many of them. That his *Diatessaron* continued to be used despite his heretical views indicates that these were the four recognized Gospels at least by the time he undertook this task.

The third possible conclusion is that, especially if the *Diatessaron* was written in Syriac, it may not have been the first harmony of this type. What little evidence we have of previous harmonies (e.g., by Justin Martyr or even a source that he used) pushes recognition of the four Gospels even earlier.

■ 0212

Parchment 0212 was first identified as a part of Tatian's *Diatessaron*. However, 0212 has recently been reexamined by a team of text-critical scholars. The conclusion of that examination is that this Greek fragment, with parts of the four Gospels (Matt. 27:56–57; Mark 15:40, 42; Luke 23:49–51, 54; John 19:38), is not a part of the *Diatessaron* but is still a Greek harmony of the Gospels from the "latter part of the second century." This fragment was found at Dura Europos, in Syria, where Tatian's *Diatessaron* gained widespread currency. Even though this is perhaps not evidence of the *Diatessaron*, it indicates instead another strong piece of evidence for the four Gospels in a single harmonized form from the second century, and found in a place where at least one other harmony of the exact same Gospels became popular.

■ MARCION (C. AD 85–160)

The next piece of evidence is from Marcion. We know very little about Marcion, the heretic who was excommunicated in AD 144 in Rome. All of Marcion's writings have disappeared (I will return to Marcion below), but from the words of his many adversaries in the late second century we can reconstruct something of what he thought about the Gospels. Irenaeus (AD 130–200) writes that Marcion "mutilates the Gospel which is according to Luke, removing all that is written respecting the generation of the Lord" (*Haer.* 27.2[*ANF* 1.352]). We know that Marcion accepted only Luke's Gospel but "persuaded his disciples that he himself was more worthy of credit than are those apostles who have handed down the Gospel to us, furnishing them not with the Gospel, but merely a fragment of it" (*Haer.* 27.2 [*ANF* 1.352]). Irenaeus's use of the plural "apostles" indicates that he knew of more than one Gospel that Marcion chose from. Tertullian (AD 160–220) distinguishes between Matthew and John being written by apostles and Mark and Luke being written by apostolic men, and notes that Marcion chose Luke's Gospel for his purposes (*Marc.* 4.2, 5 [*ANF* 3.347, 350]). These all may have been referred to as "apostles" by Irenaeus. Thus, if these church fathers are to be believed, Marcion had Gospels to choose from, and they seem to be the four Gospels in our New Testament (the ones I have been discussing). This implies that these

four Gospels were already recognized before Marcion did his selection, and it pushes the four recognized Gospels back to the first half of the second century.

■ $\mathfrak{P}^4$, $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$

The next body of evidence concerns these three widely discussed papyri. $\mathfrak{P}^4$ was one of the earliest papyrus fragments published. It was found in 1889 and partially published in 1892 by the French scholar Vincent Scheil. At first dated to the sixth century, this date was moved back to the fourth and the third centuries, and later to the late second century, perhaps even to AD 150–175. This fragmentary manuscript was found in the binding of a codex of Philo discovered in Coptos, Egypt, along with a fragment in a different hand with the words ευαγγελιον κατα ματταθαιον, *euangelion kata mattathaion* ("gospel according to Matthew"). $\mathfrak{P}^4$ contains Luke 1:58–59; 1:62–2:1, 6–7; 3:8–4:2, 29–32, 34–35; 5:3–8; 5:30–6:16. The text is Alexandrian and is in well over 90 percent agreement with $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ and Codex Vaticanus (03 B). $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ was bought in Luxor, Egypt, by Charles Huleatt and donated to the Magdalen College library in Oxford. The manuscript was first given a third- and then a fourth-century date until it was published in 1953 by Colin Roberts, who dated it to the end of the second century. This manuscript contains Matthew 26:7–8, 10, 14–15, 22–23, 31–33. The text is Alexandrian with strong agreement with Codex Sinaiticus (01 ℵ). The third papyrus, $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$, with Matthew 3:9, 15, was published in 1956 with unknown provenance, and there is no record of its origins. However, Roberts was able to show in 1961 that $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ were from the same codex. Roberts speculated that $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ was one manuscript among many that Huleatt had purchased that were not given to Magdalen College.

Although Kurt Aland suggested in 1965 that $\mathfrak{P}^4$, $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ belonged together as part of a single manuscript, they are not listed that way in lists that he compiled. It was Roberts who claimed in 1977 that the three belonged together, an opinion that he repeated ten years later. On the basis of these findings, T. C. Skeat argued not only that these three papyri were part of the same codex but also that the three of them constituted the first single-quire (or gathering) codex that contained the four Gospels.[57] A number of scholars have followed Skeat in this opinion. If this is the case, then we have evidence of the four Gospels gathered in a single codex by the time of the late second century. Assuming that this is not the first time this happened, this codex would point to an earlier definitive gathering, sometime in the early to mid-second century. However, there have been some recent significant objections to Skeat's hypothesis that links the three papyri together.

There are a number of places where it appears that recent scholarship agrees regarding these three papyri: they are to be dated to the late second century, and they were written by the same scribe in a similar and compatible codicological format. Nevertheless, objections have been raised to their being from the same codex, and certainly the same quire.

One objection concerns the fibers of the papyri. The argument is that, upon examination, the fibers of $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ indicate that they could not have come from a single quire, as Skeat suggested, but that they came from two different quires of a multiquire codex. $\mathfrak{P}^4$ also comes from a multiquire codex. A second objection is that production of the codex followed at least two different principles. The thought is that $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ were written on separate unbound sheets, while $\mathfrak{P}^4$ was written on sheets that had already been gathered. A third argument for $\mathfrak{P}$4 being separate from $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ is that they do not have the same provenance; there is no indication that $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ were ever in the binding of the Philo codex. A fourth argument is that the color of the papyrus is radically different between the two sets of fragments.[62] A fifth and final argument is that the use of ekthesis varies, with $\mathfrak{P}^4$ having anywhere from one to two letters protruding into

the margin to indicate a paragraph or equivalent unit, while $\mathfrak{P}64$ and $\mathfrak{P}67$ have only a one-letter-width protrusion.

These are significant objections, and if they are proven, Skeat's case disintegrates. However, one must be cautious with all of these objections. The first two objections prove simply that there was not a single-quire codex, not that these could not have been written separately, even according to differing principles, and then gathered into a single codex. Hans Förster tells an interesting tale that admonishes caution:

> Peter Sanz had one half of a piece of papyrus measuring 12 cm by 14.5 cm which he published in his doctoral dissertation. In six lines, more than 130 letters can be read without any doubt; thus we have an average of more than 20 letters per line, while only a few letters are unclear. There are no lacunae which would be a problem for the identification of single words, thus there is no dispute about the words which were read by this gifted papyrologist. Sanz gave a very thorough commentary on this piece and convincingly reconstructed the text. In addition, the famous Professor Gerstinger was supervising his work. However, this text had one problem. The second half of the papyrus was later found, making this piece larger than Sanz had estimated. Thus, his entire identification and analysis are wrong, even though he read the existing passages correctly.

The example is not an exact parallel, but the point can be made nonetheless. There is much speculation regarding codicology and reconstructing such manuscripts. Caution is required on all sides. The third argument, regarding provenance, is not particularly telling, as $\mathfrak{P}^4$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ seem to have been found in the same area. Scholars who have no trouble linking $\mathfrak{P}64$ and $\mathfrak{P}67$ do not mind that $\mathfrak{P}67$ has no direct provenance. The major problem is that the Matthean papyri ($\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$) were not found in the binding of Philo, as was $\mathfrak{P}^4$. However, according to Jean Merrell's account, the fragment with ευαγγελιον κατα ματταθαιαν, *euangelion kata mattathaian* ("gospel according to Matthew") was found with the Lukan text in the binding of Philo, indicating that at least at one point a Matthean text had been attached. The ascription is written in a different hand, and the form of the ascription with the word ευαγγελιον, *euangelion* ("gospel") is most likely second century (see $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$, possibly mid-second century and probably no later than AD 200, and $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, AD 175 to possibly 225, though possibly second century for both). The fourth objection, regarding the coloring of the papyri, is not significant, as I have examined other papyri from the same manuscript that vary widely in coloring and discoloration. The fifth objection, concerning ekthesis, is based upon limited evidence because of the size of the fragments. There are thirteen instances of ekthesis in $\mathfrak{P}4$, but only one each in $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$, hardly enough for definitive comparison.

If these objections cannot be sustained (and they are not telling), we are still left with the possibility of $\mathfrak{P}^4$, $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ being the first testimony of a multiquire codex of the Gospels. The format for production of the two sets of fragments is similar and compatible, as one would expect from a single scribe. The format for each indicates that there could have been other material before or after in the codex. It is true that we have direct evidence for only two of the Gospels. As Peter Head has pointed out, there are a number of different collections, such as $\mathfrak{P}^{53}$ with Matthew and Acts (mid-third century AD), $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ with Luke and John, and 0171 with Matthew and Luke (c. AD 300). However, what Head has indicated is that there are possibilities of these also having been at one time four-Gospel (plus) collections; at least there is nothing in these combinations that precludes their having been like $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ with all four Gospels and even Acts, and nothing that says they were limited to two books or Gospels.

I believe that the ascription with $\mathfrak{P}^4$, $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ may be an indication that the collection of manuscripts that we call $\mathfrak{P}^4$, $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$, and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$ contained at least two Gospels if not more. This supposition may get some support from the title found in $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$, where two ascriptions are found

back to back: ευαγγελιον κατα λουκαν, *euangelion kata loukan* ("gospel according to Luke") at the end of Luke's Gospel, and then ευαγγελιον κατα ιοανην, *euangelion kata ioanēn* ("gospel according to John") before the start of John's Gospel. In other words, these titles were found at the start and finish of each book for ease of reference, implying that there were more than simply two books included. John's inclusion may very well indicate that all four Gospels were originally included in either the order Matthew, Luke, John, Mark or the order Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

■ LONGER ENDING OF MARK

The sixth and final piece of direct New Testament evidence concerns the so-called longer ending of Mark. David Parker has discussed the endings of Mark. He indicates that the short ending is early (if not original) on the basis of several key arguments, including direct and indirect manuscript evidence. Codexes Vaticanus (03 B) and Sinaiticus (01 ℵ) provide the earliest direct manuscript evidence for the short ending (Mark 16:1–8), but we know from a manuscript such as 𝔓[75] that the Alexandrian text found in these major codexes reflects a tradition that dates to the second century, and thus a short ending is very early. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, the fact that there are both the intermediate and long endings indicates that there was a short ending that was prior to the intermediate long endings, even if the short ending was considered unsatisfactory.

Concerning the long ending, however, Parker's findings are equally significant. The earliest possible reference to a verse in the long ending of Mark (16:20) may be in Justin Martyr (writing around AD 155), who refers to Jesus, "whom his apostles going out from Jerusalem proclaimed everywhere" (*1 Apol.* 45). The wording here shares three words—"going out" (ἐξελθόντες, *exelthontes*), "proclaimed" (ἐκήρυξαν, *ekēryxan*), and "everywhere" (πανταχοῦ, *pantachou*)—with Mark 16:20, the only verse in the New Testament where these three words are found together. The long ending is also reportedly in Tatian's *Diatessaron*, on the basis of the Persian Gospel Harmony (Mark 16:14, 16, 19). Irenaeus cites Mark 16:10: "At the end of the Gospel Mark says, And so the Lord Jesus after he had spoken to them, was taken into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (*Haer.* 3.10.6). There are other later references as well. This evidence indicates that, at least by AD 155, there appears to have been a long ending to Mark, which was designed to supplement the shorter, quite possibly original, and earlier ending of Mark.

Also important to note is that the long ending of Mark appears to be a pastiche of passages from the other Gospels and Acts. Following is a list of some of these:

Mark 16:9: Jesus rises on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; cf. Mark 16:2)
Mark 16:9: Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11–18; cf. Matthew 28:1, 9–10)
Mark 16:10: women's report to the others (Luke 24:10; John 20:18)
Mark 16:11: unbelief at the women's report (Luke 24:11)
Mark 16:12: Jesus appears to two on a journey (Luke 24:13–35)
Mark 16:13: report to the others (Luke 24:33–35)
Mark 16:14: Jesus appears to the eleven (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 26)
Mark 16:14: reproach for unbelief (Luke 24:36–43)
Mark 16:15: mandate to go into all the world (Matthew 28:19a)
Mark 16:16: belief, baptism, condemnation (Matthew 28:19b; John 3:18, 36)
Mark 16:17: things done in Jesus's name (Matthew 28:19b)

Mark 16:17: casting out demons and speaking in tongues (Luke 10:17–18; Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6)
Mark 16:18: handling snakes (Acts 28:3–5)
Mark 16:18: laying hands on the sick (Acts 9:17; 28:8)
Mark 16:19: Jesus's ascension (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9)
Mark 16:19: the right hand of God (Mark 10:32–40; Matthew 20:20–23)
Mark 16:20: disciples sent out (Luke 9:1–2; 10:1, 17)

Craig Evans sees Mark 16:12–13 as especially derived from Luke 24:13–35, and Mark 16:15–17 from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20. Although a few of the passages in Mark's long ending may come from other places in the New Testament, all the most convincing ones come from the four Gospels and Acts. If the reconstruction above is correct, the implication is that the long ending of Mark was created at least by the mid-second century. It was created, however, by drawing upon material at least as important and accessible as Mark's Gospel: the three other Gospels and Acts. In other words, the four Gospels and Acts were already apparently considered a collected body of authoritative writings of the church by the early part of the second century, so that when later writers wished to "complete" Mark's Gospel, they drew upon these Gospels.

■ EXTRACANONICAL WRITINGS

This status for the four Gospels is confirmed by examination of important extracanonical works. These texts, though never so widely neglected as some have lately erroneously contended, have again been at the forefront of discussion. I select for mention several that probably were composed fairly early.

■ *TWO SMALL FRAGMENTS*

It has long been recognized that the second century, despite our relative lack of knowledge, was a time of development and expansion in the writing of Christian documents. Several extracanonical Gospels have been dated to the second century that bear examination for what they can tell us about the state of the New Testament documents. One of these is possibly the so-called Fayyum fragment (P.Vindob. G 2325).[75] This fragment of an extracanonical Gospel is clearly an amalgamation of Mark 14:26–30 and Matthew 26:30–34, in which Peter hears the rooster crow. Another is P.Oxy. LX 4009,[76] thought (erroneously) by some to be a part of the *Gospel of Peter.* This is probably at best an extracanonical writing dependent upon several Gospels. For example, reference to "harvest" in line 4 is dependent upon Matthew 9:37 or Luke 10:2; being "wise as" in lines 5–6, on Matthew 10:16b; mention of "wolf" in line 8, on Luke 10:3; and use of "say," "do," and "kill" in lines 11–16, on Luke 12:4–5.

■ *P.EGERTON 2*

The most important apocryphal text for this discussion is the so-called Egerton papyrus (P.Egerton 2 = P.Lond.Christ. 1). There has been much recent discussion regarding the date of P.Egerton 2. The original editors suggested a date of around AD 150, later revised to AD 140–160 for the manuscript, with original composition of the text recorded as no later than AD 110–130. This scheme was later challenged by Michael Gronewald, who posited a date of around AD 200 for transcription, on the basis of the use of the apostrophe in the joined P.Köln VI 255 fragment.[80] However, like Philip Comfort and David Barrett, Gronewald apparently misunderstood Eric Turner's statement regarding the use of the apostrophe. Gronewald seems to think that the use of

the apostrophe necessitates a third-century AD date. The apostrophe, however, according to Turner's own evidence, is also found in the second century, not only in the third and after, even if not frequently. I recently made an evidential comparison of P.Egerton 2 with other manuscripts, and I confirm a date no later than around AD 180–190. What is important to note about this extracanonical document, however, is that it is derivative from the four canonical Gospels. There are four major units to the P.Egerton 2 papyrus, each of which appears to be directly derivative from Gospel material.

Episode 1. Jesus speaks to lawyers and tells them to search the Scriptures, in which they think they have life, because these Scriptures bear witness of him. Jesus says that he did not come to accuse them, but Moses accuses them. They respond by questioning who Jesus is. This passage appears to be dependent upon at least three specific Johannine texts: John 5:39, where Jesus tells his hearers to search the Scriptures, because they think they have eternal life in them, and the Scriptures bear witness to him; John 5:45, where it is not Jesus but Moses who accuses his hearers; and John 9:29, where Jesus's interlocutors know of Moses, but not who Jesus is.

Episode 2. Counsel is given to stone Jesus, and the rulers seek to lay hands on him, but they cannot take him, because his hour has not come. He departs through their midst. A leper comes to him and asks for cleansing, which request Jesus grants. The leprosy goes away, and the man is told to go to the priests. This passage appears to be dependent upon a number of Johannine passages, as well as a number of Synoptic Gospel passages. The Johannine passages include John 8:59; 10:31, which say that they tried to stone Jesus; John 7:30, 44; 10:39, where they seek but fail to capture Jesus. Luke 4:30 states that Jesus passed through the midst of the crowd and went away. The episode with the leper seems to reflect elements of Matthew 8:2–3; Mark 1:40–42; Luke 5:12–13, along with Luke 17:14. The unit closes with wording from a combination of Mark 1:44; Matthew 8:4; Luke 17:14. What is important to note here is that whereas the Synoptic accounts reflect a common incident, P.Egerton 2 appears sometimes to reflect Matthew's account, and then sometimes Luke's. The form of address of the leper to Jesus, "Teacher Jesus," shows later theological interpretation.

Episode 3. After stating that something is shut up, Jesus stands on the edge of the Jordan and stretches out his right hand and sprinkles something on the water, which brings forth fruit. This passage is highly fragmentary and difficult to reconstruct, but the specific episode of standing at the bank of the Jordan is not found in the Gospels, although the language does appear to reflect the Gospels. The opening may reflect John 12:24, concerning the seed, and similar references to the Jordan River are found in Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5. Reference to joy at the end of the passage may reflect Luke 2:10.

Episode 4. Jesus's interlocutors attempt to test him with a question. They state that they know he is from God, but then they ask whether it is lawful to give to kings what pertains to their rule. Jesus realizes their thoughts and becomes angry, and he questions their integrity. He notes that Isaiah recognized that people pay honor with their lips but not with their hearts. This passage appears to be dependent upon a mix of passages that supplement the Synoptic episode regarding giving taxes to Caesar. These passages include Matthew 22:16, but also Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21, where people approach Jesus and acknowledge him as master and then ask him about the tax to Caesar. John 3:2 takes a similar approach, recognizing

that Jesus is a good teacher (cf. John 10:25). Luke 6:46; 18:19 depict Jesus as responding to interlocutors in terms of why they call him "Lord" or "good." Language in which Jesus condemns hypocrisy is found in Matthew 15:7–9, as well as in Mark 7:6–7 with reference to Isaiah. Jesus is again addressed in P.Egerton 2 as "Teacher Jesus."

Apart from the episode at the river, part of a highly fragmentary section, all of the episodes recorded in P.Egerton 2 clearly reflect a pastiche of Gospel references. As Joachim Jeremias states, "There are contacts with all four Gospels. The juxtaposition of Johannine … and Synoptic material … and the fact that the Johannine material is shot through with Synoptic phrases and the Synoptic with Johannine usage, permits the conjecture that the author knew all and every one of the canonical Gospels.… The text shows no historical knowledge that carries us beyond the canonical Gospels."[85] If this is the case, and the reconstructed date is correct, this exclusive use of the four canonical Gospels goes back to the earliest days of the second century.

After surveying this range of Gospel and related evidence, where do we stand regarding the textual transmission of the first of the three divisions of the text of the New Testament canon? I think that quite a lot can be said about the transmission of this important part of the New Testament. I have been able to look back to the earliest years of the second century and establish the use of the Gospels as a definable corpus of sacred writings. We can see clear continuity with the first century and observe that by the early years of the second century the four Gospels and possibly Acts were probably already established as an authoritative body of Christian literature, which the noncanonical gospels use in their later depictions of Jesus. This body of authoritative literature was then transmitted through the second and third centuries. By the late second and into the third century, we find $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$, which contains the four Gospels and Acts, and a manuscript such as $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ with Luke and John, but quite possibly implying the other Gospels if not Acts, if the pattern that I noted above holds true.

In the fourth century the major codexes emerge. The two major deluxe codexes are Codex Sinaiticus (01 ℵ) and Codex Vaticanus (03 B). Both of them have the four Gospels and Acts, as well as other New Testament books (and a version of the Old Testament in Greek as well). There appears to be a strong line of continuity from the second century to the fourth, with our four canonical Gospels emerging as a whole together out of the second century.

The Pauline Epistles

The Pauline Epistles are the second subcorpus for consideration, in terms of reconstructing a history of the transmission of the Greek New Testament before the major codexes. Tradition says that during his lifetime Paul wrote (at least) thirteen letters that we now have in our collection of Pauline Epistles. Critical scholarship since the beginning of the eighteenth century has raised questions about authorship and date of composition. The most extreme critics have doubted Pauline authorship of each and every one of the Pauline Epistles. Since such skepticism must surely end up doubting one's own existence, such arguments must be doubted as well. More serious have been those who have followed Ferdinand Christian Baur and maintained Pauline authorship of the four main epistles. Today the critical consensus has grown from four to seven letters, including Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The rest of the letters are often considered pseudonymous, with a date of composition from right after Paul's death in approximately AD 65 to well into the second century for the so-called Pastoral Epistles. For a number of reasons that I cannot explicate here, I believe that the traditional

ascription of the thirteen letters to Paul is historically and critically defensible, and I will work from that standpoint in this section. This position actually creates a number of problems for the type of scenario regarding transmission of the New Testament that I will develop further because it includes a larger number of letters (thirteen) within this subcorpus. Nevertheless, I believe that this is explainable within the theory that I am proposing.

In other words, I believe that sometime around AD 65 Paul died, having written at least the thirteen letters ascribed to him, as well as other letters that are not in our Pauline letter collection. As with discussion of the canonical Gospels, the second century is a tunnel period in terms of transmission of the New Testament. Nevertheless, both the second and third centuries merit careful consideration concerning the transmission of Paul's letters. Examination of some of the manuscripts that bear witness to these letters gives us insight into their textual transmission.

■ THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

The second and third (or early fourth) centuries provide several bodies of evidence regarding the transmission of the Pauline Epistles.

■ $\mathfrak{P}^{92}$

By the time of the late third or early fourth century (i.e., by around AD 300), there is firm evidence of gathering of the Pauline Epistles into a single corpus. $\mathfrak{P}^{92}$, two small fragmentary leaves from a single codex, has portions of Ephesians (1:11–13 on the recto, 1:19–21 on the verso) and 2 Thessalonians (1:4–5 on the verso, 1:11–12 on the recto). When this papyrus was published in 1982, it was titled "Frammenti di un codice con le Epistole di Paolo" ("Fragment of a Codex with the Epistles of Paul"). There are no page numbers on the manuscript, but, as Comfort and Barrett state, "The two leaves must have been part of one sheet of a single-quire codex of Paul's epistles. This one sheet may have been somewhere near the middle, with Ephesians and Thessalonians separated only by Philippians and Colossians."[89] Although we do not know the full extent of this Pauline corpus that the manuscript originally contained, it is likely that it contained at least the thirteen letters attributed to Paul, along with quite possibly the book of Hebrews (a topic and book to which I will return immediately below).

■ $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$

We can go back earlier, however, to the second century. Perhaps as early as the mid-second century and probably by around AD 200, we have tangible documentation in $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ of a gathered corpus of Paul's letters. $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ (most of which is part of the Chester Beatty collection [II], and some of which is at the University of Michigan) is fragmentary in some respects, but it is sufficiently intact for us to recognize that it consists of Romans (beginning in chap. 5), Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 Thessalonians. Upon observation of this manuscript, three major issues emerge. The first is its ordering of books. Not only does this Pauline collection have Hebrews after Romans and before 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, but it also has Ephesians before Galatians. As noted above, the manuscript ends with 1 Thessalonians, although we know from the codex construction that certainly there was room for 2 Thessalonians and Philemon (2 Thessalonians is clearly included in the Pauline letter collection by the third/fourth century, as indicated by $\mathfrak{P}^{92}$). The second issue is its date of composition. When this manuscript was first published, $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ was dated by Kenyon to the third century, although several other papyrologists, including Günther Zuntz and Ulrich Wilcken, dated it to the second century

or at least not past AD 200. It has even been proposed by one scholar that $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ dates to AD 81–96. Although there is some basis for considering this date, most scholars believe that this is too early on paleographic grounds: the hand of $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ resembles an early Roman hand in some particulars but not overall. As a result, it has recently been proposed that the date of $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ is the mid-second century. A date of the mid-second to third century is clearly the range that scholars consider, and in light of the arguments presented, a date of around AD 200 is reasonable. The third issue is contents. The consensus from the time of Kenyon, the manuscript's original editor, has been that $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ included 2 Thessalonians and Philemon (2 Thessalonians is earliest attested, along with 1 Thessalonians, in the third-century papyrus $\mathfrak{P}^{30}$, and Philemon in the second- or third-century $\mathfrak{P}^{87}$, which closely resembles $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$), but it did not (now or ever) include the Pastoral Epistles. This argument was made on the supposition that the remaining leaves of the codex—it appears that there were fourteen more pages (seven leaves) after 1 Thessalonians—would not have had enough space for the Pastoral Epistles.[95] However, it has also been observed that the scribe was beginning to compress his letters, so that he would have had room to write at least 2 Thessalonians and Philemon with ten or eleven pages to spare, and therefore he would have had room enough for the bulk of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus; and if he ran out of room, he may simply have added an extra sheet or two. The earliest attested manuscript with any of the Pastoral Epistles is dated to the second half of the second century, so there is no evidential reason to doubt that the Pastoral Epistles were extant and possibly were even known by the copyist of $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$. David Trobisch also believes that this is the case, as he notes, "There is no manuscript evidence to prove that the letters of Paul ever existed in an edition containing only some of the thirteen letters." From $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, which is an early Alexandrian text-type, we learn that a likely scenario is that there was a canon of at least thirteen Pauline Epistles by around AD 200, and possibly as early as the mid-second century (if not earlier).[22]

HE WHO READS THE BIBLE IN TRANSLATION IS LIKE A MAN WHO KISSES HIS BRIDE THROUGH THE VEIL.

Hayim Nachman Bialik

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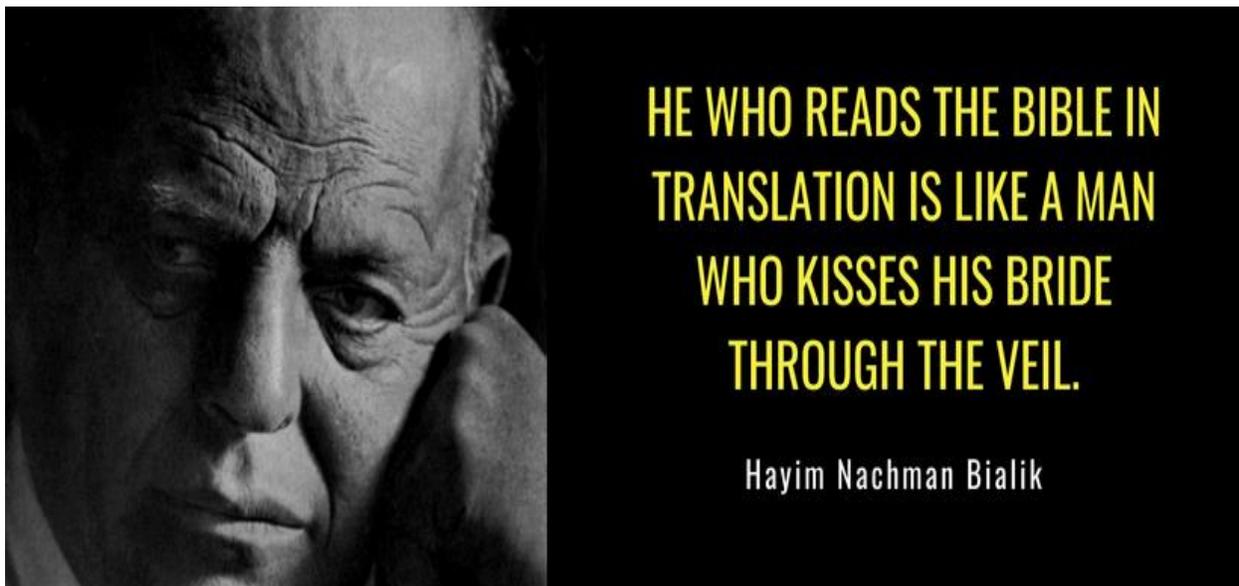
[22] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 84–110). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

The Major Codexes

The fourth and fifth centuries were the centuries of production of deluxe codexes that contained the entire Bible. The history that I reconstructed above gave evidence of early gathering of subcorpora of the New Testament, including the four Gospels and possibly Acts, the Pauline Epistles including Hebrews, and even the Catholic Epistles. By the fourth century all of these major parts of the New Testament had been brought together into one large book, along with the Old Testament. Various New Testament books, possibly as part of larger gatherings, but certainly individually, continued to be copied onto papyrus and parchment. However, with the conversion of Constantine and the institutionalization of Christianity, one of the major results was the production of major Bibles, in a form that is very much recognizable as similar to the Bible that we use today. There are four such great codexes extant that originally had both Testaments. A brief description of them gives further insight into the transmissional unity of the New Testament.

Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus

The two earliest major codexes are Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and Codex Vaticanus (03 B). Codex Vaticanus (03 B),[172] dated to the fourth century, has been in the Vatican library since at least 1481, when a catalogue records its presence. The manuscript now consists of 759 leaves out of an original total of 820–617 of which are the Old Testament and the rest the New Testament. In the Old Testament, 31 leaves at the beginning of the manuscript, containing Genesis 1:1–46:28, and 10 leaves, containing Psalms 105:27–137:6, are missing, and the leaves containing 2 Samuel 2:5–6, 7, 10–13 are mutilated. The Old Testament includes all the books of the Greek Bible except Maccabees and follows Athanasius's *Festal Letter*, with the poetical books before the prophets. The New Testament includes the four Gospels, Acts, James to Jude, Romans to 2 Thessalonians, and Hebrews. The original hands of the manuscript end at Hebrews 9:14, but the manuscript continues in a minuscule hand from the fifteenth century and includes the rest of Hebrews and Revelation (Minuscule 1957). The assumption is that Vaticanus originally had the three Pastoral Epistles, Philemon, and Revelation. Skeat thought that Codex Vaticanus (03 B), as well as Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), was one of the fifty manuscripts commissioned by the emperor Constantine in AD 335 (Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* 4.36–37), and that possibly Sinaiticus was rejected. I agree with Metzger, who takes his cue from Skeat, that it is also possible that Vaticanus was rejected, as Vaticanus lacks the Eusebian table numbers and the books of Maccabees, in addition to having many corrections and having later been reinscribed.[176]

Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), discovered by Constantin Tischendorf and published by him in 1862, is also now dated to the fourth century. The manuscript, consisting of 411 extant leaves, once contained 743 leaves, but the Old Testament has been severely damaged, so that only 293 Old Testament leaves survive (43 in Leipzig and 197 in the British Museum, along with all or parts of 36 pages in St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai and parts of 8 pages in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg). The Old Testament contains fragments and parts of Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 Chronicles (including a large duplicate section), 2 Esdras, and Lamentations, and the virtually complete texts of Esther, Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, the prophets and the poetical writings, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and Job.[178] The parts that are mostly missing (especially most of Genesis, all of Exodus, much of Leviticus, two-thirds of Numbers, and most of Deuteronomy and Joshua) are compatible with Tischendorf's account of finding the manuscript in a basket and being told that two previous baskets (presumably

with the earlier parts of the Old Testament) had already been thrown in the fire. The New Testament is complete on 150 leaves, as well as the *Letter of Barnabas* and part of the *Shepherd of Hermas* (all of the New Testament and Barnabas are in the British Library with the exception of two leaves—one at St. Catherine's and one in the National Library of Russia). The New Testament order is the four Gospels, the Pauline Epistles from Romans to Philemon (with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians), Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and then Revelation, before *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas*—a point I will return to below.

Codex Alexandrinus

The third manuscript is Codex Alexandrinus (02 A). This fifth-century manuscript once contained 820 leaves. It passed from the Patriarch of Alexandria to Constantinople and then was offered to James I of England, but it finally came into English hands in 1627 when Charles I was king. The Old Testament is virtually intact, missing only ten leaves, although some pages have been mutilated. The Old Testament consists of the entire Greek Bible, including 3 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees. The New Testament has the Gospels and Acts, the Catholic Epistles, the Pauline Epistles from Romans to Philemon (with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians), and Revelation. The New Testament lacks part of Matthew and of John (Matt. 1:1–25:6; John 6:50–8:52, probably without the episode of the woman caught in adultery on the basis of spacing) and 2 Corinthians 4:13–12:6. The books of *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* follow the New Testament (though they have lost probably one leaf of *1 Clement* and two leaves of *2 Clement*), and *Psalms of Solomon* was (apparently) appended at the end (per a table of contents at the beginning of the manuscript).

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus

The fourth manuscript is Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (04 C). This manuscript is a palimpsest—that is, a manuscript that has been erased and then written over with a new text—that was deciphered by Tischendorf in 1843 (New Testament) and 1845 (Old Testament). In the twelfth century the works of Ephraim of Syria were written over a fifth-century manuscript of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament now has only 64 leaves, while the New Testament has 145. The Old Testament is so fragmentary that one cannot determine its original size, but the New Testament probably had about 238 leaves. The New Testament is itself fragmentary, but it includes portions of every New Testament book except 2 Thessalonians and 2 John.

Contents of the Major Codexes

It is a commonplace in much discussion of the transmission of the New Testament to note that both Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and Codex Alexandrinus (02 A) include works not now in our usual New Testament canon, and to claim that their inclusion indicates their authoritative scriptural status. In this book I do not present a discussion of the canon per se, but I would argue that such statements may go further than they need to or should. For example, with reference to Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), one scholar states that the "*Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Letter of Barnabas* eventually dropped away from the church's sacred Scriptures after having been included by some Christians for centuries." Similarly, regarding Codex Alexandrinus (02 A), one author states that "the epistles of Clement [are] reckoned with the canonical books."[187]

A closer examination of the two manuscripts involved may prompt us to moderate these conclusions, at least insofar as the transmission of manuscripts is concerned. The first observation to make is that the books that we would now consider noncanonical are placed at the end of their respective manuscript. *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas* appear after Revelation in Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), and *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* appear after Revelation in Codex Alexandrinus (02 A). I noted above that there may be some manuscript variations in the order of the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles, and the Catholic Epistles, as well as some internal variation within these, most noteworthy being that the book of Hebrews occurs in different places within the Pauline corpus. However, the books often promoted as indicating an "open" canon invariably appear at the end of the major codexes (which probably would also be the case with Codex Vaticanus [03 B] if it included other books, since the Paulines probably would have been completed, then Revelation, and then any others, if they were included at all).

The second, and perhaps even more important, observation is that the two codexes themselves appear to recognize some type of differentiation among the books included. The organization of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) falls into three distinguishable parts. The first part, including the four Gospels, ends with John's Gospel and is followed by a blank sheet. The second part includes the Pauline Epistles, with Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians, and ends after Philemon, followed by a blank sheet. The third section consists of Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and then Revelation (a pattern of organization that seems to have become prominent from the seventh century on, especially in Byzantine manuscripts), before *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas*. There are blank sheets that distinctly separate the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles. I think this may well indicate that these units—the very ones that I traced transmissionally above—are thought of as fixed units. There is no further blank sheet dividing the rest of the New Testament books from *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas*. However, another telling feature may well serve a similar purpose. At the end of every book in the New Testament (and Old Testament as well) of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א), there is a colophon that includes the title of the book and a coronis (a decorative mark used to indicate the end of a textual unit) written in the ink of the manuscript. Ever since the fundamental work of H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat on the hands of Sinaiticus (as well as the colophons of Codex Alexandrinus [02 A]), there has been a strong linkage of the colophons, and the accompanying corona, with the scribal hands, so that scribe A has a particular way of drawing his coronis, and so on. I believe this is probably generally correct, but three exceptions are worth noting that help us to understand the organization and content of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א). At the end of Revelation and of *Barnabas* there is a more ornate coronis used than is found elsewhere. Both Revelation 1:5 to the end and *Barnabas* were written by scribe A, whose "coronis is the simplest, consisting of a crossed pair of wavy lines, sometimes ornamented with tendrils." However, the corona at the end of Revelation and *Barnabas* are considerably more elaborate in their written forms, with more ornamentation of the tendrils. These corona in the hand of scribe A are unparalleled in the New Testament, although there are corona approaching this elaboration by scribe A at the end of Psalms, Proverbs, and 1 Maccabees. The corona are more complex in their written form, but more noteworthy is the fact that they may well have been partially written in red ink. The online version and the recent printed version of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) do not note the coloring of these corona (although they do indicate uses of red elsewhere, including in the Psalms and for Eusebian and Ammonian numbers), but such coloring is found in the facsimile edition of Tischendorf. It is possible that Tischendorf fabricated this coloring himself (as he is often, though I think grossly unjustly, accused of fabricating other things), but the places where he indicates red ink in the

corona match more darkly colored ink in the photographs. I suspect that the red ink was observed by Tischendorf and captured in his facsimile, but has now faded to a dark brown.[193] The only other place where a more developed coronis is found in the New Testament of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) is at the end of Mark's Gospel. This coronis is usually simply attributed to scribe D, who uses more elaborate corona. However, there are only four examples of corona by scribe D in extant Sinaiticus, and this is by far the most elaborate and the only one that also uses red ink (visible in the photograph as well as in Tischendorf's facsimile). In my view, it is probable that the scribes used these colored corona to indicate the location of known textual irregularities and to differentiate them from the rest of the text. Thus, the scribe of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) realized that after Revelation there was something extraordinary about *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas*, hence their placement at the end of the manuscript, even after the third and least well-fixed textual grouping, and differentiation with the colored corona at the end of Revelation and *Barnabas* to indicate the following textual ambiguity. The scribes also, it seems to me, realized that there was a known alternative ending to Mark (the long ending), though they did not include it but indicated their knowledge with the elaborate and colored coronis.

This analysis has a correlative in Codex Alexandrinus (02 A) that indicates that the scribes recognized some type of distinction between the books included in that manuscript. Portions of *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* are included at the end of the manuscript, then, according to the table of books at the beginning of the manuscript, to be followed by *Psalms of Solomon*, not now present. In the table of books of the manuscript written in ancient times, the New Testament books are listed as follows: Gospels: according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John; Acts of the Apostles; Catholics, six; Epistles of Paul, fourteen (I note, including Hebrews after 2 Thessalonians); Apocalypse of John; Epistle of Clement 1; Epistle of Clement 2. Then there is a space of about two blank lines before these words: "Along with Books … Psalms of Solomon." B. H. Cowper believes that originally these two lines read, "Along with the 29 Books, Psalms of Solomon." He may be right. It is clear by this that *Psalms of Solomon* is an appendix to the manuscript, and clearly not part of the New Testament, possibly even of the other books of the Bible. More important is the inclusion of *1 Clement* and *2 Clement* in the table of books. There is evidence of the "reverential use" of the Clementine letters into the fourth century. However, we must note how the New Testament books are arranged even in Codex Alexandrinus (02 A). They are listed under the rubric of Gospels, then the four listed; Acts; six Catholic Epistles; fourteen Epistles of Paul; Apocalypse of John; but then each letter of Clement. They are not listed as "Letters of Clement, two." In other words, there is a differentiation made in the way that the letters of Clement are listed in relation to the rest of the New Testament books. Second, the two Clementine letters are included after the book of Revelation, and not with the other letters, which are grouped one after the other.[200] Finally, in the manuscript itself, the various groupings of books are indicated by major colophons, often accompanied by starting the next section on a new page, with the books within a group represented by smaller colophons. The two letters of Clement are grouped together but separated by only a small colophon and the second letter following on the next column. I contend that the scribe both recognized that these Clementine letters were to be distinguished (probably as not by the same author) and wanted to make clear that they were not of the same status as the other New Testament books.

The third observation concerns the structure of the New Testament and its subcorpora. It may well be that *Barnabas*, *Shepherd of Hermas*, and *1 Clement* and *2 Clement*, possibly among other books, were still reverenced in certain circles even in the fourth and fifth centuries AD. I think, however, that even if this is the case, the textual evidence is that the scribes of these two codexes

recognized that there was still a distinction among the books, a recognition perhaps of deuterocanonical New Testament books. Looking at the books of the New Testament, we see that by the time of Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) the subcorpora of the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles were firmly established. The third subcorpus was the last to be firmly established, and it is perhaps no coincidence that this group was included last and was the one to which *Barnabas* and *Shepherd of Hermas* were attached, even if being distinguished. Similarly with Codex Alexandrinus (02 A), we see that all of the subcorpora—Gospels, Acts, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, Revelation— were firmly established, but that the two Clementine letters were attached at the end. In other words, there may have been a couple of books floating on the edges of the New Testament by the fourth and fifth centuries, but the major subcorpora, and even the other books, were firmly established by this time.

The majuscule manuscripts continued to be produced until the tenth or the eleventh century. Some of these are very beautiful and elegant manuscripts, highly ornate and decorated, while others are more functional. However, few of them contain the entire Greek New Testament. Codex Bezae (05 D), dated to the fifth century, is a bilingual Greek and Latin manuscript that contains the Gospels (in the order Matthew, John, Luke, Mark), the book of Acts, and part of 3 John in Latin only. Bezae included all of the Catholic Epistles at one time. The label "Codex D" has also been given to Codex Claromontanus (06 Dp), mentioned above, a sixth-century bilingual Greek and Latin manuscript containing the Pauline Epistles, with Hebrews as an appendix after three blank pages. This may be the earliest evidence of Hebrews being awkwardly added to or distinguished from an established collection of thirteen Pauline letters. Many of the later majuscule documents evidence the rise of the Byzantine text-type, until this text-type becomes ascendant by the turn of the millennia.[23]

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[23] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 124–136). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Minuscules and Lectionaries

Two further categories of manuscripts important in transmission of the New Testament merit mention: the minuscules and the lectionaries.

Minuscules

Minuscules, as we have already noted, consist of a style of handwriting that includes cursive characteristics and the use of two hundred different letter combinations to facilitate ease of writing. Despite these conventions to make writing easier and faster, as well as more compact, the number of complete biblical manuscripts written in a minuscule hand is surprisingly small. Out of nearly three thousand minuscule manuscripts (2,911 or so), only about seven have a complete Bible (although that number is perhaps growing due to recent discoveries), and all of them date to after the tenth century. Most of the minuscules contain the four Gospels. The overwhelming majority of minuscules reflects the Byzantine or Majority text-type.

Several of the minuscules merit brief mention. One of these is Minuscule 1. This twelfth-century manuscript, now housed in the Basel University library, was one of the manuscripts that Erasmus had but did not widely use in creating his text of the Greek New Testament. The manuscript includes the Gospels, Acts, the Catholic Epistles, and the Pauline Epistles—all but Revelation. The text of this manuscript is distinct from the Byzantine text-type that Erasmus ended up following, and is one of the group of four or five manuscripts that make up what is designated as Family 1 (the others are 118, 131, 209, possibly 1582). Family 1 and Family 13 (13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709) are part of what has been designated in the past as the Caesarean text, along with Codex Koridethi (038 Θ). If Erasmus had chosen to follow this manuscript, he still would have had to deal with the problem of Revelation, but there would have been some notable differences from the text that he created. For example, the Family 1 manuscripts indicate the following textual readings: the long ending of Mark 16:9–20 perhaps would have been marked as being omitted in some manuscripts; Luke 1:28 with "blessed are you among women" would have been omitted, as it is in Codex Sinaiticus (01 א) and Codex Vaticanus (03 B); the shorter form of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2–4) would have been read; and the pericope of the woman caught in adultery would have been found at the end of John's Gospel rather than at John 7:53. But this was not to be. Instead, Erasmus used a number of manuscripts that followed the Byzantine text-type: Minuscule 2, a twelfth-century manuscript of the Gospels; Minuscule 2ap (now 2815), a twelfth-century manuscript with the Pauline Epistles and Acts; and Minuscule Ir (now 2814), a damaged and incomplete twelfth-century manuscript of Revelation. One can only wonder how the entire controversy over the Textus Receptus, and especially dispute over certain passages, would have been different if Erasmus had chosen Minuscule 1.

