

## Church History

### Lesson 3: The Spread & Survival of Christianity (Part 2) "Identity Theft: 150-313AD"

---

#### THE ANCIENT FOUNDATIONAL CHALLENGE

---

The age of the Apologists (150-313AD) was a time in which the church faced the issue of spiritual identity theft. The rise of cults who used the same words as true Christians but gave new meanings to those words caused great concern. In fact, the church was forced to fight a war on seven fronts to survive:

1. False Bible Books
2. False Christians & False Churches
3. False Sign Gifts & False Revelations
4. False Gospel
5. False History
6. False Help
7. False Religions

---

#### THE MODERN POPULAR CHALLENGE

---

##### 1. The Jesus Seminar, the Gnostic Gospels & The Da Vinci Code

##### 2. Assertions of Dan Brown

- A. Constantine "commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ's human traits and embellished those gospels that made Him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned."
- B. "Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status four centuries after Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His [Jesus'] life as a mortal man. To rewrite the history books, Constantine knew he would need a bold stroke. From this sprang the most profound moment in Christian history." (emphasis in *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 234).
- C. The Claim: Jesus was made divine by the fourth century church by those who won an ecclesiastical fight at the council of Nicea in AD 325 (pp. 231-35).
- D. Christ as Messiah was critical to the functioning of Church and state. Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power." It was by a "relatively close vote" at that council that Jesus was made Son of God."
- E. The modern Bible "was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda—to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use His influence to solidify their own power base."
- F. The claim continues that Nag Hammadi and the gospels found there show that a more diverse Christianity existed than people think in the early period.

### 3. The Truth

- A. The New Testament was completed from 45-95 A.D.
- B. The New Testament is inspired by God and is without error in presenting the life of Jesus Christ
- C. The Early Church (95-325 A.D.) believed in the authority and inspiration of the 27 books of the New Testament and the deity of Jesus Christ
- D. Constantine merely commissioned the copying of the existent NT not the writing of new books. 50 copies were made of which we probably have two.
- E. The Council of Nicea only recognized what the church always believed...that Jesus Christ is almighty God come in human flesh.
- F. The "vote" at Nicea was not close: 300 recognized the deity of Christ, 2 did not.
- G. The "Gnostic gospels" were written long after the inspired Gospels in an attempt to undermine Biblical Christianity and promote a religious philosophy called Gnosticism. The Gnostic gospels were written between 140-350 A.D.

---

#### HOW WAS THE BIBLE PUT TOGETHER? (BASIC CONSIDERATIONS)

---

How do we know that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the only writings that should be included in Scripture? What about the Apocrypha, or the Gnostic gospels? Why shouldn't they be included?

The Answer Lies In The Idea Of

**CANONICITY.**

#### **The Basic Idea**

Canon comes from Greek and Hebrew words that mean a measuring rod, which was metaphorically applied to signify a standard. When the term is applied to the Scriptures we mean "what books meet the standard for inclusion in the Bible" or better yet, "which books are authoritative in themselves and are thus canonical".

So, canonicity refers to the normative or authoritative books inspired by God for inclusion in Holy Scripture. Canonicity is determined by God. It is not the antiquity, authenticity, or religious community that makes a book canonical or authoritative. A book is valuable because it is canonical, and not canonical because it is or was considered valuable. Its authority is established by God and merely discovered by God's people.

### **Definition of Canonicity**

The distinction between God's determination and human discovery is essential to the correct view of canonicity, and should be drawn carefully:

### **The Authority Relationship Between Church and Canon: (Antique Roadshow)**

<b>Incorrect View</b>	<b>Biblical View</b>
The church is determiner of the canon.	The church is discoverer of the canon.
The church is mother of the canon.	The church is child of the canon.
The church is magistrate of the canon.	The church is minister of the canon.
The church is regulator of the canon.	The church is recognizer of the canon.
The church is judge of the canon.	The church is witness of the canon.
The church is master of the canon.	The church is servant of the canon.

