

- *I & II Timothy, Titus* are purportedly Pauline, but the style and concerns are obviously from a later church concerned with authority and order.
- *Revelation* has long been debated, in or out of the canon, but maybe Martin Luther said it best: “Leave it in, just don’t take it too seriously—nobody knows what this book is about and they all teach it wrong.”

## History of the Text

The texts we have today are passed down through many generations. In spite of the inerrantists’ insistence, we no longer have the original manuscripts that were supposedly the perfect Word of God.

- The texts were hand-written and passed around in Greek by amateurs under cover for centuries.
- Once Christianity became the official religion, having consistency was important so the widely-differing texts were assembled and crafted into a better standard in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.
- The Vulgate became the standard Latin text in 383.
- In 1516 a new Greek version was made by Erasmus, using six manuscripts dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> century (*Textus Receptus*). This flawed text was the basis for all English translations through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Now we use critical editions drawing from 5,800 Greek, 10,000 Latin, and 9,300 other language manuscripts dating between 125-1500 CE.
- *There are more variations in the manuscripts than there are words in the entire text.*

### Resources:

- *The Old Testament* by Michael D. Coogan
- *Misquoting Jesus* by Bart Ehrman

# The BIBLE

## *Origins of a Human Library*

Session 3: The Christian Bible

*John Elliott Lein — December 23, 2018*

## The Christian Canon

There are three main canons, with variations, among Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox.

### Roman Catholic Canon

From the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE to now, the Western Catholic Church has used a rearranged version of the Hebrew Canon, plus several Deuterocanonical books (“Apocrypha”), making 73 books in Old and New Testaments:

- **The Pentateuch:** first five books.
- **The History:** Joshua through Kings; moved Chronicles and Ruth into chronological order by setting.
- **Poetry and Wisdom:** Job through Sirach.
- **The Prophets:** in the most-significant theological change, the prophets are seen as predicting Jesus so are moved to the end of the Old Testament.
- *The Apocrypha* are interspersed throughout.

### Orthodox Canon(s)

- There are variations amongst the different national churches, but in general they follow the Catholic pattern with five or more Apocryphal books added.
- *1 and 2 Esdras, Prayer of Mannasseh, Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees* (4 Maccabees as an appendix).

## Protestant Canon

There are two primary variations:

- **Mainline Protestants:** follow Luther's reordering to place all Apocryphal books between the Old and New Testaments, still with 73 books.
- **Evangelicals:** Eliminate the Apocryphal books entirely, ending with 66 books in total.

## Authorship and Canonization

### The Apocrypha

The Deuterocanonical books were written in Greek (not Hebrew) between 300 BCE and 100 BCE. They were used as Scripture by some Jewish communities in the diaspora, and the Christians picked up that practice before the official Jewish canon excluded them (around 100 CE).

Martin Luther first moved them to a separate section of the canon, between Old and New Testaments, in his translation in 1534. Later in the 1850's, as the Bible wars heated up, conservatives removed them entirely from their editions of the canon.

### Authorship of the New Testament

Most of the books are anonymous though have traditional names attached to them. They were all written between 50 and 120 CE.

### The Pauline Epistles

The Apostle Paul was converted in a dramatic scene about 5 years after the crucifixion. He then spent 14 years studying in Damascus before spending the rest of his life as a traveling teacher and church-founder. He wrote letters to his young congregations during those later years, and those

we have today are the earliest part of the New Testament:

- *Galatians and I-II Thessalonians:* Earliest letters.
- *I & II Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon:* Core letters, some edits/additions from church later.
- *Romans:* Paul's longest and most detailed letter, written to a church divided over authority: should Jews or Gentiles be in charge of the Roman church?
- *Colossians:* His last letter we have, before he was likely executed in Rome around 67 CE.

### The Gospels

- *Gospel of Mark:* Written during or shortly after the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, this book is dark, short, and intense. Used as basis for Matthew and Luke.
- *Gospel of Matthew:* Written a decade after Mark for a Jewish audience familiar with the Old Testament and practices in Israel.
- *Gospel of Luke/Acts:* Two-part expansion (covering the early church), written around the time of Matthew for a Gentile audience outside Israel.
- *Gospel of John:* A theological rather than historical text, this product of a unique Christian community a decade or two after the other gospels stands alone.

### The Rest

The remaining books include letters attributed to Paul but determined to be from later dates, a few anonymous texts, and the apocalyptic Revelation:

- *James* was nearly cut by Martin Luther as works-forged heresy.
- *Hebrews* has always been a little suspect due to style, content, and anonymous nature.
- *The Epistles of John* are late works often grouped with the Gospel of John
- *I & II Peter, Jude* are very late books.