

Theology 101 – An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine

Scripture and Canon

I. The Canon of Scripture

A. The Concept of Canon

1. The word canon is from the Greek word *kanon* which refers to a standard of measure and is often translated 'rule' (Gal. 6:16)
 - a. By the 4th century, Christian writers were using the word to describe the list of books that the church recognized as inspired
 - b. Athanasius, in the Decrees of the Synod of Nicaea in AD 325 appears to be the first to use the word 'canon' in this way
 - c. The Synod of Laodicea in AD 362 was the first council to use the word in this way
 - d. The Jews appear to use the word 'Scripture' (Gk. *Graphe*), *Tanakh*, or *Torah* prior to the use of the word 'canon,' to signify a collection of divine writings (See Mt. 21:42, for an example of the use of '*graphe*') 'Torah' is used in both NT and OT – see Neh. 8:8 for an OT example of 'Torah' used in a broad sense.
2. The canon of Scripture is the list of all the books that belong in the Bible
 - a. It has to do with acknowledging that certain writings have inherent authority
 - b. The Canon has unique divine authority so that we follow what they teach
 - c. The Canon is NOT an 'authorized collection of writings' – It IS a collection of authoritative and inspired writings
3. The question of what is in the canon is significant
 - a. The Bible is our source of knowledge for all things relating to God, Salvation, Faith, and Sanctification
 - b. There are at least 4 warnings about adding to or removing from Scripture (see references above), this too should cause careful consideration of canon
4. A book is canonical if it is inspired by God as Scripture
 - a. A book could be authentic and reliable, but not be canonical if it is not inspired
 - b. A book that is inspired will also be authentic and reliable
5. Why did the question of canon arise?
 - a. Heretical groups began to deny certain books considered Scripture by Jews and the church and they created their own list of 'authoritative' books.

- 1) Marcion rejected the OT, accepted an edited version of Luke's gospel, plus his own editions of 10 letters of Paul, excluding the pastoral epistles
 - 2) The Montanists elevated prophecy to a level of supreme authority in the church, similar to modern Mormonism, where new prophecies supersede the writings of the Apostles
- b. Due to pressure from heretical groups, the church was forced to make public decisions establishing standards of orthodoxy and to formalize a Canon

B. Points About the Canon

1. A book is part of the Canon because it is inspired by God as Scripture, not because a church council declared it to be canon
 - a. The books of the Canon were 'Canon' the moment they were written
 - b. The process of 'canonization' is to recognize and acknowledge the inherent canonicity of books, not to declare certain books 'Canon' and deny other books
 - c. The church does not have the authority to make a book 'canon' – that authority belongs to God alone.
 - d. God canonizes books. The early church sought to recognize that canonicity.
2. Churches and councils still had to determine what books were inherently canon
 - a. The people involved in these decisions were careful to consider the evidence and the process was not rushed, the final canon was largely settled some thirty years before the 397 AD Council of Carthage
 - b. The books (scrolls) of the NT and OT had been circulated widely and most of what is now the current Canon was nearly universally accepted as authoritative by the Eastern and Western churches in the early 2nd century.
3. God is sovereign over history, and is able to preserve the texts of Scripture
 - a. Debates over inherent canonicity are to be expected. Such debate in the early church was a healthy part of the process
 - b. In the same way that God inspired the original texts, God is also able to guide the process of establishing the Canon

C. Criteria for OT Canon

1. Written by a prophet or someone recognized as having divine authority
 - a. A prophet is anyone who speaks the word of God with God's authority
 - b. It is in this way that Josephus talks about all of the histories and well as the 'prophetic books' as being written by prophets

- c. Per Josephus and 1 Maccabees, prophecy ceased around 400 BC
- 2. Originated through inspiration from God
 - a. The apocryphal books typically do not make such claims, they do not use phrases like, “Thus says the LORD” or “the word of the LORD came...”, etc.
 - b. This fact is also recognized by the Jews of the era, which is why 1 Maccabees says there have been no prophets, and Josephus says the apocryphal books are not of divine origin
- 3. Does not contain internal contradictions, nor does it contradict other inspired texts
- 4. Historically accepted by the Jews as authoritative and divine
- 5. Quoted in the NT or treated by the NT as Scripture
 - a. Every book of the OT is quoted in the NT except: Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (sometimes called Canticles), Ezra, Nehemiah, Obadiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah.
 - b. However, in the Tanakh, the 12 minor prophets were one canonical scroll. Therefore, in the 1st century, a quote from any of the minor prophets would be considered a quote from the ‘Book of Twelve’
 - c. The NT frequently refers to all or part of the OT as Scripture
 - d. Jesus and the Apostles also affirm the three-part division of the OT

D. History of the Old Testament Canon

- 1. Josephus (c. 97 AD), Philo of Alexandria (c. 40 AD) and others refer in their writings to the three-part division of the OT of Law, Prophets, and Writings
- 2. Pre-Christian Judaism believed that prophecy had ceased
 - a. 1 Maccabees 9:23-27, “²³ After the death of Judas, the renegades emerged in all parts of Israel; all the wrongdoers reappeared. ²⁴ In those days a very great famine occurred, and the country went over to their side. ²⁵ Bacchides chose the godless and put them in charge of the country. ²⁶ They made inquiry and searched for the friends of Judas, and brought them to Bacchides, who took vengeance on them. ²⁷ So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.”
 - b. 1 Macc. 4:45-46 and 14:41 both mention waiting for a prophet to appear, who could speak with authority – the implication is that there are no prophets and haven’t been for some time.