### **Discovering Canonicity**

Several inadequate views of what that standard should be have been offered, such as age, agreement with the Torah if it was written in Hebrew, religious value, and Christian usage. But each of these makes a common mistake; they confuse God's determination of what is Scripture with man's recognition of those writings. The bottom line is that whatever God inspired is Scripture and what He did not inspire is not. When the Holy Spirit moved a man of God to write, that writing became, not only inspired, but canonical (authoritative). God has already decided what should be included; our problem is knowing how to discover what writings God has inspired.

1. Was It Written By An Apostle Or A Member Of The Apostolic Community?
2. Was He Confirmed By An Act Of God?
3. Does It Tell The Truth About God?
4. Does It Have The Power Of God?
5. Was It Accepted By The People Of God?

## 10 Facts About The New Testament Canon

- #1: "The New Testament Books are the Earliest Christian Writings We Possess"
  - #2: "Apocryphal Writings are All Written in the Second Century or Later"
  - #3: "The New Testament Books Are Unique Because They Are Apostolic Books"
  - #4: "Some NT Writers Quote Other NT Writers as Scripture"
  - #5: "The Four Gospels are Well Established by the End of the Second Century"
  - #6: "At the End of the Second Century, the Muratorian Fragment lists 22 of our 27 NT books"
  - #7: "Early Christians Often Used Non-Canonical Writings"
  - #8: "The NT Canon Was Not Decided at Nicea—Nor Any Other Church Council"
  - #9: "Christians Did Disagree about the Canonicity of Some NT Books"
  - #10 "Early Christians Believed that Canonical Books were Self-Authenticating."
- Michael Kruger

## THE NAPKIN DEFENSE

### Inspiration

#### Formal Canon: Authoritative

##### The Testimony of Jesus

- Affirmation of the OT Canon
- Promise of the NT
- Selection of the Authors

##### The Testimony of Paul

- Statement on the Product of Inspiration
- Claim of Authority
- Affirmation of Luke's Gospel as Inspired
- Command to Use His Writings

##### The Testimony of Peter

- Statement on the Process of Inspiration
- Claim of Eyewitness Authority
- Affirmation of Paul's Writing's as Inspired

### Recognition

#### Functional Canon: Transformative

##### The Testimony of the Fathers

- Clement
- Ignatius
- Polycarp
- Origen
- Irenaeus
- Hippolytus
- Justin Martyr
- Tertullian
- Athanasius
- Eusebius

