

Tackling the *Da Vinci Code*

Sunday, June 4, 2006
9 to 9:50 am in the Parlor.
Everyone is welcome!

St. John in the Wilderness

Heavenly King, O Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and fills all things, O Treasury of every good and Bestower of life: come and dwell in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Good One.

- Pentecostarion, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 420

Tackling The Da Vinci Code

Four Questions

- Four questions:
 - 1. What is Gnosticism? What are the Gnostic Gospels?
 - 2. Who was Mary Magdalene? What Was the Role of Women in the Early Church?
 - 3. How and When Did the Early Church Understand Jesus Was Both Human and Divine?
 - 4. How and When Did the Early Church Decide on the Books in the New Testament?

Tackling the *Da Vinci Code* 1

What is Gnosticism? What
are the Gnostic Gospels?

Background

The Ancient World into
Which Christianity
Spread

Background

World Into Which Christianity Spread

- World into Christianity spread was hungry for spirituality
- Monuments attest to a desperate longing in all classes for assurance against death and fate, redemption from evil, union with the divine
- Gods of Greek and Roman Mythology no longer inspired
- Cult of the Emperor provided only a mode of corporate loyalty, perhaps a sense the Empire was favored by Providence

Background

Oriental Mystery Religions

- Oriental Mystery Religions Popular Among the Masses
- Had spread rapidly across the Roman Republic / Empire in the century before Christ
- Most popular divinities:
 - **Isis**, Egyptian mother goddess of fertility
 - **Serapis**, Egyptian deity associated with the dead and with healing
 - **Cybele** (Anatolian mother-goddess) and **Attis** (her youthful lover, the vegetation god)
 - Persian God **Mithras**, god of light, ally of the Sun
 - Especially popular among soldiers

Background

Oriental Mystery Religions

- Consisted of close-knit groups, fellowships
- Shared sacred meals
- Newcomers initiated by secret ceremonies (“mysteries”)
- The syncretism of the times led to a growing interpretation of the various pagan gods as manifestations of a one unique, supreme Power or God

Background

Graco-Roman Philosophy

- Among the educated, philosophy served as their “religion.” Most influential:
 - Platonism
 - Stoicism
- Syncretism also prominent; in practice many were “Platonic Stoicists” or “Stoic Platonists”

Gnosticism

Gnosticism

Introduction

- Refers to an amorphous group of sects
- Represent the most important heresies faced by the early Church
- “A product of syncretism, it drew upon Jewish, pagan, Oriental sources” (Kelly p. 23)
- Name “gnosticism” a creation of modern scholarship
 - Early Christian writers generally referred to a “Gnostic” group by the name of the founder

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- In the beginning, there was One God, perfect, incomprehensible, unknowable, totally transcendent
- From the One God other divine entities called **aeons** emanated. From these aeons emanated more divine entities, other aeons
- An entire realm of divine aeons thus developed, call the **Fullness** or **Pleroma**

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- The world of matter was *not* created by the One God, but resulted from some kind of disruption in the divine Pleroma, a catastrophe in the cosmos.
- In some human beings in this world of matter there resides *a divine spark* of the Pleroma, which needs to be liberated to return to the divine world of the Pleroma

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- One version of how the world of matter and human beings were created (*Secret Book of John*):
 - The lowest aeon named **Sophia** (Wisdom) generated a divine being apart from her male consort, resulting in a malformed and imperfect offspring
 - Sophia hid her offspring outside the divine realm of the Pleroma to prevent his discovery and left him

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- Sophia named her offspring **Yaldabaoth** (“Yahweh, Lord of the Sabbath”); he was the God of the Old Testament
- Yaldabaoth was evil and used his divine power to create:
 - the evil divine forces of the world,
 - The evil material world (he is the **Demiurge**, Greek for “maker” or “craftsman”)

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- Yaldabaoth tries to create human beings, but his Adam is inanimate
- The One God then allows the divine spark of Sophia to enter into Adam and human beings, making them animate -- and greater than Yaldabaoth and all his evil cosmic powers
 - When Yaldabaoth and the evil cosmic forces realize this, they cast human beings into the evil realm of matter

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- Problem of our life on earth:
 - The only way that the divine spark that resides in some human beings can return to the divine Pleroma where it belongs is to learn the secret or “mystery” of what it is and where it belongs
 - Knowledge of this secret breaks the tethers binding the divine spark to the world of matter, and allows the divine spark to ascend to the Pleroma after death

