

# THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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## PART I. THE ORIGIN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT (27 BOOKS)

### A. EVENTS THAT LED UP TO THE WRITING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The books of the New Testament came into being due to four important events:

- The first coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, into the world
- The calling of the disciples of Christ to be his witnesses
- The oral tradition of “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42)
- The special circumstances that led to the writing of each book.

#### **1. The coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, into the world.**

From the very first people, Adam and Eve, and throughout the whole Old Testament period the prophets announced the coming of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world<sup>1</sup>. When he came, his deeds and words made such a deep impression on the people in the world that the news about Jesus Christ spread fast. All four writers of the Gospels describe *this greatest event in all of human history, namely, that God took on the human nature in Jesus Christ*<sup>2</sup>. Each of the evangelists (Mark, Luke, Matthew and John) made a selection of the most important things Jesus said and did<sup>3</sup>. They made their selection in accordance with the purpose of their Gospel.

#### **2. The calling of the disciples to be the witnesses of Jesus.**

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as his acts and teachings, did not take place in a corner of the world<sup>4</sup>. There were very many witnesses. They saw the works of Jesus *with their own eyes* and heard his teachings *with their own ears*<sup>5</sup>. And what they saw and heard they passed on to very many people in many places in the world<sup>6</sup>. Before Jesus Christ ascended into heaven he appointed his disciples as his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth<sup>7</sup>. Jews, half-Jews and non-Jews who were eye- and ear-witnesses could confirm that what the apostles of Jesus Christ proclaimed and later recorded in the New Testament was the absolute truth!

But there were also many enemies of Christ and Christians. If the apostles would have proclaimed lies, these enemies would have been the first to bring that into the light. They would have unmasked the apostles as false witnesses. One of the strongest proofs that the apostles proclaimed the truth was that they made an appeal to the knowledge of their enemies! So great was their confidence that there were many people who could confirm what they proclaimed<sup>8</sup>!

#### **3. The oral transmission of “the apostles’ teaching”.**

The message of the gospel was first proclaimed by the apostles, even before they recorded it in our four Gospels<sup>9</sup>. By proclaiming the same message again and again to people in many different places, the message received more and more the form it now has in the four recorded Gospels.

The three main parts of the apostles’ teaching are:

- An introduction about Jesus Christ: his origin, his birth and the beginning of his ministry
- His ministry in public to the crowds and his ministry in private to his disciples
- His death, resurrection and ascension

<sup>1</sup> See [www.deltacourse.org](http://www.deltacourse.org) Study 16.

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1,14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 1:8

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:1; John 21:25; Acts 1:1

<sup>4</sup> Acts 26:26

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter 1:16-18; John 19:35; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:5-6

<sup>6</sup> 1 John 1:1

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:2,8

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:22; cf. Matthew 22:15-16

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:22; Acts 2:42

#### 4. The inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised his disciples that he would not leave his disciples alone, but *that he himself would return to them as the Holy Spirit and be with and in them for ever*<sup>10</sup>. The Holy Spirit would remind them of everything that he (Jesus) had said and done<sup>11</sup>, convince them of sin, salvation and judgement<sup>12</sup>, teach them all things they had to know and guide them into the whole truth<sup>13</sup>. The Holy Spirit would take what is of Christ and make it known to the disciples. The writers of the Gospels wrote their Gospels under the direct inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus Christ himself<sup>14</sup>.

The disciples of Jesus Christ were a very unique group of people and were called “apostles” (meaning: the ones sent out), because only they were chosen, called, trained and “sent out” by Jesus Christ himself while he was still on earth<sup>15</sup>. They complied with the requirements of an apostle in Acts 1:21-22. “An apostle” had to be *an eyewitness* of Jesus Christ<sup>16</sup>, God recommended their ministry through much spiritual fruit<sup>17</sup> and through miracles<sup>18</sup>. And the Holy Spirit used them to write the books of the New Testament<sup>19</sup>.

The practice among God’s people, Israel, was *to record God’s Words in ink on scrolls and preserve them safely*. For example, “After Moses finished writing in a book the words of the Law from beginning to end, ...he gave command to the Levites to place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD (in the tabernacle / temple) ... to remain as a witness ...”<sup>20</sup>. Another example, “This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you ... While Jeremiah dictated all the words the LORD had spoken to him, Baruch wrote them on a scroll ... Baruch read to all the people at the LORD’s temple the words of Jeremiah from the scroll ...”<sup>21</sup>.

So, just as the whole Old Testament was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit<sup>22</sup>, likewise the whole New Testament was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit<sup>23</sup>. Every part of the Holy Bible is inspired by God<sup>24</sup> and therefore infallible<sup>25</sup> and the final authority for doctrine and life for all people<sup>26</sup>.

The books of the New Testament were originally written in the Greek language, which was a common spoken language and literary language in the Roman Empire during the first century A.D.

### **B. THE FOUR GOSPELS (A.D. 44-98)**

The purpose of each Gospel is the following:

#### **1. Mark.**

Mark, written in Rome in the years 44–46, teaches that Jesus Christ is the mighty King. Mark was a disciple of the apostle Peter<sup>27</sup> and wrote his Gospel mainly for Romans.

#### **2. Luke.**

Luke, written in Rome in the period 60-61, teaches that Jesus Christ is the compassionate High Priest. Luke was a disciple of the apostle Paul<sup>28</sup> and wrote his Gospel mainly for the intellectuals at Rome<sup>29</sup>.

#### **3. Matthew.**

Matthew, probably written in Jerusalem in the period 63–66 (cf. his references to events and situations in and around Jerusalem)<sup>30</sup>, teaches that Jesus Christ is the great Prophet. Because Matthew wrote his Gospel mainly for Jews he made much use of quotations from the Old Testament.

#### **4. John.**

John, most probably written in Ephesus in the period 70–98, teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God or the Word of God<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> John 14:16-18

<sup>11</sup> John 14:26

<sup>12</sup> John 16:8-11

<sup>13</sup> John 16:13-15

<sup>14</sup> Romans 8:9-10, cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12

<sup>15</sup> Luke 6:12-16; Acts 26:16; Romans 1:1

<sup>16</sup> Acts 1:21-22

<sup>17</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:18

<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:12

<sup>19</sup> 2 Peter 3:2,15-16

<sup>20</sup> Deuteronomy 32:24-26.

<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah 36:1-4,10,18, 28

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 1:9-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21

<sup>23</sup> John 14:26; John 16:13-15

<sup>24</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>25</sup> Titus 1:2

<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:6

<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 5:13

<sup>28</sup> Colossians 4:14

<sup>29</sup> Luke 1:1-4

<sup>30</sup> cf. Matthew 28:15

<sup>31</sup> John 1:1

The apostle John was the first disciple of Jesus Christ<sup>32</sup> and wrote his Gospel originally for people who had a great need for the truth in a time when there were many false teachings.

### **C. THE BOOK OF ACTS (A.D. 61)**

#### **1. Luke, the writer of Acts.**

Luke was a disciple, co-worker and fellow-traveller of the apostle Paul. Luke first made an accurate study of his resources in Jerusalem, Caesarea, Asia Minor and Greece with regard to the birth, life, works and words of Jesus Christ<sup>33</sup>.

He made a study especially of the two apostles Peter and Paul. Luke wrote the book of Acts of the Apostles in 61 in Rome. The book of Acts is one of the most accurate history books in the world!

#### **2. Luke wrote Acts with three purposes.**

- **Luke wanted to record the continuing ministry of Jesus Christ through his apostles.**

The purpose of the Gospel of Luke was to record *the beginning* of the ministry of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the book of Acts was to record *the continuation* of the ministry of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit working in his apostles<sup>34</sup>. Jesus Christ built his Church on the foundation of the apostles and the New Testament prophets<sup>35</sup>.

- **Luke wanted to win the intellectuals to Christ.**

He wanted to make the message of Jesus Christ known to learned people in Rome. It was common in that time for a group of intellectuals to gather to listen to the reading of a new book, generally by the author himself, and then to discuss it. In this way Luke could proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to learned people.

- **Luke wanted to defend Christianity.**

Luke wanted to justify the attitude of the apostles Peter and Paul and other Christians towards the Roman government and its law. Throughout the book of Acts the respectful behaviour of the Christians towards the Roman government and its laws is made evident.

#### **3. A short summary of the history that is recorded in Acts.**

- **Acts chapters 1–7 describe the founding of the Church in Jerusalem and its surroundings (30-33/24).**

The events in Acts chapters 1-7 took place in the years 30–33/34. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in May of the year 30, the Spirit of the resurrected Christ<sup>36</sup> came to dwell in the hearts and lives of all Christians in order to give them courage, power, endurance, joy, and spiritual insight. The proclamation of the gospel led to the conversion of many people and the founding of the very first congregation (church) in history in Jerusalem in the year 30. However, the fast growth of the number of Christians<sup>37</sup> led to the persecution by the Jewish authorities. Finally, a great persecution broke out against especially the Greek speaking Jews who had become Christians<sup>38</sup>!

- **Acts chapters 8–12 describe the spreading of the Church to the south and to the north (33/34-44).**

The events in Acts chapters 8-12 took place in the period 33/34–44. Jewish Christian congregations were founded in Judea, Galilee and Samaria<sup>39</sup>. The first Gentile Christian congregation was established in Caesarea by Peter in about the year 40<sup>40</sup>. While the apostles remained in Jerusalem, the Greek speaking Jews, who had become believers in Jesus Christ, were scattered because of the great persecution by the other Jews against them. They proclaimed the gospel wherever they went and so people in Africa (Ethiopia) and the Middle East became Christians. By the year 44 they had founded the congregation in Antioch of Syria<sup>41</sup>.

- **Acts chapters 13–20 describe the expansion of the Church to the west (Asia Minor and Europe)(45-57).**

The events in Acts chapters 13-20 took place in the period 45–57. Jews lived in very many countries since the time of the exile to Assyria (721 B.C.) and the exile to Babylon (586 B.C.). They spread the knowledge of the Old Testament in these countries<sup>42</sup>. Paul ministered together with Barnabas in Antioch in about the years 45-46. Paul made several missionary journeys to spread the gospel among the Jews in their synagogues and especially among the non-Jews (Gentiles). From Antioch in Syria Paul made three missionary journeys:

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<sup>32</sup> John 1:35-36; John 21:20-25

<sup>33</sup> Luke 1:1-4

<sup>34</sup> Acts 1:1

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20

<sup>36</sup> John 14:16-18

<sup>37</sup> Acts 2:42-47

<sup>38</sup> Acts 6:9; Acts 7:57–8:3

<sup>39</sup> Acts 9:31

<sup>40</sup> Acts 10:28-29,34, 47-48; Acts 15:7-9

<sup>41</sup> Acts 8:1,4,27-28; Acts 11:19-26; Galatians 1:21

<sup>42</sup> Acts 15:21

**The first missionary journey of Paul** was during the years 47–48 (Acts 13–14). His companions were Barnabas and Mark. They travelled to Cyprus, Pamphylia, South Galatia and Cilicia. They founded congregations in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Asia Minor<sup>43</sup>.

**The second missionary journey of Paul** took place during the years 50–52 (Acts 15:40–18:22). His companions were Silas and Timothy. They travelled from Syria to Cilicia and South Galatia in Asia Minor. Accompanied by Luke they crossed over to Europe and founded congregations in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea) and in Achaia (Athens and Corinth)<sup>44</sup>.

**The third missionary journey of Paul** was during the years 52–57 (Acts 18:23 to Acts 21:14). His companions were among others Titus and Timothy. They ministered throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia<sup>45</sup>. They laboured for three years in Ephesus and founded the congregations in the province of Asia (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea and Colossae)<sup>46</sup>. They also travelled to Macedonia, stayed three months in Greece and then returned via Macedonia and Asia Minor (Troas and Miletus)<sup>47</sup>. On the return journey Luke was again with Paul<sup>48</sup> and describes the journey to Jerusalem in detail<sup>49</sup>.

• **Acts chapters 21–28 describe the extension of the Church to Rome, the capital of the Empire (57-61).**

The events in Acts chapters 21–28 took place in the period 57–61. During this time Paul was in prison most of the time. He was imprisoned in Jerusalem and Caesarea (57-59) and in Rome (60-61).

## **D. A SUMMARY OF THE EARLIEST CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THE 13 LETTERS OF PAUL.**

### **1. The apostle Paul, a Jewish Pharisee and persecutor of Christians, became a Christian.**

Paul was a Jew, born in Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia. He automatically received the Roman citizenship. He was educated as a Pharisee by Gamaliel in Jerusalem and ardently strived to live according to the Jewish law. He persecuted Christians in many places<sup>50</sup>.

Paul was converted in about A.D. 34, four years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He immediately went from Damascus to Arabia and later returned to Damascus. There he proclaimed the gospel until his escape from Damascus three years later<sup>51</sup>. In about A.D. 36 Paul ministered a brief period in Jerusalem and was then sent to Tarsus in Cilicia<sup>52</sup> where he ministered for almost 10 years until he joined Barnabas in Antioch in Syria in A.D. 45-46.

Paul's salvation testimony is summarised in Acts 9:1-31, Acts 22: 1-21 and Acts 26: 1-29.

### **2. Paul's first missionary journey from A.D. 47-48 (Acts 13:1 – 14:28).**

The church at Antioch (in Syria) sent Barnabas and Paul off on a missionary journey<sup>53</sup>. They travelled and ministered in Cyprus, in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. John Mark accompanied them in the beginning, but deserted them in the province of Pamphylia<sup>54</sup>.

Timothy probably committed his heart and life in Lystra to Jesus Christ. Paul called him 'my spiritual child'<sup>55</sup>.

When they had returned to Antioch in Syria, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles<sup>56</sup>.

### **3. The Jerusalem Conference in A.D. 49 or 50 (Acts 15:1-29).**

Judaizers<sup>57</sup> came from Judea to Antioch in Syria and taught that unless the Gentile believers were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved<sup>58</sup>. A sharp dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas against these Judaizers. The church in Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas together with some believers to meet the apostles and elders in the church of Jerusalem to advise them. This meeting was not a representative umbrella organisation like a Council of Synod, but a consultation between two local church councils.

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<sup>43</sup> Acts 14:23

<sup>44</sup> Acts 15:41; Acts 16:1,11-12; Acts 17:1,10,15; Acts 18:1,18-22

<sup>45</sup> Acts 18:23

<sup>46</sup> Acts 19:8-10; Colossians 4:16; Revelation 2-3

<sup>47</sup> Acts 20:1-5,13-16

<sup>48</sup> Acts 20:5-6

<sup>49</sup> Acts 21:1-8,15

<sup>50</sup> Acts 22:2-5,25-29; Acts 26:4-11

<sup>51</sup> Acts 9:19b-25; Galatians 1:17

<sup>52</sup> Acts 9:26-30; Galatians 1:18-23

<sup>53</sup> Acts 13:1-3

<sup>54</sup> Acts 15:36-40

<sup>55</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:2

<sup>56</sup> Acts 14:27

<sup>57</sup> Judaizers were Jewish missionaries zealous to convert Christians to become Jews.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 15:1-29

The name Titus occurs nowhere in the book of Acts, but elsewhere in the New Testament it appears 13 times. Titus is first mentioned in Galatians 2:1,3 and implied in Acts 15:2, when Paul and Barnabas went from Antioch to Jerusalem for the church consultation. Titus was one of the converts that accompanied them. Paul called him his true son in their common faith<sup>59</sup>. Titus became a test-case and a definite challenge to the Judaizers. According to Galatians 2:3, Titus was a Greek and naturally the Judaic party at Jerusalem demanded that he be circumcised. But Paul did not yield for a moment to their demand<sup>60</sup>.

After hearing how Gentiles had become Christians from the apostles Peter and Paul and after hearing James explain the testimony of the prophets concerning the Gentiles, the whole assembly unanimously decided the dispute in the favour of the Gentiles<sup>61</sup>. Both Gentiles and Jews would be admitted into the Christian Church solely on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ and no one would be required to keep the Jewish law. The consultation sent the prophets/preachers Judas and Silas to deliver the decision to the churches in Syria and Cilicia which had many Gentile converts<sup>62</sup>.

#### **4. Paul's second missionary journey from A.D. 50-57 (Acts 15:40 – 18:22).**

##### South Galatia and Asia Minor.

Timothy was a disciple. His mother was a Jewess and a believer, but his father was a Greek<sup>63</sup>. Paul asked Timothy to join the missionary team with Silas and Luke. They travelled from Syria to Cilicia and South Galatia in Asia Minor<sup>64</sup>.

The Christians in Lystra and Derbe spoke well of Timothy<sup>65</sup>. Because Paul began his work of preaching in Jewish synagogues, he circumcised Timothy in order not to unnecessarily offend the legalistic Jews<sup>66</sup>. It was probably at this time, that the elders of the churches, which had been established during Paul's first missionary journey<sup>67</sup>, together with Paul laid their hands on Timothy in order to *appoint* him for his new task<sup>68</sup>.

##### Macedonia.

After a vision of the man of Macedonia, the team concluded that God called them to preach the gospel to Europe! Accompanied by Luke the missionary team crossed over to Europe for the first time to preach the gospel and establish churches in Europe: in Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea and in Achaia: Athens and Corinth<sup>69</sup>.