##### The Testimony of the Manuscripts

- P35
- Chester Beatty
- U of Michigan
- Codex Sinaiticus & Vaticanus

### Affirmation

#### Final Canon: Collective

##### The Testimony of the Lists

- Muratorian
- Irenaeus
- Hippolytus

##### The Testimony of the Creeds

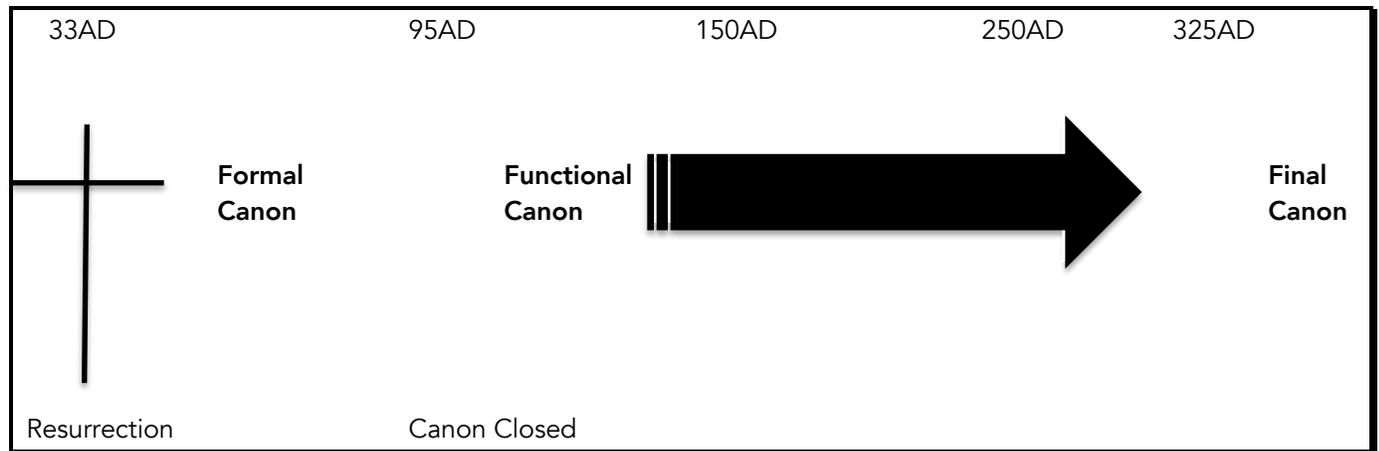
- Nicene
- Athanasian
- 457

##### The Testimony of the Heretics

- Marcion
- Mani

##### The Testimony of the Church's First Historian

- Eusebius
- Jerome



## Authoritative-Ontological-Formal Canon (33-95AD)

## A. The Testimony of Jesus

## A. Affirmation of the OT Canon

**Unity (Luke 24:27,44-47)**

27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

**Authority (Matthew 22:42-45)**

42 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They \*said to Him, "The son of David." 43 He \*said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying,

44 'The Lord said to my Lord,  
"Sit at My right hand,

Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet"?"

45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" 46 No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

**Reliability (Matthew 26:53-54)**

53 Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

**Sufficiency (Luke 16:31)**

31 But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'

**Indestructability (Matthew 5:17-18)**

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

### **Historicity (Matthew 12:40)**

40 for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

### **Facticity (Matthew 19:2-5)**

3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?"

### **Inerrancy (Matthew 22:29; John 3:12; 17:17)**

29 But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God.

### **▪ Jesus Promised the New Testament/His Ministry Anticipated It Jesus Hand-Picked Men To Continue His Teaching (Mark 3:14)**

And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach. (Mark 3:14 ESV)

### **The Holy Spirit Would Provide New Revelation and Remind the Apostles of All That Jesus Said. (John 14:25-26)**

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But 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 that I said to you.

### **The Apostles, As Chosen, Sent, Eyewitnesses Continued to Do And To Teach What Jesus Began to Do And To Teach. (Acts 1:1-8)**

1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

### **The Apostles Doctrine Is The Authoritative Teaching of The Church (Acts 2:42)**

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

### **The Apostles Teaching Is The Foundation of The Church (Ephesians 2:20)**

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

### **There Was an Old Testament Precedent for Written Scripture**

Since the written Scripture (Old Testament) had looked forward to its fulfillment in the Messiah and in the New Covenant it makes perfect sense that the Lord would provide a written Scripture for the New Covenant.

### **There Was Unfinished Revelation**

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus plainly said that further revelation was to come.

**John 16:12**

I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

### **The Apostles Had The Same Authority As Jesus (Matthew 10:14-15; John 13:20; Luke 10:16)**

And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

"I tell you the solemn truth, whoever accepts the one I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.

### **The Apostles Would Be Guided into All Truth Including Eschatological Truth (John 16:13-14)**

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."

## B. The Testimony of Paul

- Statement on the Product of Inspiration

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

- Claim of Authority

### 1 Corinthians 14:37

If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.

### 1 Thessalonians 2:13

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

- Affirmation of Luke's Gospel as Inspired

"For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 1 Timothy 5:18

## C. The Testimony of Peter

- Statement on the Process of Inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21)

"20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

- Claim of Eyewitness Authority (2 Peter 1:16-19)

"16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"-- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

- **Affirmation of Paul's Writing's as Inspired (2 Peter 3:15-16)**

"15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

## RECOGNITION

### Transformative-Functional Canon (95-350AD)

#### A. The Testimony of the Fathers

- **The Apostolic Fathers**

##### **Clement of Rome (about A.D. 95)**

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you. (The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, Chapter XLVII (Early Church Fathers Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I)

"Christ is from God, the Apostles are from Christ." - Clement, recognizing he was not one of the Apostles. Written in 95 AD right on the heels of John.

##### **Ignatius**

" I do not, as Peter and Paul, issue commandments, they were Apostles, I am but a condemned man."

