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Photo by Aaron Burden on UnsplashThe question of whether the Bible is not accurate, particularly the New Testament, is complex. Many people want to understand the text but struggle with its layers of historical, textual, and theological issues.This is where the problem lies. The sheer volume of manuscripts and variations can make the Bible seem daunting. Many biblical studies focus on the reliability of the text, highlighting its preservation while prompting discussions on how variations affect interpretation.The Role of Textual VariantsOver 400,000 textual variants have been identified in New Testament manuscripts.This figure suggests the potential for significant interpretive disparities. However, as Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman discuss in The Text of the New Testament, the majority of these variants are minor. They often involve spelling or grammatical differences that don't alter the text's meaning.Only about 0.25% of these variations are considered both meaningful and potentially authentic.Daniel Wallace notes that even within this small percentage, only a few significantly influence the interpretation of specific passages. Thus, the core doctrines of Christianity remain intact despite these variations.Core Teachings Versus Interpretive VariationsDebate exists over whether certain doctrines or practices, such as fasting during exorcisms, are mandatory. Interpretations can differ among those who accept the same textual version, reflecting individual perspectives and the influence of cultural or theological backgrounds.This divergence is important. As noted by Kurt and Barbara Aland in The Text of the New Testament, it demonstrates that while there is room for interpretive freedom, unity on essential doctrines persists. The core message of Christianity remains, even when peripheral teachings are subject to discussion.Beyond Textual Variants: The Broader Context of InterpretationThe focus on textual reliability primarily addresses the integrity of the Bible's text. It does not account for broader interpretive variations arising from factors like cultural context, historical background, or individual beliefs.These elements lead to diverse readings, even among those who agree on the biblical text. For instance, historical context may shape how individuals understand passages on social justice or governance. As Bart Ehrman explains in Misquoting Jesus, the impact of context cannot be overlooked.This diversity can be viewed as a strength. It allows the Bible to resonate with various audiences and circumstances, inviting deeper engagement with its teachings.ConclusionIn conclusion, while the Bible is subject to numerous interpretations, textual evidence suggests its core doctrines have remained resilient. The vast number of textual variants does not undermine the Bible's essential teachings, though it allows for nuanced interpretations.Moreover, the Bible's complexity invites varied insights influenced by factors beyond the text. Rather than being seen as a weakness, this reflects the Bible's adaptability and enduring relevance across different cultures and eras.As D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo note in An Introduction to the New Testament, the Bible remains a living document, relevant to all who seek to understand its message. How can financial brands set themselves apart through visual storytelling? Our experts explain how.Learn MoreThe Motorsport Images Collections captures events from 1895 to today's most recent coverage.Discover The CollectionCurated, compelling, and worth your time. Explore our latest gallery of Editors' Picks.Browse Editors' FavoritesHow can financial brands set themselves apart through visual storytelling? 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Please Support the Bible Translation Work of the Updated American Standard Version (UASV) One of the strongest proofs that the Bible has not been changed over time is the staggering amount of ancient manuscript evidence we have. The Old Testament is supported by thousands of Hebrew manuscripts, the most famous of which is the Masoretic Text. We also have the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating back to before Christ, which largely confirm the integrity of the Masoretic Text. The New Testament is even more astounding, with approximately 5,900 Greek manuscripts, some of which date back to the 2nd century C.E., just decades after the original writings. The sheer number of manuscripts allows scholars to cross-reference them to verify their consistency, thus ensuring that what we have today closely aligns with the original texts. Textual Criticism Textual criticism is a rigorous academic discipline that scrutinizes the available manuscripts to identify what the original text most likely said. Even though minor variations exist among the manuscripts—often the result of copying errors or local linguistic adaptations—the core message and doctrines remain unaffected. Using the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament as a reference, we find that only a fraction of the text (less than 1%) is in any serious doubt. These are often minor issues, like word order or spelling, that do not alter doctrine or the message of the Bible. Historicity and Archaeological Evidence The field of archaeology has repeatedly confirmed the historical accuracy of the Bible, further strengthening the case for its reliability. Places like Jericho, cities mentioned in the conquests of Israel, as well as figures like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, have all been verified through archaeological discoveries. The Bible's historical accuracy strengthens the case for its textual integrity because a document that proves reliable over and over in areas that can be verified is likely to be reliable in areas that cannot be directly tested. Early Translations and Quotations Additionally, there are thousands of early translations of the Bible, such as the Latin Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta, and Coptic versions. Early Church Fathers also extensively quoted the Scriptures. These translations and quotations corroborate the text of the Bible, offering extra layers of verification. If any substantial changes had been made to the Biblical texts, they would be glaringly apparent when cross-referencing these multiple sources. Consistency in Message and Doctrine The consistency in the Bible's message is another point often overlooked. Despite being written over a span of about 1,600 years by more than 40 different authors from diverse cultural backgrounds, the Bible remains incredibly unified in its central message and core doctrines. This internal consistency further asserts that the text has not been tampered with in any significant manner. Divine Preservation by Restoration The Bible itself makes a claim for its preservation. Isaiah 40:8 states, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." The meticulous nature of the scribes who copied the Hebrew Scriptures, along with the reverence with which the text has been treated throughout history, adds a spiritual dimension to the Bible's preservation. We can conclude that the care exercised in safeguarding the text lends credence to the claim that the Scriptures have been divinely preserved by preservation through the Masoretes for the Old Testament and dozens of textual scholars for the Old and New Testaments. Conclusion The criticism that the Bible has been changed is not supported by the overwhelming manuscript evidence, the rigorous academic discipline of textual criticism, or historical and archaeological verifications. Also, the internal consistency of the Scriptures and the historically meticulous methods of their copying argue convincingly against any substantial alteration over time. Therefore, the claim that "we cannot be sure the Bible has not been changed" is not only intellectually unfounded but also disregards the multi-dimensional evidence affirming the Bible's remarkable preservation. The Bible we have today is reliably close to the original manuscripts, both in letter and in message. Languages are constantly undergoing a process of change. Ideally, every translation should be revised each time any word or structure has changed to the extent that it no longer accurately or adequately reflects the intent or content of the source document. Practically, however, due to the expense involved in editing, setting type, printing, and distribution, it is not common to make changes in a translation until a large number of changes can be made at one time. Emotionally, some people react to any such changes as if they constituted "tampering with God's Word" rather than representing a prayerful and careful concern that the reader benefit from the most accurate and appropriate expression of God's Word possible. God's Word does not change, but languages and word meanings do. The only way God's Word can continue to communicate as it should is to update the translation periodically. In a very real sense the wording of the Scriptures not only stimulates Christian experience but is the product of it. As "babes in Christ" grow to maturity and as a foreign translator grows in mastery of and creativity in the receptor language, it is quite true that the Christians, the translator, and the translation "grow up" together. After a period of some twenty years, better ways of expressing the content of Scripture should be available. This is an excerpt from The Origin of the Bible by F. F. Bruce, J. I. Packer, Philip Comfort, and Carl F. H. Henry. To read more, you can purchase this book from many Christian bookstores and online retailers, including Tyndale.com: Elliot, R. L., et al. The Origin of the Bible. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020. The question of whether the Bible has been changed over time is a significant one, engaging both scholars and believers. The integrity and reliability of the Bible are foundational to Christian faith. To explore this topic, we'll delve into several aspects: the historical transmission of the Bible, the claims of divine preservation within the Bible itself, and the evidence from ancient manuscripts. We will reference the New King James Version (NKJV) to support our discussion. The Bible asserts its divine inspiration, claiming that its words are the words of God, faithfully transmitted through human authors. 2 Timothy 3:16 (NKJV): "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." This verse underlines the belief that all Scripture is divinely inspired, which implies a level of divine preservation to ensure its teachings remain intact and reliable. The Bible itself contains verses that speak to God's role in preserving His word. Psalm 12:6-7 (NKJV): "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O Lord, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." This passage suggests a divine commitment to preserving the purity and integrity of Scripture across generations. Skeptics and critics claim that the Bible has been changed, revised, edited or tampered with. The books of the OT were written from about 1400 BC to 400 BC. And the books of the NT were written from about AD 40 to AD 90. During the centuries, scribes made repeated copies of these books. Yet, any objective scholar will admit that the Bible has been well preserved over the centuries. For copies of it from the 14th century AD are almost identical to the copies from the 3rd century AD. Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV): "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." This verse from Isaiah, found almost identically in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the later Masoretic Text, demonstrates the long-standing consistency of the Old Testament text over centuries. The New Testament has an extraordinary wealth of manuscript evidence, more than any other ancient text. There are thousands of Greek manuscripts, along with early translations and quotations by Church leaders, which allow for comprehensive cross-referencing and verification. Matthew 24:35 (NKJV): "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." Jesus' declaration in Matthew underscores the enduring nature of His words, affirming the belief that His teachings would be preserved through time. While there are numerous manuscripts of the Bible, there are also textual variants. These variants are often minor and do not affect core doctrines or the overall message of the Bible. Textual criticism is the scholarly discipline that examines these differences to determine the most likely original text. Jeremiah 1:12 (NKJV): "Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word.'" This assurance from God to Jeremiah reflects a broader theological conviction that God actively watches over His word to ensure its fulfillment and accuracy. The process of translating the Bible into different languages involves careful scholarship to maintain the meaning of the original texts. The NKJV, for example, was developed to update the language of the King James Version while maintaining its fidelity to the original manuscripts. Proverbs 30:5 (NKJV): "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him." This verse reinforces the belief in the purity and reliability of God's word, which translators strive to reflect accurately in their work. The writings of early church leaders provide additional evidence for the consistency of the biblical text. These leaders extensively quoted Scripture, and their works serve as an important resource for verifying the text of the Bible in their time. 2 Peter 1:20-21 (NKJV): "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." This passage highlights the divine origin and guidance in the writing of Scripture, supporting the belief that the texts have been faithfully preserved. Skeptics often raise questions about changes or corruption in the Bible over time. However, the abundance of manuscript evidence, the rigorous methods of textual criticism, and the consistency observed in key doctrines and narratives counter these claims effectively. Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV): "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This prophetic assurance speaks to the effectiveness and enduring power of God's word, affirming its lasting impact and reliability. Archaeological discoveries continue to support the reliability of the Bible. For instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956, contain portions of the Hebrew Bible dating back to the second century BCE. These scrolls show remarkable consistency with later manuscripts. The world was amazed to see how similar they were to other ancient copies of the Old Testament, even though the Dead Sea Scrolls were hundreds of years older than anything previously discovered. After years of careful examination, it has been concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls gave substantial confirmation that the Old Testament has been accurately kept. Jeremiah 32:14 (NKJV): "'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may last many days.'" This instruction to preserve documents in earthen vessels is reminiscent of the preservation methods that have allowed ancient biblical texts to survive to this day. The Hebrew Scholar Millar Burrows writes, "It is a matter of wonder that through something like one thousand years the text underwent so little alteration. As I said in my first article on the scroll, 'Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition.'"Millar Burrows, The Dead Sea Scrolls (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 304. One of the most respected Old Testament scholars, Gleason Archer, examined the two Isaiah scrolls found in Cave 1 and wrote, "Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling." Archer, 25. Despite the variations and differences in manuscripts, the core doctrines of the Bible remain unchanged. The essential truths about God, salvation, and moral teachings have been preserved across different translations and through centuries of transmission. Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV): "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." This verse emphasizes the unchanging nature of Christ, which parallels the consistency and reliability of His teachings as preserved in Scripture. Believers hold that the Holy Spirit has played a crucial role in preserving the integrity of the Bible. The Spirit's guidance ensures that God's message remains clear and true throughout history. John 14:26 (NKJV): "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." This promise of the Holy Spirit's help in recalling Jesus' teachings extends to the broader context of preserving His words for future generations. When compared with other ancient texts, the Bible's manuscript evidence is unparalleled. Works like Homer's "Iliad" or Julius Caesar's "Gallic Wars" have far fewer manuscripts, yet their authenticity is rarely questioned. The Bible's extensive manuscript tradition provides a robust foundation for its textual integrity. The evidence suggests that the Bible has been remarkably preserved throughout history. Claims of divine inspiration and preservation are supported by historical, textual, and archaeological evidence. While there are minor textual variants, they do not affect the core message and doctrines of the Bible. The work of translators, scholars, and the enduring manuscript tradition all contribute to the reliability of the Bible as we have it today. As the Bible itself reflects, the word of God remains pure, enduring, and trustworthy across generations. The Bible's consistency and the preservation of its essential truths affirm the belief that it is indeed the divinely inspired and preserved word of God. Check out the Bible Answers page for more information on a variety of topics. In His service,BibleAsk Team Subscribe to get the latest posts sent to your email. Collection of religious texts This article is about the religious book. For other uses, see Bible (disambiguation). Several terms redirect here. For other uses, see Biblical (disambiguation) and The Holy Bible (disambiguation). BibleThe Gutenberg Bible, published in the mid-15th century by Johannes Gutenberg, is the first published Bible.InformationReligionChristianityJudaismLanguageHebrew, Aramaic, and GreekPeriodSee Dating the BibleBooksJewish Hebrew Bible: 24 books[a]Protestant canon (Luther's): 66 booksLatin Catholic canon: 73 booksEastern and Oriental Orthodox canon: 76 booksSee Biblical canonFull text Bible at English Wikisource Part of a series on theBible Canons and books Tanakh Torah Nevi'im Ketuvim Old Testament (OT) New Testament (NT) Deuterocanon Antilegomena Chapters and verses Apocrypha Jewish OT NT Authorship and development Authorship Dating Hebrew canon Old Testament canon New Testament canon Composition of the Torah Mosaic authorship Pauline epistles Petrine epistles Johannine works Translations and manuscripts Dead Sea scrolls Masoretic Text Samaritan Pentateuch Targumim Septuagint Peshitta Vetus Latina Vulgate Gothic Bible Luther Bible English Bibles by language Biblical studies Archeology Artifacts Dating Historicity Internal consistency People Places Names Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Rahlfs' Septuagint Novum Testamentum Graece Documentary hypothesis Synoptic problem NT textual categories Biblical criticism Historical Textual Source Form Redaction Canonical Interpretation Hermeneutics Pesher Midrash Pardes Allegorical interpretation Historical-grammatical method Inspiration Literalism Alcohol Conspiracy theory Ethics Capital punishment Homosexuality Humor Incest Muhammad Prophecy Rape Serpents Sex Slavery Violence Warfare Women Perspectives Gnostic Islamic Quranic Inerrancy Infallibility Criticism of the Bible Biblical authority Outline of Bible-related topics Bible portalvte The Bible[b] is a collection of religious texts that are central to Christianity and Judaism, and esteemed in other Abrahamic religions such as Islam. The Bible is an anthology (a compilation of texts of a variety of forms) originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek. The texts include instructions, stories, poetry, prophecies, and other genres. The collection of materials accepted as part of the Bible by a particular religious tradition or community is called a biblical canon. Believers generally consider it to be a product of divine inspiration, but the way they understand what that means and interpret the text varies. The religious texts were compiled by different religious communities into various official collections. The earliest contained the first five books of the Bible, called the Torah in Hebrew and the Pentateuch (meaning 'five books') in Greek. The second-oldest part was a collection of narrative histories and prophecies (the Nevi'im). The third collection, the Ketuvim, contains psalms, proverbs, and narrative histories. Tanakh (Hebrew: תָּנַ"ךְ, romanized: Tanaḵ) is an alternate term for the Hebrew Bible, which is composed of the first letters of the three components comprising scriptures written originally in Hebrew: the Torah ('Teaching'), the Nevi'im ('Prophets'), and the Ketuvim ('Writings'). The Masoretic Text is the medieval version of the Tanakh—written in Hebrew and Aramaic—that is considered the authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible by modern Rabbinic Judaism. The Septuagint is a Koine Greek translation of the Tanakh from the third and second centuries BCE; it largely overlaps with the Hebrew Bible. Christianity began as an outgrowth of Second Temple Judaism, using the Septuagint as the basis of the Old Testament. The early Church continued the Jewish tradition of writing and incorporating what it saw as inspired, authoritative religious books. The gospels, which are narratives about the life and teachings of Jesus, along with the Pauline epistles, and other texts quickly coalesced into the New Testament. The oldest parts of the Bible may be as early as c. 1200 BCE, while the New Testament had mostly formed by 4th century CE. With estimated total sales of over five billion copies, the Christian Bible is the best-selling publication of all time. The Bible has had a profound influence both on Western culture and history and on cultures around the globe. The study of it through biblical criticism has also indirectly impacted culture and history. The Bible is currently translated or is being translated into about half of the world's languages. Some view biblical texts as morally problematic, historically inaccurate, or corrupted by time; others find it a useful historical source for certain peoples and events or a source of ethical teachings. The term Bible can refer to the Hebrew Bible, which corresponds to the Christian Old Testament, or the Christian Bible, which in addition to the Old Testament contains the New Testament.[1] The English word Bible is derived from Koinē Greek: τὰ βιβλία, romanized: ta biblia, meaning 'the books' (singular βιβλίον, biblion).[2] The word βιβλίον itself had the literal meaning of 'scroll' and came to be used as the ordinary word for book.[3] It is the diminutive of βύβλος byblos, 'Egyptian papyrus', possibly so called from the name of the Phoenician seaport Byblos (also known as Gebal) from whence Egyptian papyrus was exported to Greece.[4] The Greek ta biblia was "an expression Hellenistic Jews used to describe their sacred books".[5] The biblical scholar F. F. Bruce notes that John Chrysostom appears to be the first writer (in his Homilies on Matthew, delivered between 386 and 388 CE) to use the Greek phrase ta biblia ('the books') to describe both the Old and New Testaments together.[6] Latin biblia sacra 'holy books' translates Greek τὰ βιβλία τὰ ἅγια (tà biblía tà hágia, 'the holy books').[7] Medieval Latin biblia is short for biblia sacra 'holy book'. It gradually came to be regarded as a feminine singular noun (biblia, gen. bibliae) in medieval Latin, and so the word was loaned as singular into the vernaculars of Western Europe.[8] See also: Biblical manuscript, Textual criticism, and Samaritan Pentateuch The Book of Genesis in a c. 1300 Hebrew Bible The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsaa), one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, is the oldest complete copy of the Book of Isaiah. The Bible is not a single book; it is a collection of books whose complex development is not completely understood. The oldest books began as songs and stories orally transmitted from generation to generation. Scholars of the twenty-first century are only in the beginning stages of exploring "the interface between writing, performance, memorization, and the aural dimension" of the texts. Current indications are that writing and orality were not separate as much as ancient writing was learned in communal oral performance.[9] The Bible was written and compiled by many people, who many scholars say are mostly unknown, from a variety of disparate cultures and backgrounds.[10] British biblical scholar John K. Riches wrote:[11] [T]he biblical texts were produced over a period in which the living conditions of the writers – political, cultural, economic, and ecological – varied enormously. There are texts which reflect a nomadic existence, texts from people with an established monarchy and Temple cult, texts from exile, texts born out of fierce oppression by foreign rulers, courtly texts, texts from wandering charismatic preachers, texts from those who give themselves the airs of sophisticated Hellenistic writers. It is a time-span which encompasses the compositions of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Sophocles, Caesar, Cicero, and Catullus. It is a period which sees the rise and fall of the Assyrian empire (twelfth to seventh century) and of the Persian empire (sixth to fourth century), Alexander's campaigns (336–326), the rise of Rome and its domination of the Mediterranean (fourth century to the founding of the Principate, 27 BCE), the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 CE), and the extension of Roman rule to parts of Scotland (84 CE). The books of the Bible were initially written and copied by hand on papyrus scrolls.[12] No originals have survived. The age of the original composition of the texts is, therefore, difficult to determine and heavily debated. Using a combined linguistic and historiographical approach, Hendel and Joosten date the oldest parts of the Hebrew Bible (the Song of Deborah in Judges 5 and the Samson story of Judges 16 and 1 Samuel) to having been composed in the premonarchial early Iron Age (c. 1200 BCE).[13] The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the caves of Qumran in 1947, are copies that can be dated to between 250 BCE and 100 CE. They are the oldest existing copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible of any length that are not fragments.[14] The earliest manuscripts were probably written in paleo-Hebrew, a kind of cuneiform pictograph similar to other pictographs of the same period.[15] The exile to Babylon most likely prompted the shift to square script (Aramaic) in the fifth to third centuries BCE.