

## Introduction, Part 1:

- I. Most non-canonical scriptures are forgeries
  - A) Proto-Gospel of James was not by James
  - B) Pseudo-Titus was not by Titus
- II. Forgeries, or Pseudonymous writings, are deceptive, no matter what you call them
  - A) Ample evidence it was not considered acceptable, even then
- III. Some things, like the gospels, were written anonymously, and only later were names attached to them
- IV. However, several Epistles explicitly claim to have been written by specific people – and in some cases they are lying

## Chapter 1:

- I. Multiple gospels known in early church; to wit, Origen of Alexandria's list
  - A) Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles and Gospel of Basilides are almost completely unknown
    - 1. Basilides was a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Gnostic
  - B) Gospel of the Egyptians and of Matthias are known from comments by Clement of Alexandria
  - C) Gospel of Thomas is known in full (see chapter 3)
  - D) Others, like Gospel according to the Hebrews and Gospel of Peter are mentioned elsewhere
- II. Docetism
  - A) The belief that Jesus' body was not real or physical – he didn't have a body
  - B) Variation – Jesus had a body but Christ was separate from it
- III. Gospel of Peter – Introduction
  - A) Mentioned and discussed by Eusebius, early 4<sup>th</sup> century historian of the church
  - B) Eusebius discusses Serapion's encounter with this gospel:
    - 1. Serapion was bishop of Antioch starting in 199
    - 2. Discovered that church at Rhodus was using this gospel
    - 3. Read it and condemned it since it seemed to be docetic
  - C) In 1886-7, an incomplete copy was found in Egyptian town of Akhmim
    - 1. Part of a monk's collection
    - 2. Dates to 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century
    - 3. Also contains Apocalypse of Peter, 1 Enoch (old testament apocrypha), Acts of Saint Julian
  - D) Other fragments found elsewhere might be other parts of this gospel
  - E) Both Eusebius and modern scholars agree Peter didn't write it

#### IV. Gospel of Peter – anti-Semitism

- A) All Gospels blame the Jews to some extent, but later ones do so more
- B) This one shows the Jews not washing their hands
- C) Herod is the one who gives the order
- D) Jewish leaders beg Pilate to not spread story of resurrection
- E) Anti-Semitism is a sign this is a later gospel

#### V. Pilate in Peter's Gospel and other traditions

- A) In later gospels, Pilate's culpability is minimized
- B) Around 200, Tertullian mentions tradition that Pilate sent a letter to emperor Tiberius declaring Jesus a god. It worked, but he was unable to convince the senate
- C) Later traditions, Pilate becomes a devout Christian, but is executed for killing Jesus
- D) In Coptic church, he became a martyr

#### VI. Several Gospels were popular – even more popular than canonical Gospels

- A) 30 ancient fragments may give us some statistics on the popularity of Gospels
  - 1. One from Mark
  - 2. Three from Peter
  - 3. Five from unknown Gospel(s)
  - 4. Three from Gospel of Thomas
  - 5. Two from Gospel of Mary Magdalene
- B) We have pottery from as late as the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century encouraging people to read the Gospel of Peter

#### VII. Apocalypse of Peter

- A) Shows fates of those who died – sort of like a Divine comedy
- B) One goal was to encourage righteous behavior
- C) Also illustrated that current suffering will soon be reversed

#### VIII. Acts of Pilate

- A) More detailed description of trial
- B) Includes lots of fanciful features, like statues bowing down to Jesus
- C) Later became combined with Jesus' journey into hell to form Gospel of Nicodemus

## Chapter 2:

- I. Acts of Thecla was once a popular document
  - A) Popular shrines to her several places
  - B) Originally stories circulated orally, only later were they written down
  - C) Eventually included with other material, including 3 Corinthians, in a document called Acts of Paul
  
- II. Forgery in the ancient world
  - A) It was commonplace, and condemned by both ancient and modern scholars
  - B) Their motivations were myriad
    - 1. Money
    - 2. Attack others
    - 3. Reach a wider audience by claiming to be an authority
  - C) We have several examples of forged letters attributed to Paul
    - 1. 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Letters to Seneca, Letter to church of Laodicea, 3 Corinthians
  
- III. The origin of the Acts of Paul
  - A) Tertullian tells the story
  - B) He is discussing baptism, and forbidding women to do it
  - C) Claims a presbyter (church elder) in Asia Minor confessed and was condemned for creating it
  
- IV. The Story of Thecla
  - A) Paul is preaching in Iconium
    - 1. Paul is preaching the virtues of chastity
    - 2. Thecla, engaged to Thamyris, listens and is persuaded
    - 3. Thamyris and Thecla's mother unsuccessfully try to dissuade her
  - B) The trials of Paul and Thecla
    - 1. Thamyris has them both tried
    - 2. Paul is exiled
    - 3. Thecla, on the strength of her own mother's testimony, is condemned to die
    - 4. Burned at the stake, fire fails to consume her.
    - 5. She escapes, and chases Paul, who refuses to baptize her
  - C) Paul and Thecla in Antioch
    - 1. Alexander, an influential citizen, desires Thecla
    - 2. She refuses him, she is captured, condemned to be killed by wild beasts
    - 3. Lioness protects her for a while
    - 4. Thecla throws herself into a vat of sea lions, "baptizing" herself
    - 5. Lightning kills the sea lions
  - D) Resolution
    - 1. Paul accepts Thecla and tells her to go preach
    - 2. Thamyris has died by now
    - 3. She comforts her mother and preaches the gospel
  - E) Later versions added many more details

