

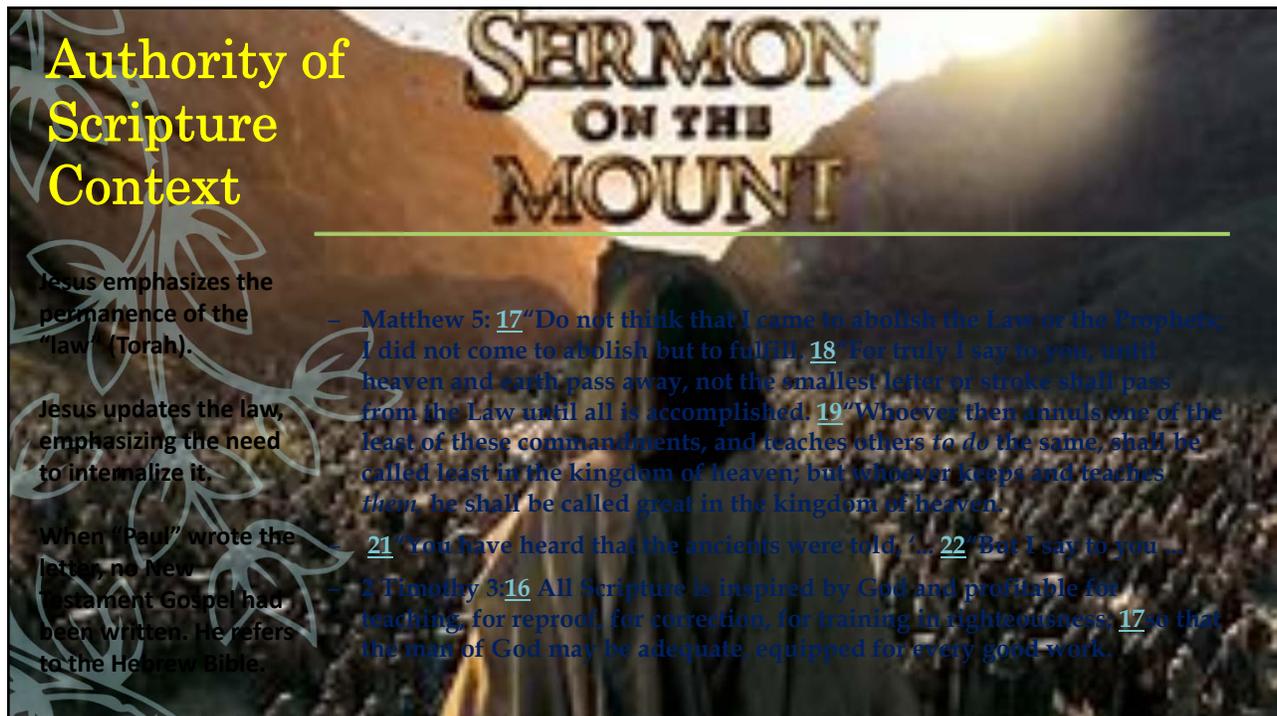
Authority of the Scriptures A Journey

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How did we get the current canon of New Testament scriptures?

1



Authority of Scripture Context

Jesus emphasizes the permanence of the "law" (Torah).

Jesus updates the law, emphasizing the need to internalize it.

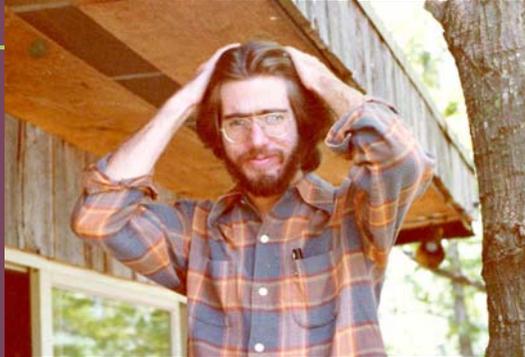
When "Paul" wrote the letter, no New Testament Gospel had been written. He refers to the Hebrew Bible.

- Matthew 5: 17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill, 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- 21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, '... 22 "But I say to you ...
- 2 Timothy 3: 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2

That describes me from a very early age.

“Problem with authority”



I don't just believe in things or people just because I am told to.

3

The problem OF authority

John 8:48-59 English Standard Version (ESV)

How we gain authority

- Conferred from Self
- Conferred from Another
- Earned

Exodus 20:2-4 King James Version (KJV)

² I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³ Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

48 The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. 50 Yet **I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.** 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” 54 Jesus answered, **“If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’[a]** 55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”[b] 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

4

Authority of Scripture

Mark 1:21 Then Jesus and His companions went to Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath began, Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were astonished at His teaching, because He **taught as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.**

The previous passages illustrate that

- The OT God **earned** his authority through his delivery of the Hebrew people from bondage.
- Jesus sees his authority as **conferred** upon him by his father (as in the baptism scenes, etc.)
- It is also said of Jesus that he “**spoke with authority,**” not as “one of the scribes.”

But citing those passages is circular. They only hold weight if one believes in the authority of the scriptures in the first place.

5

Psalm 119:105 King James Version (KJV)

¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Authority of Scripture

- **Conferred from Self**
- **Conferred from Another**
- **Earned**

From Self: Circular: If you have to say trust me, some thing is wrong. We have to believe in an invisible God in order to believe in an invisible God.

From Another: Circular: Both the OT and NT assert that humans cannot judge God. But the only way we know this is through either ordinary words in a book or the words of who are authorities in those words.

Earned: The most likely best way. Experience is the best teacher.

The hitch? *Experience is not transferable.* My mother used to read the Bible to me almost every morning. It made no sense to me, but I knew it related to her experience.

6

People of the book evaluate truth by whether it fits previously written truth.

That truth is unchanging, unchangeable.

One learns the truth through the writings, not through experience of the world.

A Problem unique to “people of the book”

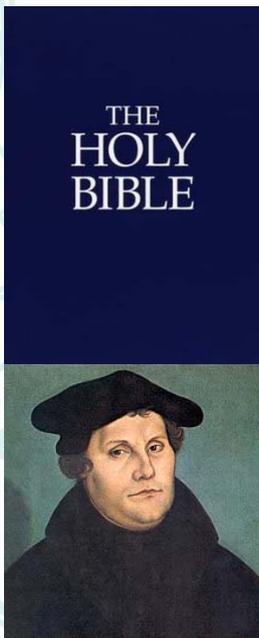
Hindus

- Have sacred books, but only in that their stories and sayings convey sharable truth.
- Truth is experiential and testable.
- Learn the truth and you do not need the writings
- Truth is progressively revealed until we reach full enlightenment, *Moksha*, actually, we circle back to where we began

Buddhists

- Have sacred books, but only insofar that the teachers laid down principles and marked paths for success.
- Truth is experiential
- The truth is inexpressible, so words are not valued except as signposts.
- Truth is progressive until we reach *Nirvana*.

7



Back where we started

- **Sola Scriptura** (Latin: by scripture alone) is a theological doctrine held by some Christian denominations that **the Christian scriptures are the sole source of authority for Christian faith and practice.**

- One believes in the scriptures in order to believe in the scriptures.
- How do we know the scriptures are trustworthy?
- And which scriptures?
- It has been decided for us.

8

Which Scriptures? The Canon



Development of the New Testament canon
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

- Writings attributed to the Apostles circulated among the earliest Christian communities. The Pauline epistles were circulating, perhaps in collected forms, by the end of the 1st century AD.^[a]
- Justin Martyr, in the mid 2nd century, mentions "memoirs of the apostles" as being read on "the day called that of the sun" (Sunday) alongside the "writings of the prophets."^[6]

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), also known as Saint Justin, was an early Christian from Nablus on the West Bank, who was martyred in Rome.^[1] He is known for his writings defending Christianity. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

9

- A defined set of four gospels (the *Tetramorph*) was asserted by **Irenaeus**, c. 180, who refers to it directly.^{[7][8]}

The Canon: Early Church Fathers



Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 202 AD)^[2] was a Greek bishop noted for his role in guiding and expanding Christian communities in what is now the south of France and, more widely, for the development of Christian theology by combating heresy and defining orthodoxy.