- c. Josephus, in *Against Apion* 1.41 (Book I, Chapter 8), explains the status of Maccabees and the 'Apocrypha', saying, "From Artaxerxes to our own times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records..."
- 3. Josephus, in *Against Apion* 1:38-42 (Book I Chapter 8) c. AD 97, claimed that the Jewish canon had been settled by the time of the Persian King Artaxerxes (465-423 BC).
 - a. Josephus describes an OT canon consisting of 22 books, 5 of which are the books of Moses, 13 books of Prophets, and 4 hymns to God, reflecting a typical Tanakh - these 22 books correspond exactly to the 39 books of the OT
 - b. The Tanakh book order combines several books, for example:
 - 1) Hosea – Malachi, 12 minor prophets, are one book – '*The Twelve*'
 - 2) 1 and 2 Kings are one book (as are 1 + 2 Chron and 1 + 2 Samuel)
 - 3) Ruth and Judges are one book (old tradition only)
 - 4) Ezra and Nehemiah are one book
 - 5) Lamentations and Jeremiah are one book (old tradition only)
 - 6) **The modern Tanakh will separate Judges/Ruth and Lamentations/Jeremiah to end up with 24 books**
 - c. The 5 books of Moses are: Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., and Deut.
 - d. The 13 prophets are:
 - 1) Joshua
 - 2) Judges/Ruth
 - 3) Samuel
 - 4) Kings
 - 5) Chronicles
 - 6) Ezra/Nehemiah
 - 7) Esther
 - 8) Job
 - 9) Isaiah
 - 10) Jeremiah/Lamentations
 - 11) Ezekiel
 - 12) Daniel
 - 13) The Twelve (Hosea – Malachi)
 - e. The 4 books of hymns are: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon

4. The Jewish Councils of Jamnia c. 90 AD and 118 AD
 - a. The councils were made up of Jewish Rabbis and several topics were discussed, including the books of the Tanakh
 - b. It brought up Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon for reconsideration, but the assumption going in was that these were canonical books and their canonicity were ratified formally by the council
 - c. Rabbinic discussions on a variety of issues at Jamnia continued for six decades
5. Rabbinic literature reflects a closed OT canon
 - a. The Babylonian Talmud, Yomah 9b vs24-25, states that the Spirit of God departed from Israel.
 - b. Quote, “After the latter prophets had died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, but they still availed themselves of the *bat kol*.”
 - c. – ‘bat kol’ means ‘daughter of the voice’ or ‘heavenly voice’ and is a reference to the Spirit of God in inter-testamental period
 - d. This teaching is also found in Sota 48b, Sanhedrin 11a, and Midrash Rabbah on Song of Songs, 8.9.3
6. Opinions vary regarding the Jewish closing of the OT canon - around 500-400 BC.
7. Melito, bishop of Sardis, provided a list of OT Canon in AD 170
 - a. As reported by Eusebius in *Eccl. History* 4.26.14 c. 325 AD
 - b. Melito does not include Esther or any Apocryphal books
 - c. The early church in the east sometimes doubted the canonicity of Esther, but it isn't clear why. The western church apparently had no such doubts.

E. Criteria for NT Canon

1. Was the book written by an apostle or someone with recognized authority?
 - a. Apostles were given authority to write commands of the Lord
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:2
 - 2) 1 Cor. 14:37
 - 3) Eph. 2:20 – the apostles and prophets are part of the ‘foundation’ of the household of God
 - i. The prophets speak the word of God
 - ii. The apostles have a similar role
 - 4) See also: 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Cor. 13:3; Rom. 2:16; Gal. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:8, 15; 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14

