



### 7. Is the Bible God's Word.

What is the Bible? In addition, what does it mean to say its "God's word"? The sight of a Bible brings up a host of feelings and reactions. Some say it is a book of myths and fables. Others will say it is a book of half-truths and cultural prejudices, the sight of a bible can cause anger or arrest in some countries. The Bible is the most published book in the history of the world. The Bible claims to be the inspired word of God, God's message to humanity. The words in the Bible have shaped the world we live in today. Nevertheless, the sight of a Bible also raises many questions.

Some commonly raised issues are; how can a book written by man be *God's Word*? What Bible is

the right one? Is the protestant Bible *God's word*? Alternatively, is the Catholic Bible *God's word*? Why does the Catholic Bible have seven additional books? Who decided what books make up the Bible? What books are excluded from the Bible? Why are there Old and New Testaments?

These questions among others are often unanswered for many. Confusion on these matters causes many to dismiss the Bible as merely a book of men. The books in the Bible claim to be the revelation of God's word spoken through the prophets, relevant for all who lived. The Bible's dismissal for many is the result of not evaluating its evidence and history.

*What is the Bible?*

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *biblia* meaning book which is derived from *byblos* an ancient Phoenician (Lebanon) city where papyrus was exported. Papyrus is a watery reed which was used to make paper. Papyrus paper was the chief writing material in the ancient world till the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The word paper is derived from the word Papyrus. The "Bible" is a collection of books "Inspired" by God and revealed to man.

The Bible is divided into two parts; the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 39 Books and the New Testament has 27 books.

*When was the Bible written?*

The Bible was written between 1450 BC and 90 AD.

There are two parts to the Bible. The Old Testament, (Hebrew: Tanach) and New Testament.

The Old Testament was written between 1450 BC and 425 BC.

The New Testament was written between 45 AD and 90 AD.

*What language was the Bible written in?*

The Bible is written in 3 languages.

- The Old Testament is written in two languages; Hebrew and Aramaic<sup>1</sup>.  
The parts written in Aramaic are: Daniel 2:4-7:28, Ezra 4:48-6:18, 7:11-26, Jeremiah 10:11, Genesis 31:47 (2 words)
- The New Testament is written in Koine<sup>2</sup> Greek.
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<sup>1</sup> Aramaic was the common language of the Middle-East from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC till the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, after it was replaced by the Koine Greek following the conquest of Alexander the Great.

<sup>2</sup> Koine means common and was the common Greek language spoken from 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

## Who wrote the Bible?

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 hundred years. By more than 40 different authors, from every walk of life. On three different continents.

- The Old Testament was written by 29 different authors over a 1000 year period, including kings, prime ministers, priests and shepherds.
- The New Testament was written by 10 to 11 different authors over a 45 year period of time, including a rabbi, tax collector, fisherman, physician and others.

## How was the Bible written?

The Bible was written under "Inspiration" from the Holy Spirit. The word inspire is derived from the Latin word "inspirare" meaning "To breathe upon or into something". God revealed Himself through individuals to speak to a much larger audience. In the same way some one would pick up a pen. The pen would become the tool in the hand of the writer, the prophet is God's pen, in revelation.



Who is doing the writing the pen or the person?

### Who wrote the Bible?

If someone asks the question, who wrote the Bible? A good way to illustrate inspiration is to write your name on a piece of paper and ask the question, who wrote the name, me or the pen?

#### Answer

The pen does not have power to write on its own

I am the force or spirit behind the pen

In the same way God is the force behind the prophets who wrote the Bible.

The Bible is a collection of books. As the prophets received revelation the books were collected in manuscript<sup>3</sup> form.

The original manuscript, written by the prophet is known as the *autograph*. The autograph is inspired by God from the first generation. The autograph is then copied to additional manuscripts. As the manuscripts wear out over time from use and environment the manuscript is again copied onto a new scroll. This process of copying the old manuscript to a new manuscript is known as *manuscript transmission*. Over a period of time the manuscripts from accepted prophets were collected. This collection of manuscripts is known to us as the Bible.

## How were books in the Bible affirmed to be God's word?

From the time of the exodus out of Egypt, God told Israel that he was going to communicate with them through prophets. People who would speak for God and represent Him to the people.

This was in response to the request from Israel who was afraid when God spoke to them directly from Mt. Sinai, the people pleaded for Moses to speak for God to them rather than God speaking to them directly, so they don't die. God was pleased with their request. (Exodus 20:18-21)

<sup>17</sup>"And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. <sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

<sup>19</sup>And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

**Deuteronomy 18:17-19**

The words spoken have particular meaning according to these verses. God's representative, the prophet, would speak for God and Israel must listen. We see three important points here.

1. God's words would come from his (prophet) mouth.
2. Those who reject God's word, through the prophet, will be responsible.
3. The prophet will speak in God's Name.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscript is derived from the Latin words "manu scriptus" meaning "Man written" manuscripts are hand written as opposed to printed documents.

The position of Prophet came with power because the individual spoke for God. This was and is a tempting proposition for many seeking power. There were many false prophets in Old Testament times. Moses gave two tests for those who would proclaim themselves prophet.

### Signs but contradictory message

<sup>1</sup>"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, <sup>2</sup>and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' <sup>3</sup>you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. <sup>4</sup>You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him

**Deuteronomy 13:1-4**

The first test of any prophet is does his message conform to what has already been revealed? A sign or wonder, a super-natural event, by itself does not mean "the message" is God's message. The sign or wonder could be a test from God. The message must conform to earlier revelations.

### False Message spoken in God's Name

<sup>20</sup>But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. <sup>21</sup>And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'—<sup>22</sup>when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

**Deuteronomy 18:20-22**

The second test is one of logic and God's nature. If the message is from God then it will happen, if the message does not happen then the speaker is a *false prophet* and must be put to death. Israel was not to fear false prophets.

Using this test, we can demonstrate who the false prophets are. We can examine the Quran by Mohammed, The book of Mormon by Joseph Smith, Jehovah Witnesses and other group claiming divine representation.

*How was the Bible inspired?*

### **The Old Testament**

Our Bible is a collection of books, in one volume with an Old Testament and a New Testament. The Old and New Testament were assembled under different circumstances over different periods of time. But the inclusion of certain "Books" as God's word is based on the same principles.

The first five books of the Old Testament is known as the Law or the Books of Moses. Following Moses God spoke through individuals and their words were confirmed by events. When their prophethood was demonstrated, their words, in manuscripts form, were added to the library that would be known as the Old Testament.

For example Jeremiah, foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and urged Israel to surrender to Babylonian rulership which would last a period of 70 years. (Jeremiah 25:12) His message was in opposition to the King's prophets who threatened to kill Jeremiah for proclaiming a "False message". The events proved Jeremiah's words correct. (Jeremiah 26) Daniel would later turn to the book of Jeremiah to pray for God's restoration of Israel to the land. (Daniel 9:2) These men spoke under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Earlier Prophets are confirmed by later prophets

Prophets would confirm the words of previous revelations, Joshua affirmed the words of Moses (Joshua 1:7), Isaiah affirmed David as a prophet and progenitor of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:7), Jeremiah the words of Samuel (Jeremiah 15:1), Daniel affirmed the words of Jeremiah

(Daniel 9:2), Ezekiel and Jesus affirmed the words of Daniel, (Ezekiel 28:3, Matthew 24:15), Zechariah of previous prophets. The prophets who spoke for God, whose words were affirmed by signs and wonders, established the Jewish *canon*<sup>4</sup>.

The scrolls were assembled in libraries which form the three part division of the Jewish Bible.

<sup>12</sup>Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. <sup>13</sup>Therefore it happened, *that* just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts.  
**Zechariah 7:12-13** (520-480 BC)

Yet for many years You had patience with them,  
And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets.  
Yet they would not listen;  
Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.  
**Nehemiah 9:30** (444-425 BC)

Nehemiah collected the books of the Old Testament into one collection after the return from Babylon. (2 Maccabees 2:13) Ezra was a scribe, who read the Law of Moses to the people who returned to Jerusalem.

<sup>1</sup>Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. <sup>2</sup>So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.  
**Nehemiah 8:1-2**

### The New Testament

In the New Testament Paul's words were called scripture by Peter, and Peter Apostolic office was established by Jesus. After Paul's conversion, and seeing Jesus on the road to Damascus Paul received both Apostolic and prophetic position in the church. His words were

as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.  
**2 Peter 3:15b,16**

The writing of the Apostles were established as scripture by the prophetic and Apostolic office designated by Jesus. Jesus also said the Apostles would receive inspiration from the Holy Spirit to remember all Jesus told them. Their writings were collected in a new form known as codex's. The Apostles would remember the words spoken by Jesus. Jesus' words would be put in written form for church to have inspired instruction.

26But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.  
**John 14:26**

The words of the Apostles were "inspired" by God's spirit as Jesus promised. The collected writings of the Apostles circulated as they were copied from city to city.

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

Jesus also testified to the writings of the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament along with the three-part division of the scriptures.

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<sup>4</sup> The word canon comes from the root word "reed" the reed was used as a measuring rod, and came to mean "standard". The Jewish canon consisted of the books that proved to be inspired by God and were attested to by the prophetic line.

44Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.  
**Luke 24:44-45.**

*What Old Testament did Jesus use?*

Since Christianity is based on the identity of Jesus, the Old Testament Jesus used is the Old Testament his church should use. There is internal evidence that reveal the Old Testament used by Jesus is composed of the same books used in the Jewish Bible today. This would exclude seven books known as the Apocrypha to Protestants and Jews and the Deuterocanonical books to the Catholics.

**1. Luke 24:44**

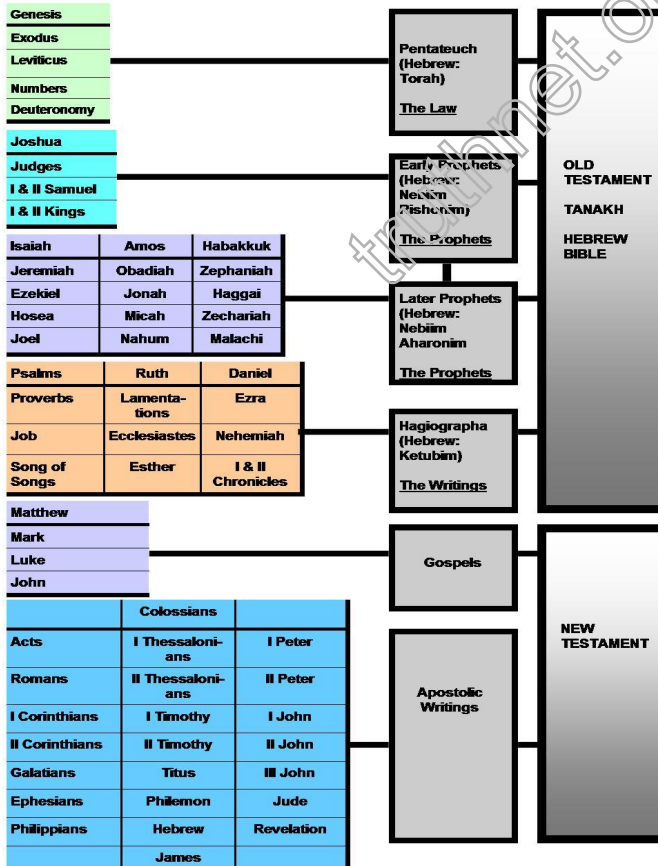
Jesus makes reference in Luke 24:44, to a three part division of scripture; this division is the current structure of the Jewish Bible. Psalms is the first and longest book of the third section of the Jewish Bible.