Paul and Silas were tried and imprisoned in Philippi<sup>70</sup>. After they were released, Luke stayed behind in Philippi<sup>71</sup>, but Silas and Timothy preached the gospel together with Paul in Thessalonica<sup>72</sup> and in Berea<sup>73</sup>. While Paul travelled on to Athens, Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea to help the young Christian church to grow<sup>74</sup>.

##### Achaia and Paul's first visit to Corinth between A.D. 50-52.

In Athens Paul spoke at a meeting on the Areopagus<sup>75</sup>. Paul left Athens and began preaching in Corinth<sup>76</sup>. *Paul was the first to preach the gospel in Corinth and he was the founder of the church at Corinth* (3:6,10; 4:15; 9:1-2). Paul became closely attached to this church. Silas and Timothy joined him in his work<sup>77</sup>. They stayed about 1½ years in Corinth<sup>78</sup>.

Before Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth, Paul wrote his (1<sup>st</sup>) letter: **Galatians** in the middle of A.D. 50 from Corinth. His purpose was: "To defend the gospel of righteousness by faith without the works of the law".

After Silas and Timothy came from Thessalonica to join Paul in Corinth<sup>79</sup>, Paul wrote his (2<sup>nd</sup>) letter: **I Thessalonians** in the autumn A.D. 50 from Corinth. His purpose was: "To encourage the growth of the new congregation".

Soon thereafter Paul wrote his (3<sup>rd</sup>) letter: **II Thessalonians** also in the autumn of A.D. 50 from Corinth. His purpose was: "To exhort the new congregation to remain calm with a view to the second coming of Christ". Silas and Timothy are mentioned in both letters<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Titus 1:4

<sup>60</sup> Galatians 2:5

<sup>61</sup> Acts 15

<sup>62</sup> Acts 15:30-39

<sup>63</sup> Acts 16:1

<sup>64</sup> Acts 15:41

<sup>65</sup> Acts 16:2

<sup>66</sup> Acts 16:3

<sup>67</sup> Acts 14:23

<sup>68</sup> 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6

<sup>69</sup> Acts 16:9-12 (Luke includes himself with the words: "we"). 1 Corinthians 2:1-3; 3:1-3

<sup>70</sup> Acts 16:19-25

<sup>71</sup> Acts 17:1 (Luke no longer includes himself, but writes about "they": Paul, Silas and Timothy).

<sup>72</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:1

<sup>73</sup> Acts 17:10,15

<sup>74</sup> Acts 17:15

<sup>75</sup> Acts 17:16-34

<sup>76</sup> Acts 18:1-17

<sup>77</sup> Acts 18:5

<sup>78</sup> Acts 18:11

<sup>79</sup> Acts 18:1,5; 1 Thessalonians 3:6

<sup>80</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1

### Ephesus and Apollos in Corinth.

Paul, Priscilla and Aquila sailed to Ephesus. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila to minister in Ephesus. There they coached Apollos to proclaim the Way more accurately<sup>81</sup>.

During Paul's absence, Apollos travelled to Achaia and came to preach the gospel in Corinth. He vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ<sup>82</sup>. He preached the same gospel, but did it in another way, which undoubtedly was connected to his education in Alexandria in Egypt, where Greek philosophy and rhetoric flourished. Some Corinthians preferred his eloquence and philosophic method of teaching more than the simple unadorned preaching of Paul<sup>83</sup>. This led to tension and the forming of factions within the church at Corinth<sup>84</sup>.

### Paul returned to Antioch in Syria.

Then Paul sailed on to Caesarea and continued to travel to Antioch in Syria<sup>85</sup>.

## **4. Paul's third missionary journey from A.D. 52-57 (Acts 18:23 to Acts 21:14).**

### Galatia and Phrygia.

Paul, Timothy and Titus ministered throughout the region of the provinces Galatia and Phrygia (in Asia Minor)<sup>86</sup>. Then Paul took the road through the interior to Ephesus.

### Ephesus and Paul's second visit to Corinth in A.D.55.

Paul ministered in Ephesus in the province of Asia for three years<sup>87</sup> (A.D. 52-55).

During his absence from Corinth, there was nevertheless much contact between Paul and the Corinthians. This was possible, because both Ephesus and Corinth were situated on the main trade route between the east and the west. The journey from Ephesus to Corinth took about three weeks by sea. While he was in Ephesus, Paul received disturbing news about the state of affairs in the Corinthian church. There seemed to have been serious moral problems.

During his last year in Ephesus, in A.D. 55, Paul probably paid a second short visit to Corinth, about which we have very little information. He probably crossed the sea from Ephesus to Corinth and back. He described this as "a painful visit"<sup>88</sup>. It caused him much grief. In 2 Corinthians 8:10, Paul speaks of "last year", probably referring to this second visit to Corinth, when he made a start with the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. During this second visit Paul warned them that he would not spare those who sinned<sup>89</sup>.

Paul also wrote a first letter to the Corinthians probably from Ephesus (about A.D. 55). He exhorted the Corinthians not to associate with (sexual) immoral people who call themselves 'brothers'. This letter was not preserved<sup>90</sup>.

Possibly during Paul's second visit or in this lost letter, Paul had revealed his original plan of paying Corinth a double visit by seeing them on his way to Macedonia and on his return from Macedonia<sup>91</sup>. The Corinthians replied, asking advice on certain matters, amongst them that of the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem<sup>92</sup>. The questions of the Corinthians together with other serious news Paul had received from Sosthenus<sup>93</sup>, Chloe's household and from Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus<sup>94</sup> concerning the state of affairs in Corinth, caused Paul to do three things:

- One. Paul wrote a second letter to the Corinthians, his (4<sup>th</sup>) letter: **I Corinthians** in the spring A.D. 56 from Ephesus. His purpose was: "To teach that the Christian Church is *in* the world, but *not of* the world".
- Two. He sent Timothy from Ephesus via Macedonia to Corinth. He expected Timothy to arrive at Corinth after his first letter to the Corinthians had arrived there<sup>95</sup>. Paul calls Timothy his faithful co-worker and says that Timothy would remind them of his way of life in Christ Jesus which agrees with his teaching everywhere in every church and that Timothy is carrying on the work of the Lord just as he is<sup>96</sup>. Timothy was entrusted with the difficult task of solving the problems in the Corinthian church, like party strife, sexual immorality, legal cases against one another, chaos in the worship meetings, etc.

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<sup>81</sup> Acts 18:19-28

<sup>82</sup> Acts 18:27 – 19:1

<sup>83</sup> Acts 18:24-28; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

<sup>84</sup> 1 Corinthians 1-3

<sup>85</sup> Acts 18:18-22

<sup>86</sup> Acts 18:23

<sup>87</sup> Acts 19:8-10, 26

<sup>88</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:1

<sup>89</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:2

<sup>90</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:9.

<sup>91</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:15-16

<sup>92</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8:10; 9:2

<sup>93</sup> Acts 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:1

<sup>94</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:10-19; 7:1; 16:12,17

<sup>95</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:10-11

<sup>96</sup> Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10

- Three. He told the Corinthian Christians that he would soon visit them and that it depended on them if he would come with ‘a whip’ to discipline them or ‘in love and with a gentle spirit’<sup>97</sup>. Paul revised his travelling plans. He had planned to visit Corinth before his journey up to Macedonia and again on his return from Macedonia<sup>98</sup> and then stay the winter in Corinth<sup>99</sup>. Now he would no longer pay them a double visit, but a single longer visit after he had visited Macedonia. The purpose of this change of plans was to spare the Corinthian Christians<sup>100</sup> and to give them time to set their house in order in readiness for his visit, because he was fully prepared to exercise the sternest discipline, if necessary<sup>101</sup>.

He also wrote a third letter to the Corinthians, a letter that hurt them<sup>102</sup>, a letter that was also not preserved (about summer A.D. 56). He wrote to them out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears<sup>103</sup>.

Paul then sent Titus to Corinth (*1<sup>st</sup> visit of Titus to Corinth*) with the task to remedy the fallout precipitated by this painful visit and the letter that hurt them.

In 2 Corinthians 8:10, Paul speaks of ‘last year’, probably referring to his second visit to Corinth, when he made a start with the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem or when Titus made a beginning with the collection for the needy Christians in Jerusalem<sup>104</sup>.

#### Troas and Macedonia.

After the great riot of the silversmiths in Ephesus<sup>105</sup> Paul left Ephesus and travelled to Macedonia. He expected to meet Titus in Troas, but finally found him in Macedonia<sup>106</sup>. Titus met Paul in Macedonia and reported the situation in Corinth. His spirit was refreshed by the Corinthians, the Corinthians were obedient and had received him with fear and trembling<sup>107</sup>. The Corinthians had continued the collection for the poor Christians in Judea. He also reported that some people at Corinth attacked Paul’s apostleship<sup>108</sup>.

