

# The Bible: What it is and How we got it

RCF Academy

Lesson 8: New Testament Canon pt. 2

# Disputes

- 5 Disputed books
  - James
    - Disputed for lack of explicit quotes,
    - questionable authorship,
  - Jude
    - Disputed for use of pseudepigraphal writings
    - authorship
  - 2 Peter
    - Disputed for different linguistic style than 1 Peter
  - 2&3 John
    - Lack of quotation
    - authorship

# Disputes

- Marcion
  - First person in history to organize a New Testament canon
  - Born in 100 AD in Asia Minor. Father was in Shipbuilding and an Elder of his church
  - Rejected Old testament.
    - Believed in two Gods, angry god of Old, loving god of the New
  - Canon consisted of only
    - Gospel
      - Redacted version of Luke
    - Apostle
      - Paul's 10 Epistles (No pastoral letters)

# Disputes

- Lists

- Serapion of Antioch

- “When, indeed, I came to see you, I supposed that all were in accord with the orthodox faith; and, although I had not read through the Gospel inscribed with the name of Peter which was brought forward by them, I said: If this is the only thing which threatens to produce ill-feeling among you, let it be read. But, now that I have learnt from what has been told me that their mind was secretly cherishing some heresy, I will make all haste to come to you again...we were able to read it through; and while we found most of its contents to agree with the orthodox account of the Saviour, we found some things inconsistent with that, and these we have set down below for your inspection.”

- Mix of books on lists. William Horbury

- “ that there was a widespread practice in the church of first listing the received books of both the Old and New Testaments and then, at the end, mentioning the “disputed” books from both Testaments that were useful for the church but not necessarily regarded as canonical.”

# Lists

- Muratorian Fragment

- Ludovico Antonio Muratori made a list from an eight century document.
- Original writing dated to around second century in Latin
  - “The third book of the gospel: according to **Luke**...The fourth gospel is by **John**, on of the disciples...The **Acts** of all the apostles have been written in one book...As for the letters of Paul...First of all he wrote to the **Corinthians**...then to the **Galatians**...to the **Romans** he write at greater length...to the **Ephesians**...to the **Philippians**...to the **Colossians**...to the **Thessalonians**...But although the **message is repeated to the Corinthians and Thessalonians**...for John also writes to the seven churches in the Apocalypse, yet speaks to all...Moreover Paul writes one letter to **Philemon**, one to **Titus** and two to **Timothy**...but the letter of **Jude** and the **two superscribed with the name of John are accepted in the catholic church**...**Wisdom** also, written by Solomon’s friend in his honor...The **Apocalypse of John** we also receive, and that of **Peter**, which some of our people will not have will not have to be read in church...”

# Lists

- The Clermont List
  - Sixth century Codex Clermontanus. Original writing dates to around 300 AD in Alexandria
  - Contains
    - Four Gospels
      - Matthew, John, Mark, Luke
    - Epistles to Paul
      - Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, Colossians, Philemon
    - General
      - 1&2 Peter, James, 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation, Acts of Apostles
    - Others
      - Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Acts of Paul, Revelation of Peter

# Lists

- The Cheltenham List
  - Fourth Century Latin list originating in North Africa
  - Contains
    - The Four Gospels
      - Matthew, Mark, John, Luke
    - Epistles of Paul - 13 in number
    - Acts of Apostles
    - Apocalypse
    - Epistles of John, 3, one only
    - Epistles of Peter, 2 one only

# Lists

- Jerome

- “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Lord’s team of four, the true cherubim...the apostle Paul writes to seven churches (for the eighth such letter, that to the Hebrews, is placed outside the number by most); he instructs Timothy and Titus; he intercedes with Philemon for his runaway slave...the Acts of the Apostles...The apostles James, Peter, John and Jude produced seven epistles both mystical and concise...the Apocalypse of John...”

- Athanasius

- This list is often looked at as the first actual list that specifies all 27 books together without other additions.

- Augustine

- Affirmed all 27 canonical books
- “Among the canonical scriptures he [ the interpreter of the sacred writings] will judge according to the following standard; to prefer those that are received by all the catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Again, among those which are not received by all, he will prefer such as are sanctioned by the greater number of churches and by those of greater authority to such as held by the smaller number and by those of less authority. If, however, he finds that some books are held by the greater number of churches, and others by the churches of greater authority (although this is not a very likely thing to happen), I think that in such a case the authority on the two sides is to be considered equal.”



# Councils

- **Eccumenical Council of Nicea (325AD)**
  - Dealt with Arianism, which believed Jesus and the Father were different in substance
    - \*\*\*Arius believed that there was a time that Jesus did not exist\*\*\*
  - Set precedence for future councils
  - DID NOT DISCUSS THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE
- **Regional Synod of Laodicea (364)**
  - Held in Asia Minor after Emperor Julian died
  - Laid down a list of canons for their local churches to follow
  - 59th canon
    - “No psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments.”
  - 60th canon - disputed over its authenticity
    - Lists 26 books - excludes Revelation

# Councils

- Regional Synod of Hippo (393)

- One of several Synods that met in Hippo, Africa.
- Laid out the canon
  - “And further it was resolved that nothing should be read in church under the name of the divine scriptures except the canonical writings. The canonical writings, then, are these:... Of the New Testament:
  - The four books of the gospels, the one book of the Acts of the Apostles, the thirteen epistles of the apostle Paul, the one to the Hebrews, by the same, two of the apostle Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Jude, John’s Apocalypse-one book.

- Regional Synod of Carthage (397)

- One of several Synods that met between the 3rd and 5th century
- Met in 397 only to affirm what Hippo (393) had already affirmed

# Gnostic Writings, “Lost Gospel” etc...

- Various texts have been produced throughout the centuries claiming authority, but not being accepted.
- Defeaters of validity
  - Gnostic “Gospels” only have 17 manuscripts that contain them. Gospel of Thomas only has three manuscripts.
  - Lack of widespread usage
    - “Since most of these writings were discovered in Egypt, particularly the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, this raises the question of whether we can expect that this distribution of texts accurately reflects their broad Christian use, or whether it just reflects the fortuitous (or random) preservation of texts in Egypt.”

# Gnostic Writings, “Lost Gospel” etc...

- Defeaters of validity
  - Lack of divine qualities
    - Absurd embellishments
      - “[34] But early when the Sabbath was dawning, a crowd came from Jerusalem and the surrounding area in order that they might see the sealed tomb.[35] But in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers were safeguarding it two by two in every watch, there was a loud voice in heaven; [36] and they saw that the heavens were opened and that two males who had much radiance had come down from there and come near the sepulcher. [37] But that stone which had been thrust against the door, having rolled by itself, went a distance off the side; and the sepulcher opened, and both the young men entered. [38] And so those soldiers, having seen, awakened the centurion and the elders (for they too were present, safeguarding). [39] And while they were relating what they had seen, again they see three males who have come out from they sepulcher, with the two supporting the other one, and a cross following them, [40] and the head of the two reaching unto heaven, but that of the one being led out by a hand by them going beyond the heavens. [41] And they were hearing a voice from the heavens saying, 'Have you made proclamation to the fallen-asleep?' [42] And an obeisance was heard from the cross, 'Yes.'”
    - Doctrine contrary to OT orthodoxy
      - 114. Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven."