

The Origin of the Bible

Before Christ (B.C.)

ca. 1500-150 B.C.

The books of the Hebrew Old Testament are written:

1. The Law (*Torah*)
2. The Prophets (*Nebi'im*)
3. The Writings (*Ketubim*)¹

ca. 250 B.C.

First Translation of the Pentateuch into Greek
The Greek Septuagint or “the 70,” (LXX)

[King] Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, being very anxious to adorn the library, which he founded in Alexandria, with all the best extant writings of all men, asked from the inhabitants of Jerusalem to have their Scriptures translated into Greek. They... sent to Ptolemy *seventy elders, the most experienced they had in the Scriptures and in both languages*, and God thus wrought what he willed. But Ptolemy, wishing to make a trial of them in his own way, and being afraid lest they should have made some agreement to conceal by their translation the truth in the Scriptures, separated them from one another and commanded them all to write the same translation. And this they did in the case of all the books. *But when they came together to Ptolemy, and compared each his own translation, God was glorified and the Scriptures were recognized as truly divine, for they all rendered the same things in the same words and the same names, from beginning to end*, so that even the heathen who were present knew that *the Scriptures had been translated by the inspiration of God*.²

Anno Domini (A.D.)

ca. 30 A.D.

Time of Jesus: Jewish ‘canon’ not closed (Luke 24:25-35)

But although *the Samaritans and Sadducees, who receive the books of Moses alone*, would say that there were contained in them predictions regarding the Messiah, yet certainly not in Jerusalem, which is not even mentioned in the times of Moses...³

It follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. *Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time*.⁴

<u>Sadducees/Samaritans</u>	<u>Pharisees</u>	<u>4 Ezra</u>	<u>Essenes</u>
5 Books of Moses	22 Books	94 Books	??? Books (24 Public/70 Secret)

¹ Compare Sirach, Prologue.

² Eusebius, *Church History* 5.8.11-14, LCL; cited in Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 88-89.

³ Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.49, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols.; Reprint; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 4.418.

⁴ Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1.37-43; cited in McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 56.

- ca. 30-100 A.D. Books of the New Testament are written.
- [90 A.D.] [*No Council of Jamnia; a Protestant scholarly ‘myth’*⁵]
- ca. 200-500 A.D. Jewish Rabbis *still* debating the Canon of Scripture
According to the School of Shammai the book of Ecclesiastes does not render the hands unclean [=is not sacred Scripture]. And the School of Hillel say: It renders the hands unclean [=is sacred Scripture].⁶
- Rabban b. Mari (320-350 A.D.) told Raba: This matter is written in the Torah, repeated in the Prophets, and repeated a third time in the Writings, and was taught in the Mishnah, and was taught as a Baraita... and repeated a third time in the Writings, as it is written... [Quotes Sirach 12:15]⁷
- 382 A.D. The Council of Rome: Pope St. Damasus I
Closes the canon of the Christian Bible
(46 OT Books, 27 NT Books = 73 Books)
- Council of Rome: *Now indeed we must treat of the divine Scriptures, what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she ought to shun.* The order of the Old Testament begins here: Genesis... Likewise the order of the writings of the New and eternal Testament, which the holy and Catholic Church supports... The canon of the New Testament ends here.⁸
- 383, 397, 419 Council of Hippo and Councils of Carthage III and IV
Local conciliar decrees on the canon; identical in content⁹
45/46 OT Books (Lamentations goes with Jer)
27 NT Books
- ca. 400 A.D. St. Jerome finishes the Latin Vulgate
Originally commissioned by Pope Damasus I
46 OT Books, 27 NT Books = 73 Books
- 1442 A.D. Ecumenical Council of Florence affirms the Canon¹⁰
(Bull of union with Jacobites of Syria)
46 OT Books, 27 NT Books = 73 Books

⁵ This theory was first forwarded by Heinrich Graetz in 1871 and popularized in English speaking world by H. E. Ryle, who based it on one meager text about a debate between Hillel and Shammai over whether Ecclesiastes “renders the hands unclean” (Mishnah, *Eduyoth*, 5:3). It has been rightly recognized as “a myth of Christian scholarship without foundation.” Joseph Blenkinsopp, cited in Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, *The Canon Debate* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 147.