V. Acts of Thecla compared to romance stories

- A) Traditional romance stories involve a couple overcoming overwhelming odds to be united
- B) Traditional stories end with love, marriage, reinforcing civil structures like marriage
- C) Acts of Thecla ends with chastity – in a sense, defying traditional roles and morality

VI. Paul and his views of women in the church

- A) 1 Timothy 2:12-15 clearly states women not allowed to do things in church
  - 1. Most scholars agree that this pastoral letter is *not* Pauline
  - 2. Interestingly, it specifically condemns “profane tales of older women,” possibly the Tales of Thecla
- B) 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 echoes the same sentiments
  - 1. This seems to contrast with other places in the same book
  - 2. This passage doesn’t fit with what precedes or follows it – which both talk about prophets in church
  - 3. It appears at different places in different copies
- C) In other Pauline letters, he greets women of influence within the church
- D) In summary: Paul was probably open to women participating in church

VII. Other works condemning sex

- A) Acts of Thomas
  - 1. 3<sup>rd</sup> century account of exploits of Thomas (the twin) in India
  - 2. Supposedly, Thomas was identical twin of Jesus
  - 3. Thomas didn’t want to go to India – Jesus “sold” him as a slave
  - 4. Thomas prays at a wedding ceremony
  - 5. Jesus appears and convinces the bride – then the groom – not to have sex
  - 6. The king tries to kill Thomas, who has already left, however
- B) Acts of John
  - 1. A docetic view – Jesus body isn’t exactly real
  - 2. John performs countless miracles
  - 3. Andronicus of Ephesus and Drusinia have decided to be celibate in marriage
  - 4. Callimachus falls in love and wants to commit adultery with Drusinia
  - 5. She dies. Callimachus goes to the tomb to have sex with her dead body
  - 6. A serpent appears and kills Callimachus, as well as a steward
  - 7. John arrives, accompanied by Andronicus. John raises Drusinia, who then raises the steward
  - 8. The unrepentant steward then is killed by the serpent again

VIII. The abstinence message of these stories

- A) Rejecting the body made some sense if the end of the world was nigh
- B) This was disruptive of society, which relied on sex/marriage as the glue of society
- C) Paul seems to propose an ascetic life style (1 Cor. 7:1,8, 26-31)
- D) Many Pauline followers probably viewed differences (male vs. female) as passing away in the near future

## Chapter 3:

- I. Early documents discovered
  - A) Dead Sea Scrolls
    - 1. Near Jerusalem. From time of Jesus
    - 2. No New Testament documents
    - 3. Helps us understand the times
  - B) Didache
    - 1. Means “teaching,” full name is “The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles of the Nations
    - 2. Gives instructions on liturgy and ethical life
    - 3. *ca.* 100 CE
  - C) P<sup>52</sup>
    - 1. Post-card size fragment from Gospel according to John
    - 2. *ca.* 125 CE
  - D) Papyrus Egerton 2
    - 1. Comes from an “Unknown Gospel”
    - 2. *ca.* 150 CE
  - E) Gospel of the Savior
    - 1. Written in Coptic
    - 2. Fragmentary, contains only Easter story
    - 3. Jesus “take this cup from me” occurs in a vision
    - 4. Jesus addresses the cross directly
  - F) The Nag Hammadi Library
- II. The Nag Hammadi Library
  - A) Discovered in 1945 by Bedouin Mohammed Ali
  - B) 12 leather bound books, papyrus, anthologies, sealed in earthenware jar
  - C) Date
    - 1. Paper indicates somewhat later than mid 4<sup>th</sup>-century
    - 2. In 367 CE, Athanasius proscribed the canon and proscribed other documents
    - 3. Probably late 4<sup>th</sup> century
    - 4. However, their source(s) may be significantly earlier
  - D) Location/Source
    - 1. Found in upper Egypt
    - 2. Few miles from nearby monastery
    - 3. Probably hidden “heretical” texts protected from Athanasius’s decree
  - E) Language – Coptic
    - 1. Some are definitely translations – such as fragment of Plato’s Republic
    - 2. Some language looks like translated Greek
  - F) Contents
    - 1. Gospel according to Phillip, and John the son of Zebedee, James
    - 2. Secret revelations to John and James
    - 3. Mystical speculation on how the divine realm came into being
    - 4. Gospel of Thomas
    - 5. Attacks on other Christians, especially proto-orthodox

### III. Gnosticism

- A) Material world is a mistake, a cosmic catastrophe
- B) Spirit comes from divine world
- C) Goal is to escape this material world
- D) Salvation comes through knowledge
- E) Jesus came to bring us this knowledge
- F) Crucifixion is not key to salvation

### IV. Q

- A) Similarities of synoptic gospels convince most scholars that Matthew and Luke copied from Mark
- B) Similarities of Matthew and Luke suggest they also had another source
  - 1. Called Quelle (German: source) or Q
  - 2. Consists almost exclusively of sayings of Jesus
- C) Some scholars found the Q hypothesis – that a collection of *only* sayings of Jesus would exist – implausible before Gospel of Thomas was discovered

### IV. Gospel of Thomas

- A) Date – 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE
- B) Probably Gnostic gospel
  - 1. Introduction – see p. 58 – “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death”
  - 2. Many obscure passages make more sense if you interpret them as Gnostic
- C) Authorship
  - 1. Claims to be Didymus Judas Thomas – twin brother of Jesus
  - 2. Scholars say definitely not
- D) Significance
  - 1. It demonstrates that collections of Jesus’ sayings did circulate independently.
  - 2. Q is now plausible – we know collections of sayings were created
  - 3. Provides insight into Gnostic thinking – if that’s what it is
- E) Content - general
  - 1. Mysterious sayings, difficult to interpret, meaning is hidden
  - 2. Some quotes nearly identical with canonical gospels
  - 3. Some similar to canonical, but with extra things added
  - 4. Some completely unfamiliar quotes
  - 5. 114 sayings in all
- F) Content – specific
  - 1. This world describes as “poverty” – next world as “wealth”
  - 2. Connecting to this next world makes us perfect
  - 3. Women – who are incomplete men – can become perfect by becoming men
  - 4. Jesus came to show us the way
  - 5. Divine spark – the ability to find the perfect – is within some of us
  - 6. Unification of everything is the goal