##### **Polycarp ( A.D. 69-155)**

These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because ye have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive.

And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, "is the mother of us all." For if any one be inwardly possessed of these graces, he hath fulfilled the command of righteousness, since he that hath love is far from all sin. (The Apostolic Fathers, the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, Chapter III (Early Church Fathers Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume I);

- **The Apologists**

**Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202)**

We have learned from none others the plan of salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia. ANF, Volume 1, Against Heresies 3.1.1. (Ibid., p. 17)

**Tertullian (A.D. 150-220)**

One Lord God does she [i.e. the Church] acknowledge, the Creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator; and the Resurrection of the flesh; the law and the prophets she unites in one volume with the writings of evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks her faith. ANF, Volume III, The Prescription Against Heresies, Chapter 36. (Ibid., pp. 32, 34)

**Origen (approx. A.D. 240)**

There is I know a Gospel which is called "according to Thomas," and one "according to Matthias," and there are many others which we read, lest we should seem to be unacquainted with any point for the sake of those who think they possess some valuable knowledge if they are acquainted with them. But in all these we approve nothing else but that which the Church approves, that is, four Gospels only as proper to be received.

- **Other Ante-Nicene/Nicene Fathers**

**Eusebius (about A.D. 324)**

From his Ecclesiastical History, iii. 25.  
At this point it seems appropriate to summarize the writings of the New Testament which have already been mentioned. In the first place must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels, which are followed by the book of the Acts of the Apostles. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul [of Paul the fourteen epistles] commonly received are at once manifest and clear.

## B. The Testimony of the Manuscripts

- **Chester Beatty Collection**



The Permanent display of the Pauline Letters, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

### **Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus II**

This significant New Testament papyrus in the Chester Beatty collection contains the texts of the letters of St. Paul, dating from around the years AD 180-200. It is one of the great treasures to survive from the early Christian church.

Paul's letters are among the earliest surviving Christian texts and are a unique witness to the spread of Christianity and the Gospels. The early date of the Chester Beatty codex and the fact that it contains almost the complete text of the letters of Paul, makes this codex extremely important for the study of the text of Paul's letters. The entire codex would have consisted of nearly 208 pages, of which only 172 survive; 112 in Dublin and 60 in the library of the University of Michigan.

- **Codex Sinaiticus & Vaticanus**

Codex Sinaiticus, also known as "Aleph" (the Hebrew letter א), was found by Count Tischendorf in 1859 at the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. It is a large codex, with 400 pages (or leaves) comprising about half of the Old Testament in the Septuagint version and the full New Testament. It has been dated to the second half of the 4th century.

Codex Vaticanus, also known as "B," was found in the Vatican library. It is comprised of 759 leaves and has almost all of the Old and New Testaments. It is dated to the middle of the 4th century.

## Collective-Exclusive

## A. The Testimony of the Lists

- Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170)

. . . at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed them in his narrative. The **third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke**...The **fourth of the Gospels is that of John**, one of the disciples.

What marvel is it then, if **John** so consistently mentions these particular points also **in his epistles**, saying about himself, What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you? For in this way he professes himself to be not only an **eye-witness and hearer, but also a writer** of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order. Moreover, **the acts of all the apostles were written in one book**. For "Most excellent Theophilus" **Luke** compiled the individual events that took place in his presence, as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter as well as the departure of Paul from the city when he journeyed to Spain.

As for the **epistles of Paul**, they themselves make clear to those desiring to understand, which ones they are, from what place, or for what reason they were sent. First of all, to the **Corinthians**, prohibiting their heretical schisms; next, to the **Galatians**, against circumcision; then to the **Romans** he wrote at length, explaining the plan of the Scriptures, and also that Christ is their principle. It is necessary for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the **Corinthians** first, to the **Ephesians** second, to the **Philippians** third, to the **Colossians** fourth, to the **Galatians** fifth, to the **Thessalonians** sixth, to the **Romans** seventh.