⁶ Mishnah, *Eduyoth*, 5:3; cf. *m. Yad*. 3:5.

⁷ Palestinian Talmud, cited in Sid Leiman, *The Canonization of the Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden: Archon, 1976), 97.

⁸ Cited in Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (New York: Herder, 1957), 33-34.

⁹ For texts, Dennis J. Murphy, CSC, *The Church and the Bible* (Boston: Alba House, 2007), 9-10.

¹⁰ See Murphy, *The Church and the Bible*, 26-27.

1534 A.D. Martin Luther publishes his German Bible
39 OT Books, with 7 OT books separated ('Apocrypha')
27 NT books = 66 Books

I hate Esther and 2 Maccabees so much that I wish they did not exist; they contain too much Judaism and no little heathen vice. (Martin Luther)¹¹

1540 John Calvin publishes Geneva Bible

*These books, called Apocrypha, have always been distinguished from the writings which were without difficulty called Holy Scripture. For the Church Fathers wished to avoid the danger of mixing profane books with those which were certainly brought forth by the Holy Spirit. That is why they made a list, which they called a canon.... It is true that the Apocrypha is not to be despised, insofar as it contains good and useful teaching. Yet there is good reason for what was given us by the Holy Spirit to have precedence over what has come from human beings. Thus all Christians, following what St. Jerome said, read the Apocrypha, and take from it teaching "for edification"... None of these books was in any way accepted by the Hebrews, and their original texts are not in Hebrew, but in Greek. It is correct that today, a great part of them are found in Hebrew. But it may be that they were [back] translated from the Greek. The safest thing is therefore to hold to what is extant in the language in which they are usually found.*¹²

1546 The Council of Trent reaffirms Catholic Canon
46 OT Books; 27 NT Books¹³

1562 Anglican Church, 39 Articles of Religion

In the name of Holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments, *of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church*. Of the names and number of the Canonical Books... All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them canonical. *And the other books (as Hierome [Jerome] saith) the Church doth read for example of lief and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.* Such are these following [lists the 7 Books plus 3 and 4 Esdras].¹⁴

1582, 1609 Douay-Rheims Catholic Bible in English

1611 A.D. King James Version (The "Authorized Bible")
First published with 46 OT Books! (in the middle)

¹¹ Cited in F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 101.

¹² John Calvin, Preface to the *Geneva Bible*, quoted in Gary Michuta, *Why Catholic Bibles are Bigger: The Untold Story of the Lost Books of the Protestant Bible* (Port Huron: Grotto, 2007), 259-60.

¹³ For text, see Murphy, *The Church and the Bible*, 30-31.

¹⁴ 39 Articles of Religion, Article 6; cited in Michuta, *Why Catholic Bibles are Bigger*, 277.

- 1952, 1966 Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSVCE)
First Ecumenical Translation (cf. *Dei Verbum* 24)
- 1970, 1986 New American Bible (NAB)
American Catholic English Bible; used in Lectionary
Some “inclusive” language; some now (Rev. Psalms, NT)
- 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II
Reaffirms Canon of Scripture:

It was by apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of sacred books. This complete list is called the canon of Scripture. It includes 46 books for the Old Testament (45 if we count Jeremiah and Lamentations as one) and 27 for the New.¹⁵

- 2013 Pope Francis on the Role of the Bible

*The sacred Scriptures are the very source of evangelization. Consequently, we need to be constantly trained in hearing the word. The Church does not evangelize unless she constantly lets herself be evangelized. It is indispensable that the word of God “be ever more fully at the heart of every ecclesial activity”...*The study of the sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer.* It is essential that the revealed word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith. *Evangelization demands familiarity with God’s word, which calls for dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations to provide for a serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its prayerful individual and communal reading.* We do not blindly seek God, or wait for him to speak to us first, for “God has already spoken, and there is nothing further that we need to know, which has not been revealed to us”. Let us receive the sublime treasure of the revealed word. (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, no. 174-75)*

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Second Edition; Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), no. 120.