[16] From the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Hebrew Bible was written with spaces between words to aid reading.[17] By the eighth century CE, the Masoretes added vowel signs.[18] Levites or scribes maintained the texts, and some texts were always treated as more authoritative than others.[19] Scribes preserved and changed the texts by changing the script, updating archaic forms, and making corrections. These Hebrew texts were copied with great care.[20] Considered to be scriptures (sacred, authoritative religious texts), the books were compiled by different religious communities into various biblical canons (official collections of scriptures).[21] The earliest compilation, containing the first five books of the Bible and called the Torah (meaning "law", "instruction", or "teaching") or Pentateuch ("five books"), was accepted as Jewish canon by the fifth century BCE. A second collection of narrative histories and prophesies, called the Nevi'im ("prophets"), was canonized in the third century BCE. A third collection called the Ketuvim ("writings"), containing psalms, proverbs, and narrative histories, was canonized sometime between the second century BCE and the second century CE.[22] These three collections were written mostly in Biblical Hebrew, with some parts in Aramaic, which together form the Hebrew Bible or "TaNaKh" (an abbreviation of "Torah", "Nevi'im", and "Ketuvim").[23] Main article: Hebrew Bible There are three major historical versions of the Hebrew Bible: the Septuagint, the Masoretic Text, and the Samaritan Pentateuch (which contains only the first five books). They are related but do not share the same paths of development. The Septuagint, or the LXX, is a translation of the Hebrew scriptures and some related texts into Koine Greek and is believed to have been carried out by approximately seventy or seventy-two scribes and elders who were Hellenic Jews,[24] begun in Alexandria in the late third century BCE and completed by 132 BCE.[25][26][c] Probably commissioned by Ptolemy II Philadelphus, King of Egypt, it addressed the need of the primarily Greek-speaking Jews of the Graeco-Roman diaspora.[25][27] Existing complete copies of the Septuagint date from the third to the fifth centuries CE, with fragments dating back to the second century BCE.[28] Revision of its text began as far back as the first century BCE.[29] Fragments of the Septuagint were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls; portions of its text are also found on existing papyrus from Egypt dating to the second and first centuries BCE and to the first century CE.[29]:5 The Masoretes began developing what would become the authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible in Rabbinic Judaism near the end of the Talmudic period (c. 300–c. 500 CE), but the actual date is difficult to determine.[30][31][32] In the sixth and seventh centuries, three Jewish communities contributed systems for writing the precise letter-text, with its vocalization and accentuation known as the mas'sora (from which we derive the term "masoretic").[30] These early Masoretic scholars were based primarily in the Galilean cities of Tiberias and Jerusalem and in Babylonia (modern Iraq). Those living in the Jewish community of Tiberias in ancient Galilee (c. 750–950) made scribal copies of the Hebrew Bible texts without a standard text, such as the Babylonian tradition had, to work from. The canonical pronunciation of the Hebrew Bible (called Tiberian Hebrew) that they developed, and many of the notes they made, therefore, differed from the Babylonian.[33] These differences were resolved into a standard text called the Masoretic text in the ninth century.[34] The oldest complete copy still in existence is the Leningrad Codex dating to c. 1000 CE.[35] The Samaritan Pentateuch is a version of the Torah maintained by the Samaritan community since antiquity, which European scholars rediscovered in the 17th century; its oldest existing copies date to c. 1100 CE.[36] Samaritans include only the Pentateuch (Torah) in their biblical canon.[37] They do not recognize divine authorship or inspiration in any other book in the Jewish Tanakh.[d] A Samaritan Book of Joshua partly based upon the Tanakh's Book of Joshua exists, but Samaritans regard it as a non-canonical secular historical chronicle.[38] The first codex form of the Hebrew Bible was produced in the seventh century. The codex is the forerunner of the modern book. Popularized by early Christians, it was made by folding a single sheet of papyrus in half, forming "pages". Assembling multiples of these folded pages together created a "book" that was more easily accessible and more portable than scrolls. In 1488, the first complete printed press version of the Hebrew Bible was produced.[39] Paul the Apostle depicted in Saint Paul Writing His Epistles, a c. 1619 portrait by Valentin de Boulogne The Rylands fragment P52 verso, 125–175 CE, is the oldest existing fragment of New Testament papyrus, including phrases from the 18th chapter of the Gospel of John.[40] During the rise of Christianity in the first century CE, new scriptures were written in Koine Greek. Christians eventually called these new scriptures the "New Testament" and began referring to the Septuagint as the "Old Testament".[41] The New Testament has been preserved in more manuscripts than any other ancient work.[42][43] Most early Christian copyists were not trained scribes.[44] Many copies of the gospels and Paul's letters were made by individual Christians over a relatively short period of time, very soon after the originals were written.[45] There is evidence in the Synoptic Gospels, in the writings of the early Church Fathers, from Marcion, and in the Didache that Christian documents were in circulation before the end of the first century.[46][47] Paul's letters were circulated during his lifetime, and his death is thought to have occurred before 68 during Nero's reign.[48][49] Early Christians transported these writings around the Empire, translating them into Old Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Latin, and other languages.[50] New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman explains how these multiple texts later became grouped by scholars into categories: During the early centuries of the church, Christian texts were copied in whatever location they were written or taken to. Since texts were copied locally, it is no surprise that different localities developed different kinds of textual tradition. That is to say, the manuscripts in Rome had many of the same errors, because they were for the most part "in-house" documents, copied from one another; they were not influenced much by manuscripts being copied in Palestine; and those in Palestine took on their own characteristics, which were not the same as those found in a place like Alexandria, Egypt. Moreover, in the early centuries of the church, some locales had better scribes than others. Modern scholars have come to recognize that the scribes in Alexandria – which was a major intellectual center in the ancient world – were particularly scrupulous, even in these early centuries, and that there, in Alexandria, a very pure form of the text of the early Christian writings was preserved, decade after decade, by dedicated and relatively skilled Christian scribes.[51] These differing histories produced what modern scholars refer to as recognizable "text types". The four most commonly recognized are Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean, and Byzantine.[52] The list of books included in the Catholic Bible was established as canon by the Council of Rome in 382, followed by those of Hippo in 393 and Carthage in 397. Between 385 and 405 CE, the early Christian church translated its canon into Vulgar Latin (the common Latin spoken by ordinary people), a translation known as the Vulgate.[53] Since then, Catholic Christians have held ecumenical councils to standardize their biblical canon. The Council of Trent (1545–63), held by the Catholic Church in response to the Protestant Reformation, authorized the Vulgate as its official Latin translation of the Bible.[54] A number of biblical canons have since evolved. Christian biblical canons range from the 73 books of the Catholic Church canon and the 66-book canon of most Protestant denominations to the 81 books of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church canon, among others.[55] Judaism has long accepted a single authoritative text, whereas Christianity has never had an official version, instead having many different manuscript traditions.[56] All biblical texts were treated with reverence and care by those who copied them, yet there are transmission errors, called variants, in all biblical manuscripts.[57][58] A variant is any deviation between two texts. Textual critic Daniel B. Wallace explains, "Each deviation counts as one variant, regardless of how many MSS [manuscripts] attest to it."[59] Hebrew scholar Emanuel Tov says the term is not evaluative; it is a recognition that the paths of development of different texts have separated.[60] Medieval handwritten manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible were considered extremely precise: the most authoritative documents from which to copy other texts.[61] Even so, Hebrew Bible scholar David Carr asserts that Hebrew texts still contain some variants.[62] The majority of all variants are accidental, such as spelling errors, but some changes were intentional.[63] In the Hebrew text, "memory variants" are generally accidental differences evidenced by such things as the shift in word order found in 1 Chronicles 17:24 and 2 Samuel 10:9 and 13. Variants also include the substitution of lexical equivalents, semantic and grammar differences, and larger scale shifts in order, with some major revisions of the Masoretic texts that must have been intentional.[64] Intentional changes in New Testament texts were made to improve grammar, eliminate discrepancies, harmonize parallel passages, combine and simplify multiple variant readings into one, and for theological reasons.[63][65] Old Testament scholar Bruce K. Waltke observes that one variant for every ten words was noted in the recent critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, leaving 90% of the Hebrew text without variation. The fourth edition of the United Bible Society's Greek New Testament notes variants affecting about 500 out of 6900 words, or about 7% of the text.[66] Further information: Textual variants in the Hebrew Bible and Textual variants in the New Testament Further information: Ethics in the Bible, Jewish ethics, and Christian ethics Creation of Light by Gustave Doré. The narratives, laws, wisdom sayings, parables, and unique genres of the Bible provide opportunity for discussion on most topics of concern to human beings: The role of women,[67]:203 sex,[68] children, marriage,[69] neighbours,[70]:24 friends, the nature of authority and the sharing of power,[71]:45–48 animals, trees and nature,[72]:xi money and economics,[73]:77 work, relationships,[74] sorrow and despair and the nature of joy, among others.[75] Philosopher and ethicist Jaco Gericke adds: "The meaning of good and evil, the nature of right and wrong, criteria for moral discernment, valid sources of morality, the origin and acquisition of moral beliefs, the ontological status of moral norms, moral authority, cultural pluralism, [as well as] axiological and aesthetic assumptions about the nature of value and beauty. These are all implicit in the texts."[76] However, discerning the themes of some biblical texts can be problematic.[77] Much of the Bible is in narrative form and in general, biblical narrative refrains from any kind of direct instruction, and in some texts the author's intent is not easy to decipher.[78] It is left to the reader to determine good and bad, right and wrong, and the path to understanding and practice is rarely straightforward.[79] God is sometimes portrayed as having a role in the plot, but more often there is little about God's reaction to events, and no mention at all of approval or disapproval of what the characters have done or failed to do.[80] The writer makes no comment, and the reader is left to infer what they will.[80] Jewish philosophers Shalom Carmy and David Shatz explain that the Bible "often juxtaposes contradictory ideas, without explanation or apology".[81] The Hebrew Bible contains assumptions about the nature of knowledge, belief, truth, interpretation, understanding and cognitive processes.[82] Ethicist Michael V. Fox writes that the primary axiom of the book of Proverbs is that "the exercise of the human mind is the necessary and sufficient condition of right and successful behavior in all reaches of life".[83] The Bible teaches the nature of valid arguments, the nature and power of language, and its relation to reality.[76] According to Alan Mittleman, professor of Jewish philosophy, the Bible provides patterns of moral reasoning that focus on conduct and character.[84][85] In the biblical metaphysic, humans have free will, but it is a relative and restricted freedom.[86] Beach[who?] says that Christian voluntarism points to the will as the core of the self, and that within human nature, "the core of who we are is defined by what we love".[87] Natural law is in the Wisdom literature, the Prophets, Romans 1, Acts 17, and the book of Amos (Amos 1:3–2:5), where nations other than Israel are held accountable for their ethical decisions even though they do not know the Hebrew god.