

HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO BE

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- Class 1 (3 Nov) - The formation of the Old Testament
- Class 2 (10 Nov) - Old Testament Apocrypha
- Class 3 (17 Nov) - The formation of the New Testament
- Class 4 (8 Dec) - New Testament Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha
- Class 5 (22 Dec) - Gospels False and True

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CLASS 1: THE FORMATION OF THE OT

1. General Dating

- Majority written 1000-400 BC
- Voice of prophecy stilled (Intertestamental Period)
- Resumption with John the Baptist
- Not to say that the Jews stopped writing (Class 2)

2. Growth of Tanakh

- Torah (Law/Instruction)
- Nevi'im (Prophets)
- Kethuvim (Writings)
- TaNaKh (acronym)
- Samaritan canon: Note that this group accepted only the Torah (slightly modified)

3. Expansion of Torah, Nevi'im, and Kethuvim: a few illustrations

- Torah: Exodus to Deuteronomy; final version in Babylon
- Nevi'im: Isa 8; Jer 36
- Kethuvim: Psalter; Proverbs

4. Incompleteness of OT

- Covenant entails writing (Jer 31)
- Hebrew OT ends in suspense: Chronicles (new beginning under Cyrus)
- Greek OT ends in suspense: Malachi (herald preceding coming of Lord)
- Second Moses (Deut 18) entails further scripture

CLASS 2: OT APOCRYPHA

- Bulk of OT written 1000-400 BC.
- Nucleus of Torah-Nevi'im-Kethuvim growing at macro and micro levels.
- Incompleteness of OT
 - Covenant entails writing (Jer 31)
 - OT ends in suspense (Heb / Gk versions)
 - Messiah still hasn't come!

2. Meaning of Apocrypha

- *Apocryphon* = hidden thing; *apocrypha* = hidden things
- Normal sense: non-canonical (not included in the canon, or rule, of the Bible)
- Doesn't necessarily imply no one knew about them, or that they were suppressed, or that there was a conspiracy!

3. Intertestamental Period

- The Jews continued writing
- Panorama of extra books
 - Historical
 - 1-2 Maccabees (also 3-4 Maccabees)
 - 1-2 Esdras
 - Folk tale
 - Judith
 - Tobit
 - Wisdom literature
 - Wisdom of Solomon
 - Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)
 - Additions to Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah. Also Psalm 151
- Highly useful if you want to know the flow of biblical history
- See chapter 15 in *A Quick Overview of the Bible*

4. Apocryphal excerpts

- Excerpts from *AQOB* and article at website
- Article: www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0110-apocrypha-second-thoughts/

5. Conclusion

- The Apocrypha fill in the gaps in Jewish history and thought, between the close of the OT canon and the era of the NT.
- The Apocrypha are useful to read, though not necessarily inspired.
- Whereas the OT came to be over the span of nearly a millennium (with parts of the Torah from the 13th century), the NT came to be over the course of only 50 years! And that's where we'll turn our attention next week.

CLASS 3: NT FORMATION

Introduction

- > OT process over period of centuries. *Note on the Samaritan Canon*
- > More books written between the testaments. *Note on the Ethiopic 1 Enoch.*
- > Yet OT spoke of a new covenant, a New Testament
- Read article on Apocrypha (www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0110-apocrypha-second-thoughts/)!
- Four phases in process of canonization
- This class: canonical NT; next class: non-canonical (apocryphal) works

I. Dictation

- amanuensis

- explains differences in style
- multiple copies?
- local issues and needs
- letters before gospels (generally)

II. Circulation & Exchange

- Ephesians 1, Revelation 1, Colossians 4
- Move from particular to the general (normative)
- Exchange of oral sources, reminiscences (consider Polycarp of Smyrna), apostolic documents, and other written pieces.

III. Collection

- challenge of Marcion (140s) (shrink) 10 Pauline + Lk
- Tatian's Diatessaron – from 4 gospels to one (c.170)
- challenge of Gnostics (major 2nd century heresy)
- Justin Martyr (c.140) – “Memoirs of Apostles”
- Irenaeus (c.170) – fourfold gospel
- Muratorian Canon (c.180)
- collection of Paul's letters p₄₆
- Origen (c.220) – excluded James 2 Pet 2-3 Jn
- More on additional writings of 2nd and 3rd century next class
- Exclusion: 2 types: Removal v. not being admitted. The non-canonical documents were of the 2nd type.
- Codex (suggests a canon)

IV. Ratification

- Ratification is not the same as production
- Viewpoint of Eusebius, church historian at court of Constantine
- 4th C councils
- > Nicaea (325): Constantine commissions 50 Bibles (?) for chs of Constantinople. No canon determined.
- > Laodicea (363): not Rev
- > Athanasius (367): Paschal letter
- > Carthage (397)
- > Some in E slow to accept Rev
- Stimulated by teachings and writings of heretics.
- Apostolicity: consistency with apostolic message (not directly related to authorship)

Conclusion

- Like OT the NT came into being gradually –
- Not over the course of centuries, but in decades.
- More will be written, though unlike the OT apoc, the NT apoc would never be regarded as scripture.