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- Christ came to reveal this secret knowledge. This knowledge of who one really is – *a divine spark trapped in an evil material body* – is the key to salvation
 - In other words, *salvation is achieved by truly knowing thyself*. Salvation is found within
 - Christ speaking in the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* **“The one who possesses the knowledge (gnosis) of the truth is free.”** (G. Phil. 93)

Gnosticism

Tenets of Gnosticism

- Gnostics tended to be ascetics. Logic:
 - Since the body was evil, it should be punished
 - Attachment to the body is problem of existence, and pleasure is a means of becoming attached to the body. Therefore, it is best to deny the body pleasure

Gnosticism

The Appeal of Gnosticism

- Explained our sense of alienation in this world (our true selves, the divine spark within us, belongs in the divine)
- Explained the presence of evil and suffering in the world (the material world was evil, not made by God, but by an evil Demiurge)
- Offered a means of the reconciliation of the human spirit with the ineffable sublimity of God

Gnosticism

The Problem with Gnosticism

- Ultimately rejected by the Church because:
 - Its radical dualism. The Creator, creation, matter, and the body were evil. Our souls alone were good, belonging in the divine world of the Pleroma
 - Its rejection of the **Incarnation**, God truly taking on human and material form, and living and suffering as a human being. In Gnosticism, the Christ aeon divinity used the human being Jesus as a shell, a temporary dwelling and hiding place

Sources for Our Knowledge About Gnosticism

Sources

- The Apostolic Fathers
 - **Irenaeus**, Bishop of Lyons, Gaul (140-160 to 200 AD) five volume work *Refutation and Overthrow of Gnosis, Falsely So-Called = Against Heresies*
 - **Tertullian** of Carthage (155 to 222 AD). Several treatises against heretics
 - **Hippolytus** of Rome (170 to 235 AD), *Refutation of All Heresies*
 - Discovered in the 19th century

Sources

- Original Gnostic documents
 - A few surfaced in 18th and 19th century:
 - **1769 and 1773:** Coptic manuscripts of Gnostic texts first appeared (purchased by tourists)
 - **1890's:** a few fragments of a Greek *Gospel of Thomas* discovered
 - **1896:** *Gospel of Mary Magdalene, Apocryphon (Secret Book) of John*, and two other texts for sale by German Egyptologist in Cairo
 - **December 1945:** discovery of the **Nag Hammadi Library**

Sources

Nag Hammadi Library

- A library of Coptic translations of 52 original Greek texts from the early years of Christianity, buried for 1600 years
- Primarily Gnostic texts, including:
 - *Gospel of Thomas*
 - *Gospel of Philip*
 - *Gospel of Truth*
 - *Gospel to the Egyptians*
 - *Secret Book of James*
 - *Apocalypse of Paul*
 - *Letter of Peter to Philip*
 - *The Apocalypse of Peter*

Sources

Nag Hammadi Library

- Leather of the books and notations within them date the books to sometime after 348 AD
- Lid of the jar dates to 4th or 5th century AD
- Conjecture is that books came from the library of a nearby monastery led by Pachomius (Basilica of St. Pachomius near the area)

Sources

Nag Hammadi Library

- *Gospel of Thomas*
 - Probably the most famous of the texts
 - Most scholars agree it is a “Gnostic” Gospel
 - Collection of 114 sayings of Jesus; no reference to the Passion or Resurrection
 - felt by Nag Hammadi scholars to be compiled about 140 AD
 - Minority of scholars suggest a date in the first century

Sources

Nag Hammadi Library

- Other texts also believed to be written sometime in the second century AD, since:
 - Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, complained in 180 AD that the heretics “boast that they possess more gospels than there really are.”
 - Christian Gnostics first appeared sometime in the second century

Tackling the *Da Vinci Code* 2

Who was Mary Magdalene?
What Was the Role of Women
in the Early Church?

Mary Magdalene in the New Testament

In the New Testament

Name

- Mary: modern form of the Jewish name **Miriam** (prophetess of Old Testament fame, Exodus 15:20-21)
- Magdela = Migdal. A very tiny fishing village on the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee
- Ancient Near Eastern peoples distinguished other persons with same first name through:
 - their place of birth or residence
 - (for women): reference to husband or son

In the New Testament **Independent**

- That Mary Magdalene is not distinguished by her husband or son suggests:
 - She had neither husband or son
 - She was in control of her own property

In the New Testament

Major Figure

- Mary Magdalene is a major figure in the New Testament:
 - 1. One of the original traveling disciples of Jesus
 - 2. Present at Jesus' death
 - 3. One of the first, or perhaps the first to visit Jesus' tomb
 - 4. The first to see the risen Lord
 - 5. The first to testify to the Resurrection to the male disciples