## Chapter 4:

### I. Modern Forgery

- A) Forgeries – of all types – occur all the time
  - 1. Hitler’s diaries
  - 2. Tabloid variety biblical discoveries
  - 3. Professional level biblical discoveries – rarely
- B) “An Amusing Agraphon”
  - 1. Article published in 1950 in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
  - 2. Professor Coleman-Norton in classics department of Princeton
  - 3. A saying attributed to Jesus, but not in the canonical gospels
  - 4. Ample evidence it was an inside joke
  - 5. Some took it literally – though apparently none do now
- C) Professional level forgeries are difficult to make, but they *can* be done

### II. Morton Smith

- A) Professor of Ancient History, Columbia University, and an expert in the field
- B) Discovered – or forged – or discovered a forgery – called “Secret Gospel of Mark”
- C) Wrote extensively on this subject
- D) Discovery was made when he was an established scholar

### III. The Secret Gospel of Mark

- A) Source
  - 1. Morton Smith – cataloging orthodox monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem
  - 2. Working in 1958
  - 3. Discovered document copied on blank pages early edition of writings of Ignatius of Antioch
  - 4. Document was supposedly copy of letter by Clement of Alexandria
  - 5. Smith photographed it and continued cataloging
- B) Clement of Alexandria
  - 1. Theologian and ethicist, ca. 200 CE
  - 2. Well known, his writing style can be compared to other documents
  - 3. Opposed to – and wrote against – Carpocratians – followers of Carpocrates
- C) The Carpocratians
  - 1. Engaged in wild licentious activities
  - 2. We are trapped in human body until we experience everything possible in this body
  - 3. Goal – experience everything – try everything
- D) Contents of the letter
  - 1. Letter from Clement of Alexandria to unknown criticizing Carpocratians
  - 2. Claims that there is an “advanced” version of Mark for those in the know
  - 3. Claims Carpocratians are using corrupted advanced version of Mark
  - 4. Interprets “Secret Mark” and condemns corrupt version
  - 5. Quotes secret Mark in two places – allowing us to know some of its content

- E) Content and meaning of secret Mark
1. Story of the raising of the dead of a young man, followed by secret instruction for him, and suggestive of physical, possibly homosexual interaction
  2. A phrase titled “naked man with naked man,” claimed to only be in the corrupted version
- F) Interpretation: Smith
1. Secret Mark is, in fact, the original, longer version of Mark, later edited
  2. Jesus was a “magician” having secret knowledge and power that could be taught
  3. Jesus performed baptisms
  4. Jesus became spiritually united with people through physical unions
  5. Without saying so, he is hinting that this is homosexual sex
- G) Evidence *against* it being a forgery
1. The handwriting is consistent with 18<sup>th</sup> century handwriting
  2. The word choices are Clement-like – enough to convince Clement scholars
  3. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, producing such a Clement-like forgery would have been virtually impossible
  4. We *know* multiple versions of Mark existed
  5. The passages quoted from Mark match what we know of Mark
  6. Adding the quoted Mark passages cause the rest to make more sense
  7. The original documents actually exist, since it was seen by others (though not examined closely)
- H) Evidence *in favor of* it being a forgery
1. Every item in previous list would be possible if Smith himself forged it
    - a) As a scholar, he knew the style of Mark, Clement, and had access to 18<sup>th</sup> century documents to produce his forgery
    - b) He had modern tools such as word counts available for these authors
  2. He produced photos, never the original documents
  3. He never did physical test to see how old the writing was
  4. Pages have been mysteriously removed from the book
  5. Letter style matches Clement *too* perfectly, as if produced by a scholar in imitation
  6. Letter cuts off oddly right when Clement was going to explain things
  7. No other ancient source refers to this letter, or to Secret Mark
  8. Clement never mentions Secret Mark elsewhere
  9. Some comments of Clement are un-Clement like
  10. Dedication of Smith’s book may be a hint, to “the one who knows”
  11. No copying errors. Zero. Very unusual
  12. Ironically, the letter begins facing a page talking about forgeries

## Introduction, Part 2:

- I. Multiple gods was the norm; monotheism the exception at the time
- II. Focus on methods of worship, not correct doctrine (orthodoxy and heresy)
- III. Christianity unusual (unique?) in that they were exclusionary of other beliefs
- IV. We have to understand the social context that produces the various forgeries