Lectionaries

The last type of text to discuss is lectionary texts. Lectionary texts have been a neglected area of study, even though there are over 2,400 of them (2,453 at last count). They range in age from the fourth century to beyond the fifteenth century, and they were designed to be used in services to provide biblical readings according to a designated plan. The usual definition of a lectionary text is that it is not a continuous-text manuscript of a book of the New Testament but one that is "divided into separate pericopes, arranged according to their sequence as lessons appointed for the

church year." We can already see a problem with such a definition. The Alands note that with "only a few exceptions," "all the papyri, all the uncials, and all the minuscules" qualify as continuous text.[214] Eldon Epp is even bolder: "All of the papyri are continuous-text MSS, that is, MSS containing (originally) at least one NT writing in continuous fashion from beginning to end." However, for many of the papyri, the extant text that we have is shorter than some of the readings in lectionaries. The fragmentary nature of these papyri does not indicate whether they are continuous text of an entire book of the New Testament or whether they are in fact a smaller excerpt or pericope. The Alands themselves have identified some papyri that in varying ways are not continuous text because they resemble talismans, selections, commentaries, lectionaries, and the like.[216] Further, there are continuous biblical manuscripts, such as the John manuscript noted above, that have been marked for liturgical use, including the designation of pericope openings and closings.

A case that illustrates the difficulties that have repeatedly been ignored in handling lectionaries is seen in Lectionary 1043. This lectionary is one of the earliest, probably dated to the fifth century (although some date it to the seventh or the eighth century), the only earlier lectionary being 1604, dated to the fourth century. This now-fragmentary manuscript contains Matthew 3:7–17 (it begins in the midst of the unit), Matthew 4:23–5:12; 7:13–20; 10:37–42, a unit beginning with Matthew 9:35, Mark 6:18–29 (it begins in the midst of a unit), Luke 2:1–20; 11:27–32; 24:36–38 (it ends in the midst of the unit), and John 20:1–18; 20:24–27 (it ends in the midst of the unit). Whereas some lectionaries have introductions to the individual lectional units (incipits) or markings with αρχη, *archē* and τελος, *telos*, this manuscript simply records biblical text continuously within the identifiable and distinct unit, as such lectionary features apparently were not used until the eighth century. The individual complete lections included here vary from seven verses up to twenty verses, and some are at least as long as the readings found in a vast number of papyri that are considered continuous text.[219] I am not suggesting that all of these papyri be considered lectionaries. Instead, I am suggesting two things: first, at least some of them may have been lectionaries, but we cannot tell because of their fragmentary nature; second, lectionaries may have a use in textual criticism because, in some instances at least, the "continuous" text of many papyri is shorter in length than are some of the lectional units found in a lectionary such as 1043.[24]

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[24] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 138–141). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

The History of Translation of the New Testament

Interlingual translation of the New Testament has a long, complex, and even intriguing history. I begin here with the earliest Bible translations into ancient languages, the so-called ancient versions, and then work forward to the most recent in English. The history of Bible translation is one of the most fascinating ever told. I hope to offer a brief glimpse into this important task, as it is vitally important to how many, if not most, Christians today come into contact with their Bible: through translation.

Ancient Versions

We begin with some of the ancient versions. There was one translation that preceded the New Testament, but that provided a model for later translations: the translation of the Old Testament into Greek. Three translations occurred early in the history of Christianity: Syriac, Latin, and Coptic. Each of these is worth noting because of its significance in discussion of the development and transmission of the Greek New Testament. I begin with the Septuagint as a backdrop for discussing the Syriac, Latin, and Coptic translations of the New Testament.

■ THE SEPTUAGINT

The first Christians may not have thought much about it, but translation of their sacred writings was something that most of them accepted without hesitation. The first Bible of Christians was the Old Testament, and the form in which most of them used it was the Greek translation that has come to be known as the Septuagint (or Old Greek, which describes everything but the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament that are often called the Torah). The vast majority of Jews, especially in the Diaspora but also many in Palestine (as evidenced by the use of the Septuagint by the Gospel writers and Paul), probably used the Septuagint as well.

The translation of what we call the "Septuagint" out of Hebrew and into Greek (most of the books were translated, but some were originally written in Greek) is probably the greatest translational accomplishment of the ancient world. As Julio Trebolle Barrera states, "This version is the first example of the translation of the complete corpus of sacred, legal, historical and poetic literature of one people, in a language of the Semitic cultural world, to the language of classical Greek culture." There are various accounts given of the origins of the Septuagint.[9] These narratives include the well-known account in the *Letter of Aristeas* that seventy-two translators from Jerusalem, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, were requested to come to Alexandria by King Ptolemy Philadelphus's librarian, and they performed the translational task. Whether or not this account has a factual basis, it is agreed that the Pentateuch was translated in the third century BC. The rest of the books were either translated over time, some in Alexandria (e.g., Pentateuch, Judges, 1–4 Kingdoms, 1-2 Chronicles, Proverbs, Job, the Twelve Prophets, Jeremiah, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Ezra, and probably Isaiah) and some in Palestine (e.g., Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Judith, 1 Maccabees), or were written originally in Greek (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon, 2-4 Maccabees), some of them in Palestine.[11] By the time of the New Testament, the Pentateuch and the Prophets, and at least portions of the Writings, such as Psalms, were well-established as Scripture, and it is this Greek form of the Scriptures that usually was employed by early Christians.

There has been much and continued discussion of the translational technique and resulting Greek of the Septuagint books. Henry St. John Thackeray divides the books of the Greek Old

Testament into six categories, three reflecting types of translation, one paraphrase, and two free Greek. Translations include good Koine Greek found in the Pentateuch, parts of Joshua, Isaiah, and 1 Maccabees; indifferent Greek found in parts of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets, most of 1-2 Chronicles, portions of 2-3 Kingdoms, Psalms, Sirach, and Judith; and literal translation found in portions of Jeremiah and Baruch, Judges, Ruth, parts of 2-4 Kingdoms, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel (Theodotion), 2 Esdras, and Ecclesiastes. Paraphrase is found in 1 Esdras and Daniel (Old Greek), Esther, Job, and Proverbs. Free Greek of a literary or Atticistic type is found in Wisdom of Solomon, the Letter of Jeremiah, part of Baruch, and 2-4 Maccabees. Vernacular Greek is found in Tobit. Trebolle Barrera differentiates between literal and free translation, equating literal with "formal equivalence" and free with "functional equivalence."[13] It is hard to equate his categories with his descriptions of the individual books, however, as these descriptions seem to resemble Thackeray's more variegated categories. This has been a tendency in Septuagint studies—namely, to reduce the translational technique to literal versus free. Nevertheless, what we see from this is that during the first century, when the authors of the New Testament were writing, they were already familiar with translation of sacred writings. More than that, they were using—though whether they were aware of this, one cannot tell—texts that varied in their translational technique and style.

The influence and importance of the Septuagint cannot be overstated. It had an impact certainly on the writers of the New Testament and probably on future translations of the New Testament into various languages. In fact, translation of the New Testament began surprisingly quickly after the writing of the New Testament books. The first translations seem to have been made in the late second century, or at least sometime after AD 180. They came about for a number of reasons. These factors include the early and ambitious missionary efforts of Christians who took Christianity to new areas where there were other indigenous languages and diminution over time of the use of Greek, especially in the western areas of the Roman Empire.[17] These early translations seem, at least at first glance, to hold great promise for helping us trace the development and transmission of the Greek New Testament. However, debate over the value of translations in reconstructing the text of the Greek New Testament continues. Although the ancient versions are early, in fact earlier than most Greek manuscripts, several prohibitive factors are to be considered when using them, including whether the translation was made from a Greek original or is derivative, the level of linguistic competence of the translators (both in Greek, the source language, and in the target language),[19] whether the target language has linguistic transparency in relation to Greek, and whether the translation reflects intralingual translational issues.[21] These issues will be kept in view as I briefly examine several important early translations of the Greek New Testament.

■ SYRIAC TRANSLATION

The Syriac translation not only reflects the early spread of Christianity but also has played a significant role in debate over establishing the Greek text of the New Testament. There are five Syriac versions of the New Testament. These include the Old Syriac, with two major manuscripts, the Cureton (Syr[c]) and the Sinai (Syr[s]); the Peshitta or Syriac Vulgate (Syr[p]); the Philoxenian (Syr[ph]); the Harclean (Syr[h]); and the Palestinian (Syr[pal]). The Palestinian is considered independent of the others and dates to the fifth century AD. The Philoxenian and Harclean are either two versions of the same original text or one version that was revised; in either case, they date to the sixth century and later. The Sinai Old Syriac version probably was made in the fourth century, and the Cureton in the fifth, but with both reflecting a Greek text from the late second or early third

century. The Peshitta version, which became the version of the Bible used in the Syriac church and dates to after AD 400, has been known for centuries, and many manuscripts of it are available.

As recently as the beginning of the twentieth century it was thought by some that the Peshitta reflected the earliest version of the Syriac Bible. John Burgon, defender of the Textus Receptus, believed that the Peshitta was to be dated to the second century and that the Cureton, Philoxenian, and Harclean versions were later versions of the Syriac tradition—a tradition, he contended, that went back to the second century or, even earlier, to the autographs themselves. The dating of the Peshitta was important to Burgon because the Peshitta, and the other versions such as the Palestinian, contained the long ending of Mark's Gospel (16:9–20).

The date of the Syriac version was an important factor in the debate over the relative merits of the Textus Receptus and the Revised Version of 1881 (to be discussed below). The Textus Receptus was defended against the Revised Version in a well-known debate in 1897 on textual criticism of the New Testament. The debate took place between, on one side, Burgon's successor in the defense of the Textus Receptus, Edward Miller, along with G. H. Gwilliam, who edited the Peshitta for Clarendon Press, and Albert Bonus, who had collated the Cureton, Sinai, and Peshitta versions, in part on the basis of the early date of the Peshitta, and on the other side, the successors of Westcott and Hort, William Sanday, Arthur C. Headlam, and W. C. Allen, all of them members of the seminar run by Sanday that produced the now famous book on the Synoptic Gospels. Sanday acknowledged that the date of the Peshitta was crucial for the case by Miller. The debate was not clearly settled for either side, but soon after the debate, however, Francis Conybeare published an analysis of the Sinai and Peshitta versions in which he concluded that the Armenian and Georgian versions of the New Testament, which can be dated to AD 325–400, seem to know the former but not the latter. Therefore, he concluded that the Peshitta version was not yet in existence at this time. This confirmed that the earliest Syriac tradition, reflective of the Western text-type in the Old Syriac, can be dated to the late second century at the very earliest (and probably not that early for the versions themselves) and was not as early as the Alexandrian text-type.

Even if the Syriac is early, there are difficulties in using it as an early source of the New Testament. The translatability of Greek into Syriac is highly problematic. Sebastian Brock, the well-known Syriologist, has noted a number of incommensurabilities between the two languages: no formalized case for Syriac, differing verbal systems, different functions of the article, parataxis (rather than hypotaxis) in Syriac, lack of formal equivalence for some phrases in Syriac, fewer adjectives in Syriac, different conjunction systems, and few particles in Syriac. These elements of discontinuity would appear to represent the major difficulties for rendering Greek into Syriac that would accurately reflect the original. However, Brock has noted that the "most problematical cases" are when the Syriac seems to indicate formal correspondence with the Greek original. As Brock states, "Formal identity can by no means be used as evidence that the Syriac supports the Greek variant in question."[28] He cites the example of Greek δέ, *de* (a conjunction, often translated either "and" or "but"), where, despite apparent similarity, there is "no exact equivalence in usage between [Greek] δέ and [Syriac] *den*."

■ LATIN TRANSLATION

The second language to discuss is Latin. There are two important features of the Latin versions and tradition. The first is the Old Latin translations themselves, probably first made in northern Africa in the late second century, and later in Italy and elsewhere. The Old Latin version, which is thought to resemble the Western text-type, has numerous fragmentary manuscripts, but they are highly divergent in their readings. Bruce Metzger cites Luke 24:4–5 as an example where there

are more than twenty-seven variants in the surviving Old Latin manuscripts. Two of these manuscripts merit mention. The bilingual Codex Bezae (05 D), dating probably to the fifth century, has both Greek and Latin. The Old Latin is thought by most scholars to represent a manuscript tradition that dates to the early third century, as the manuscript occasionally agrees with readings in two earlier Latin manuscripts, designated "k" and "a." The manuscript k, though it dates to around AD 400, has a text that agrees with the third-century text of the Latin father Cyprian. The other Latin manuscript is Codex Gigas (gig). This is a large manuscript, with pages twenty inches across and thirty-six inches high. This manuscript, though not early (it dates to the thirteenth century), was written in Bohemia and came into the possession of the government in Prague. However, during the conquest of Prague in 1648 by the Swedes it was taken, and a year later it was presented to the Royal Library in Stockholm, where it is still on display, much to the consternation of the Czech government.

The second feature of the Latin tradition is the important influence on it of Jerome's edition of the Latin Bible, the Vulgate. Jerome (347–420) was asked by Pope Damasus around AD 382 to revise the Old Latin Bible. This request came about in light of the chaotic state of affairs regarding Old Latin manuscripts. Jerome himself observed that there were nearly as many versions of the Latin text as there were manuscripts themselves. Jerome, as the most accomplished biblical scholar of his day, was commissioned to prepare a revision of the Latin Bible, using the Greek manuscripts available to him. By AD 384 Jerome had prepared the four Gospels by comparing the existing Latin manuscripts with the Greek ones and correcting the Latin where it was problematic. There is serious question as to whether or to what extent Jerome actually revised the rest of the New Testament. Like Augustine, his near contemporary, Jerome in his commentaries uses a different text than is found in the Vulgate. Further, it appears that his degree of revision decreased as his work progressed. It is possible that if he did revise the rest of the New Testament, he less and less corrected the Old Latin. In any case, we unfortunately do not know what manuscripts, either Latin or Greek, Jerome used in his revision. However, at least for the Gospels, it appears that he used a form of Alexandrian text-type, quite possibly a text that was similar in nature to Codex Sinaiticus (01 א). The Latin version that Jerome began (if not finished) underwent numerous revisions during the course of the Middle Ages by a number of scholars, resulting in much textual corruption and mixing of the Latin text-types.[36] Whether Jerome finished his task or not, this version was the Bible of the Western church for a thousand years, enshrined as the authoritative edition of the Bible for the Roman Catholic Church by papal bull in 1592 (Pope Clement VIII). It formed the basis of all English translations of the Bible until the sixteenth century and the translation work of William Tyndale, who was the first English translator to use the Greek and Hebrew. The Vulgate continued to be the basis of the major English translations of the New Testament used by Roman Catholics, including the Douai-Rheims (1610, 1749) and Ronald Knox (1955) versions, until 1966 with publication of the Jerusalem Bible (a revision of a French translation produced in 1948) and 1970 with publication of the New American Bible.

Apart from the problems with transmission of the Latin text, there are a number of difficulties with using the Latin text as a means of establishing the Greek original. Bonifatius Fischer, though noting the suitability of Latin for rendering Greek, also notes certain clear limitations. These include the following: there is no differentiation in Latin between the Greek aorist and perfect tense-forms, forms of imperatives, double negatives and negative sense, or negative particles; Latin lacks an article; there are differences in Latin in rendering the same Greek word; Latin has difficulties in rendering Greek prepositions; and there are numerous phonological ambiguities

between the two languages. Thus, even Latin does not provide as useful a guide to establishing the Greek text as one would like.

■ COPTIC TRANSLATION

The third language to consider is Coptic. Coptic is the last form of the native Egyptian language, which began first with hieroglyphics and continued with hieratic and demotic, until Coptic developed in the late first and early second centuries. The earliest Coptic manuscript is dated perhaps as early as the late first century. Coptic adopted the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet and supplemented them with seven characters from demotic.[40] The development of Coptic is directly linked to the spread of Christianity in Egypt, which seems to have occurred very early and very rapidly, moving from Alexandria outwards, as attested by a number of Greek manuscripts found in various places in Egypt. For example, $\mathfrak{P}^{52}$, dated to the first half of the second century (see above) and possibly discovered in the Fayyum, gives evidence of a Christian community in the early second century well beyond Alexandria, as does $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, with the Pauline Epistles, also possibly found in the Fayyum, or possibly near ancient Aphroditopolis. $\mathfrak{P}^{64}$ (linked to $\mathfrak{P}^4$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{67}$) was discovered even farther south in Coptos, in the Upper Nile region. By the third century, Christianity had penetrated the native population, and by the fourth century the country had been Christianized. By the time the country was Christianized, however, there had been a major transition from the use of Greek to the use of Coptic in the church. Athanasius (296/298–373) tells the story of St. Anthony (251–356 [also called "Anthony the Great"]), who apparently did not know Greek, hearing and understanding the Scriptures being read around AD 270–275. In order for this to have happened, either there was a translation provided for the occasion or, more likely, there was already a translation of the Gospel passage (Matt. 19:21) into Coptic at that point. The rise of Christianity among the native population led to the translation of the Bible into Coptic, so that by the early fourth century, Pachomius, who founded a monastic order in Egypt, required his monks to be able to read in Coptic.

Coptic appears in a number of different dialects into which the New Testament is translated. These include the following: the Sahidic, which, though having some characteristics of the Western text-type but being closer to the Alexandrian, has been identified more recently as used in many of the Egyptian papyri and seems to date to the third century as the earliest of the dialects; the Bohairic, which, though it has been known for a longer time, reflects the Alexandrian text-type even more closely than the Sahidic, but is later; the Achmimic, in which there is little New Testament evidence; the sub-Achmimic, in which there have been few findings, though there are some of significance (see below);[49] Middle Egyptian, in which the Gospel of Matthew has been found (Codex Scheide), dating to the fifth century and resembling Codexes Sinaiticus (01 א) and Vaticanus (03 B), while a portion of Acts in Codex Glazier follows the Western text; and the Fayyumic, in which there is little New Testament material, although what exists is significant (see below).

Three manuscripts of the Gospel of John merit attention here. The first is a manuscript of most of John's Gospel written in the Bohairic dialect and dated to the fourth century. In this manuscript two textually disputed passages are absent. These passages include John 5:3b–4, where the angel troubles the water, and John 7:53–8:11, the pericope of the woman caught in adultery. A second manuscript is of John's Gospel written in the Fayyumic dialect and dated to the early fourth century. This manuscript contains John 6:11–15:11. It is missing four folios (eight pages) between John 7:42 and 8:39. However, on the basis of the number of lines per page and the number of verses, it appears that this manuscript did not have the pericope of the woman caught in adultery.[54]

A third manuscript is in the sub-Achmimic dialect, datable to the mid-fourth century (AD 350–375) and found at Qau el Kebir, one of few manuscripts with specific provenance. This manuscript also omits John 5:3b–4 and the pericope of the woman caught in adultery.

Regarding the use of Coptic to reconstruct the original Greek text, J. Martyn Plumley states, "One important and overriding fact about the Coptic language must always be borne in mind. Coptic, like the ancient Egyptian language from which it is the direct descendant, is a language of strict word order. This is so since there are no case endings." Coptic furthermore has two genders, uses asyndeton (connecting clauses without conjunctions), does not differentiate negative particles, and does not form the passive voice, among other features,[57] which make it difficult to use in determining the underlying source language.

Other ancient translations could be discussed as well—for example, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Old Church Slavonic—but these are sufficient to show the difficulties in development even of ancient translations. As noted above, the major translation in the Western world was the Latin Vulgate, with the Greek Bible remaining in use in the East until at least the fall of Constantinople in 1453. This has a direct bearing upon the development of English New Testament translations.[25]

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[25] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 148–160). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Part_Four

Major Issues in Translation of the New Testament

As I have already discussed, translations of the Bible have been produced since the earliest days of Christianity. A variety of both translation practices and theories about translation have been propounded. There have been those who have reflected upon translation from Christian times forward. In light of many of the recent translation controversies, some of the comments seem surprisingly progressive, and perhaps they merit further consideration.

Comments on the Nature of Translation

Comments on the nature of translation span the time from the writing of the New Testament to the present, by translators of all types of literature, including (but not limited to) the Bible. The range of opinions is worth noting, given what I have discussed above and will discuss below. This list, like the one recounted in the first chapter, constitutes a whirlwind tour of opinions on translation, but the cumulative effect of these voices is relevant to my subsequent discussion, especially in light of the way that some people are advocating for particular theories of translation.

The Latin orator Cicero (106–43 BC), referring to his own translation work, states, "I did not translate them [orations] as an interpreter but as an orator … not … word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language." The Latin poet Horace (65–8 BC), in his *Ars Poetica* of 20 BC, similarly states, "Nor will you as faithful translator render word for word." So much for any thought that dynamic and nonliteralistic translations are a recent development!

John Dryden (1631–1700), the poet and literary theorist, in 1680 indicates that there are three types of translation: metaphrase, which is "word for word" and "line for line"; paraphrase, where words are "not so strictly followed as is the sense," which, he says, "may be amplified but not altered"; and imitation, which he thought may not constitute translation at all. This is reminiscent of a commonly heard distinction between formal, paraphrastic, and dynamic translation.

Alexander Tytler (1747–1813), the Edinburgh professor and friend of Robert Burns, in 1790 defines a "good translation" as "that, in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work." This formulation consciously notes the role of understanding in translation, to which I will return below.

