

WHY THE  
GOSPELS TELL  
THE SAME STORY  
DIFFERENTLY

# JESUS, CONTRADICTED

MICHAEL R. LICONA



# The Formation of the Biblical Canon

Who chose the literature . . . and when?



# Canon: Greek *kanōn*

- A reed used to measure distances
- Came to mean “rule/standard of faith”





# Old Testament



# Law & Prophets

- Jesus & Apostles spoke of the Law and the Prophets
- On 1 occasion, Luke 24:44 adds “and the Psalms”
- Law = Torah/Pentateuch
- Prophets = (*not listed in NT*)
  - Probably meant the rest of OT
  - Could have excluded literature in today’s Bible
  - Could have included literature not in today’s Bible



Which literature was included in  
the Law & the Prophets?



## Josephus: 22 Books (*Apion* 1:38-40)

- Law: 5
- Prophets: 13 (*not named*)
- Hymns & Precepts: 4 (*not named*)



# 22 or 24 Books in OT?

- Various ethnicities regarded their alphabets to be special, even sacred.
- 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet
  - Ps 119 divided into 22 sections, each beginning with Hebrew letter
  - Pss 25, 33, 34, 103 each have 22 sentences
- 24 letters in the Greek alphabet
  - Homeric Epics each divided into 24 chapters
  - Rabbis surprisingly settled on 24 books in OT
- Books in Hebrew Bible could be combined to arrive at 22 or 24

Contrary to the claims of some,  
the OT canon was not finalized until  
several centuries *after Jesus*.



# Melito, Bishop of Sardis (c. AD 170-180)

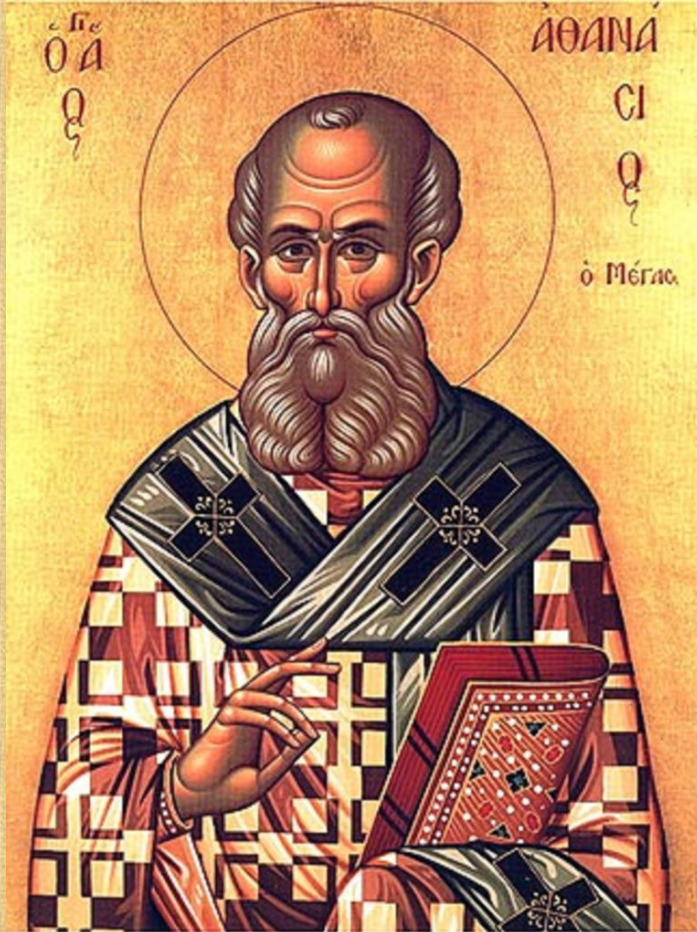
- Made a long trip to Palestine to find out which books in OT Scriptures (*Eusebius*). Though a bishop, he did not know for sure.
- His list omitted
  - Esther
  - Ezra
  - Nehemiah
  - but included *Wisdom of Solomon*

## *Baraitot (ancient Jewish oral traditions; AD 180-200)*

- 1st listing of books in Hebrew Scriptures that identifies each book by name
- All but 7 in the present Hebrew Bible:
  - Nehemiah
  - Joel
  - Obadiah
  - Jonah
  - Nahum
  - Habakkuk
  - Zephaniah



# Athanasius (AD 367)



Annual Festal Letter  
announced date when Easter  
celebrated that year

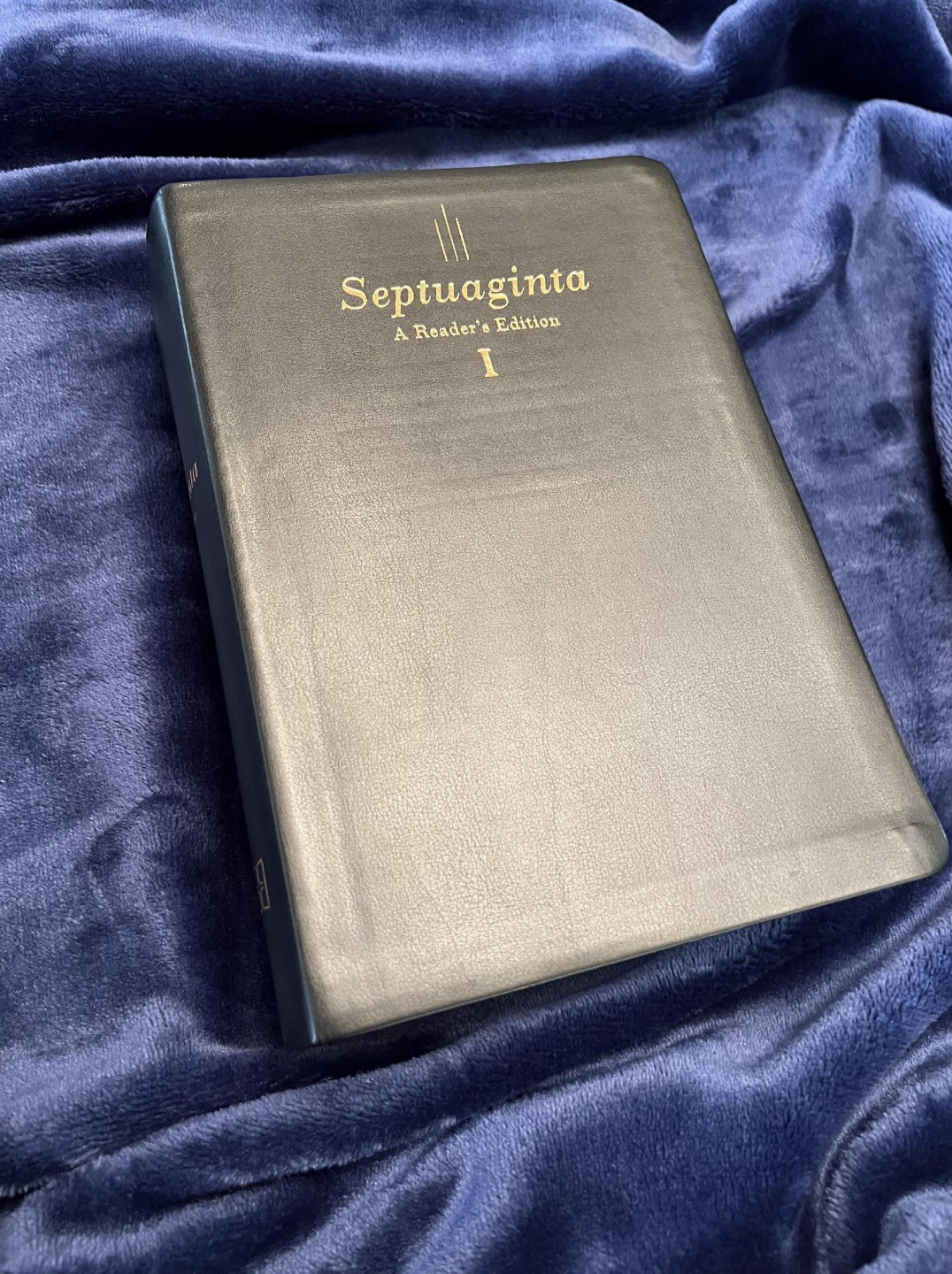
# List of Accepted Books in OT & NT

- NT: 1<sup>st</sup> list of 27 books & letters of present NT
- OT: *Esther* could be read but not included in the canon (prob. b/c no mention of God)



“It is written . . .”