Overjoyed by Titus’ success, Paul wrote a fourth letter to the Corinthians, his (5<sup>th</sup>) letter: **II Corinthians** in the autumn A.D. 56 from Macedonia (Philippi?). His purpose was: “To witness that God’s strength is manifested through human weakness”. Paul planned to visit Corinth, but feared that the Corinthians would not find him as they would like him to be and that he would not find them to be what he would like them to be<sup>109</sup>. He also warned them as during his second visit, that he would not spare those who sinned earlier<sup>110</sup>.

Paul urged Titus to go to Corinth and sent the letter together with Titus (*2<sup>nd</sup> visit of Titus to Corinth*), because Titus had the same concern for the Corinthians as Paul and acted in the same spirit and followed the same course<sup>111</sup>. He was accompanied by two other brothers, one of whom was a noted preacher. He was commissioned to organize the collections of alms for the Christians at Jerusalem<sup>112</sup>. Titus did not exploit the Corinthians (as the false apostles did)<sup>113</sup>. He had a heart for the Corinthians, was a trouble shooter, peacemaker, administrator and devoted missionary.

Also Timothy met Paul in Macedonia<sup>114</sup>. Paul travelled through the area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people<sup>115</sup>.

#### **Paul’s third visit to Corinth from winter A.D. 56 to spring A.D. 57.**

Paul and Timothy finally arrived in Greece where they stayed three months, particularly in Corinth<sup>116</sup> from the winter A.D. 56 to the spring A.D. 57. This was Paul’s third visit to Corinth<sup>117</sup>.

Paul wrote his (6<sup>th</sup>) letter: **Romans** in the spring A.D. 57 from Corinth. His purpose was: “To teach that justification is only by grace through faith”.

<sup>97</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 11:34; 16:2-9

<sup>98</sup> 2 Cor 1:15-16

<sup>99</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:5-

6

<sup>100</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:23

<sup>101</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:2

<sup>102</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:5-8

<sup>103</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:4

<sup>104</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:6; 12:17-18

<sup>105</sup> Acts 20:1

<sup>106</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:6-14

<sup>107</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:13-16

<sup>108</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

<sup>109</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:19-21

<sup>110</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:2

<sup>111</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:16; 12:17-18

<sup>112</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

<sup>113</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:17-18

<sup>114</sup> Acts 20:1-4

<sup>115</sup> Acts 20:2

<sup>116</sup> Acts 20:2-3

<sup>117</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:1

### From Macedonia via Asia to Jerusalem

Due to a plot of the Jews against Paul, Paul left Corinth and returned to Syria via Macedonia. Luke joined Paul at Philippi<sup>118</sup>. The other co-workers of Paul waited for them at Troas<sup>119</sup>.

After the Feast of Unleavened Bread in A.D. 57<sup>120</sup> Paul sailed past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia because he (and his co-workers) wanted to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost<sup>121</sup>.

### **5. Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea from A.D 57 to A.D. 59 (Acts 21:17 – 26:32).**

Paul and his party of co-workers met James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem and they shared with one another what God had done among the Gentiles and what God had done among the Jews<sup>122</sup>.

Some Jews (Judaizers) from the province of Asia stirred an uprising against Paul and his co-workers. They wanted to kill Paul. Paul addressed the crowd about his calling. Roman soldiers arrested and rescued him<sup>123</sup>.

Paul was tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin and sentenced to be tried by the Gentile Emperor in Rome<sup>124</sup>. A plot to assassinate Paul failed<sup>125</sup>.

Paul was transferred from Jerusalem to Caesarea, tried before the Roman Governor Felix and spent two years<sup>126</sup> in jail. Then he was tried before the Roman Governor Festus and the Jewish King Agrippa to whom he shared his salvation testimony<sup>127</sup>.

### **6. Paul's first imprisonment in Rome from AD 60-61 (Acts 27:1 – 28:31).**

The prisoner Paul accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus from Thessalonica were transported by ship to Rome. After a shipwreck in Malta he was put under house arrest in Rome, guarded by a soldier. "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>128</sup>.

Paul wrote four letters during his first imprisonment in Rome. Epaphras was his fellow prisoner<sup>129</sup>.

He wrote his (7<sup>th</sup>) letter: **Colossians** in A.D. 60 to the Colossians. His purpose was: "To teach that Jesus Christ is supreme in the world and his work of salvation is all-sufficient".

He wrote his (8<sup>th</sup>) letter: **Philemon** in A.D. 60 to his co-worker and friend Philemon "To exhort Philemon to welcome his runaway slave Onesimus".

He wrote his (9<sup>th</sup>) circular letter: **Ephesians** in A.D. 60 to the believers in Ephesus and the surrounding cities in Asia Minor. His purpose was: "To teach Christians about the unity of the world-wide Body of Christ (the Christian Church)".

Finally he wrote his (10<sup>th</sup>) letter: **Philippians** towards the end of A.D. 61 to the Philippians. His purpose was: "To open up his heart and life to the Philippians".

Timothy was all this time in close contact with Paul<sup>130</sup>. From prison, Paul wrote that he hoped to be released soon and that he would send Timothy to Philippi<sup>131</sup>.

### **7. Paul's missionary journey between his two Roman imprisonments from AD 61-64/65.**

After Paul's release from his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul travelled much. He sent Timothy to Philippi<sup>132</sup>, while he himself travelled via Crete to Asia Minor. He left Titus on the Island Crete to organise the church or churches that had been established there<sup>133</sup> and travelled to Colossae where he visited Philemon<sup>134</sup>.

Then he travelled to Ephesus where he met Timothy again and urged him to continue to work in Ephesus<sup>135</sup>. Paul travelled to Philippi in Macedonia as he had previously planned.<sup>136</sup> He hoped to return to Ephesus shortly, but rather expected that his absence might be prolonged<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Acts 20:6

<sup>119</sup> Acts 20:5

<sup>120</sup> Acts 20:5

<sup>121</sup> Acts 20:16

<sup>122</sup> Acts 21:17-29

<sup>123</sup> Acts 21:27 – 22:29

<sup>124</sup> Acts 22:30 – 23:11

<sup>125</sup> Acts 23:12-22

<sup>126</sup> Acts 24:27

<sup>127</sup> Acts 25:1 – 26:32

<sup>128</sup> Acts 28:30-31

<sup>129</sup> Philemon 23

<sup>130</sup> Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1; Philippians 1:1

<sup>131</sup> Philippians 2:24,19

<sup>132</sup> Philippians 2:19-23

<sup>133</sup> Titus 1:5, cf. Acts 2:11

<sup>134</sup> Philemon 22

<sup>135</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3

<sup>136</sup> Philippians 2:24, 1 Timothy 1:3

<sup>137</sup> 1 Timothy 3:14-15

Paul wrote his (11<sup>th</sup>) letter: **I Timothy** to his co-worker Timothy in the period A.D. 62–63 from Macedonia (Philippi?)<sup>138</sup>. His purpose was: “To instruct Timothy about the leadership and the organisation of congregations/churches”. He urged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to combat the false teachers and to establish sound doctrine.

He wrote his (12<sup>th</sup>) letter: **Titus** to his co-worker Titus in the period A.D. 62–63 from Macedonia (Philippi?). His purpose was “to give his fellow worker, Titus, directions for the promotion of sound doctrine and holiness in individual-, family-, church- and social relationships” on Crete. He requested Titus to meet him in Nicopolis in the province of Epirus, a province north-west of Macedonia<sup>139</sup>.

Paul then travelled to Nicopolis and spent the winter (A.D. 63?) there. Although it is not mentioned, it is possible that Titus travelled with Paul to Spain<sup>140</sup>. Details are unknown. We do not know if he took Titus with him or not. After he returned from Spain, he again travelled to Asia Minor.

He left Trophimus sick in Miletus, just south of Ephesus<sup>141</sup>. Possibly at this time he met Timothy and they shed much tears<sup>142</sup>. He met Carpus at Troas where he left his cloak and valuable parchments<sup>143</sup>. He left Erastus at Corinth<sup>144</sup>.

It is unknown when or where Paul was arrested. His arrest may have taken place in Troas, Corinth or Rome. He was again imprisoned in Rome. During his second imprisonment in Rome only Luke was with him<sup>145</sup>.

At this time, the cruel emperor of the Roman Empire, called Nero, was reigning. Nero had murdered his step-brother, his mother, his wife, his teacher and many others. In July 19-24 of the year A.D. 64 Nero probably set Rome on fire and falsely accused the Christians of doing this. A terrible persecution broke out against the Christians. Although Paul was a Roman citizen, he no longer enjoyed a measure of political protection. Paul’s second Roman imprisonment was severe and short<sup>146</sup>.

Paul wrote his (13<sup>th</sup>)(final) letter: **II Timothy** probably during the winter A.D. 64 to 65 once more from prison in Rome<sup>147</sup>. His purpose was: “To instruct Timothy to proclaim the sound Christian message”.