The poet William Cowper (1731–1800) says in his preface to the *Iliad* (1791), "The tr[anslation] which partakes equally of fidelity and liberality … promises fairest," akin to the distinction the Holman Christian Standard Bible makes. The German polymath (as well as linguist) Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) writes in a letter (1796) to the German poet August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), "All translating seems to me simply an attempt to accomplish an impossible task." The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) recognizes (1851) that "a word in one language seldom has a precise equivalent in another one."

The classicist John Conington (1825–1869) says (1861) that a translator "ought to endeavor not only to say what his author has said, but to say it as he has said it." Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893), the classicist and biblical scholar, says that the first requirement of a translation into English is "that it be English. Further the translation being English, it should also be perfectly intelligible in itself without reference to the Greek, the English being really the more lucid and exact of the two languages."

The poet and musician Sidney Lanier (1842–1881), writing in 1897, states, "It is words and their associations which are untranslatable, not ideas; there is no idea … which cannot be adequately produced as idea in English words." Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1848–1941), a renowned classicist, says (1902), "The new verses should produce the same effect upon their readers as the originals did upon their contemporaries," repeating a theme that others have promoted regarding translation. Flora Amos, a professor of literature, writing in 1920, says that translation theory cannot be reduced to a simple formula, but must be modified as new facts come along. Finally, J. B. Postgate, a comparative philologian, says, "The Faithful Translator will give the letter where possible, but in any case the spirit." With this brief journey through time, we have covered nearly two millennia of comments on translation.

This chronologically arranged selection of statements by those commenting on translation reveals a number of important insights. The first is the obvious one: serious thought about translation is not a recent phenomenon. To the contrary, serious thought has been given to the nature of the translational process long before the present time. Another insight is that there is always a decision to be made between literalism and freedom of expression. This tension has been recognized by intelligent theorizers regarding translation since at least the time of the writing of the New Testament itself. In fact, we have seen that this tension goes back to the Septuagint, the Scriptures of the early Christians. Another observation is that there is an always shifting balance between the source text and the target text. This too has been recognized since ancient times, as translators shift between obligations to writers and readers. A fourth insight is that there is a question of how well one can render one language into another. This difficulty is felt in terms of both sense and structure, and often it requires compromise between the two. A fifth point is that there is more to consider than just the words, but also things such as the audience and the original author. A sixth and final observation is that there are constraints on translation, provided by the source and the target text.

All of the varied yet surprisingly confluent statements cited above were made long before Eugene Nida, the doyen of modern translation efforts, published his first book on translation theory and practice. This is important, since Nida stands today as one of the foremost figures in translation theory, particularly concerning translation of the New Testament. I will say more about Nida below. Nevertheless, what makes Nida's work on translation so important is not only that subsequent generations of translators, whether biblical or secular, continue to respond to it but also that he attempted to take the kinds of thoughts and impressions noted above and develop some formal structures around them, putting them into a system by which translations could be evaluated and, more importantly, by which the process of the creation of translations could be implemented.

The comments above by a number of writers through the centuries make it clear that the complexity of translation has been realized, if not fully appreciated or systematically analyzed, by

literate people. In this section I will examine the major approaches to translation theory today, especially as they are related to continuing translation efforts of the New Testament, in an attempt to move beyond the simple opposition between literal and dynamic equivalence. As I proceed, some may think that the approaches less resemble translational methods than theories about translation and understanding. In a sense, this is true. There are those who are calling for a greater semiotic and communicative awareness among translators, so that they are cognizant of what is implied by translation within their symbolic world.[101] There is also the sense that most of these approaches are focused upon textual and receptive dynamics rather than formal structures, even if there is rejection of what some of this implies. One limitation to discussion of several of these approaches is that they have not been as fully utilized in Bible translation as have the formal and dynamic equivalence models, and hence there are inherent limitations in their exposition. Nevertheless, there is in fact much more that can be said about translation theory than has been said, especially recently, in some biblical studies circles.

Literal/Formal Equivalence Translation

Literal or formal equivalence translations typically try to emphasize one-to-one correspondence between the source and target languages, fidelity to the wording of the source text, consistent rendering of similar lexical and grammatical items, and recognition of genre or literary-type considerations, such that there is a correspondence between lexical items and grammatical features, so far as this is possible and still makes sense. More than that, retaining features such as stylistic characteristics and word order is emphasized, and stilted or even unnatural language is often seen as a hallmark if not a virtue of such translation because it maintains the biblical translation tradition (the Great Tradition) or what a translation should "sound" like.[103] In the English-speaking world the Authorized Version is usually seen as the paragon of literalistic translation. Today, in large part because of Nida's work, literalist or formalist translation of the New Testament is not as widely assumed (or even endorsed) as it once was, but a few scholars have recently attempted to revive it, often by appealing to features and characteristics of the Authorized Version itself. This theory reflects the purported desire to be faithful to and consistent with the original text of the New Testament. The translation is often seen to provide a regulative guide to how and how well the translator understood the original by the characteristics of the rendering. Besides the Authorized Version, a number of translations would consider themselves or want to be seen as literal or formal equivalence versions, including the Revised Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible (and 1995 revision), English Standard Version based upon the RSV (of 1971), and, in some ways, Holman Christian Standard Bible.

Several observations are to be made regarding a literal or formal equivalence translation. First, no such translation can be as formal or literal as some would ideally like; there is always the caveat that it must still make sense in English. Otherwise, such a rendering would resemble an interlinear version, where there is word-for-word alignment and substitution. If one were to take John 1:1 as an example, a literal word-for-word rendering would read as follows (assuming that these are even the correct translational equivalents to use for the individual words):

In—beginning—was—the—word—and—the—word—was—toward—the—god—and—god—was—the—word.

This makes some sense (though, realistically, only if one knows what it "should" say), but clearly it is not serviceable English even for the strictest literalist. Some English speakers say "in hospital," but few say "in beginning." The preposition "toward" does not sound like idiomatic English, and the word order, if it were not the familiar John 1:1, would be unusual if not unusable, apart from the last clause, which misrepresents the Greek syntax (the syntax should have "the word" as the subject of the clause). There is also the question, for literal and other translations, of whether "word" is the right rendering for λόγος, *logos*. I could raise questions about other words as well. So, even a simple passage like this makes strict formalism difficult if not impossible; there is always the need for accommodation to the fact that the source and target languages, because they are different and distinct language systems, are not equivalent, and so adjustments in lexis and syntax are required.

A second observation, often overlooked in discussion of translation theory in general and particular translations specifically, is that such literalism (and what we now see as awkwardness) was never intended by those who were responsible for the Authorized Version in the first place. The Authorized Version was originally commissioned to be as "consonant" with the biblical languages as it could be. Further, the guidelines to be followed by the translators indicated that biblical names were to be those commonly used, not literalistic renderings of Hebrew or Greek. Thus, "Isaac" was used, not "Izhák" as in the Geneva Bible or "Isahac" as in the Bishops' Bible. The translators went so far as to render "Joshua" as "Jesus" in two places in the New Testament (Acts 7:45; Heb. 4:8), and not keep continuity with the Old Testament. The translators also used intentionally ecclesial language (departing from Tyndale), so they employed "baptism" rather than "washing," and "church" rather than "congregation."[110] They did not purposefully translate the same source word with the same target word. In Romans 5:2, 3, 11 the same Greek word (καυχάομαι, *kauchaomai*) is rendered in the Authorized Version "rejoice," "glory," and "joy." The Authorized Version also employs prose rhythms, such as in Psalms and elsewhere, that are based upon English poetic conventions and expectations rather than those of Hebrew.[112] Finally, the translation is admittedly based upon previous translations, including the Bishops' Bible, with all of their own characteristics. The major translation relied upon and used 90 percent of the time, as already noted above, is Tyndale's. Tyndale's style is characterized by straightforward language used for everyday communication,[114] especially by the reader whom Tyndale mentions in his famous statement: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost [referring to the Pope]." This idiomatic character can be seen in the fact that the Revised Version, though it attempted to revise the Authorized Version in more literalistic ways, such as using the same word in the target as in the source language, was generally rejected by readers for the older Authorized Version. Later updatings of the Authorized Version, such as the New King James Version, show increasing tendency to move further away from literalism, using language that eliminates archaisms and instead employs contemporary English words.

I equate formal equivalence translation with the word group (or phrase) as the minimal translational unit—protests regarding individual words notwithstanding—because it seems to be at this level that much of the translational work is being done.

Dynamic/Functional Equivalence Translation

Dynamic or (more lately) functional equivalence translation is usually the alternative translational approach when translational models are discussed, especially in biblical studies. As the quotations above from numerous historical figures illustrate, one may well argue that such an alternative between formalist or literalist translation and dynamic or functional equivalence has defined translation from the beginning of reflective thought on the process. In many ways, this is correct. However, even though many were intuitively aware of the dynamic nature of all translation, the explication of a coherent theory of dynamic or functional equivalence translation fell to Eugene Nida.[118]

Because he could not find a book that laid out such a theory, as he once told me, Nida took it upon himself to formulate and disseminate the principles of Bible translation that he articulated in the course of his work in translation, with organizations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (1937–1953) and the American Bible Society (1946–1984), and well past his retirement. In the course of doing so, "he did more than any other person in the twentieth century to change the way that Bible translation is carried out"; he literally "brought about a revolution in translation." These ideas developed into several major works on translation, including both theoretical and practical studies. The first explicitly created translation that demonstrated the principles of dynamic equivalence was the Good News Translation (originally Today's English Version). However, as we have seen above, there are translators who were thinking of dynamic equivalence long before Nida formulated the theory for it, and this was reflected in some earlier translations as well, such as John Wesley's. Wesley contended that he wrote his translation in "common English." As he admits, it is capable of "being brought, in several places, nearer to the original," but he chose not to do so.[120] Thus, his rendering of John 1:1–3: "In the beginning existed the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not one single thing made that was made." Other dynamic translations include the New Revised Standard Version in some of its elements, Contemporary English Version, New International Version (as well as TNIV), New Living Translation, and perhaps, in some ways, Holman Christian Standard Bible.

Nida's dynamic equivalence model begins with a number of assumptions regarding the target language (he uses the term "receptor language"): (1) each language has its own distinctive characteristics; (2) these characteristics must be respected rather than altered; (3) what can be said in one language can be said in any other; (4) the content of the message must be preserved even if the form must be changed. He continues with assumptions regarding the source language: (1) the biblical languages are languages like any other languages, with their own limitations; (2) the biblical writers expected to be understood; (3) a translation should reproduce the meaning of a given passage according to the understanding of the writer.[122] As a result, Nida posits that (1) a translation must aim primarily at reproducing the message of the source language; (2) a translation is to seek equivalence of the message rather than conserve the form of the utterance; (3) the closest natural equivalent is to be used; (4) meaning is given priority over structure; (5) style, though secondary to content, must be preserved. Much in Nida's own definition is unique to dynamic equivalence, such as the priority of the message over the form, but there are also elements similar to formal equivalence, such as using the closest natural equivalent and preserving style.

Nida develops his theory of kernel sentences as a means of putting his principles to work, differentiating between the surface structure of any language and the underlying kernel sentences. Differing underlying kernels may be beneath the same surface structures. An example is the English surface structure expression "the will of God," which has an underlying kernel "God wills." This is different from the surface structure "Jesus of Nazareth," which has an underlying kernel "Jesus comes from Nazareth." According to Nida, one first analyzes a surface structure source-language construction into its underlying kernel, then one transfers this kernel into the equivalent kernel in the target language, and one renders this kernel into the appropriate surface structure of the target language. Nida has continually used the example of Mark 1:4 to illustrate how this works. John preached literally "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Nida posits that there are five basic kernels that make up the phrase in Mark 1:4: (1) "John preached X" ("in which X stands for the entire indirect discourse"); (2) "John baptizes the people"; (3) "the people repent"; (4) "God forgives X" (where the goal of X is the people's sin); (5) "the people sin." Nida determines a number of meaning relations among the five kernel sentences,[127] and then he proposes two means of rendering the phrase as a result of his kernel analysis. For languages that do not have passive-voice formations, a rendering might be "I will baptize you" or "You will receive baptism." For languages that do have passive formations, of which English is one, a rendering might be "John preached, 'Repent and be baptized, so that God will forgive the evil you have done.' "

Several responses must be made regarding Nida's proposal. First, there is a particular hermeneutical stance that he takes on the relationship between the author and interpreter, in which the author's intentions are clearly apprehendable.[130] This constitutes a necessary assumption that leads to the utilization of Nida's kernel theory in which kernel sentences reflect the authorial intention of the surface structure. There is little question by Nida whether such apprehension is possible or likely, especially in a given context. A second response concerns the theory of kernel sentences. Similar in many ways to early forms of Chomskyan linguistics, Nida's kernel structures have not undergone the kind of theoretical advancement that has occurred in Chomskyan linguistics. A number of linguists are highly skeptical that the recovery of meaning of the deep structure is even possible, even if it has not been overtly disproved. A third response concerns the practical issue of Nida's use of his kernel relations themselves. Although his system of analysis is internally consistent, Nida provides no further theoretical or practical support for his major formulations. Thus, there is no defense of why kernel 3 should precede kernel 2 where there is no temporal indicator, or why kernel 5 should be the goal of kernel 4 without goal-oriented language in the passage, and the like.[132]

Equally problematic for dynamic equivalence translation is the fact that when we examine various dynamic or functional equivalence translations, we recognize that there are many similarities that they have with what have often been identified as formal or literal equivalence translations. Even the example of Mark 1:4 is often rendered similarly in the two major types of translations. The rendering of this verse with "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" is found in Tyndale's New Testament of 1534 (with "remission" instead of "forgiveness"), Authorized Version (and New King James Version), Revised Standard Version (and New Revised Standard Version), New American Standard Bible, New International Version (and Today's New International Version), Jerusalem Bible, NET Bible, Holman Christian Standard Bible, and, indeed, even the English Standard Version.

In other words, the same syntax and virtually same wording is found from Tyndale to the present, including in both supposedly more literalistic and more dynamic translations. This should not be surprising, given the discussion above, as the dynamic equivalence translation has several features in common with the literalistic translation, so much so that some of these dynamic translations retain many similar distinguishing characteristics of literalistic renderings. The formalist and dynamic equivalence methods have much in common theoretically (e.g., Nida's kernel model) and practically. The emphasis of formalist equivalence was on the word or, better, the word group, although the practical outworking, as we saw in the example of John 1:1, is the clause, and the major units of analysis of dynamic equivalence are the word group (often seen as correlating with the kernel) or, perhaps more accurately, the clause. Thus, both translational methods are tied to the lower syntactical levels of language usage, especially the word group (or phrase) and the clause.

Functionalist Translation

Functionalist translation, not to be confused with functional equivalence advocated by Nida and others, draws heavily upon an early form of what has been called "scale and category grammar." This translation theory was first developed in the 1960s by the linguist J. C. Catford and continues to be used and developed. The fundamental assumption of functionalist translation is the concept of defined levels of language usage, and the resultant differentiation within these levels between form and substance. According to Catford, when language is employed, three levels of abstraction can be exemplified: grammatical/lexical form, consisting of grammar and lexis; medium form, consisting of phonology (spoken) and graphology (written); and medium substance, consisting of phonic substance and graphic substance. These exemplifications occur within a situation (or situation substance) and context, which he defines as interlevels among the three levels already noted. Most theories of translation are concerned with the meanings of grammatical/lexical forms, while Catford contends that meaning is larger than such a limited notion. He identifies a hierarchical scale of grammar that exists on five levels, from the largest unit to the smallest: sentence, clause, group, word, and morpheme, where the smaller units function as exponents of the larger units (the smaller units make up the larger units), or larger units may shift to lower levels.

Catford defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL [source language]) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL [target language])." He identifies various levels of translational equivalence. Catford is not concerned with formal equivalence, but rather with what he calls "textual equivalence." Textual equivalence is defined as the target language material being the equivalent of the source language material. In this context, meaning is defined in terms of the situation and context in which the translation is used, with a target language text being meaningful within its context as it is used according to the code of that language.[137]

There is no New Testament translation I know of that utilizes the functionalist approach. Some might say that this is understandable, as one respondent to Catford's theory accused it of having "no connection with applied linguistics, either in theory or in practice." I am not as skeptical, although I must admit that, within the current environment of formal versus dynamic equivalence, it is hard to see whether other translational models will emerge.

Nevertheless, in some instances the Contemporary English Version and the New Living Translation might come close. The CEV indicates with asterisks where it has either combined verses together or reorganized material in a way that departs significantly from a word-for-word rendering. Presumably, the translators are saying by this that their rendering, in a given context, is the functionalist equivalent of the language of the source text. Despite there not being a single functionalist translation, there are individual translational instances that illustrate this approach. One example is the translation of the Greek masculine singular pronoun (i.e., "he"). English no longer uses the masculine singular pronoun inclusively of men and women, as it was clearly used in Greek. This results in various English expressions that are not the "same" as (i.e., formally equivalent to) the original literal (formal) Greek, such as the use of "they" to translate the Greek masculine singular pronoun.[139] Even more important, perhaps, are issues related to translation of Greek verbal aspect (tense-forms) and causality (voice-forms), where there is not iconicity or one-to-one correspondence with English. Various synthetic aspects in Greek are expressed with differing English analytic realizations (the Greek present tense-form, a single word, is rendered by the English composite present progressive [e.g., "am going"]), or the Greek middle voice is captured by an English paraphrase [e.g., "the door 'opened on its own' "].[141]

Thus, in rendering the Greek ἀδελφοί, *adelphoi*, whereas a formalist might argue for the use of "brothers" in order to retain word-for-word equivalence, a functionalist might argue for "brothers and sisters" in a given context. Such a situation, such as a letter of Paul addressed to churches with both men and women, would warrant the use of "brothers and sisters" because the textual equivalence for the original hearers is best captured in English by the inclusive term. A more extended example is the New Living Translation's rendering of Mark 1:4, a passage often used in such discussions: John the Baptist "was preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God to be forgiven." Whereas Nida recommended "Repent and be baptized," which alters the word order and creates two clauses, the NLT goes even further. The two major clauses regarding repentance and baptism are expanded and related conceptually so that one explains the other: baptism is an illustration of turning from sin. More than that, Nida's "so that" clause, which preserves the syntactical differentiation of the prepositional phrase, becomes a second explanatory clause. The major changes have reached to the clause complex level.

Despite these positive features, Catford recognizes a number of restrictions upon a functionalist approach to translation. One is that there are limits to the possible sources of a translation where there is a crossing of significant boundaries, such as a difference in medium (intersemiotic translation). Another is that having linguistic pertinence is not the same as having functional pertinence; translation is concerned with the latter and may restrict the former. A third restriction is linguistic untranslatability. Rejecting the hard form of this theory (that items cannot be translated from one language to another), Catford does note that there are circumstances that limit translatability. An example of this is when there is the same formal realization for differing features, such as lexical polysemy, where a simple word may have multiple genuine meanings.

Although Catford mentions the context of situation in his translation theory, when it comes to actually analyzing examples of how translation is done, he confines himself to the clause complex as the largest category for treatment. He limits the theory to dealing with the linkage of individual clauses into larger units, with the orientation focused upon the function of the units within the target language.

Discourse Analysis (Text-Linguistics)—Based Translation

Discourse analysis, or text-linguistics as it is still sometimes called in Europe, is a composite, and hence not precisely defined, method that encompasses various forms of linguistic analysis in the study of entire texts or discourses. Discourse analysis that works from the "bottom up" makes this especially clear, since smaller linguistic units provide the foundation for building larger discourse structures (e.g., word groups make up clauses, which in turn make up paragraphs, etc.). The importance of discourse analysis for general translational theory has only fairly recently been articulated, and its promise for biblical studies is yet to be realized. However, a discourse based translational approach provides unique opportunities that go beyond other forms of translational theory already discussed because the Bible, after all, is a discourse that contains a variety of individual and discrete (sub) discourses.[144] Discourse analytical translation theory has been influenced by functionalist methodologies and builds on some of the same linguistic principles. Two major books on discourse-based translation, both by Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, bring together discussion of various individual linguistic elements and place them in the context of how discourse considerations affect translational practices. There are two major results. The first is that discourse-based analysis is primarily concerned with elements that are beyond the level of the clause or clause complex, which can include both formal structures and, perhaps more importantly, means by which texts are organized and structured (e.g., information flow, cohesion, etc.). The second is that functionalist linguistics has had a large influence upon such model-building, especially in its attention to levels of language. One of the direct applications of this approach is appraisal theory, pioneered in translation theory by Jeremy Munday. Assuming a discourse perspective, and realizing that the use of language involves evaluation, Munday examines the translation process, as well as the means by which the author's attitude and speaker's engagement are evaluated and how this influences translation (e.g., lexical choice, evaluative words, syntax, etc.). The discourse analytical treatment of translation, therefore, encompasses further, and I would say necessary, developments and extensions of the functionalist model discussed above.

There is, to date, no explicitly discourse-based translation of the New Testament. If such a translation were to be created, there would need to be the kind of level-based analysis that functionalist translation theory has articulated as a necessary foundation. However, there would also need to be more attention to higher discourse structures, such as paragraphing and subparagraphing, discourse boundaries, cohesion, the ordering and highlighting of information, and textual types. For example, within a Gospel a discourse analyst would need to ask whether a passage is a parable, or some other literary type, or a subtype within a larger discourse type.

Information from lower levels of analysis would need to be considered, such as lexical forms to determine subject, participants, and the types of expression (e.g., participant name versus reduced forms), and types of cohesion used to establish bounded units. With named participants, there is the possibility of a historical rather than a fictional account, and necessary adjustments would need to be made in the translation to reflect the historicality of the narrative world. The discourse structure, on the basis of connective words (e.g., conjunctions), verb-form shifts (e.g., tense-forms, mood, causality), and other boundary words and cohesive devices, would need to be established, especially in terms of the participants and their interaction.