- b. Some NT books are not signed by the author
 - c. Hebrews took a while to be universally accepted because it is anonymous
 - d. Some authors were associated with an apostle, such as Luke traveling with Paul, Mark was amanuensis to Peter
 - e. Mark, Luke, Acts, (possibly) Hebrews, and Jude were not written by an Apostle, but by someone closely associate or authorized by an apostle
 - f. James is considered an apostle in 1 Cor. 15:7 and Gal. 1:19 (esp. taken together)
 - g. Of apostolic authorship:
 - 1) Matthew
 - 2) John
 - 3) Romans through Philemon (all the Pauline epistles)
 - 4) James
 - 5) 1 and 2 Peter
 - 6) 1, 2, and 3 John
 - 7) Revelation
 - h. Not everything written by an apostle is Canon. However, those things written by an apostle while acting in the role of apostle and giving apostolic instruction to churches or specific individuals (like Timothy or Philemon) are Canon.
2. The truthfulness test of Deuteronomy 18:20-22
- a. “But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?’ – when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.”
 - b. If it is from God, it has to be true and correct
 - c. This is also part of the inerrancy debate – God is speaking and he has established a standard of accuracy for His written words
3. Is it doctrinally consistent with the rest of the Canon?
- a. Certain books of the NT that were recognized early on, such as the Gospels and the letters of Paul, can also be used to authenticate or evaluate other NT books.
 - b. This is a significant criterion for Hebrews. It is compatible with and explains what is taught in the OT in the light of Christ.

- c. Luther may have questioned the book of James on this criterion because he felt it conflicted with Paul on works vs grace.
 - 1) In the first edition of his German translation of the Bible c. 1522, Luther included James but referred to it 'an epistle of straw' and included James near the end of his Bible, though he did not apparently exclude it from the Canon.
 - 2) There is some debate between Catholics and Protestants to the extent of Luther's questioning of James canonicity, though given the debate that Luther was engaged in at the time, some level of internal debate is understandable.
 - 3) Though, perhaps for a time, Luther may have questioned the content of James, there is no true conflict between James and Paul.
 - 4) James is a more practical than theological and fills a gap between the theological doctrine of grace and the practical implications of living a Spirit-filled Christian life that by definition must include good works.
 - 5) Paul teaches that we are saved by grace through faith. James teaches that the result of salvation by grace through faith is good works and that consequently good works are evidence of salvation by grace through faith.
 - 6) Later editions of Luther's Bible did not question the canonicity of James
- d. The 'Shepherd of Hermas' is an example of a text that was ultimately rejected because of this doctrinal test.
 - 1) In Vision III vs 76-81 the 'old woman' by whom he received these visions (III vs2) seems to be teaching that there is only one chance for repentance after baptism and that those who use this second chance would be of a lower caste
 - 2) She also seems to teach penance in the same passage, that those who receive this second chance forgiveness must be "afflicted" so that they would "have a true sense in their hearts of what they have done amiss."
 - 3) Also in this section, she also teaches that if they do not gain "this sense in their hearts" through the "affliction" then they "shall not be saved by reason of the hardness of their hearts."

4. Internal Evidence of Inspiration

- a. Some NT writers bear witness to each other
 - 1) James, Peter, and John gave the "right hand of fellowship" to Paul (Gal. 2:9)
 - 2) Peter refers to Paul's writings as 'Scripture' in 2 Pet. 3:16

- 3) Paul quotes from Deuteronomy and the gospel of Luke and refers to both passages together as 'Scripture' 1 Tim. 5:18 with Deut. 25:4 + Lk. 10:7
- b. Some NT authors claim to write the words of God, or teach commands from God.
 - 1) In 1 Thess. 2:13 and 2 Thess. 2:15 Paul reminds the readers of his authority as an apostle of Christ, these verses taken together provide evidence that Paul's writings are indeed the word of God.
 - i. 1 Thess. 2:13 – “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God.”
 - ii. 2 Thess. 2:15 – “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.”
 - 2) In 1 Cor. 14:37-38 Paul states clearly that his writings are a command of the Lord, using language that echoes familiar OT statements by Moses.
 - i. Deut. 4:2 – “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”
 - ii. 1 Cor. 14:37-38 – “If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things that I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”
 - 3) 2 Thess. 3:4-12
 - i. Vs 4 - “...we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command.”
 - ii. Vs 6 - “...now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord...”
 - 4) 2 Pet. 3:1-2 – “I am writing to you...that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles...”
 - 5) 1 John 2:7-8 – “Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning...At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you...”
 - 6) Rev. 1:1-3 claims to be the direct revelation from God
 - i. “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by

sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who read aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it..."

- ii. As mentioned before, Revelation also contains an inscriptional curse at the end, warning the reader not to add to or remove from the book (Rev. 22:18-19)
- c. Uniqueness in content is was also viewed as internal evidence
 - 1) Is the message unique, rather than homily or commentary on other Scripture?
 - 2) Writing that appear to be a rehash of other writings were not canonical
5. Did it enjoy universal acceptance within the churches?
 - a. This is acceptance as divinely inspired text – NOT authorization or ‘canonization’
 - b. It had to be accepted in both the Eastern and Western churches
 - c. The church councils consisted of representatives from the East and West
 - d. The acceptance by the church is also evidence that the letters were widely circulated among the early church, which itself is evidence that the apostles wanted these writings to be preserved.
 - e. If a letter was not widely circulated, that may be evidence that the author did not intend for it to be preserved. This criterion would also apply to a newly discovered text, such as the Didache which was discovered in 1875. (The Didache also contradicts NT doctrine in several significant ways.)
 - f. Most of the NT was universally accepted very early on (1st century), there were only a few books that were ever really disputed.
 - g. In John 10:27 Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” – the test of universal acceptance follows the principle of, “My sheep hear my voice.”