The Law of Moses	The Torah
The Prophets	Nebhim (Prophets)
The Psalms	Kethubhim or Hagiographa

**2. Luke 11:51, Matthew 23:35**

"From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah" With these words Jesus confirms his witness to the extent of the Old Testament canon. Abel was the first martyr recorded in Scripture (Genesis 4:8) and Zechariah the last martyr to be named in the Hebrew Old Testament order. Zechariah was stoned while

propheying to the people "in the court of the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 24:21). Genesis was the first book in the Hebrew canon and 2 Chronicles the last. Jesus was basically saying "Genesis to Chronicles," or according to our order Genesis to Malachi thereby confirming the divine authority and inspiration of the entire Hebrew canon.



**3. John 10:31-36; Luke 24:44**

Jesus disagreed with the oral tradition of the Pharisees (Mark 7, Matthew 15), not with their concept of the Hebrew canon. "There is no evidence whatever of any dispute between Him and he Jews as to the canonicity of any Old Testament book"

**4. Prologue to Ecclesiasticus**

Sirach (130 B.C.)

Sirach who wrote and lived in Jerusalem makes mention of most famous men of the Old Testament. He makes explicit mention of the Twelve Prophets. (Minor Prophets) This would indicate that the whole or at least the most of the OT was known to him and already in his day the "Minor Prophets" were regarded as a special group by themselves.

In his prologue he three times refers to the tripartite division of the OT. Example: "Whereas many great teachings have been given to us through the law and the prophets and the others that followed them" Sirach 19:20-24

### 5. Philo

"Just after Christ (about A.D. 40), Philo witnessed to a threefold classification, making reference to the Law, the Prophets (or Prophecies), as well as hymns and the others which foster and perfect knowledge and piety"<sup>5</sup>

### 6. Josephus

About 90 AD, the Jewish historian spoke about the closing of the Hebrew canon.

"Since Artaxerxes' age the succession of prophets had ceased" This is what he wrote in Contra Apionem. Showing in his day the "Canon" was closed.

### Reasons the Apocryphal parts of the LXX should be rejected as scripture

1. There is not sufficient evidence that they were reckoned as canonical by the Jews anywhere.
2. The LXX design was literary, to build the library of Ptolemy and Alexandrians.
3. All LXX manuscripts are Christian and not Jewish origin. With a 500 years difference between translation and existing manuscripts. Enough time for Apocryphal books to slip in.
4. LXX manuscripts do not all have the same apocryphal books and names.
5. During the 2nd Century AD the Alexandrian Jews adopted Aquila's Greek version of the OT without apocryphal books.
6. The manuscripts at the Dead Sea make it clear no canonical book of the OT was written later than the Persian period.
7. Philo, Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 BC-40 AD), quoted the Old Testament prolifically, and even recognized the threefold classification, but he never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.
8. Josephus (30-100 AD.), Jewish historian, explicitly excludes the Apocrypha, numbering the books of the Old Testament as 22 neither does he quote the apocryphal books as Scripture.
9. Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha, although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the book of the Old Testament.
10. The Jewish scholars of Jamnia (90 AD) did not recognize the Apocrypha.
11. No canon or council of the Christian church recognized the Apocrypha as inspired for nearly four centuries.
12. Many of the great fathers of the early church spoke out against the Apocrypha--for example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.
13. Jerome (AD 340-420) The great scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha as part of the canon.
14. Not until 1546 AD in a plenary action at the counter-Reformation Council of Trent (1545-63), did the apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic

### 7. The Talmud

- Written between 350-425 for the *Jerusalem Talmud* and about 500 AD for the *Babylonian Talmud* specifically states the books of the Apocrypha, including Sirach are non-canonical.  
*Tosefta Yadaim 3:5*  
*Seder Olam Rabba 30* states, "Until then (the coming of Alexander the Great and the end of the empire of the Persians) the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, "incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise"
- *Tos. Sotah 13:2 baraita in Bab. Yoma 9b, Bab. Sotah 48b and Bab. Sanhedrin 11a*: "With the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel".

*Is the Apocrypha<sup>6</sup> or Deutero-canonical Books God's Word?*

When was the Hebrew "Canon" closed?  
And Is the apocrypha part of God's word?  
These are two related questions.

The early Christian church was made up of Jews and Gentiles. As the church grew and gentiles became a greater percentage of believers the ability to read and understand the Hebrew Scriptures

<sup>5</sup> Geisler, Norman, A General Introduction to the Bible, Pg. 246, Moody Press

<sup>6</sup> Apocrypha comes from the Greek word apokruphos, meaning "hidden or concealed"

became limited. The Septuagint (LXX) solved this problem for the early church. The LXX was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible translated in the 2nd century BC during the reign of Ptolemy (285-247 B.C.)

The Septuagint was used mainly by Jews who lived in Alexandria. The Jews of Alexandria became more dependent on Greek to understand the writings of their sacred books.

The LXX was adopted by the early church as their Bible. It allowed gentiles to read, preach and exhort from scripture in their own Greek language. The references to the Hebrew scripture are quoted from the Septuagint in the New Testament. The problem arose when other books were added to the translated works of the Hebrew prophets. These other books (Apocryphal) were added to the translations of the “closed” canon.

The early church used the Septuagint to prove to Jews that Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament. This caused the Jews to abandon the Greek translation of the Old Testament for a newer translation by Aquila in the 130 AD.

The order of books arranged in the Septuagint is the current order in Bibles today except for Jewish Bibles, which arranged according to a three part division.

*How was the New Testament canon decided?*

With the growth in the Church throughout the Roman world along came sects and groups of individuals each with their own agenda and leader. Among these groups included the Judaisers, The Gnostics, The Mandaens and the Manichaens. In order to establish their credibility, they published works that included apostles names. Many of the writing of the early church fathers, such as Irenaeus and Justin Martyr combat these early heresies. The spread of these heretical teachings and their books with misleading names was causing confusion in the early church.

The main test to determine whether a New Testament book was part of the canon, was its authorship, was the author an apostle? This rule or canon is established in the test of the prophet to determine if the work was inspired.

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup>in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**Ephesians 2:20**

To discover the true canon, the church also looked to the witness of the church fathers. Did early church fathers attest to the authenticity? Was the author an Apostle or associated with one? Several events created a necessity to standardize the need for an established canon.

1. *Persecution:* Diocletian in 303 AD called for the destruction of sacred books of the Christians.
2. *Missions:* The spreading of the Gospel to pagan lands and the translation of scripture into local languages required an authoritarian Christian canon.
3. *Spread of false teaching:* Counterfeit works were causing confusion in the early church, about what books were apostolic.
4. *Rise of Heretics:* As early as 140 AD, the heretic Marcion developed his own Canon and began to propagate it. The church needed to counter his influence by collecting the books of the New Testament.

There two ways this process is viewed. The church is not determining the scripture but discovering what already exists and was established by Christ.

The Incorrect view	The Correct view
The Church is the Determiner of Canon	The Church is the Discoverer of Canon
The Church is the Mother of Canon	The Church is the Child of Canon
The Church is the Magistrate of Canon	The Church is the Minister of Canon
The Church is the Regulator of Canon	The Church is the Recognizer of Canon
The Church is the Judge of Canon	The Church is the Witness of Canon
The Church is Master of Canon	The Church is Servant of Canon

## The Canon of the New Testament<sup>7</sup>

### I. TWO PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The canon is the collection of 27 books which the church (generally) receives as its New Testament Scriptures. The history of the canon is the history of the process by which these books were brought together and their value as sacred Scriptures officially recognized. That process was gradual, furthered by definite needs, and, though unquestionably continuous, is in its earlier stages difficult to trace. It is always well in turning to the study of it to have in mind two considerations which bear upon the earliest phases of the whole movement. These are:

#### 1. Early Christians Had the Old Testament

The early Christians had in their hands what was a Bible to them, namely, the Old Testament Scriptures.

### II. THREE STAGES OF THE PROCESS

For convenience of arrangement and definiteness of impression the whole process may be marked off in three stages:

1. that from the time of the apostles until about 170 AD;
2. that of the closing years of the 2nd century and the opening of the 3rd (170-220 AD);
3. that of the 3rd and 4th centuries. In the first we seek for the evidences of the growth in appreciation of the peculiar value of the New Testament writings; in the second we discover the clear, full recognition of a large part of these writings as sacred and authoritative; in the third the acceptance of the complete canon in the East and in the West.

#### 1. From the Apostles to 170 AD

##### (1) CLEMENT OF ROME; IGNARIUS; POLYCARP

The first period extending to 170 AD.—It does not lie within the scope of this article to recount the origin of the several books of the

New Testament. This belongs properly to New Testament Introduction (which see). By the end of the 1st century all of the books of the New Testament were in existence. They were, as treasures of given churches, widely separated and honored as containing the word of Jesus or the teaching of the apostles. From the very first the authority of Jesus had full recognition in all the Christian world. The whole work of the apostles was in interpreting Him to the growing church. His sayings and His life were in part for the illumination of the Old Testament; wholly for the understanding of life and its issues. In every assembly of Christians from the earliest days He was taught as well as the Old Testament. In each church to which an epistle was written that epistle was likewise read. Paul asked that his letters be read in this way (1 Thess 5:27; Col 4:16). In this attentive listening to the exposition of some event in the life of Jesus or to the reading of the epistle of an apostle began the "authorization" of the traditions concerning Jesus and the apostolic writings. The widening of the area of the church and the departure of the apostles from earth emphasized increasingly the value of that which the writers of the New Testament left behind them. Quite early the desire to have the benefit of all possible instruction led to the interchange of Christian writings.

**Polycarp (110 AD ?)** writes to the Philippians, "I have received letters from you and from Ignatius. You recommend me to send on yours to Syria; I shall do so either personally or by some other means. In return I send you the letter of Ignatius as well as others which I have in my hands and for which you made request. I add them to the present one; they will serve to edify your faith and perseverance" (Epistle to Phil, XIII). This is an illustration of what must have happened toward furthering a knowledge of the writings of the apostles. Just when and to what extent "collections" of our New Testament books began to be made it is impossible to say, but it is fair to infer that a collection of the Pauline epistles existed at the time Polycarp wrote to the Phil and when Ignatius wrote his seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor, i.e. about 115 AD. There is good reason to think also that the four Gospels were brought together in some places as early as this. A clear distinction, however, is to be kept in mind between "collections" and such recognition as we imply in the

<sup>7</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Editor James Orr,



word “canonical.” The gathering of books was one of the steps preliminary to this. Examination of the testimony to the New Testament in this early time indicates also that it is given with no intention of framing the canonicity of New Testament books. In numerous instances only “echoes” of the thought of the epistles appear; again quotations are incomplete; both showing that Scripture words are used as the natural expression of Christian thought. In the same way the Apostolic Fathers refer to the teachings and deeds of Jesus.

