

# Fall 2022 Adult Study: The Early Christians

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Session 2: Scripture – The Tradition of  
Traditions  
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# On the Canon of Scripture

- What does “Canon” mean?
  - Ongoing Revelation vs. Closure
- Overview of Old Testament Development
  - Languages
  - Septuagint
  - Dead Sea Scrolls
- Council of Jamnia



Tradition – What has been handed down.

As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Galatians 1:9

Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:3

## On the Canon of Scripture

- Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 AD)

- Athanasius was the most prominent theologian of the fourth century, and he served as bishop of Alexandria. His list of canonical books was published as part of his Thirty-Ninth Festal Epistle of A.D. 367. After the list he declares, “these are the wells of salvation, so that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the sayings in these. Let no one add to these. Let nothing be taken away.”

### Concerning the Divine Scriptures

2. But since we have made mention of heretics as dead, but of ourselves as possessing the Divine Scriptures for salvation; and since I fear lest, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, some few of the simple should be beguiled from their simplicity and purity, by the subtilty of certain men, and should henceforth read other books—those called apocryphal—led astray by the similarity of their names with the true books; I beseech you to bear patiently, if I also write, by way of remembrance, of matters with which you are acquainted, influenced by the need and

advantage of the Church.

3. In proceeding to make mention of these things, I shall adopt, to commend my undertaking, the pattern of Luke the evangelist, saying on my own account, Forasmuch as some have taken in hand to reduce into order for themselves the books termed Apocryphal, and to mix them up with the divinely inspired Scripture, concerning which we have been fully persuaded, as they who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, delivered to the Fathers; it seemed good to me also, having been urged thereto by true brethren, and having learned from the beginning, to set before you the books included in the Canon, and handed down, and accredited as divine; to the end that anyone who has fallen into error may condemn those who have led them astray; and that he who has continued steadfast in purity may again rejoice, having these things brought to his remembrance.

4. There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that

Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second <sup>1</sup> being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth <sup>2</sup> as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second <sup>3</sup> are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the Twelve [minor prophets] being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations and the Epistle, one book; afterwards Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.

# The Old Testament

- Polycarp and Marcion

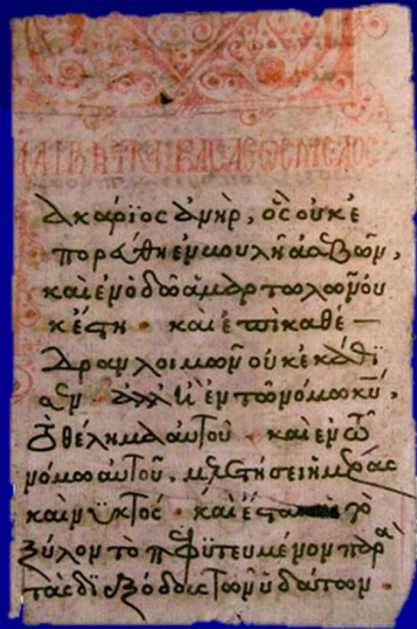
- Polycarp had learned from apostle John to flee from those who change the divine truth. One day he met in the streets of Rome the heretic Marcion who, resenting that Polycarp did not greet him, said: "Do you know me?" Polycarp replied: "Yes, I know you, the first-born of Satan."

Marcion had wanted to throw out the Old Testament altogether, saying that the God of the Old Testament couldn't possibly be the same loving Father of Jesus we see in the New Testament.

Unfortunately, there are Marcionites today among some Protestants and among some Middle Eastern Orthodox Christians since the onset of Zionist philosophies and the founding of Israel in 1948.

# The Old Testament

- The Septuagint
  - The “Scriptures” – as used by Jesus and the New Testament
- The Masoretic Text
  - “Guns, Lies and Forgeries: A Bible Story” by Robert E. Reis



Once upon a time there was a tribe living in the Middle East that had a collection of sacred texts written in Hebrew, Chaldean and Aramaic. It is the nature of sacred texts to be venerated and transmitted from generation to generation unaltered.

As time passed members of this tribe emigrated to areas where Hebrew and Aramaic and Chaldean were not spoken. A large community settled and prospered in the city of Alexandria in Egypt. Greek replaced their tribal language. They needed an accurate translation of their venerated documents into Greek.