## Chapter 5:

- I. Jesus was Jewish, as were his disciples
  - A) Disagreement among early church: did you have to become Jewish to be Christian
  - B) Early church debate discussed in Acts 15 (from Paul's point of view)
- II. Paul
  - A) Preached to gentiles, who did not want to become Jewish
  - B) Preached that you could become Christian without being Jewish
  - C) Galatians is an argument against church leaders who demanded you be Jewish
- III. Gospel of Matthew
  - A) Clearly a "Jewish" document
  - B) Argues that we *must* keep Jewish law
    - 1. Matt. 5:17-20 says we have to keep every single detail of the law
    - 2. Matt. 19:17, he tells a rich man to keep the law
- IV. Ebionites
  - A) Christian sect that insisted we must be Jewish first
  - B) We don't have any documents from them – only their critics
    - 1. Many details – even the origin of their name – are unknown
    - 2. Difficult to know what they really believed when you only have critics
  - C) Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, as prophesied
  - D) Practiced circumcision, ate kosher, kept the Sabbath, revered Jerusalem
  - E) Argued Jesus was ultimate sacrifice, so *this aspect* of worship no longer necessary
    - 1. No more ritual animal sacrifice
    - 2. Vegetarian
  - F) Jesus was *wholly* human – Joseph was his father – and he was adopted by God
    - 1. He followed the law perfectly – which made him worthy of adoption
    - 2. He was crucified, and this washed away our sins
    - 3. He did not exist before his birth
    - 4. Mary not a virgin
  - G) Gospel of Matthew or a variation used by them
    - 1. Lacked first two chapters – genealogy and virginity of mother
    - 2. Probably in Aramaic – language of Jesus

- H) Additional gospel used by them – Gospel of the Ebionites
1. Possibly identical with a gospel known as Gospel of the Nazareans
  2. Their work seemed partly an attempt to harmonize the synoptics
  3. John the Baptist eats *pancakes* and honey, a difference of one letter from *locusts*
  4. Apparently in Greek

V. Marcionites

- A) Origins: Followed 2<sup>nd</sup> century evangelist/teacher Marcion
- B) Writing
1. Marcion's writings, and those of his followers, no longer exist
  2. *Antitheses* – by Marcion – argued old testament God is not God of Jesus
- C) Canon – put together by Marcion
1. Ten letters of Paul
  2. Gospel of Luke, or a variation thereof, edited by Marcion
  3. Nothing else – nothing from the old testament
- D) Teachings
1. Two Gods exist, the good one and the Jewish one
  2. Jewish God is not evil, but strict, and everyone dies because everyone breaks laws
  3. Jesus was not even human – he was not a part of the material world at all
  4. Unclear how Marcion argued for atonement through Jesus
  5. Disciples didn't understand Jesus' message, so Jesus gave it again – correctly this time – to Paul
- E) Lasted in significant numbers until at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century

VI. What if?

- A) The Ebionites became the dominant version of Christianity?
1. Christianity would be a sect of Judaism
  2. Unlikely it would grow and become dominant
- B) The Marcionites became the dominant version of Christianity?
1. Religion would seem inherently new – less likely to dominate
  2. Less competition between Judaism and Christianity
  3. Economic theory – ultimately based on old testament concepts of justice – might not be the same

## Chapter 6:

See chapter 4 notes for comments on Gnosticism, the Nag Hammadi library, etc.

### I. Gnosticism – General comments

- A) Gnosis means knowledge
- B) Jesus is divine, from realm above
- C) Knowledge is secret, hidden, reserved for the elite
- D) Gnosticism was plural – mutually contradictory beliefs held by different subgroups

### II. Origins of Gnosticism

- A) Traditional Jewish theology held that suffering was the result of not following God's laws
- B) This became hard to explain when suffering was focused on Jews for being Jews – persecution for attempting to *follow* God's laws
- C) Concept of the Devil as source of suffering arose
- D) Apocalypticists – God would show up soon and defeat the devil
- E) When the end didn't come, many assumed that we need to leave this evil world – origins of Gnosticism
- F) The dualism – Good of heaven and evil of this world – similar to Plato
- G) Middle Platonists – 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE – tried to build cosmologies based on a God completely outside our universe
- H) Philo of Alexandria wrote commentary showing how Moses' view matched that of middle Platonists

### III. Documents describing Gnosticism

- A) Criticisms from Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, ca. 180 CE
- B) Criticisms from Hippolytus of Rome
- C) Several documents before discovery of Nag Hammadi library
- D) The Nag Hammadi library

### IV. Tenets of Gnosticism (but not necessarily universally accepted)

- A) Original God, unknowable, beyond comprehension
- B) His thoughts – aeons – become realities
- C) These aeons produce other things to produce the fullness, the Plemora
- D) Sophia, or Wisdom, was the final aeon, and she “fell”
- E) She tried to make her own offspring, but it is imperfect. This is the Jewish God, here called Yaldabaoth. She hides him in a lower sphere
- F) Yaldabaoth creates the human realm, and humans, filled with evil. He thinks he is the true God
- G) Different ideas of where Jesus came from
  - 1. He was wholly divine, and didn't even have a human body
  - 2. He was wholly human, but was imbued with the holy spirit (at baptism) which departed on the cross (“Why have you forsaken me?”)

- H) Jesus (or Christ) came from divine realm to give us the knowledge so we could escape
- D) You should deny all pleasure to your body, so you don't become attached to it

V. Gnostic culture

- A) Gnostics were part of the church – they were members of regular churches
- B) They regarded themselves as elites, having secret knowledge
- C) They had their own rituals, which we don't know much about

VI. The Gospel of Truth

- A) Authorship – unknown, possibly Valentinus
  - 1. A well-known Roman Gnostic
- B) Content – not a gospel – celebration of Jesus' salvation of our world
- C) Teachings:
  - 1. Material world came about because of conflict in the divine realm
  - 2. Jesus brought salvation by bringing knowledge

VII. Ptolemy's Letter to Flora

- A) Known only from an attack on it by 4<sup>th</sup> century Epiphanius of Salamis
- B) Written by teacher Ptolemy to unknown, probably proto-orthodox Flora
- C) Pentateuch inspired by divine being neither God nor Devil
- D) Demiurge – neither God nor devil – actually created the world

VIII. The Treatise on Resurrection

- A) Resurrection involves the salvation of the spirit
- B) Jesus' resurrection involved the swallowing of the visible by the invisible
- C) The spirit, not the body, is what is eternal
- D) You shouldn't get attached to earthly pleasures

## Chapter 7:

### I. Proto-orthodoxy – General comments

- A) There was enormous variety among early church members, even within the group of proto-orthodox
- B) The orthodox views we know about today represent the intellectual descendants of the views that won out in early internal struggles

### II. Martyrs as witnesses for truth

- A) Martyrdom became a sign of orthodoxy
  - 1. At least one Gnostic argued *against* martyrdom
  - 2. Martyrologies – accounts of martyrdom – become common after Ignatius
- B) Ignatius of Antioch
  - 1. Early 2<sup>nd</sup> century
  - 2. Condemned for Christian activities
  - 3. Sent to Rome for execution
  - 4. Wrote seven letters on the way there that we have today
  - 5. Fervently argued in his writing for his execution not to be interfered with
- C) Polycarp
  - 1. Received letter from Ignatius ca. 110
  - 2. First written account of a martyrdom, ca. 150
  - 3. Refuses to renounce faith, and is burned at the stake
  - 4. Contains several supernatural elements in the story
- D) Tertullian
  - 1. Not a martyr, he wrote about martyrs
  - 2. Argued that their strength in the face of death or torture was sign that their path was true
  - 3. Argued that since heretics didn't have the same strength, they were wrong
  - 4. First use of word "Trinity"

### III. Church government

- A) Ignatius (ca. 100) made it clear that there were bishops in charge who's word was law
- B) Writings such as 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, written in Paul's name, also show evidence of a hierarchical structure
- C) Writings that were actually by Paul show little or no structure
- D) 1 Clement argues for top-down structure from Apostolic succession
  - 1. Late first century letter from Romans to Corinthians
  - 2. Attributed to Clement (bishop of Rome), but author unknown
  - 3. Argued leaders were chosen by apostles, which were chosen by Jesus

#### IV. The question of Jewish traditions

- A) Christians wanted to maintain some Jewish connection so they could claim ancient religion
- B) Ignatius argued against the requirements of the Jewish religion
- C) Epistle of Barnabas argues that Judaism is a false religion and Old Testament is a Christian book
  - 1. Attributed to Paul's companion, but probably not really by him
  - 2. ca. 130 CE
  - 3. Strongly anti-Semitic
  - 4. Claims Jews misunderstood their own Bible, including rituals that were intended figuratively
  - 5. Reinterprets dietary laws creatively
  - 6. Interpreted six days of creation as 6,000 years
- D) Jews are condemned for killing Jesus

#### V. Prophets and Revelations

- A) Early on, people continued to have revelations, such as Ignatius
- B) In addition to Revelation of John, Hermas' *The Shepherd* was considered scripture for a while
  - 1. Mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century, written by brother of bishop of Rome
- C) Montanism
  - 1. Founded by Montanus, who claimed direct revelation from God
  - 2. We know only of his writings from critiques
  - 3. Believed the end was nigh
  - 4. Strong moral restrictions
  - 5. Emphasized prophecy over scripture
- D) To avoid conflicts, church began to reject new revelations

#### VI. Development of proto-orthodox theology

- A) God both human and divine
  - 1. Ignatius proposed both views, emphasizing his suffering
  - 2. Those claiming he was fully human were "weeded out" over time
- B) Hippolytus of Rome
  - 1. Wrote *Against Noetus* arguing for not too divine a picture of Jesus
  - 2. Criticized two bishops of Rome in early 3<sup>rd</sup> century
  - 3. Argued with Tertullian, for example, that Jesus can't be praying to himself
  - 4. Successfully pushed the church in the direction of not identifying Christ and God
- C) Origen of Alexandria (185 – 254 CE)
  - 1. Prolific writer – perhaps 1000 books
  - 2. God created all things – initially disembodied souls
  - 3. Satan fell, as did others
  - 4. Others incapable of sustaining eternal worship – they became humans
  - 5. Christ was most focused on God and essentially became God
  - 6. Origen's works were eventually banned
- D) Doctrine of trinity began to arise, largely thanks to Hippolytus and Tertullian

## Introduction, Part 3:

- I. Conflicts are the norm within communities, especially religious
- II. Jesus probably disputed most with Pharisees
- III. By the time of Paul, the disputes were internal to the church
  - A) Paul's letter to the Galatians is about whether we must be Jewish

## Chapter 8:

- I. Orthodoxy vs. Heresy: the classical view
  - A) Originally, there was only orthodox view
  - B) This became corrupted by those with opposing views
  - C) Creeds such as the Nicene Creed were established to codify orthodoxy
- II. Eusebius' Church History
  - A) Finished 325 CE
  - B) Presented view that orthodoxy was majority from the start
  - C) Clear motive to distort early history
  - D) Attributed origin of heresy to Simon Magus (see Acts 8:9-13)
- III. Book of Acts
  - A) Presents a generally unified view of churches founded by the Apostles
  - B) Mentions Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-13) and other minor characters as opposing orthodoxy
  - C) Takes the view that apostles were unified in their thoughts on Christ
- IV. Herman Reimarus (1694-1768) and his fragments
  - A) Fragments published posthumously by G.E. Lessing from 1774-78
  - B) Believed in superiority of reason over Biblical truth
  - C) Argued that contradictions in the Bible compromised its integrity
  - D) Had radically new view of Jesus
    - 1. He intended to lead a revolt against Rome
    - 2. After his death, his disciples hid his body and founded religion in his name
    - 3. There was nothing supernatural about him
  - E) Though his views are no longer supported, he influenced future scholarship
    - 1. Discrepancies are now carefully examined
    - 2. Motives are taken note of in each author's narrative
    - 3. At the times the gospels were written, there were a variety of interpretations of Jesus
- V. F.C. Baur (1792-1860)
  - A) Argued the orthodoxy arose from conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians
  - B) Claimed book such as Gallatians that show this conflict tend to be earlier
  - C) Acts, in particular, which implies harmony, is not reliable

VI. Walter Bauer (1877-1960)

- A) Wrote *Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Earliest Christianity* (1934)
- B) Attacked arguments of Eusebius
- C) Claimed originally there were many Christianities, and labeling them orthodox/heresy is biased
- D) Argued that different perspectives were originally distributed geographically
  - 1. Egypt was Gnostic
  - 2. Edessa was Marcionite
  - 3. Rome was Orthodox
- E) Orthodox won because Rome became the center
  - 1. It was wealthy and powerful
  - 2. It was a political center of power
  - 3. They had strong organizational skills and favored hierarchical structure
  - 4. They contributed money to other churches
- F) References in 2 Cor. 11 and 1 Clement make it clear Rome was trying to influence church of Corinth
  - 1. 1 Clement became gospel in Corinth, showing it was successful
- G) Not everything about Bauer was accepted by other scholars
  - 1. He was overcritical of orthodox sources
  - 2. Christianity was actually even more complicated and diverse than Bauer recognized

VII. Evidence is now considered strong for diversity of views, and no clear majority

- A) Earliest writings, such as Paul, show that he was tirelessly needing to counter opposing views
- B) Some comments in 2 Cor. 2 indicate he was losing in some cases
- C) Other comments in Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, James, Jude, 2 Peter
- D) Non canonical writings, such as Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, show the same
- E) The boundaries, even within the proto-orthodox view, were poorly defined
  - 1. Though everyone agreed that Jesus had a physical body, many had very supernatural ideas about Jesus' body.

VIII. Why did proto-orthodoxy win out?

- A) It had ancient roots, since it maintained its connection with the old testament
- B) They didn't require following Jewish law
- C) They had a hierarchy, which helped them form a unified view
- D) They communicated and worked to spread their views

## Chapter 9:

- I. Battles between different sects were fought with words
  - A) Spoken words doubtless played a role, but we don't have a record of these
  - B) Written documents attest to the ferocity and variety of tactics used
    - 1. Arguments from earlier authority
    - 2. Reason
    - 3. Creation of forgeries
    - 4. Attacks on character
  
- II. Pauline writings vs. the Ebionites
  - A) Writings attributed to Clement
    - 1. Twenty *Homilies* describing his contacts with Peter
    - 2. Ten *Recognitions* describing the search for relatives
    - 3. These documents appear to be Jewish in perspective, and anti-orthodox
  - B) These documents describe adventures of Clement
    - 1. He accompanies Peter
    - 2. Peter repeatedly defeats Simon Magus
    - 3. Simon Magus seems to be a stand-in for Paul
    - 4. A conflict described in Gal. 2:11-14 is described here as being lost by Paul
    - 5. A forged letter from Peter to James supporting the Ebionite view is included
    - 6. Paul and Acts are apparently both heretical to this author
    - 7. Claims Paul isn't a real apostle, if all he had was one vision
  
- III. Proto-orthodox vs. Gnostics
  - A) Gnostics claimed that what others taught was generally correct
  - B) However, Gnostics claimed they had a less superficial understanding of this
  - C) Coptic Apocalypse of Peter
    - 1. Part of the Nag Hammadi library
    - 2. Claim Peter was given special knowledge
    - 3. Claims only some have the ability to stop clinging to the material world
    - 4. Jesus' crucifixion only affected the physical portion, the spiritual part was unhurt
  - D) Second Treatise of the Great Seth
    - 1. From Nag Hammadi library
    - 2. Again, claims death didn't happen
  - E) In both of these, and others, Jesus laughs at those who do not understand
  
- IV. Basic arguments of the Proto-Orthodox
  - A) Unity is a sign of God
    - 1. Diversity of opinion among the heretics – especially Gnostics – is a sign that their doctrine is false
    - 2. Claims that there are multiple gods, or that Jesus and Christ are different, etc., imply disunity and therefore are also false
  - B) Complexity of the opposing myths
    - 1. Many of the heresies involved complex myths

2. When considered collectively, these myths sound absurdly complex and implausible
  3. It is not clear if the heretics even believed these myths
  4. They argued on general principles that there could not be two gods
- C) The earlier version (supposedly proto-orthodoxy) is more true
1. Most other claims named after later founder; therefore, younger
  2. Some show influence of outside philosophies, like Platonism
- D) Apostolic succession
1. Claimed churches, or at least some of them, were founded by people who could trace their roots back to the original disciples
  2. In fact, some other schools also traced their lineage to the disciples
- E) Character attacks
1. Eusebius claimed that Simon Magus and his followers did things “more disgusting than the foulest crime known”
  2. Irenaeus claimed that Gnostics and Carpocratians encouraged promiscuity
  3. Can be found in book of Jude as well
  4. Epiphanius (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) claimed that a group of Gnostics called Phibionites practiced licentious sex and cannibalism
    - a) There is reason to believe his descriptions are exaggerations or lies
    - b) He makes it clear he never participated in these rituals
    - c) Though he clearly *met* members, he doesn’t say his knowledge came from these members
    - d) He doesn’t cite any written sources for this information
    - e) Those Gnostic sources we have – like Nag Hammadi – indicate there is discouragement of bodily pleasures

#### V. Development of creeds

- A) Started with *regula fidei*, rule of faith, which contained various anti-heretical sayings
- B) Additional creeds were recited, probably at the time of baptism
- C) Apostle’s and Nicean creeds developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- D) The apparent paradoxes in these creeds was a reaction to heretical beliefs; e.g., Jesus is fully human and fully divine

#### VI. Even when there was agreement on scripture, there was no agreement on interpretation of scripture

- A) Marcionites insisted on literal interpretation of Old Testament, which led them to believe it was written by an evil God
- B) Proto-orthodox usually did not interpret the old testament literally, at least
- C) In contrast, they argued for literal interpretations *against* the Gnostics

## Chapter 10:

- I. Literacy was rare in the ancient world
  - A) Probably only a few percent
  - B) Most Christians came from the lower classes
  - C) Documents were read aloud, so many people knew of literature, even if they couldn't read
  - D) Forgeries and Falsifications were commonplace
  
- II. Non-theological forgeries
  - A) Not all forgeries were created for the purpose of theological argument
  - B) Infancy Gospel of Thomas
    - 1. Contains multiple stories of Jesus' childhood
    - 2. Supernatural happenings, entertaining stories, evidence of power
    - 3. Probably stories collected late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE
    - 4. No evidence of theological agenda
    - 5. Ireneaeus attributed it to a group of Gnostics
  - C) Paul's letters with Seneca, a well known philosopher
    - 1. Fourteen in all
    - 2. Goal apparently to make Paul seem like he was known in his time
    - 3. Approximately 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, apparently no theological agenda
  
- III. Anti-heretical forgeries
  - A) Proto-gospel of James
    - 1. Discusses events leading up to Jesus' birth and infancy
    - 2. Describes miraculous birth and remarkable raising of Mary in purity
    - 3. Continues on with stories often matching traditional gospels
    - 4. Mary remains a virgin eternally
    - 5. Author is claimed to be Jesus' brother James, a supposed step-brother
    - 6. Probably written late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE
  - B) 3 Corinthians
    - 1. Appears to be a continuation of Paul's letters to them
    - 2. Discusses those who think their bodies no longer matter
    - 3. Mentioned in Acts of Paul (see chapter 2)
    - 4. Anti-Marcionite or anti-Gnostic
  - C) Acts of Peter
    - 1. Like other pseudo-Clementine letters, it contains conflicts between Simon Magus and Peter
    - 2. Miraculous one-upmanship, Peter defeating Simon Magus
    - 3. Simon Magus' dialogue matches Gnostic views
  - D) Paul's Letter to the Laodiceans
    - 1. Motivation unclear
    - 2. Possibly to counter a no-longer existing Marcionite letter to the Laodiceans

#### IV. Falsification of Texts

- A) Texts were modified – often on purpose – for theological reasons
  - 1. Recall – Marcion himself did this
  - 2. Theodotians – who believed Jesus was wholly human – did the same
  - 3. Ebionites accused of excising Jesus' birth
  - 4. Tertullian accused Gnostic Valentinians – but Tertullian has it backwards
- B) Mostly, these modifications by the “losers” were lost
- C) Modifications by the proto-orthodox are strongly indicated
  - 1. We have many copies – thousands – and they all disagree with each other
  - 2. Unfortunately, most of them are late period
  - 3. Differences are often trivial – like spelling errors
  - 4. Others are worse – paragraph missing – but still probably innocent
  - 5. Some look very deliberate
- D) Typical deliberate alterations of text
  - 1. Mark 1:2 and 2:25 each contradict old testament – and they were altered in some copies of these books
  - 2. Mark had final twelve verses apparently added
  - 3. John's woman taken in adultery appears to be a later addition

#### V. Specific examples of alterations to combat heresy

- A) Anti-adoptionist alterations
  - 1. Luke 2:33 was sometimes changed to say “Joseph” instead of “his father”
  - 2. Luke 2:48 was changed to say “we” instead of “your father and I”
  - 3. Luke 3:22 many old copies say “today I have begotten you”
  - 4. John 1:18 modified to make Jesus seem to be God
- B) Anti-separationist alterations – Was Jesus/Christ one or two?
  - 1. 1 John 4:3-4 altered sometimes to say “every spirit that looses Jesus”
  - 2. Mark 15:34 altered sometimes to say “why have you mocked me?”
  - 3. Hebrews 2:9 changed from original “apart from God” to “by the grace of God”
- C) Anti-docetist alterations – Was Jesus completely divine?
  - 1. Luke 22:43-44 Jesus sweats blood, probably added
  - 2. Luke 24:12 Jesus' empty tomb is seen by Peter, apparently copied from John

## Chapter 11:

- I. No aspect of the early church has more impact on the world than the production of canon
  - A) The Bible is viewed as the word of God by many
  - B) This is nearly identical between all modern churches
  - C) The books were written from around 50 CE (letters of Paul) up to about 120 CE (2 Peter)
  - D) Letter from Athanasius in 367 CE set up canon of 27 books as we know them today
  - E) Other churches were missing a few or added a few
  - F) The canon was not ever officially ratified until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but was generally accepted (with small differences) by the 5<sup>th</sup> century
  
- II. Motivations for the production of scriptures
  - A) Jewish ancestry of the religion
    1. Jesus and all his early followers were Jewish
    2. Jesus interpreted and challenged the law in rabbinic tradition
    3. Though Jewish canon was not yet set, many documents were already considered sacred
    4. Christians, in competition with Jews, wanted to have their own sacred texts
    5. Christians wanted Jesus' teachings to trump the old testament
  - B) The concept of Scripture arose early in the Christian community
    1. See 1 Timothy 5:18, which equates Deut. 25:4 with Matt. 10:10
    2. 2 Peter 3:16, probably not by Peter, talks about Paul's writings as authoritative
  - C) Were the books in our current canon actually written by the authors assigned
    1. Matthew and John probably not written by Matthew or John
    2. Mark and Luke make no claim to authorship
    3. Of the 13 letters of Paul, at least 7 probably were by him
  