F. History of the New Testament Canon

1. In early lists, Jude was sometimes debated
 - a. This debate was primarily due to his quotation from the *Book of Enoch*
 - b. However, Jude was accepted as a brother of Jesus and James – this makes Jude a close associate with the apostle James
2. The book of Hebrews was also sometimes debated
 - a. The debate was typically focused on its unknown authorship

- b. Some early acceptance was based partially on an assumption of Pauline authorship
 - 1) However, Pauline authorship was also debated very early on
 - 2) Origen, prior to AD254, mentions various theories of authorship and concludes, "But who actually wrote the epistle, only God knows." *Eccl. History*, 6.25.14
- c. Ultimately, acceptance of Hebrews as canonical was due to intrinsic qualities of the book that it was truly God-breathed
- 3. Justin Martyr in *Dialog with Trypho* and *Apology* c 150-160 AD refers to all four gospels as Scripture that is read in church as part of Sunday morning worship
- 4. Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* c. 180 AD cites 22 writings as canonical
 - a. All 4 gospels and Acts
 - b. The 13 Pauline epistles
 - c. 1 Peter
 - d. 1 and 2 John
 - e. Revelation
 - f. Shepherd of Hermas was also referred to as Scripture
 - g. Hebrews is noted, but not given full Scripture status, as was common at this time in the western church of Rome
- 5. Tertullian and the African church also list 22 books as Canon around 200 AD
 - a. This list excludes 2 John and Shepherd of Hermas
 - b. Includes Jude
 - c. Otherwise the same as Irenaeus
- 6. **The Muratorian list** reflects a canon which is not much different than our present canon (c. 170 AD)
 - a. This document was discovered by Antonio Muratori in the Ambrosian Library in Milan and first published c. 1740 AD.
 - b. The list is fragmentary, so Matthew and Mark do not appear, but those gospels were universally accepted – the list refers to Luke as the 3rd gospel and John as the 4th, so Matthew and Mark were undoubtedly included
 - c. Luke is recognized as the author of Acts
 - d. The 13 Pauline epistles are attributed to Paul
 - e. At least 2 epistles of John, perhaps all three (unclear)
 - f. 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation

- g. James and Hebrews are absent
 - h. The Wisdom of Solomon was included
 - i. The Shepherd of Hermas was recommended for private reading, but not for public reading in church
 - 1) “Hermas wrote ‘the Shepherd’ very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair of the church of the city of Rome.”
 - 2) “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.”
 - j. The Apocalypse of Peter is included, but the author also notes that many object to the public use of this book in the Church.
 - k. All Gnostic, Marcionite, and Montanist writings were specifically rejected
 - 1) The Epistle to Laodicea and the Epistle to Alexandria are mentioned as being “forgeries in the name of Paul to further the heresy of maricon and others
 - 2) All writings of Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades who also compsed a new book of psalms for Marcion together with Basilides
7. Origen of Alexandria (c. 240 AD)
- a. Classified books as Undisputed Scripture, Disputed Scripture, and False scripture
 - b. Undisputed Scripture
 - 1) 4 gospels
 - 2) Acts
 - 3) 13 Pauline epistles
 - 4) Hebrews
 - 5) 1 Peter, 1 John and Revelation
 - c. Disputed Scripture (but generally accepted)
 - 1) 2 Peter
 - 2) 2 and 3 John
 - 3) Possibly James and Jude
 - 4) And Possibly Shepherd of Hermas and Barnabas
 - d. False Scripture were the heretical gospels being circulated
 - 1) Gospel according to the Egyptians

- 2) Gospel of The Twelve, Gospel of Basilides, Gospel of Thomas; Gospel of Matthias
 - 3) States specifically that there are only four inspired gospels, those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
- e. In the OT Origen includes 1 and 2 Esdras
8. Eusebius of Caesarea (c 324 AD)
- a. Eusebius speaks of Acknowledged books and Disputed but generally accepted, rejected books, and Heretical books
 - 1) Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 3, 24, and 25 (especially 25)
 - b. Acknowledged:
 - 1) 4 Gospels and Acts
 - 2) 14 Pauline letters (includes Hebrews),
 - 3) 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation (ch 24)
 - c. Disputed but generally accepted
 - 1) James and Jude
 - 2) 2 Peter
 - 3) 2 and 3 John
 - 4) Revelation (mentions some don't accept – ch. 25)
 - d. Disputed but generally rejected
 - 1) Gospel according to the Hebrews
 - 2) Ch. 24 says Shepherd of Hermas is read in some churches
 - e. Rejected as canon (chapter 25)
 - 1) Acts of Paul
 - 2) Shepherd of Hermas
 - 3) Apocalypse of Peter, Gospel of Peter, and Acts of Peter
 - 4) Epistle of Barnabas
 - 5) Didache
 - f. Heretical:
 - 1) Gospel of Peter
 - 2) Gospel of Thomas
 - 3) Gospel of Matthias
 - 4) The Acts of Andrew
 - 5) The Acts of John