Originating from Smyrna, now Izmir in Turkey, he had seen and **heard the preaching of Polycarp**,^[3] **the last known living connection with the Apostles, who in turn was said to have heard John the Evangelist.**^[4]

Chosen as bishop of Lugdunum, now Lyon, his best-known work is *Against Heresies*, often cited as *Adversus Haereses*, an attack on **gnosticism**, in particular that of Valentinus.^[5] To counter the doctrines of the gnostic sects claiming secret wisdom, he offered three pillars of orthodoxy:

- the scriptures,
- the tradition handed down from the apostles,
- and the teaching of the apostles' successors.^{[6][7]}

Intrinsic to his writing is that the surest source of Christian guidance is the church of Rome,^[5] and he is the earliest surviving witness to regard all four of the now-canonical gospels as essential.^[8]

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus>

10

Origen of Alexandria, also known as Origen Adamantius, was an early Christian scholar, ascetic, and theologian who was born and spent the first half of his career in Alexandria. He was a prolific writer who wrote roughly 2,000 treatises in multiple branches of theology, including textual criticism, biblical exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, homiletics, and spirituality. He was one of the most influential figures in early Christian theology, apologetics, and asceticism. He has been described as "the greatest genius the early church ever produced"

Development of the New Testament canon
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

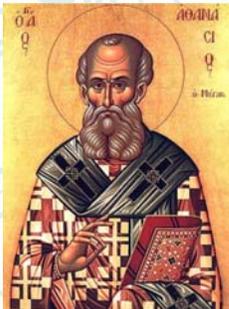
Early Church Fathers and the Canon

- By the early 3rd century, **Origen** may have been using the same twenty-seven books as in the present New Testament canon, though there were still *disputes over the acceptance of the Letter to the Hebrews, James, II Peter, II John, III John, Jude and Revelation*,^[9] known as the Antilegomena.
- Likewise, the **Muratorian fragment** is evidence that perhaps as early as 200, there existed a set of Christian writings somewhat similar to the twenty-seven book NT canon, which included four gospels and argued against objections to them.^[10]



11

Which Scriptures? The Canon



Development of the New Testament canon
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

- In his Easter letter of 367, **Athanasius** Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of the books that would become the twenty-seven-book NT canon,^[12] and he used the word "canonized" (Greek: κανονιζόμενα *kanonizomena*) in regard to them.^{[13][page needed]}
- **Athanasius of Alexandria** c. 296–298 – 2 May 373), also called **Athanasius the Great**, **Athanasius the Confessor** or, primarily in the Coptic Orthodox Church, **Athanasius the Apostolic**, was the 20th bishop of Alexandria (as **Athanasius I**). His intermittent episcopacy spanned 45 years (c. 8 June 328 – 2 May 373), of which over 17 encompassed five exiles, when he was replaced on the order of four different Roman emperors. Athanasius was a Christian theologian, a Church Father, the chief defender of Trinitarianism against Arianism, and a noted Egyptian leader of the fourth century.
- [the Arian position that the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, is of a distinct substance from the Father.]

12

For more on excluded books, see <https://listverse.com/2012/07/06/10-books-not-included-in-the-new-testament/>

Fourth Century

- **Some that didn't make it** – The first council that accepted the present canon of the New Testament may have been the **Synod of Hippo Regius in North Africa** (393). A brief summary of the acts was read at and accepted by the Councils of Carthage in 397 and 419.^[14]
 - Apocalypse of Peter.
 - The Epistle of Barnabas.
 - Infancy Gospel of James.
 - Shepherd of Hermas.
 - 1 Clement.
 - Gospel of Thomas.
 - The Didache.
 - Lost Epistle to the Corinthians
 - The Epistle of Barnabas
 - Third Letter to the Corinthians
 - Q
- These councils were under the authority of **St. Augustine**, who regarded the canon as already closed.^{[15][16][17]} Pope Damasus's Council of Rome in 382, if the *Decretum Gelasianum* correctly associated with it, issued a biblical canon identical to that mentioned above,^[12] or, if not, the list is at least a 6th-century compilation.^[18]
- Thus, while there was a **good measure of debate** in the Early Church over the New Testament canon, **the major writings are claimed to have been accepted by almost all Christians by the middle of the 3rd century.**^[11]