Mary Magdalene in the Early Church

Early Church

General

- The Church Fathers in the early church portrayed Mary Magdalene as:
 - a faithful disciple and follower of Jesus
 - a witness to the Jesus' death, burial and Resurrection

Early Church

Apostle to the Apostles

- In Church Father Hippolytus' (170-236) commentary on the Song of Songs 24-26
 - **“Lest the female apostles doubt the angels, Christ himself came to them so that women would be apostles of Christ and by their obedience rectify the sin of ancient Eve... Christ himself showed himself to the (male) apostles and said to them: ‘It is I who appeared to these women and I who wanted to send them to you as apostles.’”**
- Early Christians referred to Mary Magdalene as the **“apostle to the apostles”**

Early Church

The New Eve

“The high regard for Mary Magdalene continues in the fourth and fifth-century Latin fathers of the church. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, associated Mary Magdalene with the **New Eve** who clings to Christ as the new Tree of Life, thereby reversing the unfaithfulness of the first Eve.”

- Rosemary Radford Ruether, theologian

Early Church

The New Eve

“Augustine maintains this view, pairing Mary Magdalene with Christ as symbol of the **New Eve** and the church in relation to Christ as the New Adam. Her faithfulness reversed the sin of the first Eve.”

- Rosemary Radford Ruether, theologian

Early Church

Repentant Prostitute

- On September 21, 591, **Pope Gregory I** (Gregory the Great) preached a homily at the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome on Luke 7:36-50, and merged two (three?) gospel figures into Mary Magdalene:
 - 1. The **unnamed sinner of Luke 7:36-50** (Prostitute? Adulteress?) who bathed Jesus feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with a jar of oil she had brought with her
 - Identified in John 11:1-2 as **Mary of Bethany**, sister of Martha and Lazarus
 - 2. **Mary Magdalene**

Early Church

Repentant Prostitute

- This began a tradition in the Western Church of identifying **Mary Magdalene** with the **unnamed Sinner of Luke 7:36-50**, who bathed Jesus feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with a jar of oil she had brought
 - Perhaps the same person as Mary of Bethany in John 11:1-2

Early Church

Repentant Prostitute

- Eastern Church never followed this tradition, maintaining separate feast days for each of the three:
 - **March 21:** the Unnamed Sinner
 - **March 18:** Mary of Bethany
 - **July 22:** Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene in Gnostic Sources

Gnostic Sources

Cited in *The Da Vinci Code*

- Two Gnostic sources are cited in *The Da Vinci Code* as showing Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene:
 - *Gospel of Philip* (p. 246)
 - *Gospel of Mary of Magdala* (p. 247)
- However, there are far too many gaps in these texts to confidently make any such interpretation

Gnostic Sources

Gospel of Philip

For example, in the Gospel of Philip: “**And the companion* of the [small gap] Mary Magdalene [small gap] her more than [small gap] the disciples [small gap] kiss her [small gap] on her [gap].**” (Lost Christianities, p. 122. Bart D. Ehrman)

- **koinonos* = “companion.” Greek loan word. Can mean:
 - “wife” (but usually “*gyne*” would be used)
 - “sister” in a spiritual sense

The Role of Women in the Early Church

Women in the Early Church

Introduction

- Women had significant roles in the ministry of the Early Church
 - Prophetesses
 - Deaconesses
 - Order of Widows
 - Order of Virgins

Women in the Early Church

Decreasing Role

- However, there was a significant *decrease* in the role of women in the ministry of the Church between **100 AD and 325 AD**
- Reasons:
 - Tendency to accept the Gnostic and Greek ideas of body-soul duality
 - The flesh, although not inherently evil as in Gnosticism and Platonism, was viewed as tainted
 - The Original Sin often assumed to be pleasure

Women in the Early Church

Decreasing Role

- Reasons (*continued*):
 - Increasing asceticism:
 - with an exaltation of celibacy, singleness, even continence in marriage, combined with an association of women as temptresses to the flesh and pleasure
 - A sense redemption is best achieved by withdrawing from the world through mortification and denial of the flesh
 - Increasing distrust of those claiming the authority of the Spirit through prophetic gifts (prophetesses not welcome)

Tackling the *Da Vinci Code* 3

How and When Did the Early
Church Understand Jesus Was
Both Human and Divine?

The Early Church's View of Jesus

Early Church's View of Jesus

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

- **Christology:** the study of:
 - Who was Jesus?
 - What role, what purpose did he play in God's divine plan?
- There is *unanimity* among serious scholars and historians that from the earliest days of Church the followers of Jesus believed:
 - Jesus was God
 - Jesus' was the **Messiah** (= the Christ, the "anointed one"), the Redeemer, the bringer of salvation

Early Church's View of Jesus

Messiah or Christ

■ Messiah

- = “the anointed one” (Greek: *Christos*; **Christ**)
- Jewish expectations: the anointed king of the House of David who would:
 - defeat Israel's enemies
 - inaugurate a kingdom (Egypt to Mesopotamia) of prosperity, peace, justice
 - not necessarily divine

Early Church's View of Jesus

Messiah or Christ

■ Messiah

- Christian View of Jesus as the Messiah (= the Christ):
 - defeated Satan and the forces of evil
 - inaugurated a Kingdom of God, without borders, over all of creation
- **“Christian”**: one who accepted Jesus as Christ (= the Messiah)

Early Church's View of Jesus

Lord or Adonai

■ Lord

- Adonai
- Greek *kyrios*
- Whenever the holy name of God (YHWH) encountered in the scriptures, devout Jews substituted “Adonai” instead.

Early Church's View of Jesus

Son of God

■ Son of God

- In the Old Testament, implied a special relationship to God:
 - Angels in the Old Testament: “sons of God”
 - Davidic king: treated as God’s son
 - Nation of Israel referred to as God’s son in Hosea 11:1
- For Christians, “Son of God” implied a *unique* relationship to God

Early Church's View of Jesus

Oldest Liturgical Prayer

- Oldest surviving liturgical prayer of the Church: **The Maranatha Prayer:**
“Our Lord, come!”
- Preserved in:
 - Transliterated Aramaic (1 Corinthians 16:22)
 - Greek translation (Revelation 22:20)
 - Plausibly dates back to Paul's first experiences with Christians in the 30's

Early Church's View of Jesus

Hymn in Philippians 2:6-11

- A possible early hymn is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians 2:6-11 (~52 – 62 AD)
 - Some scholars suggest Paul did not write this hymn, but that it originally was composed in Aramaic, and dated to Palestine of the late 30's

Christ Jesus

who, though he was in the form of God

did not regard equality with God

as something to be exploited,

but emptied himself

taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death

— even death on a cross.

**Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth
and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”**

Early Church's View of Jesus

Hymn in Colossians 1:15-20

- Colossians 1:15-20:
 - Another hymn that some scholars feel was part of the liturgy of the very early Church and included by the author of Colossians (perhaps Paul)

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Early Church's View of Jesus

Hymn in Colossians 1:15-20

He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” (NRSV)

Early Church's View of Jesus

View of the Church in Rome, 40's AD

- Romans 1:3-4: Paul quotes a gospel formulation he expects the Roman to recognize, thought to date from the 40's, when the Roman church was founded by missionaries from Jerusalem:

[God's] Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (NRSV)

Early Church's View of Jesus

Four Gospels

- All four gospel writers agree that Jesus during his ministry was the **Messiah** and the **Son of God**
- Each gospel gives a different emphasis in the tension between Jesus as *fully human* versus Jesus as *fully God*
 - Emphasis on Jesus' servanthood and humanity: Mark > Luke > Matthew > John
 - Jesus' divinity is the most important message of John

Early Church's View of Jesus

Early Symbol for Jesus

- An early symbol of Jesus was the fish (Greek *ichthus*)
 - I-CH-TH-U-S represented slogan (in Greek)
“Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior”

Early Church's View of Jesus

Justin Martyr's early "Creed"

- Justin Martyr, 100-165 AD. *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*:
**In the name of this very Son of God and the first-
begotten of all creation,
who was born through the Virgin,
and became a passible man,
and was crucified under Pontius Pilate by your
people,
and died,
and rose again from the dead,
and ascended to heaven...**

Early Church's View of Jesus

Baptismal Creed ~200 AD

- Description of baptism by Hippolytus of Rome 170-235 AD, in *Apostolic Tradition*:

When the person being baptized goes down into the water, he who baptizes him, putting his hand on him, shall say: “Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty?” And the person being baptized shall say: “I believe.” Then holding his hand on his head, he shall baptize him once.

Early Church's View of Jesus

Baptismal Creed ~200 AD

And then he shall say: “Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was crucified under Pontus Pilate, and was dead and buried, and rose again the third day, alive from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?” And when the person says: “I believe,” he is baptized again.