Translations into English have often included headings to indicate discourse units, even if they have not dealt consistently with such issues as paragraphing or larger discourse features. Headings may not in themselves seem important, or even integral to a translation, especially as they are not part of the original text. However, they exercise an important discourse function, in that they guide the reader's set of expectations by dividing and labeling the text. Not all translations always get this correct, and their mistakes illustrate the importance of sensitivity to such discourse features. In one humorous example, the 1717 edition of the Authorized Version gave the heading for Luke 20 as "Parable of the Vinegar" (rather than "Vineyard"). Of standard edition Bibles—not counting study Bibles—one of the most elaborate schemes of discourse identification is that of the Contemporary English Version. It has a brief introduction to each biblical book, an outline that is used throughout the text of the particular book, and then running headings in the margins to mark divisions.[149] It also uses a portion of the biblical book itself as a title, as in John 1:1 and possibly 1 John 1:1a (but not Mark 1:1).

Discourse-based translational theory takes up a variety of issues that have not usually been discussed in traditional formal or dynamic equivalence treatments of translation, whether literalistic or dynamic, because many of these discourse issues are concerned with language levels beyond the clause or sentence. Sometimes this extension beyond the sentence goes quite a bit beyond, even beyond an individual discourse itself. Thus, in their treatment of discourse-based translation, Hatim and Mason recognize general issues of translation—such as questions of objectivity and subjectivity, liberal and free translation, form and content, and author- and reader-centered translation, issues often associated with more general literary concerns—before discussing how to handle the major discourse-based translational issues. They contend that models such as dynamic equivalence as proposed by Nida, which is reflective of Chomskyan notions of deep structure, have moved translation away from concern for communication. They want to focus upon the communicative function of discourse and the major features that make this possible. As a consequence, they are concerned with the pragmatic dimension of language, and the way that pragmatics relates to communication and semiotics.[152] The result is attention to the complex interplay of language as it is used in entire discourses, not as random or chaotic individual elements but as structured and intentional uses. These larger patterns of usage that create structure in texts and give texture to discourses are important parts of the meaning in context. In fact, Hatim and Mason want to go beyond the text to include intertextuality within the scope of issues that a full discourse analytical translational model discusses, since these intertextual references are part of the communicative intent of the discourse.

One area to note is that discourse analysis provides a means for quality assessment of translation, in which focus is not simply on "mistakes" in translation (a common area of discussion and evaluation, especially highlighted in disputes between formal and dynamic equivalence), but on a variety of higher-level features that allow assessment of translational effectiveness.[154] The development of suitable tools for translation quality assessment may well offer much future promise for evaluating the qualities of various biblical translations.

Relevance Theory

As mentioned above, with the passing of Eugene Nida from the scene, there is renewed discussion of the best model for Bible translation. This discussion will no doubt continue for some time, especially with a wide range of possible approaches available. In some Bible translation circles, especially those connected with the United Bible Societies, there is serious discussion of relevance theory becoming the driving model of translation, just as Nida's model of dynamic equivalence once dominated Bible translation in the past.[156]

Relevance theory as a translational model develops out of a critique of two major linguistic concepts. The first, which is relevant to both formal and dynamic equivalence models of translation, is a critique of the code theory of language, which claims that language can be described as a systematically organized code, apart from its speakers. The linguists Dan Sperber and Dierdre Wilson, the major intellectual forces behind development of relevance theory, contend that the code theory of language—the dominant theory behind most linguistic models—does not satisfactorily answer the question of how communication takes place, since there remains an unbridgeable gap between linguistic expression and meaning, a point that formal equivalence (and other) theories purportedly neglect. In other words, most theories of language, especially the ones that Sperber and Wilson are most readily responding to, are focused upon issues of syntax rather than semantics and especially pragmatics. This is seen particularly when contextless individual or hypothetical sentences are created and then examined. In the sentence "I will see her next Thursday," the general semantic sense of "I" as including a singular speaker does not, according to Sperber and Wilson, provide adequate information that can only be gained by knowing the "I" in a specific context. The same can be said of "her." Similarly, reference to "next Thursday" communicates only if one knows the day today, rather than simply knowing that Thursday is after Wednesday. Code theories of language have clearly dominated both major forms of translational theory—the formalist and the dynamic equivalence models—and have, so it is claimed, led to a division between the form of language and its meaning or communicative abilities. Instead, Sperber and Wilson believe that language always invokes much beyond the words themselves, and as a result they look to cognitive linguistics in a revised and streamlined form, which they call "relevance theory," as a model of communication to develop the notion of inference further.

Their second critique is of Paul Grice's implicatures of conversation. Grice, a philosopher of language whose work has direct relevance for linguistics, developed his conversational maxims to describe what is implicated (or implied or assumed) when conversation occurs. These include maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Grice's maxims have been both severely criticized and strongly embraced as the foundation of a more robust set of generalized conversational implicatures.[160] Some of the criticisms pertinent to translation should be noted. The first is that Grice's implicatures are particularly well suited to English conversational communication because they emphasize brevity, sincerity, and relevance, among others. Other cultures, whether ancient or modern, may emphasize other values in conversation not captured by Grice's maxims. Furthermore, some implicatures are of less pertinence or explicit content than others, especially when examined closely. Thus, the "maxim of relation," which is based upon intuitive subjective analysis, rather than objective analysis, is less stringent or useful.[162] Sperber and Wilson, therefore, reassess Grice's maxims with regard to the concept of ostensive-inferential communication, working within the overarching notion of situational relevance. Ostention and inference make clear that certain information is being put forward as constituting the assumptions for communication within a given situational context. This is then evaluated in terms of relevance.

Despite the claims made for it, and some of the developments in translational theory and practice, relevance theory does not itself provide a robust theory of translation, but attempts to provide a theory of cognition, especially as it relates to language. Ernst-August Gutt, who as a linguist and Bible translator has directly applied the theories of Sperber and Wilson to translational issues, states, "The central claim of relevance theory is that human communication crucially creates an expectation of optimal relevance, that is, an expectation on the part of the hearer that his attempt at interpretation will yield *adequate contextual effects at minimal processing cost*." In other words, there should be maximal understanding with minimal effort on the part of the hearer. Further, when a reader engages in more effort, the expectation is that there will be a commensurably larger amount of understanding to warrant the effort. Otherwise, there is material that is not relevant that is being processed.

The Contemporary English Version has been used by Aloo Mojola and Ernst Wendland as an example for discussion of translation theory and translation, not because it was written with relevance theory in mind, but because it was translated in an effort to minimize processing (on the basis of its use of contemporary English, attention to the biblical translational tradition, etc.) and maximize understanding. A good example is found in how the Contemporary English Version renders the opening of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–20: "There was once a rich man who wore expensive clothes and every day ate the best food. But a poor beggar named Lazarus was brought to the gate of the rich man's house." The use of "once," instead of "certain" (as in "a certain rich man") found in other translations, infers from the context an example held up to others as relevant, rather than making the man himself either specific or generic and hence descriptive. The reference to being at the gate of the rich man's house appears at the end of the verse in the Contemporary English Version. One further notices that there is no reference in verse 20 to the poor man having sores. Instead, this phrasing is moved to verse 21: "He was happy just to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. His body was covered with sores, and dogs kept coming up to lick them." The catalogue of elements is brought together to provide a cumulative description of the poor man. A number of features of the Contemporary English Version are clearly utilized to optimize relevance in the posited situational context of the parable.

Descriptivist Translation

Much Bible translation has traditionally (and, one might argue, legitimately and of necessity) focused upon linguistic matters and the translational processes themselves. These are often treated as if translation occurs without reference to larger nonlinguistic issues, such as the role of the translator. The descriptivist approach to Bible translation instead focuses upon describing the specific (literary) situational context of a translation, rather than prescribing what such a translation should be like.[166] The descriptivist approach is part of a wider effort to recognize the contextual nature of translation. With a background in literary translation and both its source and target cultures, descriptivists view both formalist and dynamic equivalence translational theories (much to the horror of advocates of each) as prescriptive; these prescriptive approaches are concerned to formulate rules and guidelines for translation, and they develop practical means to make a translation. A descriptivist translational approach is concerned with the general principles governing and even surrounding translation and the manifestation of these principles. Theo Hermans, a major advocate of descriptivist translational theory (as are Stuart Campbell and Susan Bassnett-McGuire), states that descriptivists are much more concerned with the theory of translation than with its activity. They have a "view of literature as a complex and dynamic system; a conviction that there should be a continual interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies; an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, in the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures."[168] The major issue with all literary translations is how the text is perceived as literature within different cultures, not what constitutes literature in and of itself—something that, interestingly enough, formal equivalence translators sometimes claim to be interested in. In other words, literature in a culture is based upon the culture in which it is found, not on any inherent features of the text. The conclusions of descriptivism are significant. By virtue of translation, virtually any text is going to be seen as (at least to some degree) a literary text in a target culture, and thus it will be expected to follow the patterns of similar literary texts within that culture. It is this reception that establishes the guidelines for a given translation.

A descriptivist translational approach would want to begin by asking questions about the comparative literary quality of the translation, especially in terms of the context's available literary types. It is worth observing that the Authorized Version is often hailed as a great literary work. This is especially the claim of many recent formal equivalence advocates who wish to preserve in modern translations some of the features that they believe distinguish the literary qualities of the Authorized Version. I do not want to dispute that analysis here or whether it constitutes sufficient grounds for the type of translation that they advocate. Neither would a descriptivist. However, when the Contemporary English Version was published, the translators tried to position it not as attempting "to *retain the form* of the King James Version," as had some other previous translations, but rather as seeking "to *capture the spirit* of the King James Version by following certain principles set forth by its translators in the document 'The Translators to the Reader.' " They then excerpt wording from that document to help describe their new translation. A descriptivist might well say that the literary forms used in the Contemporary English Version are intentionally chosen so as to find the contemporary equivalent, not for the individual books in the original language, but for the Authorized Version. Whether it has succeeded in doing that I cannot say, although I have some questions about gearing the Contemporary English Version to the Authorized Version rather than to the original ancient context.

Like relevance-based translational theory, the descriptivist approach attempts to describe the context in which translation occurs rather than being an approach to translational procedure. Descriptive translational theory functions within the context in which the source text is rendered into the target language.

Cultural/Postcolonial Theory

As one reviewer of previous work on this topic has observed, in my treatment of topics such as relevance theory and descriptivism I have clearly gone beyond the traditional confines of translation theory as discussed within biblical studies and entered the broader realm of translation studies. This is intentional on my part, as I want to see translation of the Bible within the larger context of general linguistic and translational theory, and not be confined by what I see as the largely stagnant debate between formal and dynamic equivalence theories. In this final category, in some ways, I go to the furthest lengths in such exploration. Cultural ideology can and does play a role in most kinds of translation, although until recently it has not often been explicitly noticed.[171] One of the major reasons for this is that a number of models of translation—including the formalist and dynamic equivalence models, but others as well, including functionalist, discourse analytical, and even relevance theory—purport to provide objectivist translational methods, even when there are subjective factors involved. As noted above, these approaches to translation focus upon the process, not the product, with the explicit purpose of providing rigorously defensible translations. However, there has been a recent reaction against the formal and dynamic equivalence models in particular, and questions have been raised about the translation process itself. These come not just from those, like the descriptivists, who wish to place the translational product within its proper context, but from those who want to question the entire nature of translation, especially where the Bible is concerned.

The English literature scholar and translator Lawrence Venuti, who has become identified with such an approach to translation, and to Bible translation in particular, has specifically criticized the dynamic equivalence model of Nida from an ideological point of view. Reflecting a culturally based approach, Venuti claims that Nida's translational method imposes a cultural hegemony of the target language upon the source text itself,[173] since a dynamic equivalence translation is meant to be fluent and fully comprehensible in the target language, while neglecting the character and context of the original source text. Venuti argues instead for foreignizing translations that restrain what he calls "the ethnocentric violence of translation," which attempts to exert hegemonic control over the translated text.[175] Venuti, perhaps not surprisingly, sees this translational hegemony in Anglo-American culture as a whole, and in translational practice in particular. He claims that such translational practice is dominated by "domesticating theories" that strive to produce fluent translations, but in which an "illusion of transparency" masks that the translation can only be a "partial interpretation." In this critique, Nida's emphasis upon "naturalness of expression"[177] in the target language involves subordination and domestication of the source text, with unrecognizable source-language features being replaced by understandable ones in the target language. Nida's argument for translational accuracy is, according to Venuti, a warrant for creating the same effect in the target-language readers as was produced in the source-language readers. In other words, the differences in language and culture that separate the two are overcome by forcing the one (the source) to submit to the other (the target). Venuti claims, however, that this results in a translation that enshrines "target-language cultural values while veiling this domestication in the transparency evoked by a fluent strategy."[179] Going further, Venuti claims that Nida does not take into account "the ethnocentric violence that is inherent in every translation process."

In other words, the issues are larger than simply the technical dimensions of translation. Even if Nida were to argue for a change in the rendering of a particular problematic word in a translation, according to Venuti, Nida would not have addressed the cultural, social, and political issues that have been raised. According to Venuti, Nida creates only a partial translation. However, the same could be argued for any translation, admittedly including the kind of foreignizing translation for which Venuti argues. Venuti recognizes that there are ideological and cultural (read also political) issues at stake in such a debate. Venuti is not suggesting a corrective that creates a theory-neutral or value-free translational model. There is not only a recognition that Nida's model is not neutral, but also an outright acknowledgment and endorsement of a competing translational ideology.

Translations are, so the critique goes, made by those in power at the expense of the disenfranchised. Thus, translation is accused of becoming an insidious colonizing tool of those wishing to extend their power and influence and dominate those unable to resist. Translations as part of this process do much more than simply render a text into the language of an indigenous people; translations become the tools of domination by others, since the translations themselves end up reflecting and even imposing the viewpoint and will of the dominant culture. Those who sponsor such a colonizing translation end up helping to perpetuate their domination through the translation itself, rather than simply communicating as equals with those with whom they have contact.

As a result, that translation is merely an ideological conflict, or a set of competing claims, is merely another ideological assertion. Whether this is true or not, translation occurs and will continue to occur—and should occur. There is little doubt that there is some value in being reminded of the difficulty of translation, the need to respect and recognize the context in which the text was written and the context into which one translates, the integrity of the form and meaning of the source text. However, as the history of Bible translation indicates, the translation of the Bible into other languages as missionary purposes dictated has been a feature of the spread of Christianity from the start, even when Christianity was not in a position of cultural or political influence or power. No doubt this has not always been done in the most contextually sensitive way. However, making the Christian message known in the language of the local people has been a staple of the Christian missionary movement since its inception, beginning with Pentecost and continuing with Paul's missionary journeys.[26]

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[26] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 173–205). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

The relations among translational models that I have discussed may be displayed in the following way:

Cultural Context	Cultural/Postcolonial Theory
Situational Context	Relevance Theory/Descriptivist Approach
Discourse	Discourse Analysis
Paragraph	
Clause Complex (Sentence)	Functionalist Translation
Clause	Dynamic/Functional Equivalence Translation
Word Group	Literal/Formal Equivalence Translation
Word	
Morphology	

Note: I designate the word group (or phrase) as the minimal unit of meaningful translation. See further discussion in the text.

This chart correlates the levels of language and context (admittedly in a simplified form) with various approaches to translation, with the recognition that the categories are not absolute. The word group (or phrase) is the minimal unit of meaningful translation, since one must have some minimal context (or, better, cotext) for determination of meaning. Formal equivalence translation functions at this level as its minimal level of translational meaning. As noted above, there probably should be more effort to work at the clause level for formal equivalence translation, or at least recognition of the significance of this level for translational practice. Dynamic equivalence, with its reliance on kernels, functions at the word group or, better, clause level. As we can see, in that sense, formal and dynamic equivalence are more closely related to each other and have much more in common, given their dealing with the lower levels of language, than do some other translational models. Functionalist translational models attempt to deal with the clause complex (or sentence), while discourse-based translation functions at the discourse level. Both relevance theory and descriptivist translational models are situationally oriented, with relevance theory focusing on situationally imposed constraints of relevance, and descriptivism focusing on literary context. Cultural or postcolonial translational critique addresses the cultural context in which translation occurs.[27]

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[27] Porter, S. E. (2013). *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation*. (L. M. McDonald & C. A. Evans, Eds.) (pp. 207–208). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

World–view confusion

The fallacy in this case lies in thinking that one's own experience & interpretation of reality are the proper framework for interpreting the biblical text, whereas in fact there may be such deep differences once we probe beyond the superficial level that we find quite different categories are being used, and the law of the excluded middle applies.

We hear the Word of God commanding us to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and so read our experience into the text that our "cross" shortage of money, a personal defeat, or even (God forgive us!) a joke. But we are far too light on ourselves; to the first–century reader, the person who literally took up his cross not only was condemned to die, but also was condemned to die the painful, ignominious, humiliating death Rome reserved for noncitizen criminals, the scum of the earth. If Jesus is telling us to take up our cross and follow him, the "death to self" he envisages is not death, nor some quick step of faith that kills off some ontological part called "the old man," but a painful, humiliating death made endurable only because Jesus physically passed this way first.

The fallacy at hand offers the clearest need for distanciation on the part of the interpreter (a notion explained in the introduction of this book). Unless we recognize the "distance" that separates us from the text being studied, we will overlook differences of outlook, vocabulary, interest; and quite unwittingly we will read our mental baggage into the text without pausing to ask if that is appropriate. We are truly prepared to understand a text only after we have understood some of the differences between what the text is talking about & what we gravitate to on the same subject. Failure to recognize the nature and scope of our own mental equipment is to commit what David Hackett Fischer calls the Baconian fallacy:

> The *Baconian fallacy* consists in the idea that a historian can operate without the aid of preconceived questions, hypotheses, ideas, assumptions, theories, paradigms, postulates, prejudices, presumptions, or general presuppositions of any kind. He is supposed to go a–wandering through the dark forest of the past, gathering facts like nuts and berries, until he has enough to make a general truth. Then he is to store up his general truths until he has the whole truth. This idea is double deficient, for it commits a historian to the pursuit of an impossible object by an impracticable method.

This does not mean real knowledge is impossible. Rather, it means that real knowledge is close to impossible if we fail to recognize our own assumptions, questions, interests, and biases; but if we recognize them and, in dialogue with the text, seek to make allowances for them, we will be better able to avoid confusing our own world–views with those of the biblical writers.[28]

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[28] Carson, D. A. (1996). *Exegetical fallacies* (2nd ed., pp. 103–105). Carlisle, U.K.; Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster; Baker Books.

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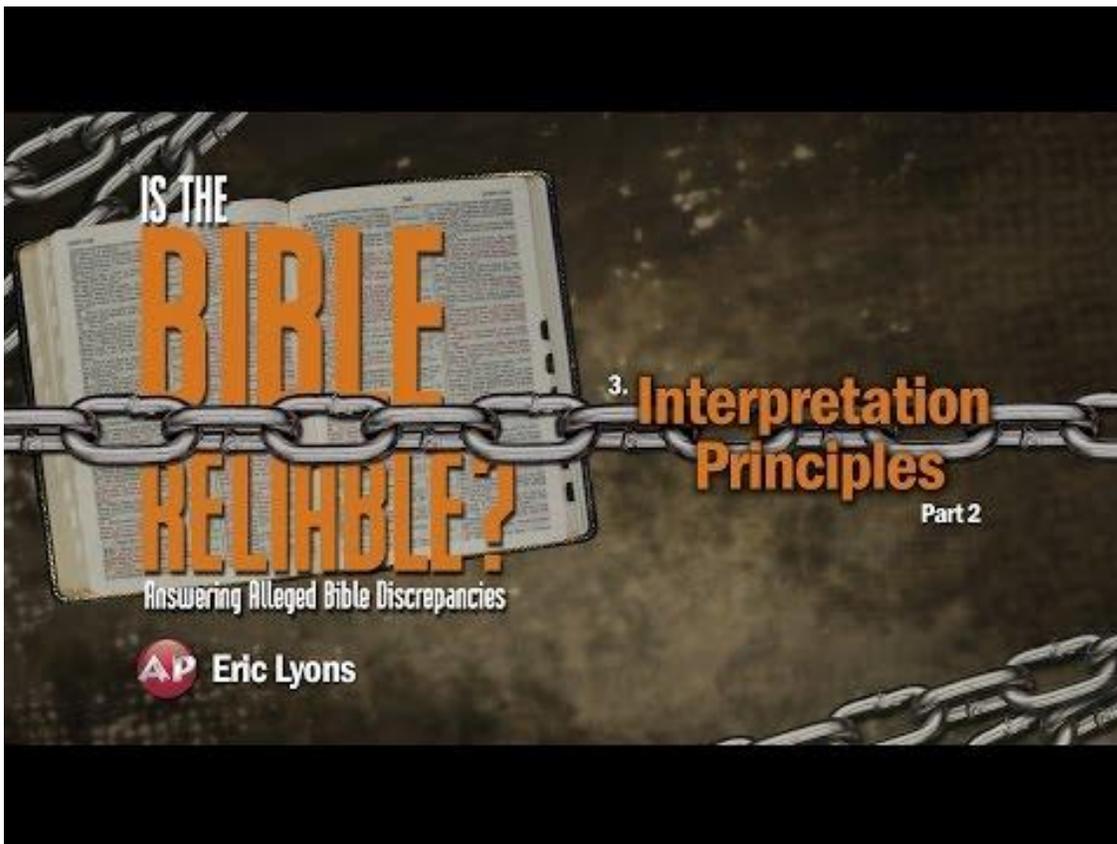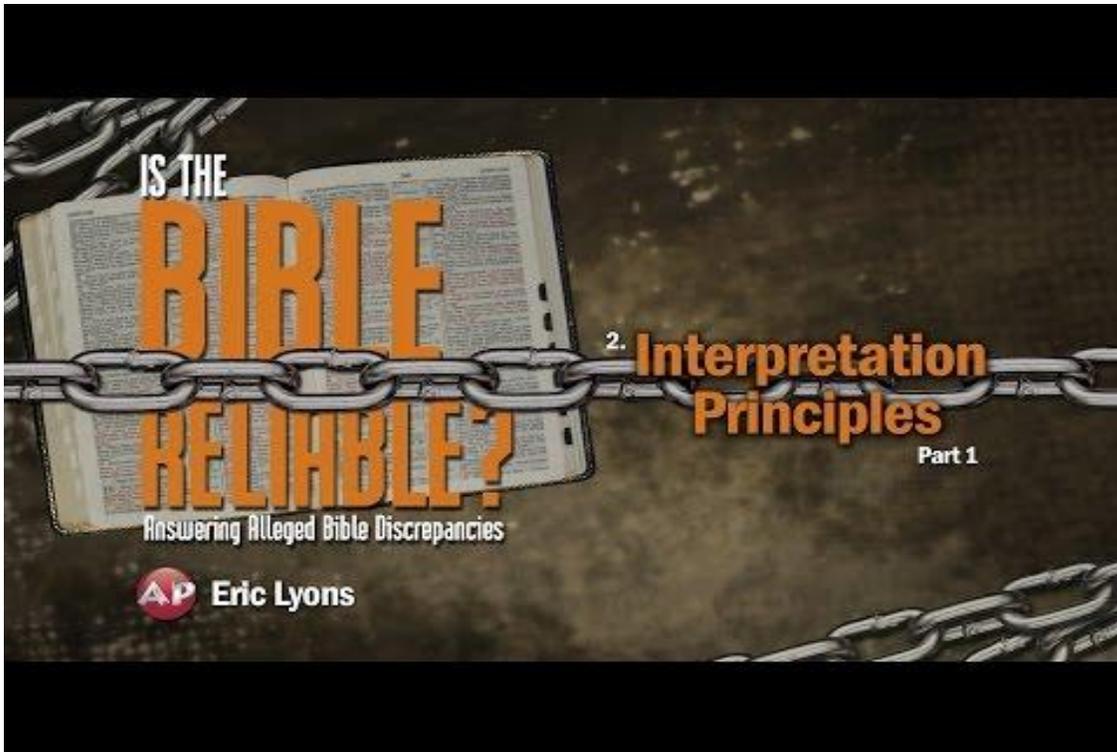
Is the Bible Canon Complete?