13

“full dogmatic articulations of the canon”:

Which Scriptures? The Canon

- 1546 Canon of Trent Roman Catholicism
 - 1559 the Gallic Confession of Faith Calvinism
 - 1563 the Thirty-Nine Articles for the Church of England,
 - 1672 Synod of Jerusalem Greek Orthodox
- Likewise, Damasus' commissioning of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible, c. 383, was instrumental in the fixation of the canon in the West.^[19]
- In c. 405, Pope Innocent I sent a list of the sacred books to a Gallic bishop, Exsuperius of Toulouse. Christian scholars assert that, when these bishops and councils spoke on the matter, however, they were not defining something new but instead **“were ratifying what had already become the mind of the Church.”**^{[15][20][21]}
- Thus, some claim that, from the 4th century, there existed unanimity in the West concerning the New Testament canon,^[22] and that,
- by the 5th century, the Eastern Church, with a few exceptions, had come to accept the Book of Revelation and thus had come into harmony on the matter of the canon.^{[4][23]}

14



Authority of the Scripture: a test case

- The first Christian to try to establish a canon, Marcion of Sinope
- Decisions as to what was orthodox and what was heresy.

Marcion of Sinope
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

15

Authority of the New Testament The canon



- In July of 144 CE, Marcion, the son of a wealthy ship owner and bishop of Sinope (in modern Turkey) lived in Rome during the second century and attempted to create the first official NT canon.
- Marcion's work focused on the Gospel of Luke and the letters of Paul.
- The Roman church disapproved of his list and revisions and expelled him.

<http://paxtonpapers.com/monotheism/the-first-christians-part-3-the-marcionites/>

16

Marcion's Insights

- The Old and New Testaments, Marcion argued, cannot be reconciled to each other.
 - The code of conduct advocated by Moses was 'an eye for an eye', but Christ set this precept aside.
 - Elisha had had children eaten by bears; Christ said, 'Let the little children come to me'.
 - Joshua had stopped the sun in its path in order to continue the slaughter of his enemies; Paul quoted Christ as commanding, 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath'.
 - In the Old Testament divorce was permitted and so was polygamy; but in the New Testament neither is allowed.
 - Moses enforced the Jewish Sabbath and Law; Christ has freed believers from both.

17

Contradictions

- Even within the Old Testament, Marcion found contradictions.
 - God commanded that no work should be done on the Sabbath, yet he told the Israelites to carry the ark around Jericho 7 times on the Sabbath.
 - No graven image was to be made, yet Moses was directed to fashion a bronze serpent.
 - The deity revealed in the Old Testament could not have been omniscient, otherwise he would not have asked, 'Adam where are you?' (Genesis 3:9).

18

He accepted the following Christian writings in this order:

Gospel according to Luke
Galatians
I Corinthians
II Corinthians
Romans
I Thessalonians
II Thessalonians
Ephesians (which Marcion called Laodiceans)
Colossians
Philemon
Philippians

Marcion's Canon

- "Marcion, therefore, **rejected the entire Old Testament.**
- but only after pruning and editorial adjustment.
- **In his opinion the 12 apostles misunderstood the teaching of Christ, and, holding him to be the Messiah of the Jewish God, falsified his words from that standpoint."**
- "Judaizing interpolations... had to be removed so the authentic text of Gospel and Apostle could once again be available.
- The Gospel according to Luke became the *Evangelicon*, and the 10 Pauline letters, the *Apostolikon*.

19

Why look at Marcion? "One Gospel"

His observations about contradictions in the scriptures still hold.

He tested the boundaries of orthodoxy, revealed the need for a canon, and at the same time, showed that the canon was being decided by popularity, fit with current ideas, and committees.