We do not know where Timothy was when Paul wrote his second letter to him. Paul mentions those people in the province of Asia whom had deserted him<sup>148</sup>; he mentions Onesiphorus whom had helped him in Ephesus<sup>149</sup> and says that he sent Tychicus to Ephesus, probably to enable Timothy to come to him in Rome<sup>150</sup>. From Ephesus, Timothy would be able to travel via Troas to Rome<sup>151</sup>. Paul also sent his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila. This couple had once before left Rome when the emperor Claudius ordered all Jews out of Rome. They had lived in Corinth and Ephesus before they returned to Rome<sup>152</sup>. Now it seems that they lived in Ephesus for a second time after the emperor Nero began his persecution against Christians in Rome<sup>153</sup>. We therefore conclude that Timothy was most probably in Ephesus when Paul wrote his second letter to him. Timothy had not yet left Ephesus, where the battle against the false teachers was still raging<sup>154</sup>.

Paul was sentenced to death<sup>155</sup> and according to tradition of the early church fathers he was beheaded on the Via Ostia, a highway outside Rome, about 5 kilometres outside Rome. Whether Timothy and Mark reached Rome before Paul’s death we do not know

## **8. The reading, exchange and collection of the letters of Paul.**

The apostle Paul exhorted believers to read his letters to the congregations/churches<sup>156</sup> and also to exchange his letters with the other congregations<sup>157</sup>. Timothy had been his faithful co-worker for 14 years and had good relationships with all Paul’s other co-workers and all the congregations which Paul had either founded or built up. Timothy was also in possession of Paul’s valuable parchments<sup>158</sup>. From his second imprisonment at Rome Paul gave an important commission to Timothy: “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses (all these people and congregations) entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”<sup>159</sup>. One way to do this was that Timothy collected all Paul’s letters, made copies and spread them to each congregation.

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<sup>138</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3

<sup>139</sup> Titus 3:12

<sup>140</sup> Romans 15:24,28

<sup>141</sup> 2 Timothy 4:20

<sup>142</sup> 2 Timothy 1:4

<sup>143</sup> 2 Timothy 4:13

<sup>144</sup> 2 Timothy 4:20

<sup>145</sup> 2 Timothy 4:11

<sup>146</sup> 2 Timothy 1:16; 2:9

<sup>147</sup> 2 Timothy 4:9,21

<sup>148</sup> 2 Timothy 1:15

<sup>149</sup> 2 Timothy 1:18

<sup>150</sup> 2 Timothy 4:12

<sup>151</sup> 2 Timothy 4:13

<sup>152</sup> Acts 18:1-3,18-19; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3-4

<sup>153</sup> 2 Timothy 4:19

<sup>154</sup> 2 Timothy 1:8; 2:3,12,14-18,23; 3:8,12

<sup>155</sup> cf. 2 Timothy 4:6-7

<sup>156</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:27

<sup>157</sup> Colossians 4:16

<sup>158</sup> 2 Timothy 4:13

<sup>159</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2

## **E. THE EIGHT GENERAL LETTERS (A.D. 43-98)**

### **1. The letter to the Hebrews.**

It is not known who wrote Hebrews, to whom he wrote or when and from where this letter was written.

- **The Hebrews were Jewish Christians, converts from a Jewish sectarian background.**

They probably belonged to a Jewish sectarian community in Rome<sup>160</sup> and their religion was characterised by ceremonial washings or ‘baptisms’ (ablutions for ritual cleansing)<sup>161</sup>. When these Jews became Christians they took with them certain sectarian customs into the Christian congregation.

- **The letter to the Hebrews.**

The (1<sup>st</sup>) general letter: **Hebrews**. It was written before A.D. 64 to the Jewish Christians in Rome who kept holding on to the conservative teachings of traditional sectarian Judaism.

The purpose of the letter to the Hebrews was: “To teach that the message of the Old Testament had been fulfilled by the message of the New Testament”. Jesus Christ is the highest exalted Person in history. His work of salvation by his life, death and resurrection has been perfectly fulfilled. The message of the New Testament is God’s final word to all people<sup>162</sup>.

### **2. The letter of James.**

- **James.**

James was the brother of Jesus<sup>163</sup> and one of the leaders in the congregation of Jerusalem, which consisted of thousands of Jewish Christians<sup>164</sup>.

- **The letter of James.**

The (2<sup>nd</sup>) general letter: **James** was probably written before the year A.D. 43 from Jerusalem to Greek speaking Jewish Christian congregations. It is probably *the earliest written book in the New Testament*.

The purpose of James was more or less the same as that of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount<sup>165</sup>, namely, “To explain the true standards of the Christian life in the kingdom of God”.

James directed his letter to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations”, that is, to the Greek speaking Jewish Christian congregations. These congregations came into being due to the heavy persecution that broke out in Jerusalem especially against the Greek speaking Jews who had converted to Christ.

They were scattered from Jerusalem<sup>166</sup> and persecuted<sup>167</sup>. Everywhere they went they proclaimed the gospel only to Greek speaking Jews and non-Jews who had converted to Judaism<sup>168</sup> and founded Christian congregations among them.

### **3. The two letters of Peter.**

- **The apostle Peter.**

Peter was a Jew from Capernaum in the province of Galilee<sup>169</sup>. He and his brother Andrew were fishermen<sup>170</sup>. After John and Andrew, Peter probably became the third disciple of Jesus Christ<sup>171</sup>. Jesus had promised Peter (Greek: petros) that he would build his Church on “the rock” (Greek: petra), that is, especially on the apostle Peter and the other apostles<sup>172</sup> and their testimony concerning Jesus Christ, who is the real Rock<sup>173</sup>. Jesus Christ planted the first congregation among the Jews<sup>174</sup>, the first congregation among the half-Jews<sup>175</sup> and the first congregation among the non-Jews<sup>176</sup> by means of the apostle Peter.

- The apostle Peter was one of the leaders in the congregation of Jerusalem between A.D. 30–33/34<sup>177</sup>.

- About A.D. 40 Peter was the first to proclaim the gospel to the non-Jews (the Gentiles)<sup>178</sup> in Caesarea.

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<sup>160</sup> cf. Hebrews 13:24

<sup>161</sup> Hebrews 6:2

<sup>162</sup> Hebrews 1:1-2; cf. Revelation 22:18-19

<sup>163</sup> Mark 6:3

<sup>164</sup> Acts 21:18-20

<sup>165</sup> Matthew 5–7

<sup>166</sup> Acts 6:8 to Acts 8:3

<sup>167</sup> Acts 22:5

<sup>168</sup> Acts 11:19

<sup>169</sup> Mark 1:21,29

<sup>170</sup> Mark 1:16

<sup>171</sup> John 1:40-42

<sup>172</sup> Matthew 16:18; cf. Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14-16

<sup>173</sup> Daniel 2:44; 1 Peter 2:8; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11

<sup>174</sup> Acts 2

<sup>175</sup> Acts 8

<sup>176</sup> Acts 10

<sup>177</sup> Acts 1:15; Acts 2:14; Acts 3:12; Acts 4:8; Acts 5:3,29; Acts 6:2,4; Acts 15:7, etc.

<sup>178</sup> Acts 15:7-9

God had to take extreme measures to convince Peter that *the gospel was not only intended for Jews, but also for the non-Jews* (Gentiles) in the world<sup>179</sup>! In A.D. 44, when king Herod Agrippa I died, Peter was imprisoned, but miraculously delivered. He then went away from Jerusalem<sup>180</sup>. Thereafter, James, the brother of Jesus, became one of the important leaders in the congregation of Jerusalem<sup>181</sup>.

- **The two letters of Peter.**

Peter wrote two letters to the congregations which Paul had founded in Asia Minor. Although we do not know whether Peter had ever ministered in Asia Minor, it is possible when you take into consideration that he travelled much. These congregations in Asia Minor consisted mainly of Gentile converts. They were being oppressed and persecuted, probably by their own countrymen.

The (3<sup>rd</sup>) general letter is 1 Peter. It was written in the period A.D. 62–63 from Rome to the congregations in Asia Minor<sup>182</sup>. The purpose of Peter was “To strengthen the Christians amidst their sufferings and to urge them to live godly lives with a view to their future hope”.

The (4<sup>th</sup>) general letter is 2 Peter. It was written in A.D. 64 from Rome, not long before Peter died<sup>183</sup> during the persecution instigated by Caesar Nero in the year 64/65. He wrote this letter to the same congregations in Asia Minor<sup>184</sup>. His purpose was: “To equip the Christians against the false teachers and their false doctrines”.

While 1 Peter addresses the danger coming mainly *from outside* the congregation, namely, their hostile countrymen, 2 Peter addresses mainly the danger coming *from the inside* of the congregation, namely the false teachers.