CLASS 4: NT APOCRYPHA & PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

Why timely

- 1945 discovery
- Appeal to individualism
- Effect of feminism (some women in special relationship to Jesus)
- Historical Jesus movement

- Fracturing of the Christian church

Definitions

- *apocrypha* -- not necessarily dangerous or deviant
- *pseudepigrapha* – false attribution
- *patristics* – church fathers
- *canon* – measure or rule
- Gnosticism – *gnosis* = knowledge
 - > Valentinian & Sethian
 - > Salvation is liberation from the material world
 - > Humans are hylic, psychic, or pneumatic
 - > salvation for very few (3 out of 30,000 who die daily!)
- *codex* – writings in book form
- *papyrus* – reed growing by Nile and converted into writing material
- *manuscript* – hand-written document

2nd century writings

- Patristics: 1 Clement, Ignatius, apologists... These are not the subject of our class, though rich stuff
- Non-Gnostic writings
 - > attempt to fill in the gaps
 - > assume canonical writings

Later centuries

- Medieval era: legends pertaining to secondary characters
 - > Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate, c.500), on descent of Christ to Hades
 - > History of Joseph the Carpenter and the Arabic Infancy Gospel (c.500)
 - Manuscripts many centuries after canonical writings
 - Gnostic writings
 - > 47 writings discovered at Nag Hammadi near a Pachomian monastery
 - > no link with history of Israel
 - > attempt to fill in the gaps
 - > Jesus reveals knowledge, post-resurrection
 - > salvation from this world – salvation by knowledge
 - > dualistic rejection of the body
 - Overview of NT Apocrypha
 - > fragmentary gospels (e.g. Egerton papyrus, Gospel of Peter— resurrection)
 - > gnostic "gospels" (Thomas, Mary, Philip [where Jesus kisses Mary Magdalene on the mouth, Bartholomew])
- Thomas: quotes over half of NT documents
 ARTICLE: <http://www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0210-the-gospel-of-thomas/>
 Secret sayings (1), asceticism (27,56), celibacy (23,49,106), detachment (42). Other Gnostic elements (11,28-29,50,52,61,87).
 > acts: Peter Pilate Paul & Thecla
 > apocalypses: Peter etc
 Pistis Sophia (Mary Magdalene asks questions)

> gospels: infancy gospels (Protevangelium Jacobi — James -- over 100 manuscripts and even in Ethiopic: avoiding anything sexual; Jos an old man, pseudo-Mt (baby confronts dragons, speaks), Thomas (learns to control powers), Arundel ms, Arabic Infancy Gospel, The History of Joseph the Carpenter

> Jewish gospels (Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of Nazoreans, etc)

Apocryphon of John

Expanded role of women, but then expanded role for other disciples, too (Philip, Thomas, Matthias...)

- Some exist only in fragments

> Clement of Alexandria quotes Gospel of the Egyptians and Gospel according to Matthias)

> Papyrus Egerton 2 (narrative)

> Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840 (dispute between Jesus and a Pharisee)

> Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1224 (small piece of a story and a saying of Jesus)

> Gospel of Peter (c.180). 8th century ms discovered in Egypt 1886, as well as a papyrus fragment from the 3rd C. Eusebius refers to it as an apocryphal work. Starts just before the crucifixion, and ends with exit from tomb. Has some details in common with Matthew, Luke, and John. Resurrection account very jazzed up.

- Why rejected

> not quoted by Fathers

> Rejected by 2nd-C writers Justin, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement

> diverge from creed (e.g. incarnation and resurrection)

> Downplay Christ's suffering

- Other reasons to reject them

> too late

> fill in the gaps; clearly using canonical gospels as starting place

> no emphasis on character and deeds of Christ, but discovering who you are

> highly individualistic. Fits well with Enlightenment ideals and American individualism, but poorly with biblical faith

> break with Jewish heritage of Christianity

Why there was no conspiracy

- Many copies, obviously these works were read!