**Clement of Rome, in 95 AD**, wrote a letter in the name of the Christians of Rome to those in Corinth. In this letter he uses material found in Mt, Lk, giving it a free rendering (see chapters 46 and 13); he has been much influenced by the Epistle to the Hebrews (see chapters 9, 10, 17, 19, 36). He knows Romans, Corinthians, and there are found echoes of 1 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter and Ephesians.

**The Epistles of Ignatius (115 AD)** have correspondences with our gospels in several places (Eph 5; Rom 6; 7) and incorporate language from nearly all of the Pauline epistles. The Epistle to Polycarp makes large use of Phil, and besides this cites nine of the other Pauline epistles. Ignatius quotes from Matthew, apparently from memory; also from 1 Peter and 1 John. In regard to all these three writers—Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius—it is not enough to say that they bring us reminiscences or quotations from this or that book. Their thought is tinctured all through with New Testament truth. As we move a little farther down the years we come to “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” (circa 120 AD in its present form; see DIDACHE); the Epistle of Barnabas (circa 130 AD) and the Shepherd of Hermas (circa 130 AD). These exhibit the same phenomena as appear in the writings of Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp as far as references to the New Testament are concerned. Some books are quoted, and the thought of the three writings echoes again and again the teachings of the New Testament. They bear distinct witness to the value of “the gospel” and the doctrine of the apostles, so much so as to place these clearly above their own words. It is in the Epistle of Barnabas that we first come upon the phrase “it is written,” referring to a New Testament book (Matthew) (see *Epis.*, iv.14). In this deepening sense of value was enfolded the feeling of authoritativeness, which slowly was to find expression. It is well to add that what we have so far discovered was true in widely separated parts of the Christian world as e.g. Rome and Asia Minor.

## (2) FORCES INCREASING VALUE OF WRITINGS

### **(A) Apologists, Justin Martyr**

The literature of the period we are examining was not, however, wholly of the kind of which we have been speaking. Two forces were calling out other expressions of the singular value of the writings of the apostles, whether gospels or epistles. These were (a) the attention of the civil government in view of the rapid growth of the Christian church and (b) heresy. The first brought to the defense or commendation of Christianity the Apologists, among whom were Justin Martyr, Aristides, Melito of Sardis and Theophilus of Antioch. By far the most important of these was Justin Martyr, and his work may be taken as representative. He was born about 100 AD at Shechem, and died as a martyr at Rome in 165 AD. His two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho are the sources for the study of his testimony. He speaks of the “Memoirs of the Apostles called Gospels” (Ap., i.66) which were read on Sunday interchangeably with the prophets (i.67). Here emerges that equivalence in value of these “Gospels” with the Old Testament Scriptures which may really mark the beginning of canonization. That these Gospels were our four Gospels as we now have them is yet a disputed question; but the evidence is weighty that they were. (See Purves, Testimony of Justin Martyr to Early Christianity, Lect V.) The fact that Tatian, his pupil, made a harmony of the Gospels, i.e. of our four Gospels, also bears upon our interpretation of Justin’s “Memoirs.” (See Hemphill, The Diatessaron of Tatian.) The only other New Testament book which Justin mentions is the Apocalypse; but he appears to have known the Acts, six epistles of Paul, Hebrew and 1 John, and echoes of still other epistles are perceptible. When he speaks of the apostles it is after this fashion: “By the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the Word of God” (Ap., i.39). It is debatable, however, whether this refers to more than the actual preaching of the apostles. The beginning of the formation of the canon is in the position and authority given to the Gospels.

### **(B) Gnostics, Marcion**

While the Apologists were busy commending or defending Christianity, heresy in the form of Gnosticism was also compelling attention to the matter of the writings of the apostles. From the beginning Gnostic teachers claimed that Jesus had favored chosen ones of His apostles with a body of esoteric truth which had been handed down by secret tradition. This the church denied, and in the controversy that went on through years the question of what were authoritative writings became more and more pronounced. Basilides e.g., who taught in Alexandria during the reign of Hadrian (AD 117-38), had for his secret authority the secret tradition of the apostle Matthias and of Glaucias, an alleged interpreter of Peter, but he bears witness to Matthew, Luke, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians in the effort to recommend his doctrines, and, what is more, gives them the value of Scripture in order to support more securely his teachings. (See *Philosophoumena* of Hippolytus, VII, 17). Valentinus, tracing his authority through Theodas to Paul, makes the same general use of New Testament books, and Tertullian tells us that he appeared to use the whole New Testament as then known.

The most noted of the Gnostics was Marcion, a native of Pontus. He went to Rome (circa 140 AD), there broke with the church and became a dangerous heretic. In support of his peculiar views, he formed a canon of his own which

consisted of Luke's Gospel and ten of the Pauline epistles. He rejected the Pastoral Epistles, Hebrews, Matthew, Mark, John, the Acts, the Catholic epistles and the Apocalypse, and made a recension of both the gospel of Luke and the Pauline epistles which he accepted. His importance, for us, however, is in the fact that he gives us the first clear evidence of the canonization of the Pauline epistles. Such use of the Scriptures inevitably called forth both criticism and a clearer marking off of those books which were to be used in the churches opposed to heresy, and so "in the struggle with Gnosticism the canon was made." We are thus brought to the end of the first period in which we have marked the collection of New Testament books in greater or smaller compass, the increasing valuation of them as depositions of the truth of Jesus and His apostles, and finally the movement toward the claim of their authoritative as over against perverted teaching. No sharp line as to a given year can be drawn between the first stage of the process and the second. Forces working in the first go on into the second, but results are accomplished in the second which give it its right to separate consideration.