BOOKS DEBATED	REASONS GIVEN
HEBREWS	Western Church Thought Forgery
JAMES & JUDE & 2nd PETER	Authorship Questioned
REVELATION	Chiliastic Origins As Per Eusebius
THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS	Nonapostolic Origin & Late Date
THE DIDACHE	Uncertain Origin & Late Date
REVELATION OF PETER	Authenticity Doubted

Old Testament Authorship (Talmudic Tradition)	
Author	**Composition(s)**
Moses	Torah, Job, and Psalm 90
Joshua	Joshua 1-24:28 and Deuteronomy 34
Eleazar	Joshua 24:29-32
Phinehas	Joshua 29:33
Samuel	1 Samuel 1-24, Judges, and Ruth
Gad and Nathan	1 Samuel 25-31 and 2 Samuel
David, et al.	Psalms
Jeremiah	Jeremiah, 1 and 2 Kings, and Lamentations
Hezekiah, et al.	Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes
The Great Assembly	Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther
Ezra	Ezra and 1 and 2 Chronicles
Nehemiah	Nehemiah

The Canon and Extra-Canonical Writings

by AP Staff

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21). These two verses are the alpha and omega of the biblical text, the first and last verses in our Bible. In between (and including) these two verses lays God's Word, the Bible—sixty-six generally accepted books composing one book that defines Christianity and its tenets. However, people assault this composition from every perspective. Theists & atheists alike attack its inspiration. Scholars in our universities attack its message. Infidels and skeptics allege that it contains numerous discrepancies. Even its make-up is subject to intense scrutiny. With attacks growing more hostile (as is evident by an article titled "The Lost Gospels" that appeared in the December 22, 2003 issue of *Time* magazine; see Van Biema, 2003), some ask, "What books really belong in the Bible?"

This question is difficult for many people, because beyond the pages of the Bible lie a number of works which some people hold as inspired and therefore worthy of inclusion. Still others examine the Scriptures and read citations of works such as the Book of Jasher or the Acts of the Seers—none of which is included among the writings of our Great Tome. Some people turn to these existing, but unaccepted, works to "add to their faith." The answers to this difficulty lie in understanding the canon of the Bible and considering what additional books, if any, we should include.

THE *QANEH* OF SCRIPTURE

Our word "canon" comes from the Greek word *kanon* and Hebrew word *qaneh*. These two words originally meant "reed." The Greeks and Semitic peoples used reeds as measuring instruments, and so the meanings of *kanon* and *qaneh* changed gradually into "rule" or "measure." To refer to a canon is to refer to those things that have been measured for acceptance; to refer to the biblical canon is to refer to the books considered Scripture—divinely inspired works that have been preserved for a purpose (Lightfoot, 2003, p. 152). The canons of the Old and New Testaments were set at different times, but each one had the influence of the Guiding Hand.

Development of the Old Testament Canon

The majority of Protestant translations of the Bible contain thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. These are divided into the five books of Law (also called the Pentateuch or Torah; Genesis through Deuteronomy), twelve books of History (Joshua through Esther), and five books of Poetry (Job through the Song of Solomon). The five Major Prophets (Isaiah through Daniel) and the twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea through Malachi) complete the thirty-nine books. Our Old Testament canon comes from the canon of the Hebrew Bible. [NOTE: Some Old Testament canons include certain apocryphal writings, which we will discuss later. However, these apocryphal writings were considered non-canonical by the Jews, and therefore were not included in the Hebrew Bible.]

The Hebrews divided their Scriptures, twenty-four books total, into three sections: the Law, Prophets, and the Writings (also called the *Hagiographa* or Holy Writings). The order & numbering of the Hebrew Bible is different from the Old Testament, which explains why they list twenty-four books, while we list thirty-nine. The Law consisted of the 5 books of the Torah, exactly like our English Bible. The Prophets contained Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Prophets, in that order.

They considered these eight books, but we divide Samuel into two parts, Kings into two parts & the Twelve Prophets into their respective parts—yielding a new number of twenty-one books out of the same set of the Prophets. [NOTE: Stephen, in Acts 7:42-43, quotes from Amos 5:25-27 & cites it as the Book of the Prophets, showing how the Minor Prophets were considered a single composite work.] Finally, the Hebrew Bible placed Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Song of Solomon, Ezra, and Chronicles in the Writings. Our Bibles divide Ezra into two books (Ezra and Nehemiah) and Chronicles into two books. This order in the Hebrew Bible follows a rough chronology of authorship, based on Jewish tradition (Bruce, 1988, pp. 29-30; Rodkinson, 1918, V:44-45). However, the question remains. Whence did the canon of these books come?

From evidence in the New Testament, it is obvious that the Jews had a canon—a group of accepted scriptures—that included the Law and the Prophets (see Matthew 5:17-18; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16-17; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Romans 3:21). In one passage, Jesus mentioned the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms (part of the Writings) together (Luke 24:44), showing at some point before the time of Christ, the Jews had codified a group of literature into Scripture. History supports this view. Flavius Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, wrote (c. A.D. 90) of twenty-two books "which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine…." Five of these were written by Moses (the Torah), thirteen books were written between Moses and Artaxerxes, King of Persia (the Prophets and part of the Writings using a different order and enumeration), and four books contained hymns and moral precepts (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) [*Against Apion*, 1:38-40]. He went on to state:

It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it comes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them (1:41-42, emp. added).

Josephus considered everything written after the time of Artaxerxes to be non-canonical, because prophetic messages had ceased. It is highly probable, since Josephus was a historian, that this was not his own idea, but reflected an earlier Jewish tradition (Bruce, 1988, pp. 32-34). [NOTE: Josephus added Ruth to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah, making twenty-two books (Bruce, p. 33).] Also around A.D. 90, a group of Jewish rabbis gathered at Jamnia in western Judea to discuss established canon. Testing for books that "defile the hands" (were prophetically inspired), they debated including certain apocryphal books and removing some disputed books. However, the conclusion was that only the books that comprised the Hebrew Bible were the inspired, canonical books (Bruce, pp. 34-36; McDowell and Wilson, 1993, p. 37).

The Talmud speaks in several places of the inspired Scripture. The Talmud is a collection of Hebrew oral law (the Mishna) along with transcribed scholarly discussions & commentary (the Gemara). The Mishna was written in the second century A.D., and the Gemara was added later (see Bass, 2003). While the Talmud was completed after the first century, it does contain the oral traditions from the post-exilic Jews. Tractate *Baba Bathra* contains the divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Law, Prophets & *Hagiographa*) with their contents, along with the traditional authors of each. The books listed match the books of our Old Testament—nothing added or taken from them (Rodkinson, 1918, V:43-46). The most interesting evidence concerning the Hebrew canon comes from tractate *Sanhedrin*: "The rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has left Israel…" (Rodkinson VII/VIII:24). Thus, Jewish oral tradition held that Malachi was the last inspired book of the Old Testament.

It is clear from the evidence that the Jewish people accepted the 39 Old Testament books as their canon — no more, no less. The New Testament refers to an established division. Josephus said that Malachi, as the last inspired author, completed the canon of Hebrew Scripture. The rabbis at Jamnia, who had access to apocryphal writings, didn't include them in the canon of Scripture. Moreover, ancient oral tradition of the Jews held the thirty-nine books in our Old Testament are the only Scriptures.

This, however, doesn't explain **how** the canon came to be. Unfortunately, the first collection of these canonical books has been lost, but from the Bible we can construct how some books were canonized. It probably was a "piecemeal" process; as the inspired writers produced their books, they added them to the canon. Deuteronomy 17:18 refers to the Law as something written down in a book kept by the priests and Levites (see Deuteronomy 28:58; 28:61; 29:21; 30:10). Deuteronomy 31:9-13 and 31:24-29 recorded that Moses wrote the Law in a book and gave it to the priests and the elders, commanding them to read it before the people every seven years. Immediately after the death of Moses, God Himself spoke to Joshua and referred to a Book of the Law that Moses had given to the people (Joshua 1:7-8). It is at this point that the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, was canonized—when it received God's spoken seal of approval as the Law of Moses (see Joshua 8:30-35; 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; 22:3-20, etc.). In like manner, the book of Joshua was canonized when Joshua wrote it down in the Book of the Law of God (the Old Testament), which, until then, contained only the Law of Moses (Joshua 24:26).

The remaining books of the Old Testament have no clear point of canonization; any dates or persons given for this process are speculation. Some have said that Ezra — with the assistance of Nehemiah, Zechariah, Malachi, and others—established the current canon before 400 B.C. (Milligen, 1868, pp. 155-159; see also Motyer, 2001, p. 15), while others have disagreed with this view (e.g., Briggs, 1970, pp. 120-122). The most likely theory is that the authors themselves were inspired to add their writings to the canon. At least part of Jeremiah appears to have been written by Jeremiah using Baruch as scribe (Jeremiah 36, esp. vs. 32; 45:1), and perhaps the rest by his own hand (51:60). Sections of the Psalms contain the names of their authors, and tradition attributed the other books to various authors. According to tractate *Sanhedrin*,

Old Testament Authorship (Talmudic Tradition)	
Author	**Composition(s)**
Moses	Torah, Job, and Psalm 90
Joshua	Joshua 1-24:28 and Deuteronomy 34
Eleazar	Joshua 24:29-32
Phinehas	Joshua 29:33
Samuel	1 Samuel 1-24, Judges, and Ruth
Gad and Nathan	1 Samuel 25-31 and 2 Samuel
David, et al.	Psalms
Jeremiah	Jeremiah, 1 and 2 Kings, and Lamentations
Hezekiah, et al.	Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes
The Great Assembly	Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther
Ezra	Ezra and 1 and 2 Chronicles
Nehemiah	Nehemiah

Moses wrote Job in addition to the Torah. Samuel wrote the book that bears his name, along with Judges and Ruth. 1 Samuel 25:1 recorded the death of Samuel, so Jewish tradition held that Gad the seer and Nathan the prophet finished 1 Samuel and wrote all of 2 Samuel. Jeremiah, in addition to his book of prophecy, wrote Kings and Lamentations. King Hezekiah and "his company" (according to the Talmud) wrote down Isaiah, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. The men of the Great Assembly (a group of post-exilic Jewish religious leaders that was founded by Ezra) copied down Ezekiel, the Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and Esther; Ezra wrote Ezra and Chronicles (cf. 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-4), and Nehemiah appended Ezra's book with his writings (Rodkinson, 1918, V:45-46). [NOTE: Some held that Nehemiah wrote all of Ezra/Nehemiah (Rodkinson, VII/VIII:284).]

This tradition shows the possible development of the canon. Moreover, the New Testament supports some claims of the traditional authorship. If Ezra was the last author of Old Testament history (1 and 2 Chronicles according to the Talmud), then it would explain the order of martyrs that Jesus used in Matthew 23:35. While rebuking the Pharisees (Matthew 23), Jesus mentioned two martyrs: Abel and Zechariah. The story of Abel, the first martyr, is found in Genesis 4:1-9. Zechariah was a priest who was martyred by King Joash of Judah (2 Chronicles 24:17-22), and the last martyr mentioned in the historical books of the Old Testament. It appears that Jesus was giving the record of martyrdom from the beginning of the Hebrew Scriptures (Genesis, written by Moses) to the end of Hebrew Scriptures (2 Chronicles, written by Ezra in days of the last prophets)—thus denying any other books inclusion in the Old Testament canon (e.g., 1 and 2 Maccabees, which were penned after Ezra's writings).

The conclusion, therefore, to the development and establishment of the Old Testament canon is this: certain portions of the Hebrew Scriptures were canonized upon the deaths of the authors (Genesis through Joshua); while men added the rest as they were written and/or collected — all under the oversight of God. The Jews considered inspiration to have ended with Malachi, and their canon of twenty-four books (the same as our thirty-nine books) supports this view. The New Testament writers, Josephus, the rabbis at Jamnia, and Talmudic tradition supported this finalized canon. This is what our Old Testament is based on, and we know that these thirty-nine books are in the canon, but the question remains: Should we add more books to this established Old Testament canon?

Development of the New Testament Canon

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books that are divided into five subcategories. These are the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John), the book of Christian history (Acts), thirteen Pauline epistles (Romans thru Philemon), eight general epistles (Hebrews thru Jude), and one apocalyptical epistle (Revelation). [NOTE: Hebrews sometimes falls among the Pauline epistles.] Colossians 4:16 states that the churches shared their epistles, and we know that the majority of the New Testament took the form of an epistle (exceptions being the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John—their original form cannot be determined, but they were probably epistles). Over time, men gathered these writings and made lists of which epistles they considered acceptable reading in worship services. As early as the second and third centuries, there was a known canon of Pauline literature that included Romans through Philemon, although some placed Hebrews with them. This is evidenced by frequent allusions to Paul's letters in the early Christian writings, showing that there was a commonly accepted set. The early Christian writers also referred to the gospels, again meaning that there was an accepted group of books (Matthew through John). As the other epistles spread, they became part of these sets of New Testament writings.

One of the first New Testament canons we see in history comes from the second century heretic Marcion. He was a radical who accepted Paul as the only "uncorrupted" apostle, and so accepted only the Pauline epistles. He wrote the *Gospel*, which was a corruption of Luke & placed at the front what he considered the Pauline canon: Galatians, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Laodiceans (which was the name he gave Ephesians; Metzger, 2000, p. 532), Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. Marcion also subjected these epistles to extensive editing; he took out anything that did not conform to what he thought was Paul's "doctrine" (Bruce, 1988, pp. 134-141). Some have held that Marcion left the book of Hebrews out of his canon because of its close association to the Old Testament (Aland and Aland, 1981, p. 49).

A mutilated fragment of papyrus, known as the Murtorian Fragment, from the late second century, also contained a partial canon. It placed Luke & John as the third & fourth gospel accounts (mention of the previous two gospels existed at the top of the original manuscript, which is missing from the fragment), and attributed Acts to Luke. Paul's letters were listed in the order of Corinthians (1 and 2), Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Galatians, Thessalonians (1 and 2), Philemon, Titus, and Timothy (1 & 2). It also mentioned Jude, two epistles of John (probably 1 and 2 John), and Revelation. It leaves out Hebrews, 1st and 2nd Peter, and 3 John, but accepts as canonical the Apocryphal book Wisdom of Solomon (but it did not claim that it was written by Solomon himself, saying that it was "written by the friends of Solomon in his honour"). The Murtorian Fragment also stated that some accepted the Apocalypse of Peter, while others did not; and it mentioned the Shepherd of Hermas as a recent, uninspired composition (Caius, 1971, V:603-604). Kurt and Barbara Aland, a husband-and-wife team of distinguished Greek scholars, contended the epistle to the Hebrews was left out of the Murtorian canon because of its "denial of a second repentance, cf. Heb. 6:4ff " (1981, p. 49).

In his *First Apology*, Justin Martyr (c. 110-165) referred to the gospels as containing the account of the Last Supper, although he did not list the titles or authors (1973, I:185). He later mentioned that the writings of the apostles were read along with those of the prophets in the Sunday assembly (I:186). Origen (c. 185-254), one of the most prolific early Christian writers, mentioned Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as genuine (1974a, X:412; Eusebius, 1971, I:273), along with Paul's writings (without listing or numbering them), 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation. He listed 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John as disputed by some & Origen mentioned a story from Acts as an apparent fact (the raising of Eutychus, Acts 20: 7-12), which means he probably took Acts as a genuine writing (1974b, X:346-347; Eusebius, 1971, I:273). In his Homilies on Joshua, Origen listed the 27 canonical books of the New Testament as abolishing idolatry and false philosophies (McGarvey, 1974, I:66), showing that as early as the mid-third century, these were the accepted writings.

Eusebius (c. 270-339), the famed historian of the early church, wrote concerning the accepted, disputed, and rejected books of the canon. He began the list of universally accepted works with the four gospels (previously listed as Matthew, Mark, Luke & John [1971, I:152-155]). To them he added Acts and the Pauline epistles (without listing them), 1 John and 1 Peter. The disputed books were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation (I:155-157). Athanasius (c. 296-373) listed the canon of the New Testament—the 27 books that comprise our current New Testament. Of these books he said, "These are fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these" (1971, IV:552).

Early Christians in other parts of the world received certain books & translated them into their native tongues. Evidence from the earliest versions of the New Testament (the Old Syriac, Old Latin, and Coptic versions) shows what books were accepted in the second century. The Old Syriac version is the translation from Greek into Syriac (Aramean) language of Syria and northern part of Mesopotamia. It contained all New Testament books with the exception of 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude & Revelation (McGarvey, 1974, I:34, 78). The Old Latin version was the African translation of the Bible into Latin during the second century; it lacked only Hebrews, James, and 2 Peter (I:34-35, 79-80). The Coptic (Egyptian) version of the New Testament existed in two dialects: Sahidic, used in Upper Egypt, and Bohairic, used in Lower Egypt. Both of these Coptic versions included all twenty-seven books of the New Testament, though they sometimes placed Revelation in a separate volume, as if they doubted its canonical status (I:35-36, 77-78). In speaking of the Old Syriac & Old Latin versions, McGarvey said:

Consequently, we find the existence of every book of the New Testament except II Peter attested by translations as early as the middle of the second century. They were translated because they were the authoritative books of the churches, and they were authoritative because the churches believed them to have come from the apostolic hands. Is it possible that these churches could have been totally mistaken about such facts when the interval had been so short? (I:80).

Moreover, 2 Peter, which was found in neither the Old Latin nor the Old Syriac versions, was found in both the Coptic Sahidic & Coptic Bohairic versions of the New Testament—showing that it was accepted by the early Egyptian Christians. Even the councils of the Catholic Church, which added the Apocrypha into the canon of the Old Testament, listed only the accepted twenty-seven books as canonical in the New Testament. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) accepted them; and the Third Council of Carthage

(A.D. 397), the Sixth Council of Carthage (A.D. 419), and the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) reaffirmed this (Bruce, 1988, pp. 232-233,247). The very councils that added books to the Old Testament refused to add anything to the New Testament beyond the twenty-seven inspired, commonly accepted books.

While these early men, early versions, and the Roman Catholic councils show the progression of the canon's acceptance, they did not **establish** the canon. God established the canon for the New Testament through the inspired writers of the New Testament. Since the majority of Jesus' disciples were Jews, they knew the Hebrew canon was inspired. Thus, anything placed on the same level as that canon, they considered inspired & therefore canonical. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter stated that Paul had written to them "things hard to understand which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do the **rest of the Scriptures**" (3:16). Thus, Peter placed the writings of Paul (Romans through Philemon, and possibly Hebrews) on the same level as Scripture—referring to them as canonical alongside the Hebrew Bible. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 2:19-20, placed the teachings of the apostles in the same category as those of the prophets, making the writings of Matthew, John, and Peter canonical. Again, Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:18, quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7, citing both as Scripture. This leaves only Mark, Acts, James, Jude & possibly Hebrews unsupported by internal canonization. Mark and Acts were virtually undisputed in early Christian history, and Hebrews, James, and Jude gained acceptance over time; while other works that were previously accepted—such as the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas—were removed from the canonical lists by the fourth century (Athanasius, 1971, IV:552).

The writers of the New Testament obviously considered each other's writings as inspired work, and the majority of the New Testament writings were canonized internally. The inspired writers themselves added the books to the canon, and slowly the early church accepted them as canonical—eventually the Christian writers of the first four centuries wrote down lists of these accepted books. While there were disputes over certain books, eventually the majority of Christians accepted them, though other books lost their canonical status. "The New Testament canon was gradually formed, on the model of the Old, in the course of the first four centuries, under guidance of the same Spirit, through whose suggestion the several apostolic books had been prepared" (Schaff, 1910, 2:516-517). We know that these twenty-seven inspired books are canonical, but the question remains: Should we add more books to this established New Testament canon?

The Biblical Canon

The canon is the rule, the measure, by which books are accepted or rejected. If they are inspired, then they are canonical. We know that the sixty-six books currently in the canon are inspired. God inspired men through the Holy Spirit to write them down, and as the books were completed, the authors added them to the canon of Scripture by inspiration. All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16), recorded and taught through the Holy Spirit by prophets, ministers, eyewitnesses (1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:16-21), or by those who, also through inspiration, compiled the accounts of eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3). These men received the words of Christ Himself & dispensed these words to the rest of Christianity; commanding that nothing but their words, which were the word of Christ, to be taught and preached (Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:11; Galatians 1:8-9). As Geisler and Nix said… "Canonicity is **determined** or established authoritatively by God; it is merely **discovered** by man" (1986, p. 221, emp. in orig.). This is how we know what books belong in our Bible. What, then, do we say concerning such books as 1 and 2 Maccabees, or the Gospel of Mary? Do they also belong in the canon, and if not, why?