- g. Eusebius separates Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon from the OT canon
9. North African church c. 360 AD (sometimes called the Cheltenham Canon after the library holding the list or Mommson Canon after its 19th century discoverer)
- a. Includes all the NT books by name except Hebrews, James, and Jude
 - b. Does not include any NT apocrypha
10. The Thirty-ninth Paschal Letter of Athanasius c. 367 AD contained an exact list of the 27 NT books that we have today.
- a. A 'Paschal Letter' was written by bishops or archbishops to members of the clergy announcing the date on which the following Easter was to be celebrated
 - b. These letters frequently are sermons or homilies
 - c. This letter included a list of books accepted by the eastern church
 - d. Full disclosure: Athanasius included Baruch with Jeremiah in the OT Canon and apparently did not include Esther
 - e. Athanasius did not include any NT apocrypha among the canon
 - f. Athanasius did include a list of books that are worth reading, but **are not canonical**:
 - 1) Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach
 - 2) Esther, Judith, Tobit, the Teaching of the Apostles
 - 3) Shepherd of Hermas
 - g. He also specifically mentions that there are no 'secret writings' that this is an "invention of heretics."
11. The Latin Vulgate was commissioned c. 382 AD and completed mostly by Jerome with NT translation completed by 390 AD and OT completed by about 405 AD
- a. Includes all 27 NT books
 - b. Does not include any NT apocrypha
 - c. Does include Tobit, Judith, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees as 'apocrypha' – of which he said, "Anything outside of these [the 22 canonical books of the OT] must be placed within the Apocrypha.
 - d. Jerome also says in his Prologue to the Books of the Kings in the Vulgate (*Prologus Galeatus* c391 AD) that the Hebrew books traditionally regarded as Holy Scripture by the Jews are canonical and the extra books of the LXX "are not in the Canon."
 - e. Jerome follows the typical custom of western Christians of this era to use 'apocrypha' to say 'non-canonical' but still useful.

- f. In this Prologue Jerome also mentions “the Shepherd” [of Hermas] as not belonging in the Canon
- g. In his letter *De Viris Illustribus sive de Scriptoribus Ecclesiasticis*, ch. 1
 - 1) Jerome affirms 1 and 2 Peter, and the Gospel of Mark as Canon.
 - 2) Jerome states, the Acts of Peter, Gospel of Peter, Preaching of Peter, Apocalypse of Peter, and Judgement of Peter are apocryphal
- h. In his letter to Paulinus, bishop of Nola c394 AD, Jerome lists the 27 books of the NT and says, “I beg of you my dear brother, to live among these books to meditate upon them, to know nothing else, to seek nothing else...”

12. 3rd Council of Carthage c. 397 AD affirmed the same list of 27 NT books

- a. This council represented the western church, Augustine was a participant
- b. Full disclosure: Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Esdras, and Maccabees were included among the OT Canon – it is speculated that these may reflect the influence of Augustine because he sometimes treats these works as canonical in his own writings.
- c. None of the NT apocrypha are included in the list of canonical books

13. Some later books that were always considered Heretical

- a. Gospel of Thomas
 - 1) This book is considered a ‘Gnostic gospel’ and is frequently cited by modern critics as a ‘lost gospel’ – popularized recently by ‘Da Vinci Code’ by Dan Brown
 - 2) Quote from the final paragraph (p.114) – “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’”
- b. Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Matthias, Acts of Andrew, and Acts of John

G. Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical Canon

1. Apocrypha is from Latin and means “hidden” or “unknown”

- a. This word is used to refer to several books of unknown or dubious authorship.
- b. These books are also sometimes called ‘deuterocanonical’ meaning ‘second canon’
 - 1) The Catholic church will call Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and Maccabees ‘Deuterocanonical’ Canon