## **2. From 170 AD to 220 AD**

The period from 170 AD to 220 AD.—This is the age of a voluminous theological literature busy with the great issues of church canon and creed. It is the period of the great names of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, representing respectively Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa. In passing into it we come into the clear light of Christian history. There is no longer any question as to a New Testament canon; the only difference of judgment is as to its extent. What has been slowly but surely shaping itself in the consciousness of the church now comes to clear expression.

### **(1) IRENAEUS**

That expression we may study in Irenaeus as representative of the period. He was born in Asia Minor, lived and taught in Rome and became afterward bishop of Lyons. He had, therefore, a wide acquaintance with the churches, and was peculiarly competent to speak concerning the general judgment of the Christian world. As a pupil of Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, he is connected with the apostles themselves. An earnest defender of the truth, he makes the New Testament in great part his authority, and often appeals to it. The four Gospels, the Acts, the epistles of Paul, several of the Catholic epistles and the Apocalypse are to him Scripture in the fullest sense. They are genuine and authoritative, as much so as the Old Testament ever was. He dwells upon the fact that there are four gospels, the very number being prefigured in the four winds and the four quarters of the earth. Every attempt to increase or diminish the number is heresy. Tertullian takes virtually the same position (*Adv. Marc.*, iv. 2), while Clement of Alexandria quotes all four gospels as "Scripture." By the end of the 2nd century the canon of the gospels was settled. The same is true also of the Pauline epistles. Irenaeus makes more than two hundred citations from Paul, and looks upon his epistles as Scripture (*Adv. Haer.*, iii.12, 12). Indeed, at this time it may be said that the new canon was known under the designation "The Gospel and the Apostles" in contradistinction to the old as "the Law and the Prophets." The title "New Testament" appears to have been first used by an unknown writer against Montanism (circa 193 AD). It occurs frequently after this in Origen and later writers. In considering all this testimony two facts should have emphasis: (1) its wide extent: Clement and Irenaeus represent parts of Christendom which are widely separated; (2) The relation of these men to those who have gone before them. Their lives together with those before them spanned nearly the whole time from the apostles. They but voiced the judgment which silently, gradually had been selecting the "Scripture" which they freely and fully acknowledged and to which they made appeal.

### **(2) THE MURATORIAN FRAGMENT**

Just here we come upon the Muratorian Fragment, so called because discovered in 1740 by the librarian of Milan, Muratori. It dates from some time near the end of the 2nd century, is of vital interest in the study of the history of the canon, since it gives us a list of New Testament books and is concerned with the question of the canon itself. The document comes from Rome, and Lightfoot assigns it to Hippolytus. Its list contains the Gospels (the first line of the fragment is incomplete, beginning with Mark, but Matthew is clearly implied), the Acts, the Pauline epistles, the Apocalypse, 1 and 2 John (perhaps by implication the third) and Jude. It does not mention Hebrew, 1 and 2 Peter, James. In this list we have virtually the real position of the canon at the close of the 2nd century. Complete unanimity had not been attained in reference to all the books which are now between the covers of our New Testament. Seven books had not yet found a secure place beside the gospel and Paul in all parts of the church. The Palestinian and Syrian churches for a long time rejected the Apocalypse, while some of the Catholic epistles were in Egypt considered doubtful. The history of the final acceptance of these belongs to the third period.

3. 3rd and 4th Centuries

### **(1) ORIGEN**

The period included by the 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries—It has been said that "the question of the canon did not make much progress in the course of the 3rd century" (Reuss, *History of the Canon of Holy Scripture*, 125). We have the testimony of a few notable teachers mostly from one center, Alexandria. Their consideration of the question of the disputed book serves just here one purpose. By far the most distinguished name of the 3rd century is *Origen*. He was born in Alexandria about 185 AD, and before he was seventeen became an instructor in the school for catechumens. In 203 he was appointed bishop, experienced various fortunes, and died in 254. His fame rests upon his ability as an

exegete, though he worked laboriously and successfully in other fields. His testimony is of high value, not simply because of his own studies, but also because of his wide knowledge of what was thought in other Christian centers in the world of his time. Space permits us only to give in summary form his conclusions, especially in regard to the books still in doubt. The Gospels, the Pauline epistles, the Acts, he accepts without question. He discusses at some length the authorship of He, believes that "God alone knows who wrote it," and accepts it as Scripture. His testimony to the Apocalypse is given in the sentence, "Therefore John the son of Zebedee says in the Revelation." He also gives sure witness to Jude, but wavers in regard to James, 2 Peter, 2 John, and 3 John.

#### **(2) DIONYSIUS**

Another noted name of this century is *Dionysius of Alexandria*, a pupil of Origen (died 265). His most interesting discussion is regarding the Apocalypse, which he attributes to an unknown John, but he does not dispute its inspiration. It is a singular fact that the western church accepted this book from the first, while its position in the East was variable. Conversely the Epistle to the He was more insecure in the West than in the East. In regard to the Catholic epistles Dionysius supports James, 2 John, and 3 John, but not 2 Peter or Jude.

#### **(3) CYPRIAN**

In the West the name of *Cyprian*, bishop of Carthage (248-58 AD), was most influential. He was much engaged in controversy, but a man of great personal force. The Apocalypse he highly honored, but he was silent about the Epistle to the Hebrews. He refers to only two of the Catholic epistles, 1 Peter and 1 John.

These testimonies confirm what was said above, namely, that the end of the 3rd century leaves the question of the full canon about where it was at the beginning. 1 Peter and 1 John seem to have been everywhere known and accepted. In the West the five Catholic epistles gained recognition more slowly than in the East.

#### **(4) EUSEBIUS**

In the early part of the 4th century *Eusebius* (270-340 AD), bishop of Caesarea before 315, sets before us in his *Church History* (III, chapters iii-xxv) his estimate of the canon in his time. He does not of course use the word canon, but he "conducts an historical inquiry into the belief and practice of earlier generations." He lived through the last great persecution in the early part of the 4th century, when not only places of worship were razed to the ground, but also the sacred Scriptures were in the public market-places consigned to the flames (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, VIII, 2). It was, therefore, no idle question what book a loyal Christian must stand for as his Scripture. The question of the canon had an earnest, practical significance. Despite some obscurity and apparent contradictions, his classification of the New Testament books was as follows: (1) The acknowledged books. His criteria for each of these was authenticity and apostolicity and he placed in this list the Gospels, Acts, and Paul's epistles, including He. (2) The disputed books, i.e. those which had obtained only partial recognition, to which he assigned Jas, Jude, 2 Pet and 2 Jn. About the Apocalypse also he was not sure. In this testimony there is not much advance over that of the 3rd century. It is virtually the canon of Origen. All this makes evident the fact that as yet no official decision nor uniformity of usage in the church gave a completed canon. The time, however, was drawing on when various forces at work were to bring much nearer this unanimity and enlarge the list of acknowledged books. In the second half of the 4th century repeated efforts were made to put an end to uncertainty.

#### **(5) ATHANASIUS**

*Athanasius* in one of his pastoral letters in connection with the publishing of the ecclesiastical calendar gives a list of the books comprising Scripture, and in the New Testament portion are included all the 27 books which we now recognize. "These are the wells of salvation," he writes, "so that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the sayings in these. Let no one add to these. Let nothing be taken away." Gregory of Nazianzen (died 390 AD) also published a list omitting Revelation, as did Cyril of Jerusalem (died 386), and quite at the end of the century (4th) Isidore of Pelusium speaks of the "canon of truth, the Divine Scriptures." For a considerable time the Apocalypse was not accepted in the Palestinian or Syrian churches. Athanasius helped toward its acceptance in the church of Alexandria. Some differences of opinion, however, continued. The Syrian church did not accept all of the Catholic epistles until much later.

#### **(6) COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE, JEROME; AUGUSTINE**

***The Council of Carthage in 397***, in connection with its decree "that aside from the canonical Scriptures nothing is to be read in church under the name of Divine Scriptures," gives a list of the books of the New Testament. After this fashion there was an endeavor to secure unanimity, while at the same time differences of judgment and practice continued. The books which had varied treatment through these early centuries

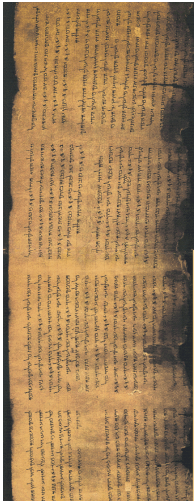
were He, the Apocalypse and the five minor Catholic epistles. The advance of Christianity under Constantine had much to do with the reception of the whole group of books in the East. The task which the emperor gave to Eusebius to prepare "fifty copies of the Divine Scriptures" established a standard which in time gave recognition to all doubtful books. In the West, Jerome and Augustine were the controlling factors in its settlement of the canon. The publication of the Vulgate (Jerome's *Latin Bible*, 390-405 AD) virtually determined the matter.

In conclusion let it be noted how much the human element was involved in the whole process of forming our New Testament. No one would wish to dispute a providential overruling of it all. Also it is well to bear in mind that all the books have not the same clear title to their places in the canon as far as the history of their attestation is concerned. Clear and full and unanimous, however, has been the judgment from the beginning upon the Gospels, the Acts, the Pauline epistles, 1 Peter and 1 John.

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J. S. RIGGS

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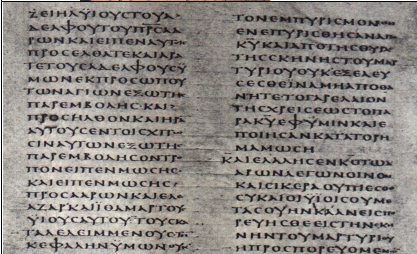
**Dead Sea Scrolls**

In March 1947 a young Arab boy discovered in the caves of Qumran near the Dead Sea jars containing several leather manuscripts dating to the time of Christ. They belonged to the Essenes. The Essenes were a Jewish sect that settled in the Judean desert near Qumran. Other manuscripts were found over the next 10 years. 2 copies of the book of Isaiah were found along with books and fragments from the whole Old Testament except for the book of Ester.

Prior to the discovery the oldest existing book of the Hebrew Old Testament dated to about 1000 AD. Carbon dating has placed them between 168 BC and 233 AD. Archaeology puts the dates at between 150 BC to 100 AD.

Gleason Archer observed that the two copies of Isaiah proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. The scrolls gave an overwhelming confirmation of the Masoretic text. Some of the variants show parallels to the Greek text of the Septuagint (LXX).