Around 250 B.C. seventy rabbis translated the sacred texts

into Greek. This translation was not a bootleg edition. The project was approved by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. The Septuagint, the translation of the seventy, was an official document.

A Hebrew Bible exists today. It is used by Jews everywhere. It is called the Masoretic text. It was compiled around 700 A.D. It is almost one thousand years newer than the Septuagint. The rabbis who compiled the Masoretic text were not accountable to the High Priest in Jerusalem. There no longer was a High Priest. The rabbis who compiled the Masoretic text were not accountable to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. There no longer was a Sanhedrin.

The Septuagint predates the first appearance of the Masoretic text by almost ten centuries. The Septuagint is based upon Hebrew texts at least twelve centuries older than the texts upon which the Masoretic version is based. .Yet, modern Christian translations of the Old Testament rely on the Masoretic Text, not the Septuagint.

Where is the problem?

Most of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament used the Septuagint as their primary source. The integrity and truthfulness of the



Discredit the Septuagint and there is no New Testament.

There was no controversy about the integrity of the Septuagint from 250 B.C. until 135 A. D.

What had happened to provoke dissatisfaction with the Septuagint among the Jews?

Annas and Caiphas and the Sanhedrin had rejected the messianic claims of Jesus. The New Testament documents had been written and were circulating by A..D. 70. The Jews knew that the credibility of the Christian Gospels depended on the credibility of the Septuagint. Something had to be done.

Around 95 A.D. Rabbi Akiva, who later proclaimed Bar Kochba as the messiah, hired a man named Aquila to translate a Hebrew to Greek version of the Old Testament that would undermine the messianic claims of Jesus found in the Septuagint. Some scholars believe that the Masoretic text was based in part on this tendentious translation by Aquila.

## The Old Testament: LXX vs. MT

- How is the Masoretic text different from the Septuagint?
  - Psalm 22:16 the word “pierced” has been replaced by “lion”.
  - Psalm 145: 13 omitted entirely.
  - Isaiah 53:11 the word “light” is omitted.
  - On 134 occasions the Tetragrammaton, the name of God, has been replaced by “Adonai.”

## The Old Testament: LXX vs. MT

- Psalm 151 was omitted entirely. (It is now omitted by almost all Christian Bibles!)
- Exodus 1: The number 75 replaced by 70
- Genesis 10:24 some generations removed.
- Deuteronomy 32:8 “Angels Of Elohim” replaced with “children of Israel.”
- Jeremiah 10 verses 6 and 7 have been added in the Masoretic.

## The Old Testament: LXX vs. MT

- Psalm 96:10 "Say among the nations, YHWH reigns from the wood" omitted.
- Isaiah 19:18 "city of righteousness" changed to the "city of the sun" or in some versions "the city of destruction."
- The Masoretic scribes purposely and willfully rearranged the original chapter order in the prophetic Book of Daniel, so that the chapters make no sense chronologically.
- Isaiah 61:1 "recovery of sight to the blind." Omitted.
- In Psalm 40:6 "a body you have prepared for me" was replaced by "you opened my ears."

## The Old Testament: LXX vs. MT

- Deuteronomy 32:43 "Let all the messengers of Elohim worship him." Omitted.
- Genesis 4:8: "Let us go into the field" is omitted.
- Deuteronomy 32:43. Moses' song is shortened.
- Isaiah 53 contains 10 spelling differences, 4 stylistic changes and 3 missing letters for light in verse 11, for a total of 17 differences.
- Isaiah 7:14. "Virgin" replaced by "young woman."