- Marcion believed there was **one true gospel** which had been corrupted into many versions. He explained the corruption on the basis of Galatians in which Paul emphasizes that there is only one gospel (1:8-10) and states that false brethren are attempting to turn believers from this gospel (1:6-7).
- Of the Gospels that were current among the churches, **the only one that Marcion felt he could trust was the Gospel according to Luke.** We cannot say with certainty why he had confidence in this Gospel, but perhaps the reason was that he regarded the author, Luke, as a disciple of Paul and believed him to be more faithful to tradition than the other evangelists. In any case, this was for Marcion *the* Gospel, without identification of its human author -- a deficiency for which Tertullian (*Adv. Marc.* 4.2) castigates Marcion.

20

Gnostic beliefs

- Marcion undertook to expunge everything from the text of Luke which echoed or otherwise implied a point of contact with the Old Testament.
- Since **Jesus**, according to Marcion, had only **the appearance of being human**, he could not have been born of a woman. Therefore Marcion omitted most of the first 4 chapters of Luke.
- In the last chapters the omissions are rather more numerous than the first; the resurrection of Jesus is passed over in silence. More examples may be found in [Evans] (pp. 643-6).

21

Gnosticism

- All matter is evil, and the non-material, spirit-realm is good.
 - There is an unknowable God, who gave rise to many lesser spirit beings called Aeons.
 - The creator of the (material) universe is not the supreme god, but an inferior spirit (the Demiurge).
 - Gnosticism does not deal with "sin", only ignorance.
 - To achieve salvation, one needs *gnosis* (knowledge).
-
- **Gnosticism** (from Ancient Greek: γνωστικός *gnostikos*, "having knowledge", from γνώσις *gnōsis*, knowledge) is a modern name for a variety of ancient religious ideas and systems, originating in Manicheism, **Hellenistic Judaism** and the **Jewish Christian milieux** in the first and second century AD.
 - Many of these systems believed that the material world is created by an emanation or 'works' of a lower god (**demiurge**), trapping the **divine spark** within the human body. This divine spark could be liberated by *gnosis*, spiritual knowledge acquired through direct experience. Gnosticism is not a single system, and **the emphasis on direct experience** allows for a wide variety of teachings, which may include but are not limited to the following:
 - The Gnostic ideas and systems flourished in the Mediterranean world in the second century AD, in conjunction with and influenced by the early Christian movements and **Middle Platonism**. After the second century, a decline set in. In the Persian Empire, Gnosticism in the form of **Manicheism** spread as far as China, while **Mandaeism** is *still alive in Iraq*.

22

Books	Marcionite canon ^[24]	Muratorian fragment ^[25]	Peshitta [version needed]	Codex Vaticanus ^[26]	Codex Sinaiticus ^[27]	Codex Alexandrinus ^[28]	Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus ^[29]
Composition date	c. 130-140	c. 170	?	c. 300-325	c. 330-360	c. 400-440	c. 450
Matthew	No	Probably ^[30]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mark	No	Probably ^[30]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luke	Marcion ^[31]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
John	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acts	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Romans	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Galatians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ephesians	Laodiceans ^[32]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philippians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colossians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe ^[33]
1 Timothy	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Timothy	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Titus	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Philemon	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hebrews	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
James	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Peter	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Peter	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 John	No	Probably ^{[33][35]}	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 John	No	Maybe ^[33]	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe ^[33]
3 John	No	Maybe ^[33]	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jude	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Revelation	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Clement	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
2 Clement	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Shepherd of Hermas	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Epistle of Barnabas	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Apocalypse of Peter	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Book of Wisdom	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Which Texts Accepted?