The Dead Sea Scrolls are owned by the Nation of Israel



**The Septuagint or the LXX**

The LXX version is the first translation of the OT ever made. The translation was inaugurated by Ptolemy of Philadelphus (285-247 BC). Ptolemy was fond of books and wanted to add the Hebrew Pentateuch to his collection in Alexandria. The LXX was the bible of the early church. The order of OT books is derived from the LXX through the Vulgate by St. Jerome.

On the basis of the LXX Catholics advocate the "Larger" canon of the Jews in Alexandria. Protestants deny the existence of an independent canon in Alexandria in view of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Palestine. The difference is 7 complete books and portions of 2 others. The books are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 & 2 Macabees and additions to Daniel and Esther.

These portions are rejected by protestants.

The oldest existing LXX manuscript is dated 350 A.D which is.



**Samaritan Pentateuch**

With the split of the Samaritans from the Jews from the 8th century BC there arose a second Hebrew revision of the Pentateuch known as the Samaritan Pentateuch. It contains the five books of Moses and is written in Paleo-Hebrew script similar to the that found on the Moabite Stone, Siloam inscription.

Author Frank Cross believes the Samaritan Pentateuch branched off in the Pre-Masoretic text in the 2nd century BC.

There are differences from the Masoretic text that are trivial and orthographic. Some of the differences were introduced by Samaritans with the interest in preserving their status. Such as the location of the Arc. The oldest existing manuscript is dated to the 11th century AD.



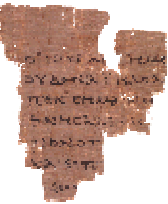
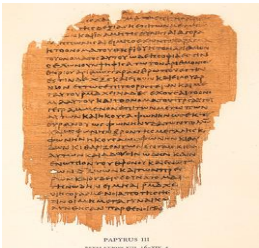

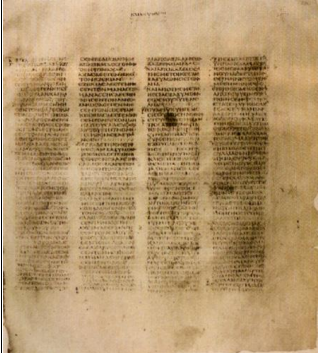

**Aleppo Codex**

The Aleppo Codex dates from the Masoretic period (500-1000 AD) of Old Testament copying. During this period there was a deep reverence of the Scriptures, complete review of established rules and a systematic renovation of transmission techniques

Aleppo was written by Shelomo ben Baya'a but according to a colophon it was pointed (vowel marks were added) by Moses ben Asher (930 A.D.) It is a model codex based on the Masoretic text. It was not permitted to be copied for a long time and was reported to be destroyed. Aleppo Codex was smuggled from Syria to Israel. It has now been photographed and will be the basis of the New Hebrew Bible to be published by Hebrew University. It is a sound authority for the Ben Asher text.

**NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS**

**HISTORY**

	<p><b>The John Rylands Fragment John 18:31-33 (117-138 AD)</b></p> <p>The earliest known copy of any portion of the New Testament is from a papyrus codex (2.5 by 3.5 inches). It dates from the first half of the second century A.D. 117-138. (P.52)The papyrus is written on both sides and contains portions of five verses from the gospel of John (18:31-33,37-38). Because this fragment was found in Egypt a distance from the place of composition (Asia Minor) it demonstrates the chain of transmission. The fragment belongs to the John Rylands Library at Manchester, England</p>
	<p><b>Chester Beatty Papyri (250 AD)</b></p> <p>This important papyri consists of three codices and contains most of the New Testament. (P.45, P.46, P.47). The first codex(P.45) has 30 leaves (pages) of papyrus codex. 2 from Matthew, 2 from John, 6 from Mark, 7 from Luke and 13 from Acts. Originally there were 220 pages measuring 8x10 inches each. (P.46)The second codex has 86 leaves 11x6.5 inches. 104 pages of Paul's epistles. P.47 is made of 10 leaves from Revelation measuring 9.5 by 5.5 inches.</p>
	<p><b>Bodmer Papyri (200 AD)</b></p> <p>Dating from 200 A.D. or earlier the Bodmer collection of Papyri (P.66,P.72,P.75) contains 104 leaves. P.66 Contains the Gospel of John 1:1-6:11, 6:35-14:26, 14-21. P.72 has the earliest know copy of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter also contains other Canonical and apocryphal books. P.72 measures 6 x 5.75 inches. P.75 is 102 pages measuring 10.25 by 5.33 inches. Contains most of Luke and John dated between 175 and 225 AD. Earliest know copy of Luke. Very similar to the Codex Vaticanus.</p>
	<p><b>CODEX SINAITICUS (340 AD)</b></p> <p>Considered to the most important witness to the Greek text of the New Testament dated in the 4th century. Sinaiticus was found at St. Catherine's monastery at Mt. Sinai by Von Tischendorf (1815-1874). It was acquired for the Czar of Russia. Sinaiticus contains over 1/2 of the Old Testament (LXX) and all of the new except for Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11.. Also contains the Old Testament Apocrypha. Sinaiticus is written on 364.5 pages measuring 13.5 by 14 inches. The material is good vellum made from antelope skins. Purchased by the British government for \$500,000 in 1933.</p>
	<p><b>Codex Vaticanus (325-350 AD)</b></p> <p>Vaticanus was written in the middle of the 4th century and was not know to textual scholars till 1475 when it was catalogued in the Vatican Library. For the next 400 years scholars were prohibited from studying it. Its includes most of the LXX version of the Old Testament and most of the New. It contains 759 leaves measuring 10 by 10.5 inches. Codex Vaticanus is owned by the Roman Catholic Church and is housed in the Vatican Library, Vatican City.</p>