Early Church's View of Jesus

Baptismal Creed ~200 AD

And again the deacon shall say: “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy church, and in the resurrection of the body?” Then the person being baptized shall say: “I believe,” and he is baptized a third time.

Early Church's View of Jesus

Both Human and Divine

- Christians throughout the early centuries believed Jesus was both human and divine (not some mere mortal prophet)
- The struggle in the Church during this period was understanding the meaning of saying Jesus was *both* human and divine:
 - How human was Jesus?
 - How divine was Jesus?
 - How did Jesus' human nature and the divine nature co-exist?

Early Church's View of Jesus

Both Human and Divine

- 325 AD: Council of Nicaea
- 451 AD: Council of Chalcedon
- Jesus
 - *One* person, with *two* natures, a full divine nature, and a full human nature. He was fully human and fully divine
 - Equal to God the Father
 - Existed from all eternity

Nestorianism

*Integrity and separateness
of Jesus' human and
divine aspects*

**Antiochene School of
Christology**

Arianism Jesus'
Humanity

Apollinarius Jesus'
Divinity

Alexandrian School of Christology

*Unity of Jesus' human
and divine aspects*

Eutychianism, Monophysitism

Early Church's View of Jesus

Both Human and Divine

- 325 AD: Council of Nicaea
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Early Church's View of Jesus

Both Human and Divine

- We believe this fourth century understanding was a divine revelation about Jesus
- It does not mean early believers fully comprehended this revelation
- Christian understanding, like any human understanding, developed and grew

Early Church's View of Jesus

Both Human and Divine

“... orthodox Christology does not attempt to explain the substance of Christology, that is, how the two natures are united in one person. It attempts to indicate where the mystery lies, so to speak, and to defend the mystery against attempts to dissolve it into a neat formula that would distort it.”

- Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd Edition, p. 164

Tackling the *Da Vinci Code* 4

How and When Did the Early
Church Decide on the Books in
the New Testament?

The Canon of the New Testament

Canon of the New Testament

Terminology

- Canon, Greek (*kanon*)
 - Derived from (*kane*), a loan word from the Semitic *kaneh*, “measuring rod” or “measuring stick”
 - “that which is a standard or norm by which all things are judged or evaluated”
 - Canon of Scripture: “a fixed collection of sacred writings that defines the faith and identity of a particular religious community.”

Canon of the New Testament

Gospels

- Gospels (*evangelion*)
 - “Synoptic” Gospels (70 to 90 AD)
 - Called “synoptic” because they offer a similar picture of events in Jesus’ life
 - **Mark**
 - **Matthew**
 - **Luke**
 - **John** (90 to 100 AD)
 - Only 8% overlap with material in the synoptic gospels

Canon of the New Testament

Acts of the Apostles

- **Acts of the Apostles**
 - A sequel to Luke (~Luke II)

Canon of the New Testament

Pauline Letters

- Paul's Letters (50 to 62 AD)

- The Main Epistles (6)

- **Galatians**

- **1 Thessalonians**

- **2 Thessalonians****

- **1 Corinthians**

- **2 Corinthians**

- **Romans**

(**= Paul's authorship disputed by modern scholars)

Canon of the New Testament

Pauline Letters

- The Prison Epistles (4)
 - **Philippians**
 - **Colossians****
 - **Philemon**
 - **Ephesians****
- The Pastoral Epistles (3) (felt today to be written by others after Paul died)
 - **1 Timothy****
 - **2 Timothy****
 - **Titus****

(**= Paul's authorship disputed by modern scholars)

Canon of the New Testament

Hebrews and the General Letters

■ **Hebrews**

- Anonymous author
- In early Church, Paul felt to most likely be author
- Most modern scholars feel it is unlikely Paul was the author

■ **General or Catholic Letters (7)**

- **James**
- **1 Peter, 2 Peter**
- **Jude**
- **1 John, 2 John, 3 John**

Canon of the New Testament

Revelation

- **Revelation** or the **Apocalypse of John** (~81-96 AD)

The Formation of an Authoritative Collection of Christian Scriptures ("Canonization")

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Overview: First Century

- In the first century
 - The only accepted “canon” of sacred Scriptures was the Hebrew Scriptures (later to called the Old Testament)
 - The Greek Translation begun in Alexandria called the **Septuagint** (LXX) was used (250-130 BC).
 - The Scriptures that would one day make up the “New Testament” were being written and were circulating, but they were not yet thought of as “canon.”