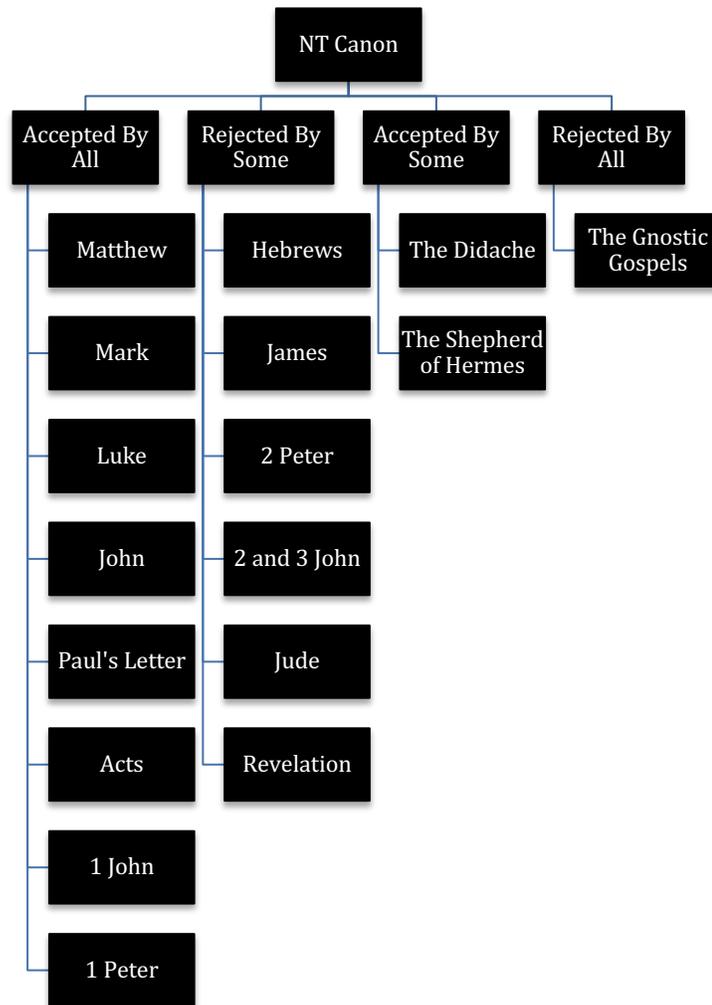
It is true that he writes **once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians** for the sake of admonition, yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth. For **John** also **in the Apocalypse**, though he writes to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to all. Paul also wrote out of affection and love one to **Philemon**, one to **Titus**, and **two to Timothy**; and **these are held sacred in the esteem of the Church catholic for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline**.

There is current also an epistle to the Laodiceans, and another to the Alexandrians, both **forged** in Paul's name to further the heresy of **Marcion**, and several others which cannot be received into the catholic Church.

For it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey. Moreover, **the epistle of Jude** and **two bearing the name of John** are **counted in the catholic Church**; and the **book of Wisdom**, written by the friends of Solomon in his honour. We receive only the **apocalypses of John and Peter**, **though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church**. But Hermas wrote "The Shepherd" very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among **the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among the Apostles, for it is after their time**. **But we accept nothing whatever of** Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades, who also composed a new book of psalms for Marcion, together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians . . .

## B. The Testimony of the Heretics

- Marcion



#### Books Questioned By Some

**Hebrews**—Because the author is unknown. Accepted as having apostolic authority, if not apostolic authorship.

**James**—Because of perceived conflict with Paul's teaching about salvation by faith alone. Conflict resolved by seeing works as an outgrowth of real faith.

**2 Peter**—Because the style differs from 1 Peter. But Peter used a scribe to write **1 Peter** (see 5:12), who may have helped him smooth out his Greek.

**2 and 3 John**—Because author is called "elder," not apostle. However, Peter called himself an elder too (1 Peter 5:1). They are cited in the earliest lists of canon.

**Jude**—Because he refers to the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses. He does not call them Scripture, though, much like Paul quoting pagan poets (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). It had wide early acceptance.

**Revelation**—Because it teaches a thousand-year reign of Christ, which was taught by a certain cult. It was accepted by the earliest church fathers, though.