[88] Political theorist Michael Walzer finds politics in the Hebrew Bible in covenant, law, and prophecy, which constitute an early form of almost democratic political ethics.[89] Key elements in biblical criminal justice begin with the belief in God as the source of justice and the judge of all, including those administering justice on earth.[90] Carmy and Shatz say the Bible "depicts the character of God, presents an account of creation, posits a metaphysics of divine providence and divine intervention, suggests a basis for morality, discusses many features of human nature, and frequently poses the notorious conundrum of how God can allow evil."[91] Further information: Hebrew Bible and Development of the Hebrew Bible canon Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) Torah (Instruction)GenesisBereshitExodusShemotLeviticusWayiqraNumbersBemidbarDeuteronomyDevarim Nevi'im (Prophets) Former JoshuaYehoshuaJudgesShofetimSamuelShemuelKingsMelakhim Latter IsaiahYeshayahuJeremiahYirmeyahuEzekielYekhezqel Minor Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi Ketuvim (Writings) Poetic PsalmsTehillimProverbsMishleiJobIyov Five Megillot (Scrolls) Song of SongsShir HashirimRuthRutLamentationsEikhahEcclesiastesQoheletEstherEster Historical DanielDaniyyelEzra–NehemiahEzraChroniclesDivre Hayyamim vte The authoritative Hebrew Bible is taken from the masoretic text (called the Leningrad Codex) which dates from 1008. The Hebrew Bible can therefore sometimes be referred to as the Masoretic Text.[92] The Hebrew Bible is also known by the name Tanakh (Hebrew: תנ"ך). This reflects the threefold division of the Hebrew scriptures, Torah ("Teaching"), Nevi'im ("Prophets") and Ketuvim ("Writings") by using the first letters of each word.[93] It is not until the Babylonian Talmud (c. 550 BCE) that a listing of the contents of these three divisions of scripture are found.[94] The Tanakh was mainly written in Biblical Hebrew, with some small portions (Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12–26, Jeremiah 10:11, Daniel 2:4–7:28)[95] written in Biblical Aramaic, a language which had become the lingua franca for much of the Semitic world.[96] Main article: Torah See also: Oral Torah A Torah scroll recovered from Glockengasse Synagogue in Cologne Samaritan Inscription containing a portion of the Bible in nine lines of Hebrew text, currently housed in the British Museum in London The Torah (תּוֹרָה) is also known as the "Five Books of Moses" or the Pentateuch, meaning "five scroll-cases".[97] Traditionally these books were considered to have been dictated to Moses by God himself.[98][99] Since the 17th century, scholars have viewed the original sources as being the product of multiple anonymous authors while also allowing the possibility that Moses first assembled the separate sources.[100][101] There are a variety of hypotheses regarding when and how the Torah was composed,[102] but there is a general consensus that it took its final form during the reign of the Persian Achaemenid Empire (probably 450–350 BCE),[103][104] or perhaps in the early Hellenistic period (333–164 BCE).[105] The Hebrew names of the books are derived from the first words in the respective texts. The Torah consists of the following five books: Genesis, Bereshith (בראשית) Exodus, Shemot (שמות) Leviticus, Vayikra (ויקרא) Numbers, Bamidbar (במדבר) Deuteronomy, Devarim (דברים) The first eleven chapters of Genesis provide accounts of the creation (or ordering) of the world and the history of God's early relationship with humanity. The remaining thirty-nine chapters of Genesis provide an account of God's covenant with the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (also called Israel) and Jacob's children, the "Children of Israel", especially Joseph. It tells of how God commanded Abraham to leave his family and home in the city of Ur, eventually to settle in the land of Canaan, and how the Children of Israel later moved to Egypt. The remaining four books of the Torah tell the story of Moses, who lived hundreds of years after the patriarchs. He leads the Children of Israel from slavery in ancient Egypt to the renewal of their covenant with God at Mount Sin

Greek, but its style is largely Semitic.[152][z][aa] Koine Greek was the common language of the western Roman Empire from the Conquests of Alexander the Great (335–323 BCE) until the evolution of Byzantine Greek (c. 600) while Aramaic was the language of Jesus, the Apostles and the ancient Near East.[151][ab][ac][ad] The term "New Testament" came into use in the second century during a controversy over whether the Hebrew Bible should be included with the Christian writings as sacred scripture.[153] It is generally accepted that the New Testament writers were Jews who took the inspiration of the Old Testament for granted. This is probably stated earliest in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God". Scholarship on how and why ancient Jewish–Christians came to create and accept new texts as equal to the established Hebrew texts has taken three forms. First, priest and biblical scholar John Barton writes that ancient Christians probably just continued the Jewish tradition of writing and incorporating what they believed were inspired, authoritative religious books.[154] The second approach separates those various inspired writings based on a concept of "canon" which developed in the second century.[155] The third involves formalizing canon.[156] According to Barton, these differences are only differences in terminology; the ideas are reconciled if they are seen as three stages in the formation of the New Testament.[157] The first stage was completed remarkably early if one accepts Albert C. Sundberg [de]'s view that "canon" and "scripture" are separate things, with "scripture" having been recognized by ancient Christians long before "canon" was.[158] Barton says Theodor Zahn concluded "there was already a Christian canon by the end of the first century", but this is not the canon of later centuries.[159] Accordingly, Sundberg asserts that in the first centuries, there was no criterion for inclusion in the "sacred writings" beyond inspiration, and that no one in the first century had the idea of a closed canon.[160] The gospels were accepted by early believers as handed down from those Apostles who had known Jesus and been taught by him.[161] Later biblical criticism has questioned the authorship and dating of the gospels. At the end of the second century, it is widely recognized that a Christian canon similar to its modern version was asserted by the church fathers in response to the plethora of writings claiming inspiration that contradicted orthodoxy: (heresy).[162] The third stage of development as the final canon occurred in the fourth century with a series of synods that produced a list of texts of the canon of the Old Testament and the New Testament that are still used today. Most notably the Synod of Hippo in 393 CE and that of c. 400. Jerome produced a definitive Latin edition of the Bible (the Vulgate), the canon of which, at the insistence of the Pope, was in accord with the earlier Synods. This process effectively set the New Testament canon. New Testament books already had considerable authority in the late first and early second centuries.[163] Even in its formative period, most of the books of the New Testament that were seen as scripture were already agreed upon. Linguistics scholar Stanley E. Porter says "evidence from the apocryphal non-Gospel literature is the same as that for the apocryphal Gospels – in other words, that the text of the Greek New Testament was relatively well established and fixed by the time of the second and third centuries".[164] By the time the fourth century Fathers were approving the "canon", they were doing little more than codifying what was already universally accepted.[165] The New Testament is a collection of 27 books[166] of 4 different genres of Christian literature (Gospels, one account of the Acts of the Apostles, Epistles and an Apocalypse). These books can be grouped into: The Gospels are narratives of Jesus's last three years of life, his death and resurrection. Synoptic Gospels Gospel of Matthew Gospel of Mark Gospel of Luke Gospel of John The narrative literature provides an account and history of the very early Apostolic age. Acts of the Apostles The Pauline epistles are written to individual church groups to address problems, provide encouragement and give instruction. Epistle to the Romans First Epistle to the Corinthians Second Epistle to the Corinthians Epistle to the Galatians Epistle to the Ephesians Epistle to the Philippians Epistle to the Colossians First Epistle to the Thessalonians Second Epistle to the Thessalonians The pastoral epistles discuss the pastoral oversight of churches, Christian living, doctrine and leadership. First Epistle to Timothy Second Epistle to Timothy Epistle to Titus Epistle to Philemon Epistle to the Hebrews The Catholic epistles, also called the general epistles or lesser epistles. Epistle of James encourages a lifestyle consistent with faith. First Epistle of Peter addresses trial and suffering. Second Epistle of Peter more on suffering's purposes, Christology, ethics and eschatology. First Epistle of John covers how to discern true Christians: by their ethics, their proclamation of Jesus in the flesh, and by their love. Second Epistle of John warns against docetism. Third Epistle of John encourage, strengthen and warn. Epistle of Jude condemns opponents. The apocalyptic literature (prophetical) Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, predicts end time events. Catholicism, Protestantism, and Eastern Orthodox currently have the same 27-book New Testament Canon. They are ordered differently in the Slavonic tradition, the Syriac tradition and the Ethiopian tradition.[167] Main article: Peshitta The Peshitta (Classical Syriac: ܦܫܝܛܬܐ or ܦܫܝܛܬܐ pšīṭtā) is the standard version of the Bible for churches in the Syriac tradition. The consensus within biblical scholarship, although not universal, is that Old Testament of the Peshitta was translated into Syriac from biblical Hebrew, probably in the 2nd century CE, and that the New Testament of the Peshitta was translated from the Greek.[ae] This New Testament, originally excluding certain disputed books (2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation), had become a standard by the early 5th century. The five excluded books were added in the Harklean Version (616 CE) of Thomas of Harqel.[af][151] The canon of the Catholic Church was affirmed by the Council of Rome (382), the Synod of Hippo (393), the Council of Carthage (397), the Council of Carthage (419), the Council of Florence (1431–1449) and finally, as an article of faith, by the Council of Trent (1545–1563) establishing the canon consisting of 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament for a total of 73 books in the Catholic Bible.[168][169][ag] Main article: Orthodox Tewahedo biblical canon The canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is wider than the canons used by most other Christian churches. There are 81 books in the Ethiopian Orthodox Bible.[171] In addition to the books found in the Septuagint accepted by other Orthodox Christians, the Ethiopian Old Testament Canon uses Enoch and Jubilees (ancient Jewish books that only survived in Ge'ez, but are quoted in the New Testament),[142] Greek Ezra and the Apocalypse of Ezra, 3 books of Meqabyan, and Psalm 151 at the end of the Psalter.[p][n] The three books of Meqabyan are not to be confused with the books of Maccabees. The order of the books is somewhat different in that the Ethiopian Old Testament follows the Septuagint order for the Minor Prophets rather than the Jewish order.[171] Main article: New Testament apocrypha See also: Apocryphon The New Testament apocrypha are a number of writings by early professed Christians that give accounts of Jesus and his teachings, the nature of God, or the teachings of his Apostles and of their activities. Some of these writings were cited as Scripture by some early Christians, but since the fifth century a widespread consensus emerged limiting the New Testament to the 27 books of the modern canon.[172][173] Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Western Protestant churches do not view the New Testament apocrypha as part of the inspired Bible.[173] Although some Oriental Orthodox canons to some extent have. The Armenian Apostolic church at times has included the Third Epistle to the Corinthians, but does not always list it with the other 27 canonical New Testament books. The New Testament of the Coptic Bible, adopted by the Egyptian Church, includes the two Epistles of Clement.[174] See also: Biblical manuscript and Textual criticism The original autographs, that is, the original Greek writings and manuscripts written by the original authors of the New Testament, have not survived.[175] But, historically, copies of those original autographs exist and were transmitted and preserved in a number of manuscript traditions. The three main textual traditions of the Greek New Testament are sometimes called the Alexandrian text-type (generally minimalist), the Byzantine text-type (generally maximalist), and the Western text-type (occasionally wild). Together they comprise most of the ancient manuscripts. Very early on, Christianity replaced scrolls with codexes, the forerunner of bound books, and by the 3rd century, collections of biblical books began being copied as a set.[176] Since all ancient texts were written by hand, often by copying from another handwritten text, they are not exactly alike in the manner of printed works. The differences between them are considered generally minor and are called textual variants.[177] A variant is simply any variation between two texts. The majority of variants are accidental, but some are intentional. Intentional changes were made to improve grammar, to eliminate discrepancies, to make Liturgical changes such as the doxology of the Lord's prayer, to harmonize parallel passages or to combine and simplify multiple variant readings into one.[63] Main article: Role of Christianity in civilizationFurther information: History of Christian thought on persecution and tolerance, The Bible and violence, and Women in the Bible See also: Category:Works based on the Bible With a literary tradition spanning two millennia, the Bible is one of the most influential works ever written. From practices of personal hygiene to philosophy and ethics, the Bible has directly and indirectly influenced politics and law, war and peace, sexual morals, marriage and family life, letters and learning, the arts, economics, social justice, medical care and more.[178] The Christian Bible is the world's most published book, with estimated total sales of over five billion copies.[179] As such, the Bible has had a profound influence, especially in the Western world,[180][181] where the Gutenberg Bible was the first book printed in Europe using movable type.[182] It has contributed to the formation of Western law, art, literature, and education.[183] The Bible has been used to support and oppose political power. It has inspired revolution and "a reversal of power" because God is so often portrayed as choosing what is "weak and humble...(the stammering Moses, the infant Samuel, Saul from an insignificant family, David confronting Goliath, etc.)....to confound the mighty".[184][185] Biblical texts have been the catalyst for political concepts like democracy, religious toleration and religious freedom.[186]:3 These have, in turn, inspired movements ranging from abolitionism in the 18th and 19th century, to the civil rights movement, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and liberation theology in Latin America. The Bible has been the source of many peace movements and efforts at reconciliation around the world .[187] The roots of many modern laws can be found in the Bible's teachings on due process, fairness in criminal procedures, and equity in the application of the law.[188] Judges are told not to accept bribes (Deuteronomy 16:19), are required to be impartial to native and stranger alike (Leviticus 24:22; Deuteronomy 27:19), to the needy and the powerful alike (Leviticus 19:15), and to rich and poor alike (Deuteronomy 1:16, 17; Exodus 23:2–6). The right to a fair trial, and fair punishment, are also found in the Bible (Deuteronomy 19:15; Exodus 21:23–25). Those most vulnerable in a patriarchal society – children, women, and strangers – are singled out in the Bible for special protection (Psalm 72:2, 4).[189]:47–48 The Bible has been noted by scholars as a significant influence on the development of nationhood and nationalism, first among ancient Jews and later in Christian societies. For the ancient Jews, it served as "both a national history and a source of law",[190] providing a framework that established shared ancestry, common history, legal codes, and cultural markers that defined Jewish collective identity.[190][191] It has been suggested that the practice of regular public readings of biblical texts during the Second Temple period facilitated the transmission of these identity-forming narratives across the wider Jewish public.[191] Several scholars argue that substantial portions of the Hebrew Bible—particularly the Deuteronomistic History and the Tetrateuch—were composed specifically to establish and reinforce a distinct Israelite ethnic and national identity.[191] Some scholars of nationalism, such as Adrian Hastings, contend that the model of ancient Israel presented in the Hebrew Bible provided the world with the original concept of nationhood, influencing the development of nationalism and European nation-states.[192] The philosophical foundation of human rights is in the Bible's teachings of natural law.[193][194] The prophets of the Hebrew Bible repeatedly admonish the people to practice justice, charity, and social responsibility. H. A. Lockton writes that "The Poverty and Justice Bible (The Bible Society (UK), 2008) claims there are more than 2000 verses in the Bible dealing with the justice issues of rich-poor relations, exploitation and oppression".[195] Judaism practised charity and healing the sick but tended to limit these practices to their own people.[196] For Christians, the Old Testament statements are enhanced by multiple verses such as Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9 and 9:2, and Acts 5:16 that say "heal the sick". Authors Vern and Bonnie Bullough write in The care of the sick: the emergence of modern nursing, that this is seen as an aspect of following Jesus's example, since so much of his public ministry focused on healing.[196] In the process of following this command, monasticism in the third century transformed health care.[197] This produced the first hospital for the poor in Caesarea in the fourth century. The monastic health care system was innovative in its methods, allowing the sick to remain within the monastery as a special class afforded special benefits; it destigmatized illness, legitimized the deviance from the norm that sickness includes, and formed the basis for future modern concepts of public health care.[198] The biblical practices of feeding and clothing the poor, visiting prisoners, supporting widows and orphan children have had sweeping impact.[199][200][201] The Bible's emphasis on learning has had formidable influence on believers and western society. For centuries after the fall of the western Roman Empire, all schools in Europe were Bible-based church schools, and outside of monastic settlements, almost no one had the ability to read or write. These schools eventually led to the West's first universities (created by the church) in the Middle Ages which have spread around the world in the modern day.[202] Protestant Reformers wanted all members of the church to be able to read the Bible, so compulsory education for both boys and girls was introduced. Translations of the Bible into local vernacular languages have supported the development of national literatures and the invention of alphabets.[203] Biblical teachings on sexual morality changed the Roman empire, the millennium that followed, and have continued to influence society.[204] Rome's concept of sexual morality was centered on social and political status, power, and social reproduction (the transmission of social inequality to the next generation). The biblical standard was a "radical notion of individual freedom centered around a libertarian paradigm of complete sexual agency".[205]:10,38 Classicist Kyle Harper describes the change biblical teaching evoked as "a revolution in the rules of behavior, but also in the very image of the human being".[206]:14–18 Salomé, by Henri Regnault (1870) See also: Films based on the Bible, Category:Operas based on the Bible, Category:Books based on the Bible, Category:Plays based on the Bible, and Category:Music based on the Bible The Bible has directly and indirectly influenced literature: St Augustine's Confessions is widely considered the first autobiography in Western Literature.[207] The Summa Theologica, written 1265–1274, is "one of the classics of the history of philosophy and one of the most influential works of Western literature."[208] These both influenced the writings of Dante's epic poetry and his Divine Comedy, and in turn, Dante's creation and sacramental theology has contributed to influencing writers such as J. R. R. Tolkien[209] and William Shakespeare.[210] Many masterpieces of Western art were inspired by biblical themes: from Michelangelo's David and Pietà sculptures, to Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper and Raphael's various Madonna paintings. There are hundreds of examples. Eve, the temptress who disobeys God's commandment, is probably the most widely portrayed figure in art.[211] The Renaissance preferred the sensuous female nude, while the "femme fatale" Delilah from the nineteenth century onward demonstrates how the Bible and art both shape and reflect views of women.[212][213] The Bible has many rituals of purification which speak of clean and unclean in both literal and metaphorical terms.[214] The biblical toilet etiquette encourages washing after all instances of defecation, hence the invention of the bidet.[215][216] See also: The Bible and slavery Critics view certain biblical texts to be morally problematic. The Bible neither calls for nor condemns slavery outright, but there are verses that address dealing with it, and these verses have been used to support it, although the Bible has also been used to support abolitionism. Some have written that supersessionism begins in the book of Hebrews where others locate its beginnings in the culture of the fourth century Roman empire.[217]:1 The Bible has been used to support the death penalty, patriarchy, sexual intolerance, the violence of total war, and colonialism. In the Christian Bible, the violence of war is addressed four ways: pacifism, non-resistance; just war, and preventive war which is sometimes called crusade.[218]:13–37 In the Hebrew Bible, there is just war and preventive war which includes the Amalekites, Canaanites, Moabites, and the record in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and both books of Kings.[219] John J. Collins, biblical scholar, writes that people throughout history have used these biblical texts to justify violence against their enemies.[220] Anthropologist Leonard B. Glick offers the modern example of Jewish fundamentalists in Israel, such as Shlomo Aviner, a rabbi and prominent theorist of the Gush Emunim movement, who considers the Palestinians to be like biblical Canaanites, and therefore suggests that Israel "must be prepared to destroy" the Palestinians if the Palestinians do not leave the land.[221] Historian Nur Masalha argues that genocide is inherent in these commandments, and that they have served as inspirational examples of divine support for slaughtering national opponents.[222] However, the "applicability of the term [genocide] to earlier periods of history" is questioned by sociologists Frank Robert Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn.[223] Since most societies of the past endured and practised genocide, it was accepted at that time as "being in the nature of life" because of the "coarseness and brutality" of life; the moral condemnation associated with terms like genocide are products of modern morality.[223]:27 The definition of what constitutes violence has broadened considerably over time.[224]:1–2 The Bible reflects how perceptions of violence changed for its authors.[224]:261 Feminist biblical scholar Phyllis Trible, in her book Texts of Terror, tells four Bible stories of suffering in ancient Israel where women are the victims. Tribble describes the Bible as "a mirror" that reflects humans, and human life, in all its "holiness and horror".[225] John Riches, professor of divinity and biblical criticism at the University of Glasgow, provides the following view of the diverse historical influences of the Bible: It has inspired some of the great monuments of human thought, literature, and art; it has equally fuelled some of the worst excesses of human savagery, self-interest, and narrow-mindedness. It has inspired men and women to acts of great service and courage, to fight for liberation and human development; and it has provided the ideological fuel for societies which have enslaved their fellow human beings and reduced them to abject poverty. ... It has, perhaps above all, provided a source of religious and moral norms which have enabled communities to hold together, to care for, and to protect one another; yet precisely this strong sense of belonging has in turn fuelled ethnic, racial, and international tension and conflict. It has, that is to say, been the source of great truth, goodness, and beauty at the same time as it has inspired lies, wickedness, and ugliness.[226] Main articles: Bibliology, Biblical inspiration, Biblical literalism, Biblical infallibility, and Biblical inerrancy See also: Islamic view of the Bible A Bible is placed centrally on a Lutheran altar, highlighting its importance Biblical texts have always required interpretation, and this has given rise to multiple views and approaches according to the interplay between various religions and the book.[227] The primary source of Jewish commentary and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible is the Talmud. The Talmud, (which means study and learning), is a summary of ancient oral law and commentary on it.[228] It is the primary source of Jewish Law.[229] Adin Steinsaltz writes that "if the Bible is the cornerstone of Judaism, then the Talmud is the central pillar".[230] Seen as the backbone of Jewish creativity, it is "a conglomerate of law, legend and philosophy, a blend of unique logic and shrewd pragmatism, of history and science, anecdotes and humor" all aimed toward the purpose of studying biblical Torah.[229] Christians often treat the Bible as a single book, and while Barton says they are "some of the most profound texts humanity has ever produced", liberals and moderates see it as a collection of books that are not perfect.[231] Conservative and fundamentalist Christians see the Bible differently and interpret it differently.[232] Christianity interprets the Bible differently than Judaism does with Islam providing yet another view.[233] How inspiration works and what kind of authority it means the Bible has are different for different traditions.[234] The Second Epistle to Timothy claims, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).[235] Various related but distinguishable views on divine inspiration include: the view of the Bible as the inspired word of God: the belief that God, through the Holy Spirit, intervened and influenced the words, message, and collation of the Bible[236] the view that the Bible is also infallible, and incapable of error in matters of faith and practice, but not necessarily in historic or scientific matters the view that the Bible represents the inerrant word of God, without error in any aspect, spoken by God and written down in its perfect form by humans Within these broad beliefs many schools of hermeneutics operate. "Bible scholars claim that discussions about the Bible must be put into its context within church history and then into the context of contemporary culture."[139] Fundamentalist Christians are associated with the doctrine of biblical literalism, where the Bible is not only inerrant, but the meaning of the text is clear to the average reader.[237] Jewish antiquity attests to belief in sacred texts,[238][239] and a similar belief emerges in the earliest of Christian writings. Various texts of the Bible mention divine agency in relation to its writings.[240] In their book A General Introduction to the Bible, Norman Geisler and William Nix write: "The process of inspiration is a mystery of the providence of God, but the result of this process is a verbal, plenary, inerrant, and authoritative record."[241] Most evangelical biblical scholars[242][243] associate inspiration with only the original text; for example some American Protestants adhere to the 1978 Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which asserted that inspiration applied only to the autographic text of scripture.[244] Among adherents of biblical literalism, a minority, such as followers of the King-James-Only Movement, extend the claim of inerrancy only to a particular version.[245] See also: Quran § Significance in Islam, Bhagavad Gita § Composition and significance, and Torah § Significance in Judaism Both Judaism and Christianity see the Bible as religiously and intellectually significant.[246] It provides insight into its time and into the composition of the texts, and it represents an important step in the development of thought.[246] It is used in communal worship, recited and memorized, provides personal guidance, a basis for counseling, church doctrine, religious culture (teaching, hymns and worship), and ethical standards.[246][247]:145 According to Barton: The Bible is centrally important to both Judaism and Christianity, but not as a holy text out of which entire religious systems can somehow be read. Its contents illuminate the origins of Christianity and Judaism, and provide spiritual classics on which both faiths can draw; but they do not constrain subsequent generations in the way that a written constitution would. They are simply not that kind of thing. They are a repository of writings, both shaping and shaped by the two religions..."[248] As a result, there are teachings and creeds in Christianity and laws in Judaism that are seen by those religions as derived from the Bible which are not directly in the Bible.[84] For the Hebrew Bible, canonization is reserved for written texts, while sacralization reaches far back into oral tradition.[249]:80 When sacred stories, such as those that form the narrative base of the first five books of the Bible, were performed, "not a syllable [could] be changed in order to ensure the magical power of the words to 'presentify' the divine".[249]:80 Inflexibility protected the texts from a changing world.[249]:80 When sacred oral texts began the move to written transmission, commentary began being worked in, but once the text was closed by canonization, commentary needed to remain outside. Commentary still had significance. Sacred written texts were thereafter accompanied by commentary, and such commentary was sometimes written and sometimes orally transmitted, as is the case in the Islamic Madrasa and the Jewish Yeshiva.[249]:81 Arguing that Torah has had a definitive role in developing Jewish identity from its earliest days, John J. Collins explains that regardless of genetics or land, it has long been true that one could become Jewish by observing the laws in the Torah, and that remains true in the modern day.[250] The Christian religion and its sacred book are connected and influence one another, but the significance of the written text has varied throughout history. For Christianity, holiness did not reside in the written text, or in any particular language, it resided in the Christ the text witnessed to. Old Testament scholar David M. Carr writes that this gave early Christianity a more 'flexible' view of the written texts.[251]:279 Wilfred Cantwell Smith points out that "in the Islamic system, the Quran fulfills a function comparable to the role... played by the person of Jesus Christ, while a closer counterpart to Christian scriptures are the Islamic Hadith 'Traditions'."[252]:133 For centuries the written text had less significance than the will of the church as represented by the Pope, since the church saw the text as having been created by the church. One cause of the Reformation was the perceived need to reorient Christianity around its early text as authoritative.[253]:13 Some Protestant churches still focus on the idea of sola scriptura, which sees scripture as the only legitimate religious authority. Some denominations today support the use of the Bible as the only infallible source of Christian teaching. Others, though, advance the concept of prima scriptura in contrast, meaning scripture primarily or scripture mainly.[ah][ai] In the 21st century, attitudes towards the significance of the Bible continue to differ. Roman Catholics, High Church Anglicans, Methodists and Eastern Orthodox Christians stress the harmony and importance of both the Bible and sacred tradition in combination. United Methodists see Scripture as the major factor in Christian doctrine, but they also emphasize the importance of tradition, experience, and reason. Lutherans teach that the Bible is the sole source for Christian doctrine.[254] Muslims view the Bible as an original revelation from God; but the Jews and the Christians corrupted it through falsification and alteration (Taḥrīf), and therefore the Quran is revealed by God to the Islamic prophet Muhammad.[255] The Rastafari view the Bible as essential to their religion,[256] while the Unitarian Universalists view it as "one of many important religious texts".[257] Further information: Bible translations, List of Bible translations by language, Bible translations into English, and List of English Bible translations Title page from the first Welsh translation of the Bible, published in 1588, and translated by William Morgan) An early German translation of the Bible by Martin Luther, whose translation of the text into the vernacular was highly influential in the development of Lutheranism and the Reformation The original texts of the Tanakh were almost entirely written in Hebrew with about one per cent in Aramaic. The earliest translation of any Bible text is the Septuagint which translated the Hebrew into Greek.[34] As the first translation of any biblical literature, the translation that became the Septuagint was an unparalleled event in the ancient world.[258] This translation was made possible by a common Mediterranean culture where Semitism had been foundational to Greek culture.[259] In the Talmud, Greek is the only language officially allowed for translation.[120] The Targum Onkelos is the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible believed to have been written in the second century CE.[34] These texts attracted the work of various scholars, but a standardized text was not available before the 9th century.[34] There were different ancient versions of the Tanakh in Hebrew. These were copied and edited in three different locations producing slightly varying results. Masoretic scholars in Tiberias in ancient Palestine copied the ancient texts in Tiberian Hebrew. A copy was recovered from the "Cave of Elijah" (the synagogue of Aleppo in the Judean desert) and is therefore referred to as the Aleppo Codex which dates to around 920. This codex, which is over a thousand years old, was originally the oldest codex of the complete Tiberian Hebrew Bible.[260] Babylonian masoretes had also copied the early texts, and the Tiberian and Babylonian were later combined, using the Aleppo Codex and additional writings, to form the Ben-Asher masoretic tradition which is the standardized Hebrew Bible of today. The Aleppo Codex is no longer the oldest complete manuscript because, during riots in 1947, the Aleppo Codex was removed from its location, and about 40% of it was subsequently lost. It must now rely on additional manuscripts, and as a result, the Aleppo Codex contains the most comprehensive collection of variant readings.[35] The oldest complete version of the Masoretic tradition is the Leningrad Codex from 1008. It is the source for all modern Jewish and Christian translations.[34][260] Levidas writes that, "The Koine Greek New Testament is a non-translated work; most scholars agree on this – despite disagreement on the possibility that some passages may have appeared initially in Aramaic... It is written in the Koine Greek of the first century [CE]".[261] Early Christians translated the New Testament into Old Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Latin, among other languages.[50] The earliest Latin translation was the Old Latin text, or Vetus Latina, which, from internal evidence, seems to have been made by several authors over a period of time.[262][263] Pope Damasus I (366–383) commissioned Jerome to produce a reliable and consistent text by translating the original Greek and Hebrew texts into Latin. This translation became known as the Latin Vulgate Bible, in the 4th century CE (although Jerome expressed in his prologues to most deuterocanonical books that they were non-canonical).[264][265] In 1546, at the Council of Trent, Jerome's Vulgate translation was declared by the Roman Catholic Church to be the only authentic and official Bible in the Latin Church.[266] The Greek-speaking East continued to use the Septuagint translations of the Old Testament, and they had no need to translate the Greek New Testament.[262][263] This contributed to the East-West Schism.[53] Many ancient translations coincide with the invention of the alphabet and the beginning of vernacular literature in those languages. According to British Academy professor N. Fernández Marcos, these early translations represent "pioneer works of enormous linguistic interest, as they represent the oldest documents we have for the study of these languages and literature".[267] Translations to English can be traced to the seventh century, Alfred the Great in the 9th century, the Toledo School of Translators in the 12th and 13th century, Roger Bacon (1220–1292), an English Franciscan friar of the 13th century, and multiple writers of the Renaissance.[268] The Wycliffite Bible, which is "one of the most significant in the development of a written standard", dates from the late Middle English period.[269] William Tyndale's translation of 1525 is seen by several scholars as having influenced the form of English Christian discourse as well as impacting the development of the English language itself.[270] Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German in 1522, and both Testaments with Apocrypha in 1534, thereby contributing to the multiple wars of the Age of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Important biblical translations of this period include the Polish Jakub Wujek Bible (Biblia Jakuba Wujka) from 1535, and the English King James/Authorized Version (1604–1611).[271] The King James Version was the most widespread English Bible of all time, but it has largely been superseded by modern translations.[54] Some New Testaments verses found to be later additions to the text are not included in modern English translations, despite appearing in older English translations such as the King James Version. Historically significant translations of the Bible in English Name Abbreviation Published[aj] Wycliffe Bible WYC 1382 Tyndale Bible[ak] TYN 1526[al] Geneva Bible GNV 1560 Douay–Rheims Bible DRB 1610[am] King James Version KJV 1611 English Revised Version RV 1885 Revised Standard Version RSV 1952 New American Bible NAB 1970 New International Version NIV 1978 New King James Version NKJV 1982 New Revised Standard Version NRSV 1989 English Standard Version ESV 2001 Some denominations have additional canonical texts beyond the Bible, including the Standard Works of the Latter Day Saints movement and Divine Principle in the Unification Church. Nearly all modern English translations of the Old Testament are based on a single manuscript, the Leningrad Codex, copied in 1008 or 1009. It is a complete example of the Masoretic Text, and its published edition is used by the majority of scholars. The Aleppo Codex is the basis of the Hebrew University Bible Project in Jerusalem.[35] Since the Reformation era, Bible translations have been made into the common vernacular of many languages. The Bible continues to be translated to new languages, largely by Christian organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, New Tribes Mission and Bible societies. Lamin Sanneh writes that tracing the impact on the local cultures of translating the Bible into local vernacular language shows it has produced "the movements of indigenization and cultural liberation".[272] "The translated scripture ... has become the benchmark of awakening and renewal".[203] Bible translations, worldwide (as of September 2024[update])[273] Number Statistic 7,396 Approximate number of languages spoken in the world today 3,526 Number of translations into new languages in progress 1,274 Number of languages with some translated Bible portions 1,726 Number of languages with a translation of the New Testament 756 Number of languages with a full translation of the Bible (Protestant Canon) 3,756 Total number of languages with some Bible translation Main articles: Biblical archaeology school, Historicity of the Bible, and Religiously motivated pseudoarchaeology See also: Dating the Bible The Tel Dan Stele at the Israel Museum. Highlighted in white: the sequence B Y T D W D Biblical archaeology is a subsection of archaeology that relates to and sheds light upon the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament.[274] It is used to help determine the lifestyle and practices of people living in biblical times.[275] There are a wide range of interpretations in the field of biblical archaeology.[276] One broad division includes biblical maximalism, which generally takes the view that most of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible is based on history although it is presented through the religious viewpoint of its time. According to historian Lester L. Grabbe, there are "few, if any" maximalists in mainstream scholarship.[277] It is considered to be the extreme opposite of biblical minimalism which considers the Bible to be a purely post-exilic (5th century BCE and later) composition.[278] According to Mary-Joan Leith, professor of religious studies, many minimalists have ignored evidence for the antiquity of the Hebrew language in the Bible, and few take archaeological evidence into consideration.[279] Most biblical scholars and archaeologists fall somewhere on a spectrum between these two.[280][277] The biblical account of events of the Exodus from Egypt in the Torah, the migration to the Promised Land, and the period of Judges are sources of heated ongoing debate. There is an absence of evidence for the presence of Israel in Egypt from any Egyptian source, historical or archaeological.[281] Yet, as William Dever points out, these biblical traditions were written long after the events they describe, and they are based in sources now lost and older oral traditions.[282] The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, ancient non–biblical texts, and archaeology support the Babylonian captivity beginning around 586 BCE.[283] Excavations in southern Judah show a pattern of destruction consistent with the Neo-Assyrian devastation of Judah at the end of the eighth century BCE and 2 Kings 18:13.[284] In 1993, at Tel Dan, archaeologist Avraham Biran unearthed a fragmentary Aramaic inscription, the Tel Dan stele, dated to the late ninth or early eighth century that mentions a "king of Israel" as well as a "house of David" (bet David). This shows David could not be a late sixth-century invention, and implies that Judah's kings traced their lineage back to someone named David.[285] However, there is no current archaeological evidence for the existence of King David and Solomon or the First Temple as far back as the tenth century BCE where the Bible places them.[286] In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, surveys demonstrated that Acts of the Apostles (Acts) scholarship was divided into two traditions, "a conservative (largely British) tradition which had great confidence in the historicity of Acts and a less conservative (largely German) tradition which had very little confidence in the historicity of Acts". Subsequent surveys show that little has changed.[287] Author Thomas E. Phillips writes that "In this two-century-long debate over the historicity of Acts and its underlying traditions, only one assumption seemed to be shared by all: Acts was intended to be read as history".[288] This too is now being debated by scholars as: what genre does Acts actually belong to?[288] There is a growing consensus, however, that the question of genre is unsolvable and would not, in any case, solve the issue of historicity: "Is Acts history or fiction? In the eyes of most scholars, it is history – but not the kind of history that precludes fiction." says Phillips.[289] Main articles: Biblical studies, Biblical criticism, Historical criticism, and Textual criticism See also: Biblical authority Jean Astruc, often called the "father of biblical criticism", at Centre hospitalier universitaire de Toulouse Biblical criticism refers to the analytical investigation of the Bible as a text, and addresses questions such as history, authorship, dates of composition, and authorial intention. It is not the same as criticism of the Bible, which is an assertion against the Bible being a source of information or ethical guidance, nor is it criticism of possible translation errors.[290] Biblical criticism made study of the Bible secularized, scholarly, and more democratic, while it also permanently altered the way people understood the Bible.[291] The Bible is no longer thought of solely as a religious artefact, and its interpretation is no longer restricted to the community of believers.[292] Michael Fishbane writes, "There are those who regard the desacralization of the Bible as the fortunate condition for" the development of the modern world.[293] For many, biblical criticism "released a host of threats" to the Christian faith. For others biblical criticism "proved to be a failure, due principally to the assumption that diachronic, linear research could master any and all of the questions and problems attendant on interpretation".[294] Still others believed that biblical criticism, "shorn of its unwarranted arrogance," could be a reliable source of interpretation.[294] Michael Fishbane compares biblical criticism to Job, a prophet who destroyed "self-serving visions for the sake of a more honest crossing from the divine textus to the human one".[292] Or as Rogerson says: biblical criticism has been liberating for those who want their faith "intelligently grounded and intellectually honest".[295] The Dunham Bible Museum is located at Houston Baptist University in Houston, Texas. It is known for its collection of rare Bibles from around the world and for having many different Bibles of various languages.[296] The Museum of the Bible opened in Washington, D.C. in November 2017.[297] The museum states that its intent is to "share the historical relevance and significance of the sacred scriptures in a nonsectarian way", but this has been questioned.[298][299] The Bible Museum in St Arnaud, Victoria in Australia opened in 2009.[300] There is a Bible Museum at The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.[301][302] The Bible Museum on the Square in Collierville, Tennessee opened in 1997.[303][304] Biedenharn Museum and Gardens in Monroe, Louisiana includes a Bible Museum.[305] The grandest medieval Bibles were illuminated manuscripts in which the text is supplemented by the addition of decoration, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. Up to the 12th century, most manuscripts were produced in monasteries in order to add to the library or after receiving a commission from a wealthy patron. Larger monasteries often contained separate areas for the monks who specialized in the production of manuscripts called a scriptorium, where "separate little rooms were assigned to book copying; they were situated in such a way that each scribe had to himself a window open to the cloister walk."[306] By the 14th century, the cloisters of monks writing in the scriptorium started to employ laybrothers from the urban scriptoria, especially in Paris, Rome and the Netherlands.[307] Demand for manuscripts grew to an extent that the Monastic libraries were unable to meet with the demand, and began employing secular scribes and illuminators.[308] These individuals often lived close to the monastery and, in certain instances, dressed as monks whenever they entered the monastery, but were allowed to leave at the end of the day.[309] A notable example of an illuminated manuscript is the Book of Kells, produced circa the year 800 containing the four Gospels of the New Testament together with various prefatory texts and tables. The manuscript was "sent to the rubricator, who added (in red or other colours) the titles, headlines, the initials of chapters and sections, the notes and so on; and then – if the book was to be illustrated – it was sent to the illuminator."[310] In the case of manuscripts that were sold commercially, the writing would "undoubtedly have been discussed initially between the patron and the scribe (or the scribe's agent,) but by the time that the written gathering were sent off to the illuminator there was no longer any scope for innovation."[311] Bible from 1150, from Scriptorium de Chartres, Christ with angels Blanche of Castile and Louis IX of France Bible, 13th century Maciejowski Bible, Leaf 37, the 3rd image, Abner (in the centre in green) sends Michal back to David. Jephthah's daughter laments – Maciejowski Bible (France, c. 1250) Coloured version of the Whore of Babylon illustration from Martin Luther's 1534 translation of the Bible An Armenian Bible, 17th century, illuminated by Malnazar Fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah, Foster Bible, 19th century Jonah being swallowed by the fish, Kennicott Bible, 1476 Bibles An old Bible from a Greek monastery The Imperial Bible, or Vienna Coronation Gospels from Wien, Austria, c. 1500 The Kennicott Bible in 1476 A Baroque Bible The Bible used by Abraham Lincoln for his oath of office during his first inaugural in 1861 American Civil War-era illustrated Bible A miniature Bible An 1866 Victorian Bible Shelves of the Bizzell Bible Collection at Bizzell Memorial Library Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation (c. 1472–1475), showing the Virgin Mary reading the Bible Bible portal Additional and alternative scriptures relating to Christianity Bible box Bible case Bible paper Biblical software Christian theology Code of Hammurabi Family Bible (book) International Bible Contest Lectionary – schedule of ceremonial Bible readings which varies by denomination List of major biblical figures List of nations mentioned in the Bible Theodicy and the Bible Typology (theology) ^ This figure counts the Books of Samuel, the Books of Kings, the Twelve Minor Prophets, the Books of Chronicles, and the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah as one book each, as they are counted in Judaism. If these are counted separately, as they are in Christianity, there are 39 books in the Hebrew Bible. Both of these figures exclude the deuterocanonical books. ^ from Koine Greek τὰ βιβλία, tà biblía, 'the books' ^ a b "[...] die griechische Bibelübersetzung, die einem innerjüdischen Bedürfnis entsprang [...] [von den] Rabbinen zuerst gerühmt (.) Später jedoch, als manche ungenaue Übertragung des hebräischen Textes in der Septuaginta und Übersetzungsfehler die Grundlage für hellenistische Irrlehren abgaben, lehte man die Septuaginta ab." Homolka, Jacob & Chorin 1999, pp. 43ff, Bd.3 ^ Although a paucity of extant source material makes it impossible to be certain that the earliest Samaritans also rejected the other books of the Tanakh, the 3rd-century church father Origen confirms that the Samaritans in his day "receive[d] the books of Moses alone