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Overview: Second Century

- In the second century:
 - Within individual Christian communities, collections of Scriptures considered “canon” for that community became common
 - There were however many different such “canons,” undoubtedly some in which apocryphal and spurious writings were considered sacred authorities

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Overview: Third and Fourth Centuries

- Between the end of the second century to the end of the fourth century:
 - a general consensus developed on the core books that should be included in any “canon” of Scripture
 - Modern scholars continue to debate exactly how quickly the consensus developed during this period
- In the West, the entire New Testament canon was relatively fixed by the end of the fourth century
- In the East, the presence of certain books in the New Testament canon continued to be debated for another century and half (that is, into the sixth century)
 - Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, Revelation questioned

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Criteria for Canonization

- **Criteria for Canonization:**
 - **1. Apostolicity**
 - If a writing was produced (or believed to be produced) by an apostle or someone in contact with an apostle, it was included
 - **2. Orthodoxy**
 - Writing must express the truth faith
 - **3. Antiquity**
 - Anything believed written after the age of the apostles was rejected
 - **4. Widespread Use or Catholicity (= universality)**
 - The writing must be used widely through the churches

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

At the End of the Second Century

- At the end of the second century, the only scriptures that all communities generally agreed on as canonical were:
 - The four gospels written in the first century:
Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
 - **Acts**
 - **The Letters of Paul**

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

At the End of the Second Century

- Books in our New Testament, but *not* widely accepted as canonical in the early Church:
 - **Hebrews**
 - The General or Catholic Epistles:
 - James
 - 1 and 2 Peter
 - 1, 2, and 3 John
 - Jude
 - **Revelation**

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

At the End of the Second Century

- Books *not* in our New Testament, but often accepted as “canonical” in the early Church:
 - **Apocalypse of Peter**
 - Ultimately excluded from the canon when it was realized it was not written by Peter
 - **Shepherd of Hermas** (first half the second century)
 - In the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus manuscript of the New Testament
 - Popular among pious Christians the first four centuries of the Church
 - Commended as important reading for new Christians by many of the Church Fathers
 - Ultimately excluded because it did not meet apostolicity and antiquity

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

At the End of the Second Century

- Books not in our New Testament, but often accepted as canonical in the early Church:
 - **The Didache (Teaching of the Apostles)** (100-120 AD)
 - Lost until a copy found in monastery library in Constantinople in 1873
 - **The Letter of Barnabas** (around 130 AD)
 - In the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus manuscript of the New Testament
 - **Letter of 1 Clement** (about 95 AD)
 - In the fifth century Codex Alexandrinus manuscript of the New Testament
 - **Eldad and Modad** (a lost apocalypse)

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

The Canon and the Gnostic Gospels

- There was never a time when any of the Gnostic writings or “Gnostic gospels” were considered for inclusion into the canon
 - Irenaeus **“For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to ‘the perfect’ apart and privately from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to the those whom they were also committing the leadership of the churches themselves.”**
 - None of the Gnostic writings met the criteria of apostolicity, orthodoxy, antiquity, or widespread use

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

The Canon of Eusebius

- Eusebius of Caesarea (260 to 339 AD)
 - “Father of Church History”
 - About 320-330 AD: published the 10 volume work *Church History*, sketching history of the early Church from Jesus to his day
 - He classified the Scriptures of his day in four categories:
 - Acknowledged as canonical
 - Disputed
 - Spurious (orthodox, but not written by an apostle)
 - Rejected

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Influence of Emperor Constantine

- Emperor Constantine asked Eusebius to produce 50 copies of the Sacred Scriptures for use in the Churches in Constantinople (“New Rome”)
- Constantine was likely a force for conformity in Scripture among the Churches in the empire

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

The Canon of Athanasius

- 39th Festal (Easter) Letter of Saint Athanasius (295-373 AD) of Alexandria, 367 AD
 - First formal listing of the 27 books of the present New Testament as canonical Scripture

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

Western Church: Synod in Hippo

- New Testament Canon was never ratified in an “ecumenical council”
- First synod that ratified Athanasius’ list of 27 books was a Synod in Hippo, North Africa, in 393 AD, where St. Augustine (Bishop of Hippo) put his weight behind Athanasius’ list
 - Established the canon in the Western Church

Forming a Canon of Scriptures

In the Eastern Church

- In the East, the process was not complete for at least another century and half (that is, into the sixth century)
- Continued to have doubts about:
 - Hebrews
 - 2 Peter
 - 2 and 3 John
 - Jude
 - Revelation

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