- they were never in the canon, thus not "removed." ("The Lost Books of the Bible that Were Never Missing")

- why conspiracy views popular today

> anti-establishment currents in society, e.g. the 1960s

> feminism

Conclusion

- These "extra" books never in the canon

- canonical works all 1st century; apocryphal works 2nd century - c.500 AD

- some contain unbiblical emphases (ESP continence & sexuality)

- others deny the gospel

> death & redirection of Christ

> God of OT

> the essential goodness of the creation (Gen 1) and the body

- Don't be taken in. > discovery of Gnostic corpus 1945 > conspiracy theories sell books!
- > postmodernism: suspicion of texts
- (1960s suspicion of authority and the establishment; suspicion of texts naturally followed)

CLASS 5: CANON, PROCESS, CONFIDENCE

SUMMARY

- I. OT books came together in a process superintended by God over a period of centuries.
- II. Documents were written in later centuries of Judaism, though they were rejected from the canon.
- III. NT books came together in a process superintended by God over a period of decades.
- IV. Documents were written in later centuries, though they were never in the canon. They aren't inspired.
- V. In this final class we will talk about
 - <> The possibility of an open canon
 - <> The role of process in the action of God
 - <> The strongest reasons for trusting scripture.

I. OPEN CANON?

- Opened and closed twice-- so why not again!
- Open canon? No.
- Jude 3: refers to content, not necessarily books. But that is exactly what the pretenders attempt to do: to add content.
- This is no trivial matter. Just as nothing was to be added to the Law (Deut 4:2), and nothing was to be added to the gospel (Rev 22:18-19), we must be careful not to go beyond what is written.
- The apostolic age is over. The Lord made certain exclusive promises to the apostles: John 14:25-26, 16:12-13; see Eph 2:20, 3:5, 4:11.

II. PROCESSES

- God usually works through processes
 - > History of Israel
 - > Formation of character
 - > Creation of universe
 - > Creation of life
 - > Formation of canon
- Processes take time, and may be influenced by external forces.
- Scripture has two aspects: divine and human.
 - > Word as Christ
 - > Word as Scripture
 - > Two aspects because the Lord comes into our world, descending to our level. This is not a weakness, but a great strength.

III. CONFIDENCE

- This material is faith-building
 - > The lost
 - > The skeptic
 - > You
- Could you defend scripture from the attacks of the skeptic or the apathy of the self-absorbed?

PRACTICALITY

1a. Message matches reality.

1b. It works!

- Not to say the narrow road is easy; it requires willpower, discipline, integrity, stamina, humility, focus.
- Given the sinful nature of the human race, it's not so surprising that the world is generally unaware of the power of the word. Nor is it surprising that the world resists the word when it is challenged by the light.

RELIABILITY

2a. Preservation of message was more than adequate.

2n. The manuscript evidence refutes the claims of Muslims, Mormons, and skeptics that the documents have been corrupted.

- The manuscript record doesn't prove the Bible is true, only that the temporal gap between us and biblical times creates no insurmountable problems.

EVIDENCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

3a. Prophecy

3b. Attests to God

3c. Transformation that transcends mere human effort or planning.

CONFIRMATION

4a. Illuminated by history, geography, archaeology, and other fields.

4b. External points of contact support our confidence, making it easier to believe; for some seekers, makes it possible to believe.

- Although there are many impressive facts of Christian evidences, we shouldn't overvalue them, or link our faith to them. Many are subject to reevaluation and revision, and in some cases rejection.

COHERENCE

5a. The Testaments mesh together.

5b. Each book supports the apostolic message, just as

5c. The apostolic message is faithful to Jesus' words.

5d. The message is consistent, neither self-contradictory nor chaotic.

COMPARISON

6a. Compared to (other) man-made scriptures, the NT is stellar.

6b. Though few have the time to make extensive investigations into the claims and supporting evidence of the many religions of the world, if we did, the process of elimination leaves us with only one option.

EXPERIENCE

7a. In accord with the truths of the Old and New Testaments, we have experienced God.

7b. The Spirit of God commends the word of God to the open heart.

7c. Conscience confirms the word. Though conscience isn't infallible, it is invaluable in the process.

- Our experience qualifies all of us as witnesses.
- Gifted with this special knowledge and access, we have a divine responsibility to relay the message.

[CONCLUSION]

- Let's think clearly about the function of scripture. We worship Christ -- who is the incarnate Word of God, but we don't worship the Bible (bibliolatry), the written word of God.

- *"We don't believe in Christ because we believe in the Bible; we believe in the Bible because we believe in Christ."* -- Martin Kahler
- If this series has helped you, please tell others about it. Be sure to put the what you've learned to good use. Let's make a difference in someone's life.