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AD 300)[1] Part of a series onBooks of theNew TestamentPapyrus 46, one of the oldest New Testament papyri, showing 2 Cor 11:33–12:9 Gospels and Acts Four Evangelists MatthewMarkLukeJohn Lukan Acts Acts of the Apostles Epistles and Apocalypse Pauline epistles Romans 1 Corinthians2 Corinthians GalatiansEphesians PhilippiansColossians 1 Thessalonians2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy2 Timothy TitusPhilemon Hebrews Catholic epistles James 1 Peter2 Peter 1 John2 John3 John Jude Apocalypse Book of Revelation Authorship Luke-ActsJohannine works Pauline epistlesHebrews Petrine epistles Related topics New Testament canon New Testament manuscripts Synoptic Gospels Johannine literature (epistles) Pastoral epistles Bible portal Christianity portalvte Part of a series of articles onPeter in the Bible In the New Testament Walking on water Confession Servant's ear Denial Restoration Vision of a sheet Liberation Incident at Antioch Epistles 1 Peter 2 Peter Other Cross Sword Tomb Quo vadis? Primacy In Judaism In Islam vte 2 Peter, also known as the Second Epistle of Peter and abbreviated as 2 Pet.,[a] is an epistle of the New Testament written in Koine Greek. It identifies the author as "Simon Peter" (in some translations, 'Simeon' or 'Shimon'), a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). The epistle is traditionally attributed to Peter the Apostle, but most critical scholars consider the epistle pseudepigraphical (i.e., authored by one or more of Peter's followers, using Peter as a pseudonym).[4][5][6][7][8] Scholars estimate the date of authorship anywhere from AD 60 to 150. See also: Authorship of the Petrine epistles According to the Epistle itself, it was composed by the Apostle Peter, an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry. 2 Peter 3:1 says "This is now the second letter I have written to you"; if this is an allusion to 1 Peter, then the audience of the epistle may have been the same as it was for 1 Peter, namely, various churches in Asia Minor (see 1 Peter 1:1). The date of composition has proven to be difficult to determine. Taken literally, it would have been written around AD 64–68, as Christian tradition holds Peter was martyred in the 60s by Nero, and also because Peter references his approaching death in 2 Peter 1:14 ("since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me").[9] The questions of authorship and date are closely related. Scholars consider the epistle to have been written anywhere between c. AD 60–150, with "some reason to favour" a date between 80 and 90.[10] Dates suggested by various authors include: c. 60 (Charles Bigg)[11] 63 (Giese, Wohlenberg)[12][13] 64 – 110 (Davids)[14] Mid 60s (Harvey and Towner, M. Green, Moo, Mounce)[15][16][17][18] c. 70 or 80 (Chaine)[19] 75 – 100 (Bauckham, perhaps about 80–90)[20] 80 – 90 (Duff)[10] c. 90 (Reicke, Spicq)[21][22] Late first or early second century (Perkins, Harrington, Werse)[23][24][25] c. 100 (Schelkle)[26] 100 – 110 (Knoch, Kelly)[27][28] 100 – 125 (James, Vogtle, Paulsen)[29][30][31] 100 – 140 (Callan, perhaps about 125)[32] 130 (Raymond E. Brown, Sidebottom)[33][34] 150 (L. Harris)[35] The scholarly debate can be divided into two parts: external and internal evidence. The external evidence for its authenticity, although feasible, remains open to criticism. (There is debate as to whether 2 Peter is being quoted or the other way around.) Much of this debate derives from Professor Robert E. Picirilli's article "Allusion to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers," which compiles many of the allusions by the Apostolic Fathers of the late first and early second centuries, thus demonstrating that 2 Peter is not to be considered a second-century document.[36] Despite this effort, scholars such as Michael J. Gilmour, who consider Picirilli's evidences to be correct, disagree with classifying the work as authentic but rather as a pseudepigrapha, arguing among many other things that Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1–2) had to warn against contemporary pseudo-Pauline writers.[37] The internal debate focuses more on its style, its ideology, and its relationship to the other works and stories. Some of the internal arguments against the authenticity of 2 Peter have gained significant popularity since the 1980s. One such argument is the argument that the scholar Bo Reicke first formulated in 1964, where he argued that 2 Peter is clearly an example of an ancient literary genre known as a 'testament', which originally arose from Moses' farewell discourse in Deuteronomy.[38][b][c] Richard J. Bauckham, who popularized this argument, wrote that the 'testament' genre contains two main elements: ethical warnings to be followed after the death of the writer and revelations of the future. The significant fact about the 'testament' genre was not in its markers but in its nature; it is argued that a piece of 'testament' literature is meant to "be a completely transparent fiction."[42] This argument has its detractors, who classify it as a syllogism.[43][44][45][46][47] Others characterize the writing as a 'farewell speech' because it lacks any semblance of final greetings or ties with recipients.[48] One of the questions to be resolved is 2 Peter's relationship with the Pauline letters since it refers to the Pauline epistles and so must postdate at least some of them, regardless of authorship. Thus, a date before AD 60 is improbable. Further, it goes as far as to name the Pauline epistles as "scripture"—one of only two times a New Testament work refers to another New Testament work in this way—implying that it postdates them by some time.[49] Various hypotheses have been put forward to improve or resolve this issue; one notable hypothesis is that the First Epistle of Clement (c. AD 96), by citing as Scripture several of the Pauline letters,[50] was inspired by 2 Peter because it was considered authentic. This would mean that even the recipients of 1 Clement, the inhabitants of Corinth, would have also considered it authentic, which would indicate that the letter must have been in circulation long before that time.[51] The earliest reference to a Pauline collection is probably found in Ignatius of Antioch around AD 108.[52][53] Another debate is about its linguistic complexity and its relationship with 1 Peter. According to the scholar Bart D. Ehrman, the historical Peter could not have written any works, either because he was "unlettered" (Acts 4:13) or because he was a fisherman from Capernaum, a comparatively small and probably monolingual town, in a time and province where there was little literacy.[54] Bauckham addresses the statistical differences in the vocabulary of the two writings, using the data given by U. Holzmeister's 1949 study;[55] 38.6 percent of the words are common to 1 and 2 Peter. 61.4 percent peculiar to 2 Peter, while of the words used in 1 Peter, 28.4 percent are common to 1 and 2 Peter, 71.6 percent are peculiar to 1 Peter. However, these figures can be compared with other epistles considered authentic,[56] showing that pure statistical analysis of this type is a weak way of showing literary relationship.[57][58][59] Bauckham also notes that "the Greek style of Second Peter is not to the taste of many modern readers, at times pretentiously elaborate, with an effort at pompous phrasing, a somewhat artificial piece of rhetoric, and 'slimy Greek'"; contrary to the style of the first epistle, "2 Peter must relate to the 'Asiatic Greek.'"[60] The crux of the matter is how these differences are explained. Those who deny the Petrine authorship of the epistle, such as, for example, Kelly, insist that the differences show that First and Second Peter were not written by the same person.[61] Others add that 2 Peter was a specific type of pseudepigraphy common and morally accepted at the time, either because it was a testamentary genre or because the works of the disciples could bear the names of their masters without any inconvenience.[62][63][d] Those who defend Petrine authorship often appeal to the different amanuenses or secretaries Peter used to write each letter, as first suggested by Jerome.[64][65][66] Thomas R. Schreiner criticizes people who regard arguments in favor of the authenticity of 2 Peter as mere arguments of religious conservatives who impotently try to invent arguments to support authenticity. People of this mindset, according to Schreiner, object to the claim that different secretaries may have been used but then claim that the corpus of the two letters is too small to establish stylistic variation. Schreiner states: When we examine historical documents, we are not granted exhaustive knowledge of the circumstances in which the document came into being. Therefore, we must postulate probabilities, and in some cases, of course, more than one scenario is likely. Moreover, in some cases the likely scenarios are not internally contradictory, but both constitute plausible answers to the problem posed. Suggesting more than one solution is not necessarily an appeal to despair, but can be a sign of humility.[67] The scholar Simon J. Kistemaker believes that linguistically "the material presented in both documents provides substantial evidence to indicate that these letters are the product of a single author."[68] However, this view is very much in the minority. Most biblical scholars have concluded Peter is not the author, considering the epistle pseudepigraphal.[4][69][70][71][35][49] Reasons for this include its linguistic differences from 1 Peter, its apparent use of Jude, possible allusions to second-century gnosticism, encouragement in the wake of a delayed parousia, and weak external support.[72] Some early manuscripts containing the text of this chapter are: Papyrus 72 (3rd/4th century)[73] Codex Vaticanus (B or 03; 325–50) Codex Sinaiticus (א or 01; 330–60) Codex Alexandrinus (A or 02; 400–40) Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C or 04; c. 450; partial)[74] Papyrus 74 (7th century; extant verses 3:4, 3:11, 3:16) Codex Floriacensis (h; 6th century Old-Latin; partial)[75] There is an obvious relationship between the texts of 2 Peter and the Epistle of Jude, to the degree that one of them clearly had read the other and copied phrases, or both had read some lost common source.[76] The shared passages are:[77] 2 Peter Jude 1:5 3 1:12 5 2:1 4 2:4 6 2:6 7 2:10–11 8–9 2:12 10 2:13–17 11–13 3:2-3 17–18 3:14 24 3:18 25 In general, most scholars believe that Jude was written first, and 2 Peter shows signs of adapting phrases from Jude for its specific situation.[78] See also: Development of the New Testament canon The earliest undisputed mention of 2 Peter is by the theologian Origen (c. 185–254) in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, although he marks it as "doubted"/"disputed".[78] Origen mentioned no explanation for the doubts, nor did he give any indication concerning the extent or location. Donald Guthrie suggests that "It is fair to assume, therefore, that he saw no reason to treat these doubts as serious, and this would mean to imply that in his time the epistle was widely regarded as canonical."[79] Acceptance of the letter into the canon did not occur without some difficulty; however, "nowhere did doubts about the letter's authorship take the form of definitive rejection."[79] Origen, in another passage, has been interpreted as considering the letter to be Petrine in authorship.[80] Before Origen's time, the evidence is inconclusive;[81] there is a lack of definite early quotations from the letter in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, though possible use or influence has been located in the works of Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 211), Theophilus (d. c. 183), Aristides (d. c. 134), Polycarp (d. 155), and Justin (d. 165).[82][83][36] Robert E. Picirilli observed that Clement of Rome linked James 1:8, 2 Peter 3:4, and Mark 4:26 in 1 Clement 23:3.[36]:59–65 Richard Bauckham and Peter H. Davids also noted the reference to "Scripture" in 1 Clement 23:3 matched 2 Peter 3:4, but make it dependent on a common apocalyptic source, which was also used in 2 Clement 11:2.[84][85] Carsten Peter Thiede adds to Picirilli's work authors such as Justin and Minucius Felix who would use 2 Peter directly and a new reference in Clement of Rome (1 Clem. 9.2 = 2 Pet. 1.17).[86] 2 Peter seems to be quoted amongst apocryphal literature in Shepherd of Hermas (AD 95–160),[87][88] Apocalypse of Peter (c. AD 125–135),[89][90][91][92][93] the Gospel of Truth (AD 140–170), and the Apocryphon of John (AD 120–180).[94] Eusebius (c. 275–339) professed his own doubts (see also Antilegomena), and is the earliest direct testimony of such, though he stated that the majority supported the text, and by the time of Jerome (c. 346–420) it had been mostly accepted as canonical.[95] The Peshitta, the standard version of the Bible for churches in the Syriac tradition, does not contain the Second Epistle of Peter and thus rejects its canonical status.[96] In both content and style this letter is very different from 1 Peter. Its author, like the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, is familiar with literary conventions, writing in a more elevated Koine Greek than, for example, Paul's writings or the Gospel of Mark.[97] Gorgianic figures are used which are characteristic of Asian rhetoric (Asianism),[98][99] with style similar to that of Ignatius and the Epistle to Diognetus.[100] This leads some scholars to think that, like 1 Peter, the letter is addressed to Gentile Christians in Asia Minor.[101][102][103] The epistle presciently declares that it is written shortly before the apostle's death (1:14), an assertion that may not have been part of the original text. Arguments for and against the assertion being original are based largely on the acceptance or rejection of supernatural intervention in the life of the writer.[104] The epistle contains eleven references to the Old Testament. In 3:15-16 a reference is made to one of Paul's epistles, which some have identified as 3:10a with 1 Thess. 5:2; 3:14 with 1 Thess. 5:23.[e] The author of 2 Peter had a relationship with the Gospel tradition, mainly in the Transfiguration of Jesus, 1:4 with Mark 9:1; 1:11 with Mark 9:1; 1:16,18 with Mark 9:2-10; 1:17 with Matthew 17:5; 1:19 with Mark 9:4;[106] and in the promise of the Second Coming, 3:10b with Mark 13:31 or Luke 21:33.[107] The book also shares a number of passages with the Epistle of Jude, 1:5 with Jude 3; 1:12 with Jude 5; 2:1 with Jude 4; 2:4 with Jude 6; 2:5 with Jude 5; 2:6 with Jude 7; 2:10–11 with Jude 8–9; 2:12 with Jude 10; 2:13–17 with Jude 11–13; 2:18 with Jude 16; 3:2f with Jude 17f; 3:3 with Jude 18; 3:14 with Jude 24; and 3:18 with Jude 25.[108] Because the Epistle of Jude is much shorter than 2 Peter, and due to various stylistic details, the scholarly consensus is that Jude was the source for the similar passages of 2 Peter.[108][109] Tartarus is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:4 as devoted to the holding of certain fallen angels. It is elaborated on in Jude 6. Jude 6, however, is a clear reference to the Book of Enoch. Bauckham suggests that 2 Peter 2:4 is partially dependent on Jude 6