THE EXTRA-CANONICAL WRITINGS

Every piece of literature outside of the Bible is extra-biblical. Everything of a biblical nature that is not included in the Bible is extra-canonical, which include apocryphal writings, pseudepigraphal writings, and the Apocrypha. These are composed of the books of prophecy, the gospels, histories, acts, and apocalypses—many claiming to authorship by men and/or women mentioned in the Bible. Books have been attributed to Adam, Enoch, Barnabas, Thomas, Paul & others. Some are compilations containing the acts of such men as Pontius Pilate, Paul, Peter, and other noted men of the New Testament.

The Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

There are two sets of Old Testament extra-canonical writings: the Apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha. When most people hear about the extra-canonical (also called the deuterocanonical) books, the books that come to their mind are the books commonly known as the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are a subset of the apocryphal writings, which literally means the "hidden away" writings. These words (Apocrypha and apocryphal) are derivatives of the Greek *apokruphos*, which is a compound of *apo* ("away from") and *krupto/kruptos* ("I hide/hidden") [Danker, 2000, pp. 114,105-107,570-571]. The Apocrypha refers to the apocryphal books that the Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and Greek Orthodox Churches accept as canonical, but that the Hebrew canon rejects. The Catholic and Orthodox canons vary, not only from the Hebrew and Protestant canon, but also from each other. The Catholic Church regards Tobit, Judith, an additional 107 verses scattered throughout the book of Esther (see *Apocrypha*, 1977, p. 96), the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and 1 and 2 Maccabees as canonical. 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh were added as an appendix at the end of the New Testament, and are considered non-canonical by the Roman Catholic Church (*Apocrypha*, pp. xi-xii). The Greek Orthodox Church accepts the Catholic canon, but adds 1 Esdras, Psalm 151, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 3 Maccabees to their canon, while placing 4 Maccabees in an appendix. In addition to the Catholic canon, the Russian Orthodox Church regards 1 and 2 Esdras (which they called 2 and 3 Esdras), Psalm 151, and 3 Maccabees as canonical (*Apocrypha*, pp. xiii). How did these additional books come to be regarded as canonical by some, but not by others?

As the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) gained prominence throughout the world, a group of writings was added to the traditional twenty-four of the Hebrew canon—these were the Apocrypha. Why would these books be in the Greek Old Testament but not in the Hebrew Old Testament? In his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim gave a probable explanation for the development of both the Apocrypha and Old Testament pseudepigraphal writings. With the translation of the Old Testament into Greek around 250 B.C., the Jewish people (particularly those outside of Palestine) began a transition from traditional Judaic thought to Judeo-Hellenistic thinking. This involved the melding of Grecian philosophies, most notably Stoicism and Epicureanism, with Old Testament theology. As this digression from traditional thought occurred, a new group of writings was sought that would reconcile sometimes opposing viewpoints of Judaism and Hellenism. The result was the Apocrypha and the Old Testament pseudepigrapha—books that were the middle ground between the truth of the Old Testament & the mythology and humanistic philosophies of the Greco-Roman world (1972, 1:31-39). It is because of this the Apocrypha, which had some verifiable historical significance to the Jewish nation and theological significance to the Hellenistic Jews, were included in the Greek canon of the Old Testament.

While the Hebrew canon never included the Apocrypha, the Hellenist and some early Christian canons and manuscripts included them. Existing copies of the Septuagint include them, some of the early Christian writings quote from them, and some Greek Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, et al.) regarded them as canonical (Geisler and Nix, 1986, pp. 266-267). The Catholic Church's Council of Hippo (A.D. 393), the Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397), the Sixth Council of Carthage (A.D. 419) & the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) accepted the Apocrypha as canonical (Bruce, 1988, pp. 97,104-105). Thus, they gained acceptance in the Catholic Church and the later divergences of the Orthodox churches, but why do we reject them? One objection is that they were written after the Old Testament revelations had ceased (after the time of Malachi), and before the New Testament revelations had begun. While certain books, like 1 and 2 Maccabees, contain accurate historical records, they shouldn't be included any more than histories written by Tacitus or Herodotus. In addition, many of the apocryphal additions to the Old Testament contain errors and contradictions. Nevertheless, the foremost objection to the inclusion of the Apocrypha is that the Hebrew Bible didn't include them, and the majority of Jews did not consider them inspired writings. The Jews considered the canon complete and closed, consisting of only those 39 books that make up our Old Testament. It was closed in the days of Ezra, and should not be re-opened to include such late additions as the Apocrypha.

The Old Testament pseudepigrapha are the set of writings that are attributed falsely to Old Testament era men, hence their name as the "false inscriptions." The word is a Greek compound of *pseudos* ("false") & *epigraphe* ("inscription," which comes from *epi*, "upon," and *grapho/graphe* "I write/writing")

[Danker, pp. 1097,369,363-367,206-207]. Some scholars contend that certain books from the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Apocrypha (Wisdom of Solomon, 2 Esdras & the Letter of Jeremiah) belong in the Old Testament pseudepigrapha because they are falsely attributed, while certain other books in the pseudepigrapha (3rd and 4th Maccabees) should be included in the Old Testament apocryphal writings (Ladd, 1986, 3:1040). One of the most extensive & authoritative editions of pseudepigraphal writings of the Old Testament comes from James Charlesworth's two-volume set entitled *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, which includes fifty-two complete works and a supplement containing fragments of other Old Testament pseudepigraphal writings.

Charlesworth gave the following requirements for a book's inclusion in the Old Testament pseudepigrapha: (1) They are predominantly Jewish or Christian; (2) Usually, they are falsely attributed to Old Testament figures; (3) Most of them claim inspiration; (4) Often, they expand stories and concepts in the Old Testament; (5) They were either written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, or they preserve tradition from that time period (1983, 1:xxv). The pseudepigrapha include apocalyptic books, testaments, legends, wisdom and philosophical literature, Old Testament expansions, prayers, psalms, and odes. Why are these books not included in the canon? The first & most obvious, answer is they contain false information about their respective authors. If a book lies about its origin, then its contents most likely contain falsehoods. If a book requires a false attribution in order to be canonical, then it must have characteristics that make its inspiration and/or canonicity suspect. For example, these books were written far too late to be included in the Hebrew canon of the Bible, and therefore do not belong in the canon of our Old Testament. Geisler and Nix rightly noted that "the Pseudepigrapha books are those that are distinctly spurious & unauthentic in their overall content. Although they claim to have been written by biblical authors, they actually express religious fancy and magic from the period between about 200 B.C. and A.D. 200" (1986, pp. 262). They also stated regarding the pseudepigrapha: "There are a vast number of false & spurious writings that deserve mention at this point; not because anyone would seriously contend for their authority, but because they do represent religious lore of the Hebrews in the inter-testamental period. The New Testament writers make use of a number of these books... Of course, it should be remembered that the New Testament also quotes from the heathen poets Aratus (Acts 17:28); Menander (1 Cor.15:33) & Epimenides (Titus 1:12). Truth is truth no matter where it's found, whether uttered by heathen poet, a pagan prophet (Numbers 24:17), or even a dumb animal (22:28). Nevertheless, it should be noted that **no such formula as 'it is written' or 'the Scriptures say' is connected with these citations**. It should also be noted that **neither the New Testament writers nor the Church Fathers have considered these writings canonical** (p. 262, emp. added)."

They contain fanciful additions to the biblical record, and a mixture of Greek philosophy/mythology and Old Testament theology, platitudes that contradict the Bible, and errors in areas of science, history, geography... It's on these grounds we reject the pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as non-canonical. Nevertheless, some of the canonical books contain possible references to pseudepigraphal writings. Geisler & Nix maintained that there were possible quotations or allusions in Jude and 2nd Timothy to the pseudepigraphal books of 1st Enoch, the Testament of Moses, and the book of Jannes and Jambres (1986, pp. 262). The Testament of Moses and book of Jannes and Jambres date to the first century A.D. or later, so if Jude and Paul were referring to them, it would have only been as contemporary fictional literature. The same is true for 1st Enoch, which dates between second century B.C. and the first century A.D. In a similar fashion, preachers today sometimes use extra-biblical sources in their lessons in order to make a point. Nowhere does the biblical text state that Jude and Paul equated pseudepigraphal writings with those of Scripture, so any reference to them in the biblical account was merely inspired use of an uninspired source.

The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

The New Testament pseudepigrapha are those books that were written in the form of New Testament works (gospels, acts, epistles & apocalypses) but that exist outside of the New Testament canon. These books often bear the name of apostles, prominent disciples, early Christian writers (Clement, Matthew, Barnabas), or famous figures from the New Testament (such as Pilate and Gamaliel). Some of them were attributed to groups of people, such as the Egyptians or Ebionites. We can quickly reject the New Testament pseudepigrapha because of their false attribution, errors, discrepancies, and false teachings. They were also written too late to be inspired, and some exist only as fragments. Moreover, most importantly, the early church rejected them as non-canonical.

However, despite their non-canonical status, many of the New Testament pseudepigrapha are useful historical and theological writings, because they show the traditions, myths, and superstitions of some early Christians, as well as the heretical branches of early Christianity (Doceticism, Gnosticism, Asceticism). One of the most extensive and authoritative editions of pseudepigraphal & apocryphal writings of the New Testament comes from R.M. Wilson's English translation of Schneemelcher's two-volume set entitled *New Testament Apocrypha*, which includes translations or discussions of about ninety of the most prominent writings. [NOTE: In the 9th century, Photius listed around 280 pseudepigraphal and apocryphal works of the New Testament & more have been discovered since then (Geisler & Nix,1986, p.301). Because of their number, it's almost impossible to include all of them in a single collection, causing Schneemelcher to include only the most prominent in his work.]

However, there were some writings that early Christians accepted as either inspired works, or genuine (but uninspired) works — the New Testament apocrypha. Geisler and Nix listed these as the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas, 1st & 2nd Corinthians from Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Didache, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Gospel According to the Hebrews, the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, and the Seven Epistles of Ignatius. Many of these were listed or included in the best Greek manuscripts (Sinaiticus [א], Alexandrinus [A] & Bezae [D]): Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (א & D), 1st & 2nd Corinthians from Clement (A), the Shepherd of Hermas (א & D), the Apocalypse of Peter (D) & the Acts of Paul & Thecla (D). Moreover, some of the early Christian writers cited these as Scripture or listed them at sacred writings: the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (Clement of Alexandria & Origen), Shepherd of Hermas (Irenaeus & Origen), and the Didache (Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius) [Geisler & Nix, 1986, pp. 313-316]. With this evidence, why do we reject these as uninspired?

First, listing or including books in a Greek manuscript does not make it part of the canon of Scripture. Most of the books that were included in the manuscripts were placed after Revelation, almost as an appendix to the canonical works. Most modern Bibles contain a concordance, dictionary, or maps after the text, but none of these are considered inspired. In a similar fashion, these apocryphal works were included in the manuscripts (which date from the fourth and fifth centuries) as additional — but uninspired — literature. Moreover, the books that some early Christian writers listed as Scripture weren't included in the canon lists of these men. They may have considered them as genuine as Scripture, but uninspired— and therefore non-canonical. For other writings (1st and 2nd Corinthians from Clement, the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, and the Seven Epistles of Ignatius), the authors never intended them to be taken as Scripture, but simply letters from one Christian to another. Some of these apocryphal works contain errors & false teachings, making them uninspired.

Finally, they were written after the time of inspiration, and therefore after God had closed the canon. Nevertheless, these are some of the most valuable non-canonical writings. Even more than New Testament pseudepigrapha, apocryphal writings show what early Christians thought concerning the church, worship, and the tenets of Christianity.

Many of the early Christian writers cited the New Testament apocrypha genuinely historical or as something of religious value, but uninspired—some even considered them canonical. Eventually, however, these works lost their status as canonical works, and rightly so. They were written too late to be inspired, and some teach religious errors. Gnostics and other heretics wrote several of the pseudepigrapha, and so introduced their deviant ideas through letters, gospels, and apocalypses under the guise of authentic New Testament figures. While some of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the New Testament are valuable for historical and theological study, they should not be placed on the same level as inspired Scripture.

CONCLUSION

God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him…" (2 Peter 1:3), and our knowledge of Him is complete through the revealed Word. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

The Bible that we possess is the inspired Word of God, and the only thing we need—no additions and no subtractions, only sixty-six canonical books. While some of extra-canonical writings are useful for historical or literary study, they aren't inspired and do not belong within the pages of the Bible. They don't possess the same authority as the sixty-six inspired books, and should not be regarded as Scripture. This canon was created & established by God, and was closed by Him.

However, God presented these books to us with some special directives. The writer of Proverbs said: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. **Don't add to His words**, lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar" (30:5-6). Moses commanded the Israelites in Deuteronomy 4: 2: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Again, in Deuteronomy 12:32, Moses said: "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." As diligent students of the Scriptures, let's always keep in mind these sixty-six inspired books contain everything we need to know. We have the Word of God just as He wanted us to have it — nothing more, nothing less.

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A Book that Almost Made It

Excerpt from a popular writing that some wanted to include in the New Testament: The Shepherd of Hermas

In this picturesque allegory, a shepherd (Jesus) gives strict moral guidance through visions, "mandates," and "similitudes" to a man named "Hermas." The former slave-turned-businessman wrote it between 90 and 157 in Rome. It was used as a textbook for new believers and was considered Scripture by Irenaeus (c. 130–c. 200) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215).

The Gift of Repentance

I asked [the shepherd], "Because my sins are abundant, what must I do to live?"

"You shall live," he said, "if you keep my commandments and walk in them. Whosoever shall hear and keep these commandments shall live before God."

"I must continue to question," I said. "Some teachers say that there is no second repentance beyond what was granted when we were blessed in the water of baptism and received remission for our previous sins."

He replied, "That is so; for he who has received remission for former sins ought never to sin again but live in purity. Since you never cease asking about such things, I will explain more without excusing those who already believe in the Lord.

"Those who believe now, and those who shall believe in the future, need no repentance of sins, since they have remission of their former sin.

"For those who were called before these days the Lord granted repentance. The Lord knows the heart, and knowing all things beforehand, he knows the weakness of man and the wiles of the Devil, who throws mischief at the doors of God's servants. Because the Lord is merciful, he granted mercy to his creation and offered repentance.

"But after the Lord established this holy gift, and a man be tempted by the Devil, he has but one repentance. It is unprofitable, therefore, for such a man to sin and repent repeatedly, for scarcely shall he live."

I said, "When I heard this truth, I attained life, for I know that if I do not add again to my sins I shall be saved."

"You will be saved," he answered, "and so shall all who accept God's gift."

Angel of Righteousness

"Understand," said he, "that two angels accompany man, one of righteousness and one of wickedness."

"How then," said I, "shall I know their working since both angels dwell with me?"

"Listen," he replied, "and do not wander. The angel of righteousness is delicate, modest, meek, and gentle. When he enters your heart, he speaks to you of purity, reverence, self-control, and virtue. When these things come into your heart and good deeds flow from them, you know that the angel of righteousness is within you.

"Now observe the works of the angel of wickedness: he is ill-tempered, bitter, and foolish, and his evil deeds cast down the servants of God."

Then I said, "I do not know how to detect him."

"You wander again," he replied. "Listen: when ill temper and bitterness come over you, then you know that he is in you. When the lust for renown, feasting on heavy luxuries, a desire of women, covetousness, haughtiness, and similar urges come into your heart, know that the angel of wickedness has slid into you. When you feel this, shake him out and cast him off. His deeds are unprofitable for those who would live to God.

"You now have the workings of both angels to think upon. Believe the angel of righteousness and resist the angel of wickedness. His teaching brings great evil even to small things … This commandment opens the ways of faith to grant you to believe with your whole heart in the works of righteousness, and by doing them, live to God."[29]

Truth about the New Testament Gospels

How did early Christians determine which writings really came from eyewitnesses?

- After listing the books that he viewed as authoritative, here's what this leader said that he had discovered regarding a popular book known as *The Shepherd*:

  "Hermas composed *The Shepherd* quite recently—in our times, in the city of Rome, while his brother Pius served as overseer.... While it should indeed be read, it cannot be read publicly for the people of the church— it is counted neither among the prophets (for their number has been completed) nor among the apostles (for it is after their time)."[10]

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[29] A Book that Almost Made It. (1994). *Christian History Magazine-Issue 43: How We Got Our Bible, Canon to King James*.

Is the Apocrypha Inspired of God?

By **Wayne Jackson**
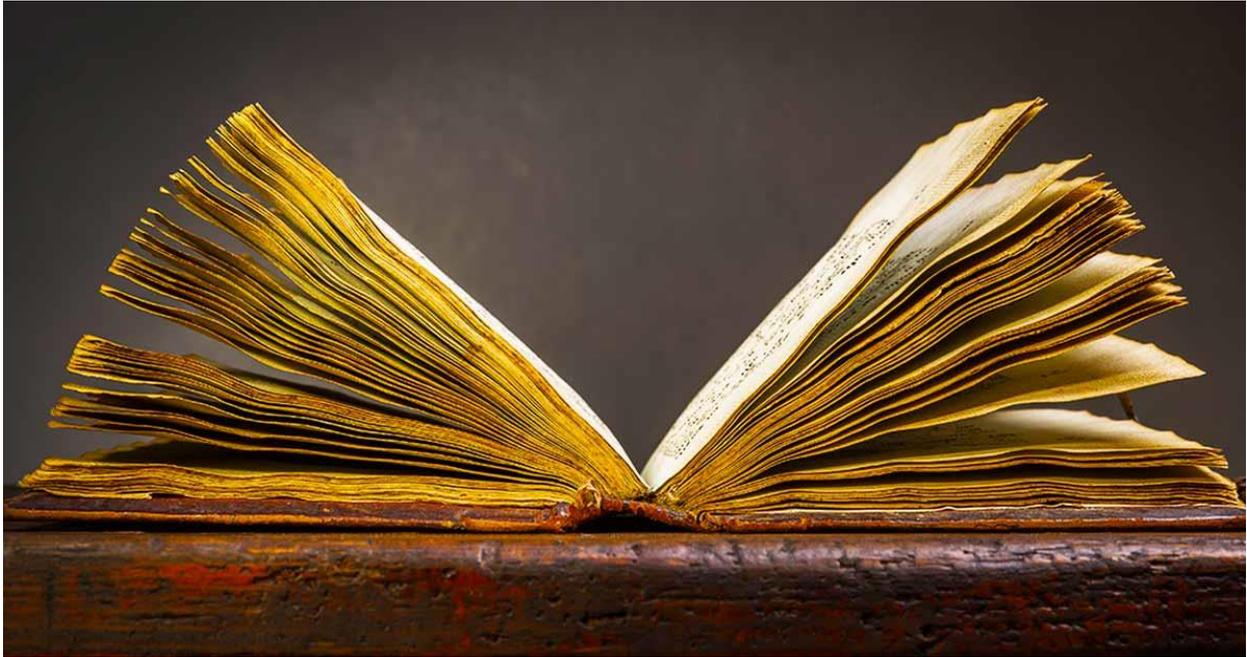
Members of the Roman Catholic Church note, with perhaps some degree of pride, their version of the Bible contains more books than does the standard translations used by non-Catholics. More often than not, the average Christian is at a loss to explain why there are forty-six books in the Catholic Bible Old Testament, yet only thirty-nine books in the Old Testament common versions.

The **qualified teacher** needs to be able to give a reasonable explanation to his Catholic friends for the absence of those seven books in the versions we use.

The Disputed Books

The Apocrypha is a collection of documents, generally produced between the second century B.C. & first century A.D., which were not a part of the original Old Testament canon. The names of these books are 1st Esdras, 2nd Esdras, The Rest of Esther, Song of the Three Holy Children, History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon,

Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1st Maccabees, and 2nd Maccabees. The last seven of these are all incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible. The Medieval Catholic Council of Trent (1546) affirmed the canonicity of these books, as found in the Latin Vulgate, and condemned those who reject them.

The title, "Apocrypha," is a transliterated form of the term apokruphos, meaning "hidden."

A plural form of the word is used in Colossians 2:3, where Paul declares that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are "hidden" in Christ.

The adjective "apocryphal" has come to be applied to those books that don't bear the marks of divine inspiration. There are several reasons for rejection:

General Principles

There is abundant evidence that none of these books were ever received into the canon (that which conforms to "rule") of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Although they appear in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament—known as LXX), that is not necessarily a reliable criterion. Professor G. T. Manley notes: "[These books] do not appear to have been included at first in the LXX [third-second centuries B.C.], but they found their way gradually into later copies, being inserted in places that seemed appropriate" (1962, 39).

The apocryphal books are not in those most ancient works which allude to the Old Testament Scriptures. For example:

Philo Ignored: The Jewish philosopher of Alexandria (20 B.C. – A.D. 50) wrote prolifically and frequently quoted the Old Testament, yet he never cited the Apocrypha, nor did he even mention these documents.

Josephus Rejected: The Jewish historian, Josephus (A.D. 37-95), rejected them. He wrote:

"We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine" (*Against Apion* 1.8).

By combining several Old Testament narratives into a "book," the thirty-nine of our current editions become the twenty-two alluded to by Josephus.

Missing from Ancient Lists: The most ancient list of the Old Testament books is that which was made by Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170). None of the apocryphal books were included (Eusebius, *Eccles. History* 4.26.14).

Not Recognized by Origen, Tertullian: In the early third century A.D., neither Origen nor his contemporary, Tertullian, recognized the books of the Apocrypha as being canonical.

Accepted by Low-ranking Church Officials: Though some of the apocryphal books were being used in the church services by the **fifth century A.D.**, they were read only by those who held inferior offices in the church (see Horne 1841, 436).

