

**HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS FORMED**

1. The documents of the New Testament were originally INDIVIDUAL letters/documents written by some of the Apostles of Jesus, or close associates of an Apostle of Jesus, in order to pass on the teachings of Jesus.

**Galatians 1:11-12** <sup>11</sup> *I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup> I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.* (NIV)

2. They were written to be CIRCULATED and read among all the Christian churches of that time.

**Colossians 4:16** *"After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea."* (NIV)

3. Because of persecution, the rise of false teachers, and the growth of the church geographically, it became important to PUBLICALLY RECOGNIZED what documents were authoritative.

**2 Peter 2:1-3** <sup>1</sup> *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. <sup>2</sup> Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. <sup>3</sup> In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.* (NIV)

4. Eventually, a church council called the Synod of Hippo (north Africa) in A.D. 393 listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. It did not choose them or confer upon them authority. They SIMPLY LISTED the documents considered to be authoritative by the church up to that point in history.

**THE CRITERIA**

1. The document must have a connection with AN APOSTLE; those who were EYEWITNESSES of Jesus and were taught by Jesus.

**2 Peter 1:16-17** <sup>16</sup> *For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were*

**eyewitnesses** of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> **We ourselves heard** this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain." (NIV)

2. The contents of the book had to be consistent with JESUS' teaching.

**2 Corinthians 11:4** "For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough." (NIV)

3. A book needed to have widespread INFLUENCE and continuous ACCEPTANCE and USE by all the churches at that time.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** "And we thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." (NIV)

### **WHY WERE THE LATER Gnostic GOSPELS NOT INCLUDED?**

1. Most scholars agree the names of the apostles were attributed to these documents to give them respectability and to PRETEND that they were Christian.

**2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** <sup>1</sup> Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, <sup>2</sup> not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. <sup>3</sup> Don't let anyone deceive you in any way ..." (NIV)

2. These documents WERE NOT written by eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ.

**Luke 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, <sup>2</sup> just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. <sup>3</sup> With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (NIV)

3. The Gnostic Gospels are very ESOTERIC in nature and differ greatly with the NT Gospels.

**1 Timothy 6:20-21** <sup>21</sup> *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing idea of what is falsely called **knowledge** (gnosis), <sup>21</sup> which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith ...* (NIV)

### **THE EARLY CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO Gnosticism**

1. Compiled a list of accepted sacred Christian writings—CANON.
2. Developed a creed to codify the basic Christian beliefs—Apostle's CREED.
3. Began calling itself "CATHOLIC" which meant "according to the whole," meaning, "according to the whole testimony of the apostles," to identify itself as an orthodox Christian community.

### **BOTTOM LINE:**

It is important to note that Jewish people, or later, the Christian Church, did not create the authoritative version of the Bible; it did not determine which books would be called Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Instead, the church recognized, or discovered, which books had been inspired from their inception.

**2 Peter 1:19-21** <sup>19</sup> *We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origins in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* (NIV)