- 2) The Catholic Church admittedly derives much of its unique doctrine from the deuterocanonical books
- c. From “Defending the Deuterocanonicals” by James Akin accessed on the Catholic Information Network (cin.org)
 - 1) “The deuterocanonicals teach Catholic doctrine, and for this reason they were taken out of the Old Testament by Martin Luther and placed in an appendix without page numbers.”
 - 2) “The reason they were dropped is that they teach Catholic doctrines that the Protestant Reformers chose to reject. Earlier we cited an example where the book of Hebrews [11:35-37] holds up to us an Old Testament example from 2 Maccabees 7 [7:1, 13-14], an incident not to be found anywhere in the Protestant Bible, but easily discoverable in the Catholic Bible. Why would Martin Luther cut out this book when it is so clearly held up as an example to us by the New Testament? Simple: A few chapters later it endorses the practice of praying for the dead so that they may be freed from the consequences of their sins (2 Macc. 12:41-45); in other words, the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Since Luther chose to reject the historic Christian teaching of purgatory (which dates from before the time of Christ, as 2 Maccabees shows), he had to remove that book from the Bible and appendicize it.”
- d. The apocryphal books are mostly thought of as intertestamental books, but there are several New Testament era apocryphal writings as well
2. The typical OT Apocrypha include: (Roman Catholic; Greek and Russian Orthodox)
 - a. Tobit (sometimes called ‘Tobias’)
 - b. Judith
 - c. Additions to the book of Esther
 - d. Wisdom of Solomon (or just ‘Wisdom’)
 - e. Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach)
 - f. Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch chapter 6)
 - g. Additions to the book of Daniel including:
 - 1) The Prayer of Azariah
 - 2) the Song of the Three Jews
 - 3) Susanna
 - 4) Bel and the Dragon
 - h. 1 and 2 Maccabees
 - i. Additional Books in the Eastern Orthodox (Greek and Slavonic) Bibles
 - 1) 1 Esdras (Greek Orthodox only)

- 2) 2 and 3 Esdras (Slavonic Orthodox only)
 - 3) Prayer of Manasseh
 - 4) Psalm 151
 - 5) 3 Maccabees
- j. Additional Books in the Appendix to the Vulgate
- 1) Prayer of Manasseh
- k. Additional Books in the Appendix to the Greek Orthodox Bible
- 1) 4 Maccabees
- l. Other Intertestamental era apocrypha
- 1) Book of Enoch (also called 1 Enoch or Ethiopian Enoch)
 - i. Comprised of 5 sections that seem to be written at different times ranging from around 165 BC (pre-Maccabean) to around 50 BC
 - ii. Authorship is unknown, it is believed that multiple authors are involved, especially if assumptions about dates are correct
 - iii. The full text of the Book of Enoch exists only in the Ethiopian Version, which seems to be a translation of the Greek version, of which only a few fragments exist. Only parts of the early Latin version are extant. It is suspected that the Greek fragments are translations from either Hebrew or Aramaic. Some fragments have been found in Qumran.
 - iv. Enoch was caught up from earth to be with God in Gen. 5:24. The Book of Enoch relates what Enoch learned from his journeys through the heavens and from God in heaven.
 - a) Section one is a vision given to Enoch of the events surrounding Genesis 6:1-8
 - b) Section two consists of visions about the messiah
 - c) Section three is visions of the “luminaries” and astronomy
 - d) Section four is two visions, the first of judgment from the sky, the second an apocalyptic allegory describing the history of man
 - e) Section five is an epistle written by Enoch for later generations
 - 2) Assumption of Moses (or Ascension of Moses)

- i. Is known from a single incomplete 6th century AD Latin manuscript that was discovered in Milan in the mid -1800's and first published in 1861.
 - ii. Mentioned by Athanasius and Origen
 - iii. Based on its content, most scholars date the original work to the early 1st century AD because of some contemporary historical characters described in chapters 6 and 10.
- 3. What did Pre-Christian Judaism believe about the intertestamental deuterocanonical books?
 - a. Pre-Christian Judaism seems to believe that prophecy had ended with Malachi.
 - b. 1 Maccabees 9:23-27, “²³ After the death of Judas, the renegades emerged in all parts of Israel; all the wrongdoers reappeared. ²⁴ In those days a very great famine occurred, and the country went over to their side. ²⁵ Bacchides chose the godless and put them in charge of the country. ²⁶ They made inquiry and searched for the friends of Judas, and brought them to Bacchides, who took vengeance on them. ²⁷ So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.”
 - c. 1 Macc. 4:45-46 and 14:41 both mention waiting for a prophet to appear, who could speak with authority – the implication is that there are no prophets and haven't been for some time.
 - d. The Qumran text *Community Rule* has statements indicate that the community is still awaiting a prophet who spoke with the authority of God (1 QS 9.11)
- 4. Early sources generally did not consider the intertestamental Apocrypha to be Scripture or Prophecy
 - a. The Hebrew Tanakh does not contain any of the Apocrypha
 - b. Josephus, in *Against Apion* 1.41 (Book I, Chapter 8), explains the status of Maccabees and the 'Apocrypha', saying, “From Artaxerxes to our own times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records...”
 - c. Also in *Against Apion* 1:38-42 (Book I Chapter 8) c. AD 97, Josephus claimed that the Jewish canon had been settled by the time of the Persian King Artaxerxes (465-423 BC). (Esther dates to 486-464 BC)
 - 1) This canon consisted of 22 books (corresponding to our 39 books of the OT) that were considered divine by the Jews (Josephus A.A. p609)

- 2) Josephus said this after the assumed dates of composition for all the accepted Apocryphal books and the LXX
- 3) Josephus' statement that the Canon has been established since the time of Artaxerxes undermines the Catholic assertion that the Jews altered their Canon in response to the Christians adopting the 'deuterocanonical' books in their Canon
- d. In AD 170, the bishop of Sardis listed the 38 of the current 39 books of the OT as canon (excluding Esther), but did not include any of the Apocrypha
- e. In the **AD 367 Paschal Letter**, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, listed all of the current NT and OT books except for Esther and **said specifically of the Apocrypha** "these are not indeed included in the Canon but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness." (although, he did include Baruch with Jeremiah)
- f. Jerome included the Apocrypha in his Vulgate translation (c. 404 AD), but Jerome himself said that the Apocrypha were not "books of the canon" but what he called "books of the church" that he considered helpful and useful to believers.
- g. **The Catholic church did not 'canonize' the 'apocrypha' until the Council of Trent c. 1546 AD, in response to Luther and the Reformers**
5. Some extant **LXX** MSS include the Apocrypha
 - a. However, the earliest LXX MSS is c. 350 AD and of Christian origin
 - b. It is historical fact that the LXX was commissioned by Ptolemy Philadelphus around 270 BC and completed by 200 BC
 - c. However, while the LXX is discussed or quoted frequently in early writings, the oldest extant MSS is much later and of Christian origin, making it unclear whether the Apocrypha was part of the original LXX or a later addition by the church
 - d. In the various existing MSS of the LXX, the included apocryphal books vary
 - 1) The Vatican MS does not contain the Maccabees at all, but does include 1 Esdras, which is generally not included by the Catholics today.
 - 2) The Alexandria MS of the 5th c. AD contains 1 Esdras, 3 and 4 Maccabees, and 1 and 2 Clement
 - 3) The inclusion of various texts does not indicate that they are considered canonical, in many cases the Apocryphal books were considered history or devotional, but not regarded as canon (like Jerome and the Vulgate)

6. Complete Lack of use of intertestamental apocrypha in the NT
 - a. According to some counts, the NT quotes the OT at least 295 times, but never from the apocrypha (see discussion of Book of Enoch below)
 - b. Jesus never quotes or referred to them
 - c. The early church did not accept them as canonical
 - d. What about Jude and the *Book of Enoch*?
 - 1) Jude may allude to *The Assumption of Moses* and almost definitely quotes from the *Book of Enoch*
 - 2) Both of these books are generally considered pseudepigraphal books
 - 3) The *Book of Enoch* is considered canon only by the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox and is not part of most LXX versions either
 - 4) The *Assumption of Moses* is not considered canon by any major Jewish, Christian, Catholic, or Orthodox sect
 - 5) Neither of these texts are part of the Jewish canon, even though the *Book of Enoch* was widely known during the intertestamental period (a copy of *Enoch* was found at Qumran)
 - 6) The Assumption of Moses exists only in a single 6th century Latin fragment discovered in the mid 1800's and first published in 1861 – it is possible that it was written to reflect some details in Jude, rather than the other way around.
 - 7) Cf. Jude 14 with Enoch 1:9
7. The complete list of New Testament apocrypha (so-called 'lost books')
 - a. Gospel of Thomas
 - 1) Universally considered heretical by the early church
 - 2) Likely produced in the mid-2nd century AD
 - 3) Quote from the final paragraph (p.114) – “Simon Peter said to them, ‘Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.’ Jesus said, ‘I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’”
 - b. Gospel of Truth, c. late 2nd century
 - 1) Mentioned by Irenaeus, who notes that it differs significantly from the canonical gospels.
 - 2) Not a traditional 'gospel' but more of a meditation on Christian living.

- 3) A copy may have been found at Nag Hammadi, but it is uncertain whether this is the same Gospel of Truth mentioned by Irenaeus.
- c. Gospel of The Twelve, c. mid- 2nd century
 - 1) Mentioned by Origen and Jerome
 - 2) No copies are extant
- d. Gospel of Peter, c. mid-2nd century AD
 - 1) Referred to by Origen and Eusebius, but no part of it is quoted
 - 2) Universally dismissed as heretical
 - 3) A few fragments were discovered in 1886 in Upper Egypt which deal with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - 4) Pilate is exonerated and blame is solely on the Jews, also contains many post-resurrection miracles not recorded in the 4 Gospels
- e. Gospel of Basilides, c. early to mid 2nd century AD
 - 1) Mentioned by Origen, Jerome and a few others
 - 2) The contents are mostly unknown and no fragments are extant
 - 3) Basilides was known as a Gnostic scholar from Alexandria
- f. Gospel of the Egyptians, c. mid-2nd century
 - 1) Quoted a few times by Clement, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius
 - 2) Promoted the particular Gnostic doctrines of the Encratites
 - 3) Has some content similar to Gospel of Thomas
- g. Gospel of the Hebrews, c. mid-2nd century AD
 - 1) All that survives are a few quotes by Clement, Origen, and Jerome
 - 2) Seems to promote Jesus as the son of the Holy Spirit
- h. Gospel of Matthias, c. early to mid-2nd century AD
 - 1) Mentioned by Origen, Eusebius and Jerome
 - 2) No quotes or text known to exist
- i. Traditions of Matthias, c. early to mid-2nd century AD
 - 1) Survives in a few fragmentary quotes from Clement
 - 2) Might be the same as Gospel of Matthias
- j. Preaching of Peter (Kerygma Petri), c. early 2nd century AD
 - 1) Survives in a few fragmentary quotes from Clement and Origen
 - 2) Not much is known about the general character or content
- k. Acts of Andrew, c. mid to late-2nd century AD