Originated During Divine Silence: The apocryphal books were produced in an era when **no inspired documents** were being given by God. Malachi concludes his narrative in the Old Testament by urging Israel:

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances."

He then projects four centuries into the future and prophesied:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come" (Mal. 4:4-5).

This text pictured the coming of John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:14; Lk. 1:17). The implication of Malachi's prophecy is that no prophet would arise from God until the coming of John. This excludes the apocryphal writings.

Josephus confirms this when he declares:

It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because **there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time** (emphasis added).

He further says that no one "has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them" (*Against Apion* 1.8).

F. F. Bruce contended that there "is no evidence that these books were ever regarded as canonical by any Jews, whether inside or outside Palestine, whether they read the Bible in Hebrew or in Greek" (1950, 157).

Jesus, Disciples Never Quoted from Apocrypha: Jesus Christ and his inspired New Testament penmen quoted from, or alluded to, the writings and events of the Old Testament profusely. In fact, there are one thousand quotations or allusions from thirty-five of the thirty-nine Old Testament books are found in the New Testament record.

And yet, significantly, **not once** are any of these apocryphal books quoted or even explicitly referred to by the Lord or by any New Testament writer.

Noted scholar Emile Schurer argued that this is really remarkable since most of the New Testament habitually quoted from the LXX (1894, 99).

Despite the fact that New Testament writers quote largely from the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew Old Testament, there is not a single clear-cut case of a citation from any of the fourteen apocryphal books .... The most that can be said is that the New Testament writers show acquaintance with these fourteen books and perhaps allude to them indirectly, but in no case do they quote them as inspired Scripture or cite them as authority (Unger 1951, 101).

Apocryphal Books Do Not Claim Inspiration: It must be observed that the apocryphal books, unlike the canonical books of the Old Testament, make no direct claims of being inspired of God.

Not once is there a, "thus says the Lord," or language like, "the word of the Lord came unto me, saying." In fact, some of the documents actually confess non-inspiration! In the prologue of Ecclesiasticus, the writer states:

"Ye are intreated therefore to read with favor and attention, and to pardon us, if in any parts of what we have labored to interpret, we may seem to fail in some of the phrases."

Awkward Literary Style: Then there is the matter of literary style. Dr. Raymond Surburg has written:

When a comparison is instituted of the style of the Apocrypha with the style of the Biblical Hebrew Old Testament writings, there is a considerable inferiority, shown by the stiffness, lack of originality and artificiality of expression characterizing the apocryphal books (1980, 7).

Evidence Negating Inspiration

The Apocrypha contains a great variety of historical, geographical, chronological, and moral errors. Professor William Green of Princeton wrote: "The books of Tobit and Judith abound in geographical, chronological, and historical mistakes" (1899, 195).

A critical study of the Apocrypha's contents clearly reveals that it could not be the product of the Spirit of God. The following examples are ample evidence of this.

Creation Contradiction: Rather than the creation being spoken into existence from nothing by the word of Almighty God, as affirmed in the Scriptures (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6-9; Heb. 11:3), the Apocrypha has God creating the world out of "formless matter" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:17).

Where Was Baruch? According to the prophet Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem on the tenth day, fifth month, of the nineteenth year of his reign (Jeremiah 52:12-13). Subsequent to this, both the prophet and his scribe, Baruch, were taken into Egypt (Jeremiah 43:6-7). At this same time, the Apocrypha claims that Baruch was actually in Babylon (Baruch 1:1-2).

Contradictions With Itself: There are two contradictory accounts of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, dreaded enemy of the Jews. One narrative records that Antiochus and his company were "cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea by the treachery of Nanaea's priests" (2nd Maccabees 1:13-16), while another version **in the same book** states that Antiochus was "taken with a noisome sickness" and so "ended his life among the mountains by a most piteous fate in a strange land" (2 Maccabees 9:19-29).

When Did Tobit Die? Tobit is said to have lived 158 years (Tobit 14:11), yet, supposedly, he was alive when Jeroboam revolted against Jerusalem (931 B.C.) & then still around when the Assyrians invaded Israel (722/21 @B.C.2)—a span of some 210 years! (1:3-5).

False Doctrines: The Apocrypha teaches the erroneous doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, suggesting that the kind of body one now has is determined by the character of his soul in a previous life:

"Now I was a goodly child, and a good soul fell to my lot; Nay rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled" (Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20).

The foregoing was a common belief among **heathen peoples**, but certainly it is contrary to the biblical view that the soul of man is formed with him at conception (Psa. 139:13-16; Zech. 12:1).

Praying for the Dead: The Apocrypha teaches that prayer may be made for the dead:

"Wherefore he made the propitiation for them that had died, that they might be released from their sins" (2 Maccabees 12:45).

Roman Catholics often cite this passage to find support for their dogma of praying for the dead to be released from purgatory, but the effort is vain. Obviously, there's no New Testament passage to buttress the notion.

Alms for Sins: The Apocrypha suggests that one may atone for his sins by the giving of alms: "It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin" (Tobit 12:9).

The Suspect Morality of the Apocrypha

The moral tone of the Apocrypha is far below that of the Bible.
Note some examples:

Suicide Noble? The apocrypha applauds suicide as a noble and manful act. Second Maccabees tells of one Razis who, being surrounded by the enemy, fell upon his sword, choosing "rather to die nobly" than to fall into the hands of his enemy. He was not mortally wounded, however, and so threw himself down from a wall & "manfully" died among the crowds (14:41-43).

Magical Potions: It describes magical potions which are alleged to drive demons away (Tobit 6:1-17).

Murder Applauded: The murder of the men of Shechem (Gen. 34), an act of violence which is condemned in the Scriptures (cf. Gen. 49:6-7), is commended and is described as an act of God (Judith 9:2-9).

These, along with various other considerations, lead only to the conclusion that the Apocrypha cannot be included in the volume of sacred Scripture.
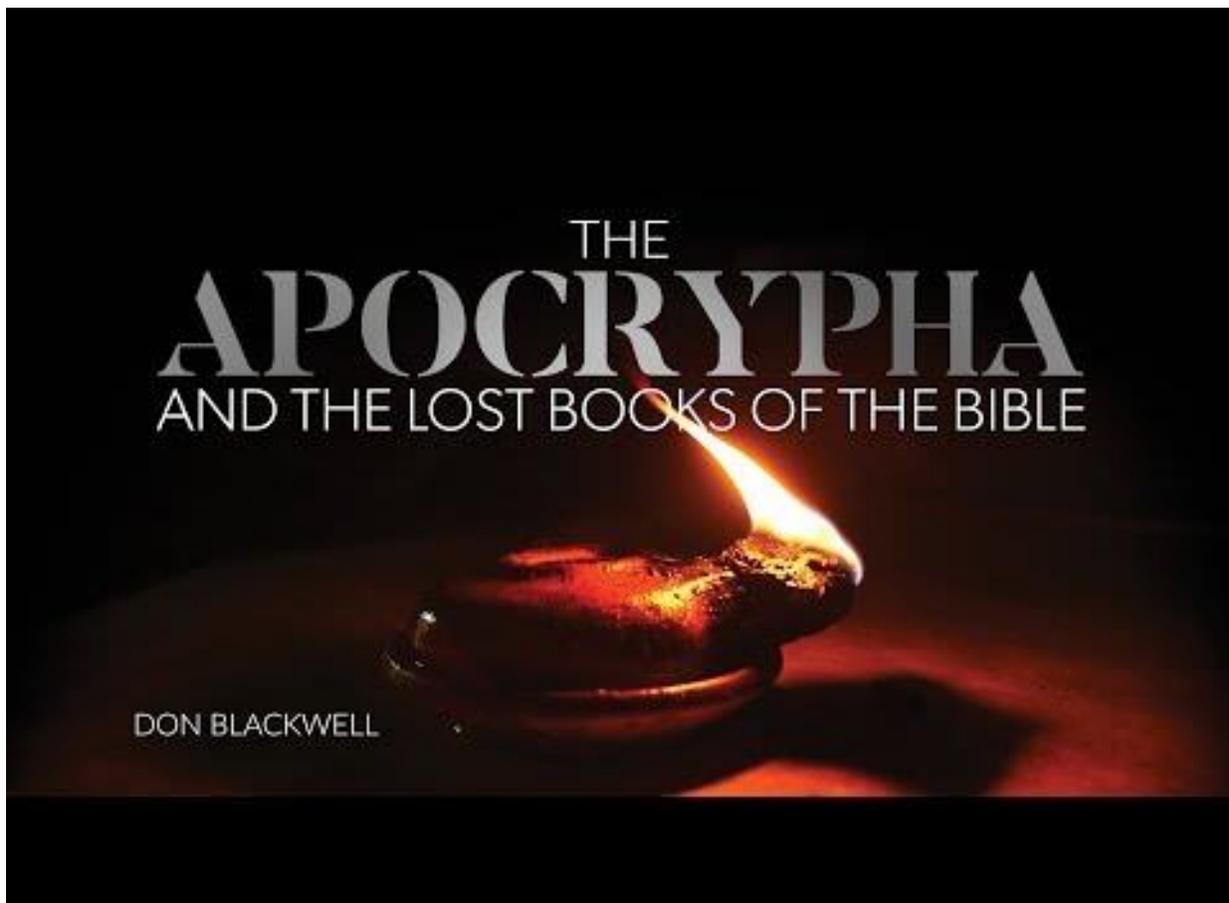
AD 1560 — Apocrypha

The Apocrypha refers to several books and additions that were included in the early Greek and Latin translations of the Old Testament. The Septuagint contained the Apocrypha in 100 BC.

By the first century AD, writers Philo and Josephus indicate that the Hebrew canon did not include the Apocrypha. This evidence leads to its removal from the Geneva Bible in AD 1640. By AD 1827, the Apocrypha is omitted from most English versions of the Bible.

1500 BC   500 BC   AD 1   AD 500   AD 1000   AD 1500   AD 1900   AD 2000

Spiritual Formation Renovare' Bible's
Second Canon Inclusion Rationale

1. The Deuterocanonical books were part of the ancient Greek Bible, the Septuagint, which was in circulation during the time of Christ. It was the Bible of the early Church. This Bible shaped the conscious awareness of God for the first Christians.

2. The Deuterocanonical books help Christian readers understand the New Testament context – the context of Jesus' ministry as well as of the writers of the New Testament books. The people Jesus encountered and taught were in many ways spiritually formed by these writings.

3. Most of the Church throughout most of her history has included the Deuterocanonical books as part of the Bible. The Eastern Orthodox Bible, the Greek Bible, the Slavonic Bible, the Anglican Bible, and the Roman Catholic Bible all currently include the Deuterocanonical books. Plus, while not viewing them as Scripture, early Protestant Bibles – Luther's translation, the Great Bible of 1539, the Geneva Bible of 1560 (supported by John Calvin and John Knox), the Bishop's Bible of 1568, and the King James Bible of 1611 – included the Deuterocanonical books, or 'Apocrypha,' as something of an appendix.

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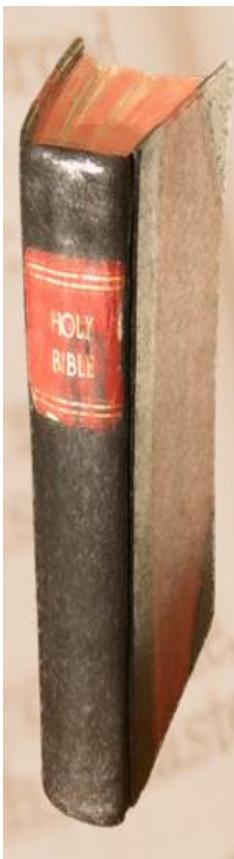
Spiritual Formation Renovare' Bible's
Second Canon Inclusion Rationale

4. Throughout the ages, many questions have persisted about the value of the Deuterocanonical books. Even those groups in our time who include and use the Deuterocanonicals do not give them the same authority as the primary canon. And we, the General Editors of *The Renovare' Spiritual Formation Bible*, would not want to accord these books the same authority as revealed scripture. Still, their role in bridging the gap between Malachi and Matthew is unquestioned and they provide marvelous insight into the way in which the first Christians understood their relationship to God.

5. The Deuterocanonical books do not affect any central doctrine of the Christian faith, but they do contain many helpful insights for spiritual formation. For this reason alone they are worth reading and can function for us today in much the same way that good sermons and devotional writings do. Of them, the reformer Martin Luther wrote, 'Apocrypha – that is, books which are not regarded as equal to the holy Scriptures, and yet are profitable and good to read.' For this purpose, we have organized the Deuterocanonical books into three categories: Law & History, Writings & Wisdom, and Prophets & Apocalyptic.

Dangers of The APOCRYPHA!
(1 Timothy 4:1,2)

- **Divine approval of deception**
  (Judith 9:10-13)

- **Morality based on expediency** (Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom)

- **Alms atones for sin** (Ecclesiasticus 3:30)

- **God hears prayers of the dead** (Baruch 3:4)

- **We should pray for the dead** (2 Macc. 12:44)

CANON:
which books belong?

How Did These Gain Acceptance?

- It was felt the "discovery" of these books required their recognition as God's Word.

- Included in the Septuagint

- Canonized by Rome and Constantinople in 1546 (to justify unscriptural practices/doctrines).

CANON:
which books belong?

Unscriptural Practices

📖 **Prayers for dead** (2 Macc. 12:44)

📖 **Expiatory value of alms**
(Tobit 12:9; 4:10; 2 Macc. 12:40-46)

📖 **Invocation and intercession of the saints** (2 Macc. 15:14; Baruch 3:4)

📖 **The worship of Angels** (Tobit 12:12)

📖 **Purgatory and redemption of souls after death** (2 Macc. 12:40-46)

CANON:
which books belong?

The Bible is complete

📖 **No visions (Colossians 2:18)**

📖 **No other philosophies (Colossians 2:8)**

📖 **No knowledge (1 Timothy 6:20)**

📖 **No additions to the Bible (Galatians 1:6-9)**

CANON:
which books belong?

The Ebionites and the Reliability of the New Testament Gospels

by Luke Wayne

The Ebionites were an ancient sect of Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah and savior but denied that He was God in flesh. They put great emphasis on Jewish law but claimed that Jesus had abolished the sacrifices and instituted strict vegetarianism. Many critics of biblical Christianity have claimed that the Ebionites were actually the original Jewish Christians and that the New Testament Christianity that we know is a later gentile aberration and/or an invention of the Apostle Paul. Ironically, the quotations of Ebionite writings that have come down to us point the other direction. They show that the New Testament writings, particularly the Canonical Gospels, are actually earlier than the Ebionites and are more representative of the early Christian movement.

Harmonization

The Ebionites had a "gospel account" of their own which, like the Biblical Gospels, purported to tell of the life of Jesus. Indeed, the Ebionite Gospel actually utilizes the biblical gospels as its primary sources!1 Even Bart Ehrman, an anti-Christian scholar who is not inclined to give any preferential treatment to the Biblical sources, nevertheless concedes of the Ebionite gospel that:

> "It was written in Greek, and represented a kind of harmony of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke."2

In other words, the author of the Ebionite Gospel started with the Biblical Gospels and blended them together. An example of this is the narrative of Jesus' baptism. While the New Testament Gospels do not contradict each other on this story, they all word things slightly differently and give slightly different details. For example, when the voice of the Father speaks from heaven, His words are reported in the Biblical gospels as:

> "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," (Matthew 3:17).

> "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased," (Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22).

Thus, the Ebionite gospel weaves the stories together so that the voice from heaven speaks more than once, saying both "This is my beloved son..." and "You are my beloved son..." at different times. Other such details are similarly combined into one longer account.3

Orthodox Christian writers of the early/mid Second Century like Justin Martyr also often harmonized quotes and stories from the biblical accounts. Tatian (one of Justin's students) produced a harmonized gospel of his own called the "Diatessaron" that also took the stories of the four biblical gospels and combined them into one narrative. Such harmonies not only testify that the New Testament gospels are the more ancient sources upon which both Ebionites and orthodox Christians relied for their information, it also shows that these Gospels already possessed a unique authority among the ancient readers and had a particular trust invested in

their content. The Ebionites developed their Jesus narrative after the New Testament gospels were written and under the assumption that those gospels were basically reliable sources of information on Jesus' life and teaching.

Scholars have also argued that the so-called "Clementine Homilies," another set of ancient sectarian documents of unknown origin, may actually preserve Ebionite material.4 The author of this material used all four gospels as sources, though John less so than the Synoptics.5 If truly Ebionite, this material from the Clementine Homilies offers us yet another example of the Ebionites harmonizing and adapting the Biblical Gospels for their own ends. All of this demonstrates the New Testament Gospels to be the older and more reliable sources and the Ebionite account to be a later phenomenon.

Midrashic Expansion

There was a common practice in ancient Jewish communities to produce literary interpretations of sacred texts called Midrash that, among other things, often explained biblical texts through stories that expanded the narrative and added details, sometimes including whole new legendary episodes. Often, such Midrashic tales made their way into the loose, paraphrastic, interpretive translations known as the Targums. These were copies of the Old Testament texts, usually in Aramaic, that were meant to not only translate but to explain and bring to life the text for the common, less learned people. For example, in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the actual text reads:

> "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The Jerusalem Targums expanded this into:

> "When the end had come to our father Jacob, that he should be taken up from the world, he called the twelve tribes, his sons, and gathered them round his couch. Then Jacob our father rose up, and said to them., Do you worship any idol that Terah the father of Abraham worshipped? do you worship any idol that Laban (the brother of his mother) worshipped? or worship you the God of Jacob? The twelve tribes answered together, with fullness of heart, and said, Hear now, Israel our father: The Lord our God is one Lord. Jacob responded and said, May His Great Name be blessed forever! And you shall love the instruction of the law of the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your wealth."6

The Gospel text used by the Ebionites appears to have shown this same kind of Midrashic expansion. For example, Matthew 10 records the names of the twelve apostles as they are called to preach to the towns of Israel. The Ebionite gospel expands the naming of the twelve into the following narrative:

> "When He came to Capernaum He entered the house of Simon, also called Peter, and He opened His mouth to say, 'As I was passing by the lake of Tiberias I chose John and James, the sons of Zebedee, and Simon, Andrew, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot; and I called you, Matthew, while you were sitting in the tax collector's booth, and you followed me. I want you, therefore, to be the Twelve Apostles as a witness to Israel."7

Similarly, in Matthew 12:9-10, we are told of an incident involving a man with a withered hand who was healed on the Sabbath:

> "Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'— so that they might accuse Him."

Jerome preserves for us how this passage was expanded in what he calls "the gospel that the Nazareans and the Ebionites use,"8 explaining:

> "...The man with the withered hand is described as a mason, who sought help in words like these: 'I was a mason who made a living with my hands; I beseech you, Jesus, restore my health so I do not have to beg for food shamefully."9

This not only provides further evidence that these Jewish Ebionites preserve a later, expanded form of the New Testament Gospels, they show that the New Testament gospels not only existed but were, in fact, already held as authoritative Scripture by the time the Ebionites came along and created their gospels. Midrashic expansions were not made for random historical sources. Midrash was explanatory expansion on authoritative texts. So, again, even the Ebionite sect actually provides us evidence that the New Testament gospels are, indeed, the older and more authoritative sources for true Christianity.

Blatant Sectarian Alteration

Finally, the Ebionite gospels display obvious alteration of the stories to fit their own doctrinal developments. For example, the Ebionites were vegetarians, and they changed the narrative to support this view. On the diet of John the Baptist, the New Testament Gospels tell us:

> "Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey," (Matthew 3:4, see also Mark 1:6).

The Ebionites altered the text to say:

> "And so John was baptizing, and Pharisees came to him and were baptized, as was all of Jerusalem. John wore a garment of camel hair and a leather around his waist; and his food was wild honey that tasted like manna, like a cake cooked in oil."10

They removed the locusts to make John a vegetarian. Biblical Christians have no attachment to eating locusts and had no special reason to report that John ate them other than the fact that he did. The Ebionites, however, did have an important reason to deny that John ate locusts. They altered the text to support their teaching. They did this again later in the gospel, where the New Testament says:

> "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?' And He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man & say to him, "The Teacher says, 'My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"' The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover," (Matthew 26:17-19).

The Ebionite gospel adds an extra clause to the conversation to bring it in line with their views. When the disciples ask where Jesus wants them to prepare the Passover, Jesus begins by sternly clarifying:

"I have no desire to eat the meat of this Passover lamb with you."[11]

These and other such examples lead scholars to conclude that the Ebionite gospel writer "appears to reinterpret both Jewish and Jesus traditions."[12] The Ebionites are not the preservers of an original Jewish Christian faith. They are a sect that altered the Christian faith to suit their own novel doctrines.

Yet, even in doing so, they provide an additional line of evidence to us that the Canonical Gospels of the New Testament are, indeed, the older and more reliable sources on who Jesus really is and, therefore, on true Christianity. As much as certain modern critics may wish to find "real" Christianity in some lost ancient sect, the truth is that these later off-shoots all show signs of their novelty and point back to the fact that orthodox, New Testament Christianity is the true heir to Jesus' teaching. The biblical Gospels are early, authoritative, and reliable. We should accept no substitutes.

- 1.Ron Cameron, The Other Gospels: Non-canonical Gospel Texts (Westminster John Knox Press, 1982) 103
- 2.Bart Ehrman, Lost Scriptures (Oxford University Press, 2003) 12
- 3.ibid, 13
- 4.Fred Lapham, An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha (T&T Clark International, 2003) 49
- 5.Phillip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Volume 2 (Hendrickson Publishing, 1907) 437
- 6.See Deuteronomy 6:4-5 in Targum Neophiti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan for variations on this tradition.
- 7.Bart Ehrman, Lost Scriptures (Oxford University Press, 2003) 13-14
- 8.Jerome's commentary on Matthew, as quoted in Bart Ehrman, Lost Scriptures (Oxford University Press, 2003) 10
- 9.ibid
- 10.Bart Ehrman, Lost Scriptures (Oxford University Press, 2003) 13
- 11.ibid, 14
- 12.Ron Cameron, The Other Gospels: Non-canonical Gospel Texts (Westminster John Knox Press, 1982) 104