- Some books were accepted at some points, and a limited list from the beginning.
- Shepherd of Hermas and Epistle of Barnabas were on the list around 330.
- I and II Clement on the lists around 400
- Second John and II Thessalonians doubted in 450
- Revelation was a no until 330 CE

23

Books	Marcionite canon ^[24]	Muratorian fragment ^[25]	Peshitta [version needed]
Composition date	c. 130-140	c. 170	?
Matthew	No	Probably ^[30]	Yes
Mark	No	Probably ^[30]	Yes
Luke	Marcion ^[31]	Yes	Yes
John	No	Yes	Yes
Acts	No	Yes	Yes
Romans	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Corinthians	Yes	Yes	Yes
Galatians	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ephesians	Laodiceans ^[32]	Yes	Yes
Philippians	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colossians	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Thessalonians	Yes	Yes	Yes
1 Timothy	No	Yes	Yes
2 Timothy	No	Yes	Yes
Titus	No	Yes	Yes
Philemon	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hebrews	No	No	Yes
James	No	No	Yes
1 Peter	No	No	Yes
2 Peter	No	No	No
1 John	No	Probably ^{[33][35]}	Yes
2 John	No	Maybe ^[33]	No
3 John	No	Maybe ^[33]	No
Jude	No	Yes	No
Revelation	No	Yes	No
1 Clement	No	No	No
2 Clement	No	No	No
Shepherd of Hermas	No	No	No
Epistle of Barnabas	No	No	No
Apocalypse of Peter	No	Yes	No
Book of Wisdom	No	Yes	No

Other observations

- Matthew and Mark were in doubt at first
- The epistles James, Peter, Hebrews were rejected in 170
- Epistles of John questioned until the 300s
- Apocalypse of Peter and the Book of Wisdom were in in 170
- *Do we simply follow the leading of the councils?*

24

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— Americans have a positive view of the Bible. And many say the Christian scriptures are filled with moral lessons for today.

However, **more than half of Americans have read little or none of the Bible.**

Less than a quarter of those who have ever read a Bible have a systematic plan for reading the Christian scriptures each day. And a third of Americans never pick it up on their own, according to a new study from Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

Small wonder many church leaders worry about biblical illiteracy, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

“Most Americans don’t know first-hand the overall story of the Bible—because they rarely pick it up,” McConnell said. “Even among worship attendees less than half read the Bible daily. **The only time most Americans hear from the Bible is when someone else is reading it.**”

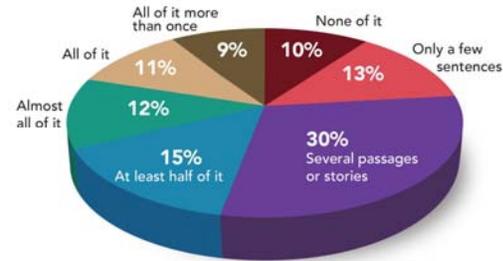
Many unfamiliar with biblical text

Almost nine out of 10 households (87 percent) own a Bible, according to the American Bible Society, and the average household has three.

But Bible reading remains spotty.

Taking it on authority

Among Americans:
How much of the Bible have you personally read?



LifeWay
LifeWayResearch.com

By Bob Smietana. LifeWay Research: Americans Are Fond of the Bible, Don't Actually Read It. April 25, 2017
<https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/04/25/lifeway-research-americans-are-fond-of-the-bible-dont-actually-read-it/>

25

A second look at 2 Timothy

Authority

Conferred from Self

Conferred from Another

Earned

- 2 Timothy 3
- 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,
- 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!
- 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
- 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.
- 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
- 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
- 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

26

This journey didn't go where I wanted it to

- Though belief in authority based in **experience** – **earned authority** – is undoubtedly the least moveable kind of adherence to authority, *apparently most of us believe in the authority of scripture because we were told to, or because we unreflectively accept that the Bible is authoritative just because it says so in the Bible.*
- Much of the wisdom in the Bible can be tested experientially, but the histories and the testimonies involve another level of trust.
- Tune in next week ...

27

References not listed on the relevant screen

Definition sola scriptura

[Sola scriptura - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sola_scriptura

Image of Bible:

https://www.christianbook.com/the-holy-bible-kjv-economy/9781565633254/pd/633253?en=bing-pla&event=SHOP&kw=bibles-0-20%7C633253&p=1179517&dv=c&msclkid=42fc54aa3aac1e09ed8609093df0cda1&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=Shopping%20Main&utm_term=4580840320340823&utm_content=s-bibles

Image Sermon on the Mount:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5QCSgdnvPI>

- Origen:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen#/media/File:Origen3.jpg>

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