- 1) Mentioned first by Eusebius who lists it among the heretical writings
 - 2) Was circulated during the 3rd to 9th century, particularly among the dualistic and ascetic sects, especially the Manicheans and Priscillianists.
- i. Acts of Paul, c. 185-195 AD
- 1) A romance that makes arbitrary use of the canonical Acts and Pauline Epistles
 - 2) Tertullian tell us the author was a cleric who lived in the Roman province of Asia in the western part of Asian Minor and he composed the book with the intent of honoring the Apostle Paul
 - 3) The author was brought up for trial by his peers and convicted of falsifying the facts and dismissed from his office.
- m. Acts of John, c. 150-200 AD
- 1) Purports to give an eyewitness account of the missionary work of the Apostle John in and around Ephesus
 - 2) No complete texts are extant, but large portions exist in Greek and Latin
 - 3) The contents display clear docetic tendencies (Gnostic doctrine that Christ's body was not physical but was like a phantom, pure spiritual and His sufferings were only apparent and not actual.)
 - 4) Claims Jesus was constantly changing shape, sometimes appearing as a small boy or a beautiful man, or bald-headed with a long beard
 - 5) Also contains a story of the Apostles dancing in a circle around Jesus while holding hands as Jesus sings a hymn to the Father.
 - 6) Also contains a story of a sexual encounter between the devout Drusiana and her lover inside a sepulture
 - 7) Also contains the earliest known story of Eucharist for the dead
- n. Epistle to the Laodiceans, c. late 3rd century
- 1) Jerome says, "Some read the Epistle to the Laodiceans, but it is rejected by everyone" – De viris ill. 5
 - 2) Mostly a patchwork of phrases from genuine Pauline Epistles
 - 3) Was included in several Vulgate translations, even making its way into pre-Luther German translations, though it was not generally considered Canon
 - 4) J. B. Lightfoot says this of the so-called Epistle to the Laodiceans, "...for more than 9 centuries this forged epistle hovered about the doors of the sacred Canon, without either finding admission or being peremptorily excluded."

- 5) The Roman Catholic Council of Florence (1439-43) excludes the Epistle to the Laodiceans from its 27-book NT Canon
- o. Epistle of Barnabas, c. 70-135 AD
 - 1) Not an epistle, but more of a theological tract about the relationship between Christianity and Judaism
 - 2) Exhibits a radically anti-Jewish attitude
 - 3) Claims that the Mosaic Law arose from reliance upon an evil angel (9.4)
 - 4) Takes an allegorical approach to OT interpretation
 - p. 1 Clement, c. 95-96 AD
 - 1) Provides a more positive view of the Roman government than seen elsewhere
 - 2) Few manuscripts survive, the first complete text was discovered in 1873
 - q. Didache (The Teaching of the Apostles), c. 70-150 AD approx.
 - 1) Known from references by Athanasius, Didymus and Eusebius
 - 2) First copy of the text was discovered in 1873
 - 3) The origins (Author and location) of the document are a mystery
 - 4) Contains instructions for church order, practice, and leadership
 - 5) Closes with a brief apocalypse
 - r. Shepherd of Hermas, c. mid-2nd century AD
 - 1) Sometimes referred to simply as "The Shepherd"
 - 2) An autobiographical account of a man named Hermas who is visited by an angelic shepherd
 - 3) According to the Muratorian List (c170AD) - "Hermas wrote 'the Shepherd' very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair of the church of the city of Rome."
 - 4) Produced around the middle of the 2nd century
 - 5) Authorship and date are unknown
 - 6) Only 3 incomplete Greek manuscripts and some fragments have been discovered, the earliest Greek being codex Sinaiticus c mid-4th century AD
 - s. Apocalypse of Peter, c. 135 AD approx.
 - 1) Best known for its vivid descriptions of the punishments of hell.
 - 2) Unlike Revelation, this book does not focus on Jesus as judge and redeemer, but focuses on the after-life, describing different classes of sinners, on the punishment of the evil and salvation of the righteous.

3) Full text dated to about the 9th century were discovered in 1886 in cemetery A at al-Hawawis in the desert necropolis of Akhmim, Egypt.

8. Nag Hammadi library was discovered in 1945, it is a collection of Gnostic Gospels buried in a sealed jar and discovered near the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi.