

Important Dates and Events for the Development of the Christian Canon of Sacred Scripture

Below is a list of some of the most important dates and events in the assemblage of the canon of the Christian Bible. This is by no means a complete list – there are many more canons, for example, produced by individual bishops and other Christians than those listed here. However, these are the most important ones and represent the train of thought which lead to the modern Bible.

Date	Event
160 AD	<p>Irenaeus of Lyons refers to the four Gospels and argues for Acts Irenaeus of Lyons (in France) argues that there should be four Gospels – this is perhaps the earliest reference to the notion of a four gospel canon.</p> <p>“It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For, since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the "pillar and ground" of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh. ... For the living creatures are quadriform, and the Gospel is quadriform, as is also the course followed by the Lord. For this reason were four principal covenants given to the human race: one, prior to the deluge, under Adam; the second, that after the deluge, under Noah; the third, the giving of the law, under Moses; the fourth, that which renovates man, and sums up all things in itself by means of the Gospel, raising and bearing men upon its wings into the heavenly kingdom.”</p> <p>He also suggests that Acts must be included in any canon which includes Luke, as they are clearly by the same author.</p>
170 AD	<p>Muratorian Canon produced The so-called Muratorian Canon is the earliest known example of a canon list of mostly New Testament books. It survives, damaged and thus incomplete, as a bad Latin translation of an original, no longer extant, Greek text that is usually dated in the late second century, although a few scholars have preferred a fourth century date. This is an excerpt from Metzger's translation:</p> <p>The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke... The fourth... is that of John... the acts of all the apostles... As for the Epistles of Paul... To the Corinthians first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans seventh... once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians... one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy... to the Laodiceans, [and] another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul's name to [further] the heresy of Marcion... the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned (or, bearing the name of) John... and [the book of] Wisdom... We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church. But Hermas wrote the Shepherd very recently... And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church.</p>
173 AD	<p>Diatessaron Assembled Assembled by Tatian, a pupil of Justin Martyr. This is a harmony of the four canonical gospels (the word means “through four”). It attempted to deal with the Synoptic Problem and present a single harmonization of the gospels. Evidence suggests that</p>

	Tatian may have had access to an earlier harmonization of the gospels, but we have no record of this. Only fragments of the Diatessaron remain, owing to its suppression as heretical (although it is unclear if the work itself was heretical).
200 AD	Origen using modern 27 book canon By the early 200's, Origen may have been using the same 27 books as in the modern New Testament, though there were still disputes over the canonicity of Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Revelation.
303 AD	Start of the Diocletian Persecution The last, and the greatest, of the persecutions of the Christians by the Roman Empire.
313 AD	Edict of Milan The Emperor Constantine the Great issues the edict of Milan, which makes Christianity legal and ends the persecution. This has a significant impact on the ease of canonization.
367 AD	Letter of Athanasius lists modern 27 book New Testament canon In his Easter letter of 367, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of exactly the same books as what would become the 27-book NT canon, and he used the word "canonized" (kanonizomena) in regards to them. He also listed a 22-book OT and 7 books not in the canon but to be read: Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, Didache, and the Shepherd. This list is very similar to the modern Protestant canon; the only differences are his exclusion of Esther and his inclusion of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah as part of Jeremiah.
382 AD	Council of Rome & the Damasian List (identical to modern canons) Purporting to date from a "Council of Rome" under Pope Damasus I in 382, the so-called "Damasian list" appended to the Decretum Gelasianum gives a list identical to what would be the Canon of Trent, and, though the text may in fact not be Damasian, it is at least a valuable sixth century compilation. This list, given below, was purportedly endorsed by Pope Damasus I: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jesus Nave, Judges, Ruth, 4 books of Kings, 2 books of Chronicles, Job, Psalter of David, 5 books of Solomon, 12 books of Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, 2 books of Esdras, 2 books of Maccabees, and in the New Testament: 4 books of Gospels, 1 book of Acts of the Apostles, 13 letters of the Apostle Paul, 1 of him to the Hebrews, 2 of Peter, 3 of John, 1 of James, 1 of Jude, and the Apocalypse of John.
383 AD	Pope Damasus commissions Jerome to produce the Vulgate The pope of the time asks Jerome, a Christian scholar and apologist, to begin a translation into Latin which will become the famous Vulgate (based on the Old Latin text and the original Scriptures).
387 AD	Gregory of Nazianzus compiles canon similar to Athanasius' – but omits Revelation
393 AD	Synod of Hippo approves the Damasian List Held in Carthage, north Africa, and attended by Saint Augustine. It approved the Damasian List subject to "approval of the Church Across The Sea".
397 AD	Council of Carthage reaffirms the Synod of Hippo Held in North Africa. Issues a canon which is identical to the one at Hippo and the

	Damasian List.
405 AD	<p>Jerome completes the Vulgate Jerome finally finishes the Vulgate. He has chosen to use the Hebrew versions of the Old Testament Scriptures (where available) – a decision which was roundly criticized by his contemporaries. He does, however, include the full 73 book canon of the modern canon.</p>
405 AD	<p>Pope Innocent confirms Damasian list as canon of Sacred Scripture in a letter to a French Bishop In c.405, Pope Innocent I sent a list of the sacred books to a Gallic bishop Exsuperius of Toulouse, which is identical to Trent (without the distinction between protocanonicals and deuterocanonicals).</p>
419 AD	<p>Council of Carthage confirms the Damasian list Another council (or perhaps synod) in Carthage confirms the list once again.</p>
1451 AD	<p>Council of Florence affirms the 73 book canon The Council of Florence (Originally Council of Basel) was a Ecumenical Council of bishops and other ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church. It began in 1431 in Basel, Switzerland, and became known as the Council of Ferrara after its transfer to Ferrara was decreed by Pope Eugene IV to convene in 1438. The council transferred to Florence in 1439 because of the threat of plague, and the financial support of the Medici family. The initial location at Basel reflected the desire among parties seeking reform to meet outside the territories of the Papacy, the Holy Roman Empire, or the kings of Aragon and France, whose influences the council hoped to avoid. Ambrogio Traversari attended the Council of Basel as legate of Pope Eugene IV.</p> <p>The Council produced an identical list to the Damasian List.</p>
1534 AD	<p>Martin Luther removes 7 books from the Bible Martin Luther removes the 7 deutrocanonical books and portions of two others (Daniel and Esther) from his Bible. He also argues that Esther should be removed (without its deuterocanonical elements it never mentions God) and wanted to remove Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation. He called James “an epistle of straw”, said “as for Revelation, I have a personal aversion to it” and “a book of Revelation ought to be revealing”. He took these books out and placed them at the end of the New Testament.</p>
1546 AD	<p>Council of Trent affirms the 73 book canon Faced with Luther's actions and the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church issues an edict (a firmly binding doctrinal de fide edict – perhaps for the first time!) concerning Sacred Scripture. The edict does <i>not</i> contain a list of Scripture – rather, it says that the Bible is the Vulgate; the books in the Vulgate and in the form they appear there.</p>