

THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

I. DEFINING THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. By Usage: the 2nd Part of the Christian Scriptures
- B. By Words: “Testament” is better rendered “Covenant”; i.e. an agreement
- C. By Composition: A Collection of Books; in the Following Categories
 - 1. Gospels: Books about Jesus Christ
 - 2. History: The Acts of the Apostles
 - 3. Pauline Epistles
 - 4. General Letters
 - 5. Apocalyptic: The Revelation or Apocalypse
- D. By Faith: The Word of God

II. TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Transmission of the NT Text
 - 1. At face value: the text of the NT was completed by AD 100
 - a. None of the original documents, or autographs, survive
 - b. Over 5000 Greek **manuscripts (MS)**, or hand written documents, are known
 - c. Manuscripts are sometimes referred to as “witnesses” (to the original text)
 - 2. Earliest copying carried out by amateurs to meet local needs
 - 3. **Variants** (differences between MSS) developed in text; most before 4th century AD
 - 4. Textual families reflected certain broad geographic areas
 - 5. **Textual Criticism** attempts to establish the original reading of a text
 - a. Identifies variants (and classifies them)
 - b. Evaluates variants in attempt to determine most likely original reading
 - c. Different approaches: some give precedence to particular text families (based on relative age or geographical location); others take eclectic approach
- B. Early Manuscripts (MSS) of the New Testament
 - 1. Earliest MSS are of **Papyrus** (paper-like material from reed plant) in Miniscule (lower case) Script
 - a. Earliest MSS of NT: John Ryland’s Fragment: with parts of John 18:31-33, c. AD 135
 - b. Early Collections: Chester Beatty Papyri & Bodmer Library Collections, 3rd Cent AD
 - 2. Uncial (upper case Greek script) MSS
 - a. Usually in **Codex** Form, with Leaves Sewn on one Edge Like a Book
 - b. Usually of **Parchment** (= Animal Skin)
 - c. Earliest complete Bible (and NT) = 4th cent AD **Codex Sinaiticus**; from monastery at Mt. Sinai

III. THE CANON = The List of Books Considered to be Scripture

- A. NT Canon Began to Form by End of 1st Cent: Gospels & Paul's Letters
 - 1. The heretic teacher Marcion: short canon ca. AD 140; prompted orthodox position
 - 2. Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2-3 John disputed for some time
 - 3. 1st list of 27 NT books: Athanasius' Festal Letter of Easter, 367
- B. Criteria by Which New Testament Books were Canonized
 - 1. Authorship by an Apostle or a Close Associate
 - 2. General Recognition; Accepted by the Majority of Churches
 - 3. An Inherent Spiritual Quality or Authority (it changed lives)
- C. There is a Distinction Between a Book's Canonicity and It's Authority
- D. "New Testament Apocrypha"
 - 1. Books related to NT books in content, but not included in the NT Canon
 - 2. Generally written 2nd century or later
 - 3. Many are pseudonymous ("falsely named"); i.e., falsely attributed to a biblical character
 - 4. Some are good works that simply never found general acceptance
 - 5. Not a collection with defined limits
 - a. Gospels
 - b. Acts
 - c. Letters
 - d. Apocalypses
 - e. Allegories and Gnostic books

IV. THE SEPTUAGINTAND APOCRYPHA

- A. **Septuagint** (LXX): A Greek Translation of Hebrew OT
 - 1. Done 3rd-1st Cent BC in Alexandria (Egypt) for Greek-speaking Jews
 - 2. Became the Bible for Earliest Greek-speaking Christians
 - 3. Source of Many OT Quotations Found in NT
 - 4. Rejected by Jews because of Christian Use; Preserved through Christian MSS
- B. **The Apocrypha** (= "official" OT Apocrypha, called **Deuterocanonicals** by Roman Church)
 - 1. Books Written 200 BC-AD 100 by Jews or Jewish Christians; Associated with LXX
 - 2. Usage:
 - a. Never Included in Hebrew Bible Canon
 - b. Because Contained in LXX, Used by Christian Church through Reformation
 - c. Rejected as Uncanonical by Protestants
 - d. Still Accepted by Orthodox Churches
 - 1) Roman Catholics: Declared Canonical at Council of Trent
 - 2) Eastern Orthodox
 - 3. Pseudepigrapha
 - a. Other books of related material, dating 200 BC to AD 100 or so
 - b. Not included in any established canon of the OT