- III. Argument by authority
  - A) Several groups claimed their views came from authorities
    1. Ebionites claimed their authority from Peter and James
    2. Marcionites claimed their authority from Paul
    3. Valentinian Gnostics claimed authority from Theudas from Paul
  - B) Canonical gospels were attributed to those close to the apostles, but all were written anonymously
  - C) Several epistles are almost certainly pseudonymous
    1. 2 Peter, clearly too late
    2. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are written to pastors
    3. 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians
    4. Possibly 1 Peter and Jude

#### IV. Indications of progress towards a canon

- A) Letter of Polycarp to the Phillipians, ca. 130 CE
  - 1. Contains nearly 100 citations from what we call New Testament, each cited as authority, and only twelve from old testament
- B) The Shepherd, of Hermas, ca. 110 – 140 CE, Long document, not a single reference to New Testament
- C) 2 Clement, Mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century
  - 1. Quotes Jesus, probably from scripture, but doesn't attribute them
  - 2. About 5 of the eleven quotes do *not* correspond to anything in our gospels

#### V. Why a canon was established

- A) New prophets were constantly springing up – such as Montanus – claiming divine revelation
- B) Marcion was deliberately changing and editing and deleting scripture
- C) Authors found it useful to have a source of authority for attacking their opponents
  - 1. Justin Martyr, quotes authority to attack Marcion
  - 2. Irenaeus, shortly thereafter, criticizes heresies by claiming they don't use all four gospels, and also quotes Paul
  - 3. Contrast may be a response to Marcion's canon

#### VI. Early Canons

- A) The Muratorian canon
  - 1. Author unknown, probably original from late 2<sup>nd</sup> century, though some say 4<sup>th</sup>
  - 2. Lists four gospels, Acts, thirteen letters of Paul
  - 3. Also Jude, two epistles of John, Apocalypse of John and Peter, Wisdom of Solomon
  - 4. Mentions Hermas' Shepherd, but says not to be read in church, since it is too recent
  - 5. Lists several rejected books
  - 6. Specifies criteria for inclusion:
    - a) Had to be written near the time of Jesus
    - b) Had to be written by an apostle or near-apostle
    - c) Had to be widely read (catholic)
    - d) Had to be in agreement with prevailing interpretation (orthodox)
- B) Eusebius and early 4<sup>th</sup> century canon
  - 1. Eusebius gave us a summary of what was going on at this time
  - 2. "Acknowledged" books: The four gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline letters plus Hebrews (attributed to Paul), 1 Peter, 1 John, and perhaps Revelation of John
  - 3. "Disputed" books: James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John
  - 4. "Spurious" books of doubtful canonicity: *Shepherd* of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Acts of Paul, and the Didache of the Apostles, and perhaps Revelation of John
  - 5. Heretical books: Gospels of Thomas, Mathias and Peter, Acts of Andrew and John
- C) Athanasius declared canon, and his views eventually prevailed
  - 1. Augustine of Hippo, in 397 CE, came out in support of this canon

## Chapter 12:

- I. Outcome of history would have been different if Gnostics, Marcionites, or Ebionites had been victorious
  - A) Christian-Jewish relations would have been completely different
  - B) Canon would have been very different
  - C) Concept of Trinity would not have arisen
  - D) The way we read other books might have been changed if we read canon differently
  
- II. Christian-Roman relations
  - A) Persecution early (2 Cor. 11:23-25)
  - B) Systematic effort to wipe it out – mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century
    1. Pagan religions – including emperor worship – was commonplace, and disasters could be blamed on those who didn't follow it
  - C) 312 Constantine attributed his success to Christianity
  - D) 325 Council of Nicea called by Constantine
  - E) During 4<sup>th</sup> century grew from 5-7 percent to 50 percent of empire
  - F) Theodosius I late 4<sup>th</sup> century made Christianity the official religion
  - G) Unlikely other forms of Christianity would have been embraced by Constantine
  
- III. There are modern versions of Christianity that resemble the ancient ones
  - A) Messianic Jews act like Ebionites
  - B) Some modern versions resemble Gnosticism
  - C) Orthodox elements share or borrowed elements from these earlier versions
    1. Respect for traditions of Israel and monotheism from Ebionites
    2. Idea of new covenant, and a closed canon, from Marcionites
    3. Spiritual emphasis over material, spiritual elite, and other ideas from Gnostics
  
- IV. What has been lost?
  - A) Diversity of views – some of which might be similar to what Jesus meant – have been expunged from the church
    1. Adoptionists and Ebionites probably closest to Jesus' views
  - B) Great theological thinkers – whose views sometimes didn't perfectly match orthodoxy – were eventually expelled from the church
    1. Tertullian was condemned because he was Montanist – he believed in ongoing revelation
    2. Origen, who claimed Jesus was subordinate to God, was condemned as well
  - C) Intolerance of other views not dissimilar to Roman intolerance of Christianity
    1. Christians actually were *generally* tolerated by Romans, with isolated persecution because Christians refused to worship other gods
    2. Jews were excluded as they clearly had ancient traditional religion that precluded such practices
    3. Proto-orthodox, in the end, very intolerant of other views
  - D) Now that we are growing to be a more tolerant society, we can hope to regain some of what was lost