#### **4. The three letters of John.**

- **The apostle John.**

After the death of the apostles Peter and Paul, God gave the Christian congregations in Asia Minor a new leader: the apostle John. The church father Irenaeus (130–200) said that the apostle John lived permanently in Ephesus in Asia Minor and that he ministered until the time of Caesar Trajan (98–117).

- **The three letters of John.**

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 by the Roman army under Titus, the heathen religions with their heathen philosophical teachings and customs began to influence the Christian teachings and habits. John wrote three letters during this period.

The (5<sup>th</sup>) general letter 1 John, the (6<sup>th</sup>) general letter 2 John and the (7<sup>th</sup>) general letter 3 John were written in the period A.D. 70–98 in Ephesus and sent to the congregations/churches in the area of Ephesus. The purpose of John was “To warn the Christian congregations against the false teaching of Cerinthus”. Cerinthus was a Jewish convert to Christianity in Alexandria in Egypt and a contemporary of John. Cerinthus and other adherents of Gnosticism were Christian heretics who falsely claimed that they possessed more spiritual knowledge than what was revealed in the Bible.

#### **5. The letter of Jude.**

- **Jude.**

Jude was also a brother of Jesus and James<sup>185</sup>.

- **The letter of Jude.**

The (8<sup>th</sup>) general letter is Jude and was written in the period A.D. 64–68, probably to the same congregations in Asia Minor to which Peter had also written. The purpose of Jude was “To warn the Christian congregations against the false teachers and to urge them towards love, faith and prayer”<sup>186</sup>. It seems that the false teachers had already penetrated and infiltrated the Christian congregations with their destructive work.

## **F. THE BOOK OF REVELATION (A.D. 81-96)**

### **1. The background of the book.**

The church father Irenaeus (130-200) said that the book of Revelation was written towards the end of the reign of Caesar Domitian (81–96), who during the final three years of his reign persecuted Christians. He demanded that all people must worship him as ‘god’ and opposed the growth of the Christian Church. The opposition and persecution under Caesar Domitian was the example for the social, economic and religious conditions revealed in the book of Revelation and which would *characterise the history of the Church within the history of the world during the whole period between the first and the second coming of Jesus Christ*.

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<sup>179</sup> Acts 10:9-23

<sup>180</sup> Acts 12:1-19

<sup>181</sup> Acts 21:17

<sup>182</sup> 1 Peter 1:1

<sup>183</sup> 2 Peter 1:14

<sup>184</sup> 2 Peter 3:1

<sup>185</sup> Mark 6:3

<sup>186</sup> Jude 1:20-21

## **2. The Author of the book.**

Although God in Jesus Christ is the real Author of the book of Revelation, Christ revealed its contents via an angel to the apostle John by means of visions and symbolic language.

John recorded these visions in the book of **Revelation** in about the period A.D. 95–96 while he was exiled on the isle of Patmos (14 hours sailing SW from Ephesus).

## **3. The purpose of the book.**

The purpose of the book of Revelation on the one hand is: “To encourage the persecuted Christians throughout history in their struggle against the evil political, religious and immoral powers (the antichrists, the false prophets and the great prostitutes), because genuine Christians are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ<sup>187</sup>”.

The purpose of the book of Revelation on the other hand is: “To warn the careless and negligent Christians who are tempted to conform to this evil world, that unless they repent, their lampstand would be removed from its place<sup>188</sup>”.

## **4. The theme of the book.**

The theme of the book of Revelation is:

“The victory of Christ and his Church over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers (the antichrist, the false prophet, the great prostitute and the kings of the world with their armies)”.

# **PART II. THE TRANSMISSION AND TRANSLATION OF MANUSCRIPTS**

## **AND THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **G. THE TRANSMISSION OF THE COPIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS**

#### **1. The original New Testament Greek manuscripts.**

The original New Testament documents were probably written between A.D. 43-97 on papyrus, a thin and fragile kind of paper made from the reeds of the papyrus plant, which grew in the marshes of Egypt and the Middle East. These documents were inscribed by hand “with pen and ink”<sup>189</sup>. All the original books of the New Testament were written in the Greek language, the most important language for literature in the Roman Empire at that time. A hand-written document in any language is called ‘a manuscript’.

The original handwritten documents were normally sent by messengers to the churches or persons for whom they were intended. The letter to the Colossians was probably sent by Tychicus. According to Colossians 4:7-9,16, Paul sent Tychicus for the express purpose that the church may know about his circumstances (his imprisonment in Rome).

#### **2. The earliest copies and collections of the New Testament books.**

The Greek text of the New Testament we possess today has been transmitted to us by means of copies and copies of copies of the original manuscripts over a period of more than 1400 years until the printing press was invented and used.<sup>190</sup>

After many years of use, these hand-written copies would begin to tear and become too old for use. So new copies were made of these old copies, sometimes with unintended small variations. etc. A manuscript with a particular variation<sup>191</sup> became the original of a whole family of manuscripts, all showing the same variation. In this way whole families of manuscripts have come into existence, each with a different variation. A specific family-tree of manuscripts can be reconstructed by observing the similarities and small differences in the many copies of manuscripts<sup>192</sup>.

Although we no longer possess the infallible original manuscripts of the various books of the New Testament, very ancient copies have been preserved. Fragments of manuscripts were found that are less than 250 years younger than the original manuscript! *The New Testament copies are very much closer to the date of the original manuscripts than is the case of the copies of any other ancient historical, literary or religious record!* That is why Christians have great confidence in the reliability of the New Testament Greek text!

Copies of the original Gospels and the original Letters of Paul must have been made and circulated at an early date. In 2 Peter 3:2,15-16, the apostle Peter mentions the Old Testament books, the Gospels and the Letters of the apostles. He speaks of the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets” (the Old Testament books), “the command given by our Lord and Saviour through the apostles” (the Gospels), and also of “all the letters of Paul”. It is probable that *the two Gospels (Matthew and Mark) and the thirteen Letters of Paul* were already transmitted as two collections by the year A.D. 64, because *they never appear as single documents in manuscript form!*

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<sup>187</sup> Romans 8:37; Revelation 17:14

<sup>188</sup> Revelation 2:5

<sup>189</sup> Jeremiah 36:18; 3 John 13

<sup>190</sup> The printing of books was invented in Haarlem (Netherlands) (possibly by Lourens Coster) in the year 1440 and was improved in Mainz (Germany) by Johannes Gutenberg in the year 1450.

<sup>191</sup> **Variations:** e.g. i) another word (synonym), ii) an added word (in order to explain), iii) or a deleted word (by accident), iv) or a wrong spelling.

<sup>192</sup> About 5000 Greek manuscripts!

One church father, Justin Martyr, writes that by about A.D. 140 the Gospel of Luke was separated from Acts and combined with the other three Gospels to form 'a fourfold life of Christ'.

The General Letters and the book of Revelation never belonged to any collection, because they do not appear in the same sequence in the works of the earliest church fathers. They were gradually drawn into the larger collection with the others, until *the whole New Testament as we know it today came into existence in the early third century after Christ*.

### **3. The copying of the New Testament books.**

The books of the New Testament were first copied either by individuals for their private use or by professional scribes (writers) for the use in churches and monasteries. Copies were usually made one at a time. But as the demand increased, it is likely that trained servants transcribed a number of copies simultaneously from dictation by one of them. In the process of transcription, errors crept into the manuscripts. These errors were perpetuated by later copyists. In this way several variants of each copy of a New Testament book came into existence. However, the fact that we have so large a number of copies of the New Testament books, the original texts must have been preserved in some of these copies.

After Christianity virtually became the state religion of the Roman Empire in A.D. 313, the *emperor Constantine ordered that 50 copies of the whole Bible should be made and distributed* to the larger churches in the cities of the Empire. These copies became the so-called 'authorised editions' of the Bible and served as the text which was copied by thousands afterwards.

Between the fourth and twelfth centuries, the New Testament was published either in portions such as 'the Gospels' or 'the Letters of Paul', or occasionally in complete volumes of 'the whole New Testament' or 'the whole Bible'!

Because papyrus was too frail for use in public services or in the libraries of monasteries, the scribes (writers) generally used thin sheets of calfskin (called vellum) or sheepskin (called parchment) to write on. These materials were used until the age of printing in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

## **H. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GREEK TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**

*There are greater resources available for reconstructing the original Greek text of the New Testament than for any other (historical-, literary-, or religious-) document in any language of the classic age!*

Three types of sources are presently available:

- Many Greek manuscripts of the New Testament
- Many early translations of the New Testament into other languages
- Many writings of the church fathers, who quote the New Testament.

### **1. The great number of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.**

#### **• Fragments of manuscripts.**

The oldest fragments of the New Testament are:

- A fragment of Mark 6:52-53 dated before A.D. 50
- Fragments containing John 18:31-34,37-38, dated A.D. 130!
- This proves that the Gospel of Mark was probably the first Gospel and that the Gospel of John was written before A.D. 100.
- The Chester Beatty Papyri contain a large part of the New Testament and is dated A.D. 200-250.

#### **• Manuscripts with large capital letters (majuscule script)<sup>193</sup>.**

The oldest volumes of the New Testament are written in large capital letters (called majuscule letters or uncials) between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D. Three volumes are especially important, namely:

- The Codex Vaticanus (designated with an 'B'), which contains almost the whole New Testament and is dated A.D. 325-350
- The Codex Sinaiticus (designated with an 'Aleph'), which contains almost the whole New Testament and half of the Old Testament and is dated A.D. 350
- The Codex Alexandrinus (designated with an 'A') which contains almost the whole Bible and is dated A.D. 400.

These codices were copied very carefully for public reading in the churches.

#### **• Manuscripts with small cursive letters (minuscule script)<sup>194</sup>.**

The other volumes of the New Testament are written in small cursive letters between the tenth and fifteenth centuries A.D. *Today we possess about 5000 manuscripts of the New Testament in Greek!*

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<sup>193</sup> Majuscule script = large rounded unjoined letters of the Greek alphabet, "uncials" (majuscule type of letters with round forms, used in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and is found in manuscripts of 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> century. Modern capitals are largely derived from uncials.

<sup>194</sup> Minuscule script = a kind of cursive script developed in 7<sup>th</sup> century. Modern lower-case letters are derived from minuscules.

## **2. The very early translations of the New Testament from the Greek text.**

Christians spread the gospel to many countries, both towards the West and the East. Therefore the Greek New Testament was translated into Latin, the main language in the western part of the Roman Empire and Syrian, the main language in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. They were translated between A.D. 150-200 and were thus *based on Greek manuscripts that were older than any Greek manuscript that survived*. Translations help to ascertain the contents and exact meaning of the underlying Greek words.

- **Earliest translations of the Greek New Testament.**

Translations of the Greek New Testament have been made between the second and fourth centuries A.D. into the following languages: Latin, Syrian, three Egyptian languages (Coptic, Sahidic and Bohairic), Gothic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Georgian and Arabic. *Today we possess about 1000 manuscripts of the New Testament in the earliest translations!*

- **Later Latin translations of the Greek New Testament.**

In A.D. 384 the church father Jerome translated a standard Latin text based on the oldest existing Greek text and this was called **the Vulgate** or Common Version. This text was revised by Alcuin in the eighth century and again by the University of Paris in the thirteenth century. In 1546 the Council of Trent declared it to be the standard text of the Roman Catholic Church. In the early thirteenth century, Stephen Langton (archbishop of Canterbury) divided the Bible into chapters. *Today we possess about 8000 manuscripts of the Vulgate.*

## **3. The writings of the church fathers.**

**The church fathers** were the leaders and teachers of Christianity during the first six centuries. They used the language of the Greek New Testament freely in their sermons and their writings. Together *the church fathers quoted all the verses except 11 of the whole New Testament!* This is amazing!

## **4. The trustworthiness of the Greek New Testament.**

- **The number of copies of the manuscripts.**

The most ancient historical books in the West we possess are from Herodotus and Thucydides and are from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. While we only possess 8 manuscripts of each of these, we have 5000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, 1000 manuscripts of the earlier translations of the New Testament, 8000 manuscripts of the Latin New Testament and almost the whole New Testament in Greek from the quotations of the church fathers! Thus *the text of the New Testament has been preserved better than any other (historical-, literary- or religious-) document of the ancient world!*

- **The time interval between the original documents and their oldest copies.**

The oldest historical books in the West, Herodotus and Thucydides, are from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., but the oldest copies we have of them are from A.D. 900. While the time interval between the writing of these books and the date of their earliest extant copies is 1300 years, the time interval between the New Testament originals and their oldest extant copies is only 250 years! This is 52 times shorter! While classical scholars of history do not doubt the authenticity of the text of Herodotus and Thucydides, the reliability of the New Testament text is many times greater!

- **The accuracy of the transcription (copying) of the text.**

The greatest Epic in the West is 'the Iliad' and we possess 643 copies of it. Next to the New Testament, there are more extant copies of the Iliad than any other book of ancient times. Both books are considered sacred and both underwent some changes in their text through copying. But, while 764 of the 15600 lines of the Iliad are questioned, only 40 of the 20000 lines of the New Testament are questioned. That is 25 times less! However, *not one of these 40 lines or 400 different words which are questioned in the New Testament Greek text affects either the doctrine or life of Christians, because the doctrine and life it teaches is taught in the other parts of the New Testament that stand above any doubt!*

We must therefore conclude that from the standpoint of literary evidence, the reliability of the New Testament Greek text is stronger than that of any other ancient historical-, literary-, or religious document in the world! Scholars are satisfied that we possess substantially the true text of the Greek New Testament.

## **I. THE CANON OR LIST OF THE INSPIRED AND AUTHORITATIVE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

### **1. The books which truly belong to the New Testament.**

**Why does the New Testament have these 27 books?**

The New Testament has these 27 books, because they claim divine inspiration and divine authority.

The books which are regarded as truly belonging to the New Testament are called '*canonical books*'. The word 'canon' means a straight reed or ruler used as a measuring stick. Applied to literature, the word 'canon' means *the list of books which conform to the standard of divine inspiration and divine authority.*

The books of the New Testament say very clearly that they were inspired by God. Jesus says: “The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”<sup>195</sup>. And, “The Spirit of Truth will testify about me”<sup>196</sup>. The apostle Paul says, “All Scripture is God-breathed”<sup>197</sup>. And the apostle Peter says, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never has its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”<sup>198</sup>.

Thus, whatever was given by inspiration of God was Scripture (the Bible), and whatever did not come by inspiration of God was not Scripture. ‘The Scripture’ is the written record of the inspired and authoritative words of God. The apostles, the Early Christian Church and all Christian churches throughout the ages have considered these 27 books of the New Testament Scripture as ‘canonical’, that is, as divinely inspired and authoritative for what people should believe and how they should live.

The books which are not regarded as belonging to the New Testament are called ‘*apocryphal books*’. The word ‘apocryphal’ means ‘hidden’ and implies that their origin, message and inspiration are invented or of doubtful authenticity.

## **2. Inspiration is demonstrated by three facts.**

### **• Inspiration is demonstrated by the contents of a book.**

All the New Testament books have as their central subject the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Four Gospels record his life, his works and his words.

The book of Acts records the effects of Jesus Christ in the history of the world.

The Letters record the theological and practical teachings based on complete dependency on Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The book of Revelation records the relationship of Jesus Christ to the present and future of this world.

However, ‘the apocryphal Gospels’ and ‘the apocryphal Acts’ are more concerned with miracle-making and legends than with the genuine doctrine and life of Christians. And ‘the apocryphal letters’ are pieces taken from the canonical letters. In precision of narrative, in depth of teaching, and in concentration on the person of Jesus Christ, there is a discernible difference between the canonical and apocryphal books.

### **• Inspiration is demonstrated by the effect of a book.**

All literature may record human thought. But while some literature may *influence* human thought profoundly, *the New Testament books change (transform) human thought, values, behaviour and direction of life!* The ethical and spiritual effect of the New Testament books are so great, that wherever its message is proclaimed and received, the Church expands and brings with it a moral and spiritual cleansing of society! An unbridgeable chasm exists between the moral and spiritual standards of paganism and that of the New Testament books!

### **• Inspiration is demonstrated by the agreement of the internal testimony of a book with the external testimony of those who use it.**

The test of the divine message and the moral power of that message cannot be applied successfully by a single individual in a limited sphere and during a short period of time (for example: by one prophet, in one country and within one century). Testimonies with respect to the inspiration of the Bible books should be made by many different people, living in different countries and cultures, and over a great period of time. When the internal testimony of the books themselves and the external testimony of many different people who use them over a great period of time agree that they are works of God, then the criteria of canonicity are made surer. This is explained in the following two points:

## **3. The internal testimony of the New Testament.**

The New Testament claims that it has been inspired by God and is authoritative. From the beginning, the message concerning Christ was passed on from one person to another as “the word of God”. Galatians 1:11-12 says, “The gospel is not something that man made up”, but it has been “received by revelation from Jesus Christ”. 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 says that the apostle Paul preached and passed on to others the gospel which he received. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says that the message was received by the hearers “as the word of God” and according to 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it produced a lasting effect on those who believed it.

The apostles regarded their writings as the inspired and authoritative word of God and warned people against disobedience. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 4:2,8 the apostle says, “You know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. He who rejects this instruction does not reject man, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” In 2 Thessalonians 3:14 he says, “If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him and do not associate with him”.

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<sup>195</sup> John 14:26

<sup>196</sup> John 15:26

<sup>197</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>198</sup> 2 Peter 1:20-21

In 1 Corinthians 14:37-38 he says, "If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored (by God)."