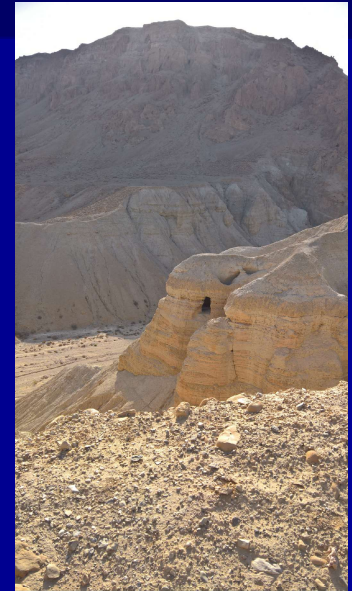
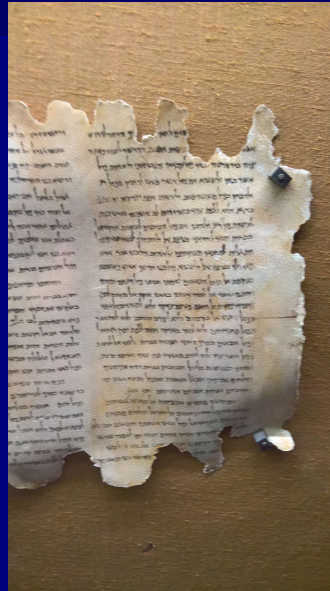
(When Aquila made his Greek translation of the Old Testament at the behest of Rabbi Akiva, he changed the Septuagint's "virgin" into "young woman". The Masoretic compilers may have followed his lead.)

The Masoretic text differs from the Septuagint in hundreds of places.

How do we know which text is accurate?

# The Old Testament: LXX vs. MT

- Which Is Accurate?
  - The Dead Sea Scrolls
  - Peshitta and Other Ancient Translations



The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered just after World War II.

According to carbon dating, textual analysis, and handwriting analysis the documents were written at various times between the middle of the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD. There are fragments from all of the books of the Hebrew Bible fragments except the Book of Esther and the Book of Nehemiah.

In addition an independent Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible exists, the Peshitta.

Control of the Dead Sea Scrolls was a military objective

of Israelis. It was achieved by their victory in the Six Days War.

The publication of the scrolls slowed to a trickle.

After 1971, the international team even refused to allow the publication of photographs of the material. They excluded scholars who wanted to make independent evaluations.

The embargo was not broken until 1991.

An addition to the Dead Sea Scrolls, scholars can use the Peshitta to decide between the Masoretic text and the Septuagint.

I have given examples above of some of the places the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Peshitta, and the Septuagint agree.

The Masoretic Text is part of a tradition that began with Rabbi Akiva. Rabbis rewrote the Jewish Bible to destroy the credibility of the New Testament.

In particular, passages—and whole books—showing expectation of the coming Messiah and dealing with Resurrection were suppressed.

# The New Testament

## ■ Muratorian Canon

- 7<sup>th</sup> century Latin translation of a Greek original from ~170 AD
- List of New Testament books is close to what we have today; some things are missing and some are added.

Book	Muratorian Canon	Present canon <sup>[2]</sup>
<a href="#">Gospel of Matthew</a>	Probably <sup>[2]</sup>	Yes
<a href="#">Gospel of Mark</a>	Probably <sup>[2]</sup>	Yes
<a href="#">Gospel of Luke</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Gospel of John</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Acts of the Apostles</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Romans</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">1 Corinthians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">2 Corinthians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Galatians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Ephesians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Philippians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Colossians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">1 Thessalonians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">2 Thessalonians</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">1 Timothy</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">2 Timothy</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Titus</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Philemon</a>	Yes	Yes
<a href="#">Hebrews</a>	No	Yes <sup>[2]</sup>

The **Muratorian fragment**, also known as the **Muratorian Canon**<sup>[1]</sup>(18:02) or **Canon Muratori**, is a copy of perhaps the oldest known list of most of the books of the **New Testament**. The fragment, consisting of 85 lines, is a 7th-century **Latin** manuscript bound in a 7th or 8th century **codex** from the library of **Columbanus**'s monastery at **Bobbio Abbey**; it contains features suggesting it is a translation from a **Greek** original written about 170 or as late as the **4th century**.



# The New Testament

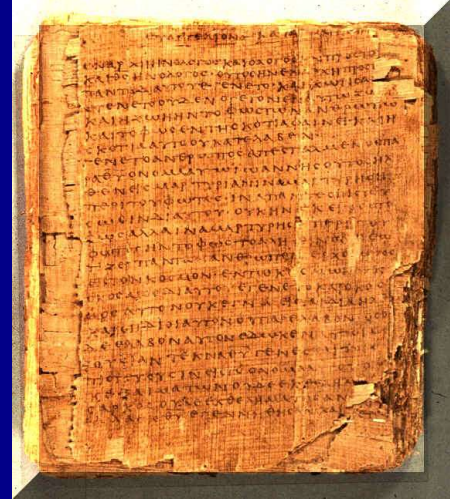
- Muratorian Canon
  - Cont.