- OT: always refers to OT – except 2 Sam. 1:18 (*Book of Jashar*)
- NT: always refers to OT
- Apostolic Fathers: always refers to OT – except 2x
  - 1 Clement 46:2 cites an unknown source
  - *Shepherd of Hermas* 7:4 refers to *Book of Eldad and Modat* (lost)



Septuagint (LXX)



# Alexander (4<sup>th</sup> c. BC)



A marble bust of the Roman orator Cicero, showing him with a serious expression and a receding hairline. The bust is set against a black background.

Cicero

*Latin*

A marble statue of the Roman historian Sallust, depicting him seated and holding a scroll. The statue is set against a light blue sky and a building in the background.

Sallust

A marble bust of the Roman historian Livy, showing him with a serious expression and a receding hairline. The bust is set against a black background.

Livy



Ci

***GREEK***

*Latin*

**!**

- Greek translation of OT
- Named after legend of 72 translators of Torah each completing their translation in 72 days (LXX)
- Unknown when translated but probably completed by 200 BC



# Septuagint (LXX)

- NT quotes or alludes to the OT hundreds of times.  
More than half are of the LXX
- Includes some of the Apocrypha
- Sometimes preserves texts thought to be closer to original than the Hebrew text

# Are Jewish Bible & Christian OT the same?

- Yes but arranged & divided differently
- 22 books in Jewish Bible same as 39 in Protestant Bible



# Conclusion: Formation of OT Canon

- Before the 1<sup>st</sup> century, there was widespread agreement that the Scriptures included the “Law & Prophets”
- “The Prophets” (what included not articulated)
- Some lists *included* literature eventually excluded
- Some lists *excluded* literature eventually included
- OT canon not finalized by time of Jesus
- Most popular version of Bible for NT writers was LXX
- Jewish Bible & Protestant OT the same

Introduction to the Apocrypha, xi  
Abbreviations, xxiii  
**THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA**  
The First Book of Esdras, 1  
The Second Book of Esdras, 23  
Tobit, 63  
Judith, 76  
The Additions to the Book of Esther, 96  
The Wisdom of Solomon, 102

Literature Between the OT & NT



# Catholic Bible

- 1 & 2 Maccabees
- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus)
- Baruch (w/Epistle of Jeremiah)
- Daniel significantly longer
- Esther significantly longer

# Orthodox Bible

- *Catholic Bible +*
- Prayer of Manasseh
- Psalm 151
- 3 Maccabees
- 1 Esdras (aka 1 Ezra)



## Orthodox Bible

- *Catholic Bible +*
- Prayer of Manasseh
- Psalm 151
- 3 Maccabees
- 1 Esdras (aka 1 Ezra)

## Coptic & Ethiopian Orthodox

- *Most Orthodox Bible +*
- Unchanged since before Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)

“Apocrypha” (Protestants)

“Deuterocanonical” (Catholics)

“Apocrypha/Readable” (Orthodox)



# Apocrypha

- Before Christ: hidden or secret books
- 2<sup>nd</sup> c: disputed or hidden books
- 4<sup>th</sup> c: rejected books
- Early Protestant Bibles included them
  - Matthew's Bible (1537)
  - Geneva Bible (1560)
  - KJV (1611) – though assigned as “Apocrypha”

# Deuterocanonical

- “Secondary” books
- Catholic Church believes these are inspired but not as important as the other biblical literature
- Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> c.) liked them and thought should be included
- Accepted as Scripture at Council of Trent (1546)



# Apocrypha/Readable

- “Readable”: Term assigned by Athanasius in AD 367
  - Read privately but not in churches
  - Educational but not for church doctrine (noncanonical)
- # of lit. included varies among different Orthodox traditions
- Whether readable in Worship Services varies among different Orthodox traditions

James H. Charlesworth  
EDITOR

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# Pseudepigrapha

- *Pseudo*: false; *Graphē*: literature
  - Literature falsely attributed to an author
  - *Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Mary, Gospel of Thomas*, etc.
- Catholics & Orthodox refer to as “Apocrypha”
- Rejected by all 3 (i.e., Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox)

Did the canon misfire?





# Why Protestants don't include Apocrypha

## Pros

- Protestant OT same as Jewish Scripture
- NT & Apostolic Fathers don't appeal to the Apocryphal literature as "Scripture"

## Cons

- LXX includes some of Apocryphal literature

# Who got it right? And how do we know?

- Catholics?
- Orthodox?
- Protestants?



*Protestant Canon:* Collection of literature that's inspired  
and approved for teaching