The first and "second Letter of Peter" and the collection of "all the Letters of Paul" became *canonical* very early, because 2 Peter 3:1-2,15-16 alluded to it as a body of literature that should be received as "the other Scriptures", namely, "the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets" (the Old Testament) and "the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (the Gospels). The fact that even the apostle Peter wrestled with their contents and the ignorant and unstable people distorted them proves that they were authoritative. If they were not authoritative, nobody would have paid attention to them!

#### **4. The three external testimonies: the early church fathers, the formal canons and the church councils.**

- **The external witness of the church fathers.**

The earliest church fathers between A.D. 95 and A.D. 150, all quoted from the New Testament books. They were disciples of the apostles themselves or of their students. *Justin Martyr* lived from A.D. 100-165 and he referred to the Four Gospels, Acts, 8 Letters of Paul, 1 Peter and Revelation by name. He stated that the Gospels were read every Sunday in the church service along with the Old Testament. *Irenaeus* lived about A.D. 170 and was a student of Polycarp, who was a student of the apostle John. He referred to all the books of the New Testament except Philemon and 3 John.

- **The external witness of the formal canons.**

*The Muratorian Canon* is an unofficial list of New Testament books and is dated A.D. 170. It includes all the books of the New Testament except the General Letters of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter.

*The Festal Letter of Athanasius* in A.D. 367 distinguishes sharply between on the one hand "the God-inspired Scripture ... handed down to our fathers by those who were eye-witnesses and servants of the word from the beginning" (the canonical books) and on the other hand "the secret writings of heretics" (the apocryphal books). He stated that only the 27 books of our New Testament is "God-inspired Scripture" and says that "these are springs of salvation. Let no one add to them or take away from them."

- **The external witness of the church councils.**

These 'church councils' were meetings of representatives of all the Christian churches.

- At the *Council of Laodicea* in A.D. 363, the subject of the canonical books was discussed for the first time. This council decided that only the canonical books of the New Testament should be read in the church services.

- *The Council of Carthage* in A.D. 397 made the same decision and added a clear list of the 27 books in our New Testament as being canonical.

- *The Council of Hippo* in A.D. 419 repeated the same decision and the same canonical list.

#### **5. The books which do not belong to the New Testament ('the Apocrypha').**

All the New Testament Books were written before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. But false prophets and false teachers have since the middle of the second century A.D. written apocryphal Gospels, apocryphal Acts, apocryphal Letters and apocryphal Apocalypses, claiming that these were originals.<sup>199</sup> 'Apocryphal' means "that the origin, authenticity and trustworthiness of the book is doubtful."

- **Apocryphal Gospels.**

- *The Protevangelium of James* (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.). The Protevangelium of James is a so-called 'Infancy Gospel' writing about the birth of the Virgin Mary and the childhood of Jesus Christ. It included the following: The birth and infancy of Mary. Mary became the wife of Joseph through the lot. The pregnant Mary stood the test of innocence. Mary and Joseph slept in a cave on their way to Bethlehem. The midwife Salome's hand was healed by picking up the child Jesus. The mountain split and hid Elisabeth and John the Baptist during the slaughter at Bethlehem. Zacharias was slain, his body was never found, but his blood they found had turned into stone.

- *The Gospel of Thomas* (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) Also this gospel is a so-called 'Infancy Gospel', writing about the childhood of Jesus Christ. It included the following: Jesus as a five year old boy turned 12 clay sparrows into living birds by clapping his hands on a sabbath day. In anger Jesus withered a boy who had spoilt his playing with water. Jesus was provoked to cause a boy to die who had bumped into him (or had thrown a stone at him). In vexation Jesus smote his accusers with blindness. Joseph pinched the ear of Jesus. Joseph took Jesus to a teacher Zacchaeus to teach him the letters of the alphabet, but Jesus derided them saying he existed before the creation. So Jesus became his master. Jesus cursed the Jews and they became maimed and then he healed them all. After a boy Zeno was pushed from the roof and died, Jesus jumped down and raised him from the dead; Jesus healed a bleeding foot cut by an axe. Jesus as a six year old boy accidentally broke the water pitcher, but then filled his garment with water to bring to his mother. Jesus as an eight year old boy sowed one corn of wheat, but reaped a hundred measures, which he gave to the poor of the village. Jesus took hold of one end of a wooden beam and stretched it longer so that his father could complete the bed he was making. In wrath Jesus cursed and then struck a teacher dead after he had tried to teach Jesus the letters of the Greek and Hebrew alphabet and had beaten him on the head.

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<sup>199</sup> The Apocryphal New Testament, Montague Rhodes James, Oxford, at the Clarendon Press. 1960

Jesus taught the Law by the Holy Spirit so that everyone listening marvelled. Then Jesus healed the teacher he had killed. His brother James was bitten by a viper when he was gathering wood, but Jesus breathed upon the wound, the pain ceased, the viper burst and James continued to live as before. Jesus raised a small child in the neighbourhood from the dead. Jesus raised a builder from the dead. Jesus as a twelve year old child silenced the Jewish elders and teachers and expounded the Law and the Prophets.

These *apocryphal Gospels were written by ignorant men*, because the Bible clearly teaches that *the first miracle of Jesus was turning water into wine after he was thirty years of age*<sup>200</sup>!

- **Apocryphal Acts.**

The Acts of John, Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of Andrew and the Acts of Thomas were written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.

- **Apocryphal Letters.**

The Epistles of the Apostles were written about 160 A.D.

- **Apocryphal Apocalypses.**

The Apocalypse of Peter was written in the second century A.D. and the Apocalypse of Paul was written in the fourth century A.D.

All these New Testament apocryphal books are of doubtful authenticity. *Like the Old Testament apocryphal books, these New Testament apocryphal books have never been accepted as a part of the Christian Canon.* They were never regarded as inspired and authoritative for doctrine and life.

- **Forgeries.**

- *The Gospel of Judas*<sup>201</sup>, a forgery of the late second century A.D. written by Gnostics. Gnosticism is the belief that the created world was evil, and was totally separate from and in opposition to the world of the spirit. Similar teachings are found in Hinduism and the teachings of Zarathustra. Gnosticism is a heresy that is rejected by the Church Fathers in the early Christian centuries.

- *The Gospel of Barnabas*<sup>202</sup>, a forgery of the fifteenth century A.D. written in Italian by a renegade from Christianity to Islam.<sup>203</sup>

## **6. The only true test whether a book belongs to the New Testament or not.**

### **How do Christians know which books are canonical and belong to the New Testament?**

If a sovereign God has taken the initiative in revelation and in the production of an inspired record of that revelation through human agents, then *'canonicity' simply remains a matter of recognition and acknowledgement of the inherent quality of these books*, namely, that they are inspired by God and are authoritative for what people must believe and how they must live.

When a child recognizes his own parent from a multitude of other adults, he does not impart any new quality of parenthood by such an act. He simply recognizes a relationship which already exists.

So also with the list of authoritative books drawn up by the Councils of the Church. *The Councils of the Church did not impart canonicity to a single page in the Bible by means of any decision. The Councils simply recognized and acknowledged the divine inspiration and authority (canonicity) of these books from the time these books were first composed! And the Councils formerly rejected other books (e.g. the Apocrypha) for which canonicity had been falsely claimed.*

The authors of the Bible books clearly state that the books of the New Testament are 'canonical' (divinely inspired and has divine authority) from the moment they were composed on the ground of the words: "Understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"<sup>204</sup>. False prophets speak because of the appearance of an angel, etc., but never because of the inspiration by the Holy Spirit of the Bible! "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"<sup>205</sup>.

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<sup>200</sup> John 2:11

<sup>201</sup> Read the article on the Internet: "The Gospel of Judas", Wikipedia.

<sup>202</sup> Read the article on the Internet: "The Gospel of Barnabas", by Samuel Green.

<sup>203</sup> The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam, Harper and Row.1989, p 64. The Muslim scholar Cyril Glassé states: As regards the Gospel of Barnabas itself, there is no question that it is a medieval forgery. A complete Italian manuscript exists which appears to be a translation from a Spanish original (which exists in part), written to curry favour with Muslims of the time. It contains anachronisms which can date only from the Middle Ages and not before, and shows a garbled comprehension of Islamic doctrines, calling the Prophet 'the Messiah', which Islam does not claim for him. Besides its farcical notion of sacred history, stylistically it is a mediocre parody of the Gospels, as the writings of Baha'Allah are of the Koran.

<sup>204</sup> 2 Peter 1:20-21

<sup>205</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

The canonical books therefore are not backed-up by human authority, but divine authority. The canonical books were recognised and acknowledged immediately to be divinely inspired and authoritative for doctrine and life from the moment people came into contact with them! Millions of adherents of other religions have turned to Jesus Christ *after reading the Bible!*