<a href="#">James</a>	No	Yes <sup>[10]</sup>
<a href="#">1 Peter</a>	No	Yes
<a href="#">2 Peter</a>	No	Yes
<a href="#">1 John</a>	Probably <sup>[11]</sup>	Yes
<a href="#">2 John</a>	Maybe <sup>[11]</sup>	Yes
<a href="#">3 John</a>	Maybe <sup>[11]</sup>	Yes
<a href="#">Jude</a>	Yes	Yes <sup>[10]</sup>
<a href="#">Apocalypse of John</a>	Yes	Yes <sup>[10]</sup>
<a href="#">Apocalypse of Peter</a>	Yes <sup>[12]</sup>	No
<a href="#">Wisdom of Solomon</a>	Yes	Varies by denomination <sup>[13]</sup>

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# The New Testament

- St. Athanasius of Alexandria
  - Same as we have today
  - Not agreed upon by Antioch until 7<sup>th</sup> century
- Same for Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Protestants
  - NOT Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons



5. Again, it is not tedious to speak of the books of the New Testament. These are: the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. After these, The Acts of the Apostles, and the seven epistles called Catholic: of James, one; of Peter, two, of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen epistles of Paul the apostle, written in this order: the first, to the Romans; then, two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians, then, to the Philippians; then, to the Colossians; after these, two of the Thessalonians; and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly,

that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.

6. These are the fountains of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed. Let no one add to these; let nothing be taken away from them. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the Sadducees, and said, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures. And he reproved the Jews, saying, Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of me.

7. But for the sake of greater exactness I add this also, writing under obligation, as it were. There are other books besides these, indeed not received as canonical but having been appointed by our fathers to be read to those just approaching and wishing to be instructed in the word of godliness: Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being merely read; nor is there any place a mention of secret

writings. But such are the invention of heretics, who indeed write them whenever they wish, bestowing upon them their approval, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as if they were ancient writings, they find a means by which to lead astray the simple-minded.

# Books of the Bible

## ■ OLD TESTAMENT (Jewish/Protestant Canon)

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy  
Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel  
2 Samuel  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Esther  
Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Solomon  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel

Daniel  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

# Books of the Bible

## ■ ADDITIONAL BOOKS OF THE SEPTUAGINT (Greek Old Testament)

1 Esdras

Judith

Tobit

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

3 Maccabees

Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach)

Letter of the Prophet Jeremiah

Baruch

A supernumerary Psalm

Prayer of Manasseh from 2 Chronicles

Portions of Esther

Portions of Daniel, including the Song of the  
Three Youths (which we read on Holy Saturday  
morning), Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon

# Books of the Bible

## ■ Numbering of Psalms

Greek (LXX)	Hebrew
1-8	1-8
9	9-10
10-112	Add one to the number of each Psalm
113	114-115
114	116:1-9
115	116:10-19
116-145	Add one to the number of each Psalm
146	147:1-11
147	147:12-20
148-150	148-150

# Books of the Bible

## ■ The New Testament

- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Matthew         | 1 Timothy  |
| Mark            | 2 Timothy  |
| Luke            | Titus      |
| John            | Philemon   |
| Acts            | Hebrews    |
| Romans          | James      |
| 1 Corinthians   | 1 Peter    |
| 2 Corinthians   | 2 Peter    |
| Galatians       | 1 John     |
| Ephesians       | 2 John     |
| Philippians     | 3 John     |
| Colossians      | Jude       |
| 1 Thessalonians | Revelation |
| 2 Thessalonians |            |



Codex Sinaiticus – contains full Old and New Testaments from 4<sup>th</sup> Century, found in Sinai, sold by Count von Tischendorf to British Museum



# “Closure” of the Canon

- Closure of Revelation
- Books of the Bible vs. Writings of the Saints
- Next week we discuss the content of the Bible and how to interpret it properly.

## Recommended Reading

- *The Holy Bible*
- Cronk, George F. *The Message of the Bible: An Orthodox Christian Perspective*. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.
- Constantinou, Eugenia. *Thinking Orthodox: Understanding and Acquiring the Orthodox Christian Mind*. Chesterton, Indiana: Ancient Faith Ministries, 2020.