

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE BIBLE

A selection of collected canons

This provides a summary of the earliest evidence of complete canons. Most are covered in Book 3.

The ***Muratorian Canon*** (c. 150). This is the earliest list available to date and is substantially the same as the final canon. It includes the four Gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul, Jude, two (perhaps all three) letters of John and the Revelation of John. These are accepted by the 'universal church'. It omits 1 and 2 Peter, James and Hebrews. However, 1 Peter was widely accepted by this time and may be an oversight by the writer (or the later copyist).

Origen of Alexandria (c. 240). All twenty-seven books, though he recognised not all accepted 2 and 3 John and 2 Peter.

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 313). Eusebius listed the accepted books, disputed books and the rejected books. Those universally accepted were the twenty-seven (and no others), although five were listed as disputed by some: James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John. Eusebius admits these were known to most of the churches and he himself accepted them.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350). Only the Apocalypse of John is missing. Cyril warned that no others were even worth reading privately.

The Cheltenham Canon (c. 360). Identified in 1885 (the 'Mommsen list' after its discoverer), is thought to reflect the position in North Africa. Only James, Jude and Hebrews are not mentioned by name, but there is room for at least two of these in the list. No non-canonical books are included.

The Council of Laodicea (c. 363). Identical to that of Athanasius except that the Apocalypse of John is missing. It commands that only these should be read in the churches. Some question whether the list is a later addition and not the conclusions of the Council itself.

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 367). In his *Festal Epistle* for the year 367 Athanasius listed the entire canon exactly as we have it today, though in a varied order and Esther is missing from the Old Testament.

Tyrannius Rufinus (c. 380). Well reflects the churches in the west. His canon was the same as that of Athanasius (except that the order differed), and he listed additional books that were useful but not canonical, and those 'that should not be read out in church.'

Jerome (c. 380). The monk who dedicated himself to producing the Latin Vulgate, adopted the same canon as Augustine.

Augustine (c. 390). Augustine was present at the Synods of Hippo (393), and Carthage (397, 419) at which the canon of twenty-seven books in the New Testament was recognised as the one in use universally among the Western churches. The Old Testament included some the *Apocrypha* books. No known records of Hippo exist and Carthage may reflect what was stated there.

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 350). Produced in metrical form, presumably for easy remembrance, it includes all with the exception of the Apocalypse of John. Gregory concludes 'If there is anything outside of these it is not among the genuine books' (Gregory, *Hymn*, l.1.12:31).

The Apostolic Canons (c. 380). The origin and authorship is uncertain. Twenty-seven books are listed, but this includes two of Clement, which were never widely accepted.

Amphilochius of Iconium (c. 390). Another metrical list which includes all the twenty-seven, though acknowledges that some question Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude. Of Revelation 'some approve, but the most say it is spurious.' However, nothing is included that should not be there.

The third Council of Carthage (397). Probably the same as the first Council at Hippo in North Africa (393), though there are no records of this. Augustine was present and again in 419 when the same list was confirmed. From here the canon of the New Testament in the West was universally accepted.

The Peshitta version (c. 390). At the end of the fourth century from Syria, only twenty-two books are listed, with 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation missing.

Roman Catholic and Protestant canons. The Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1546), *The thirty-nine Articles* of the Church of England (1552), *The Westminster Confession* (1646) of the English and Scottish Puritan churches and the *Baptist Confession of Faith* (1689) each stated the canon of the New Testament as we know it today. The differences were in the Old Testament, where the Roman Catholic church added some of the books of the *Apocrypha*.