

Essay on christianity, traditions and synoptic problem

[Religion](#), [Bible](#)



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The Christian Canon

The Christian Canon is the list of authoritative and inspired books universally accepted by Christians. These canons emerged from prolonged debates and consensus assumed by diverse faiths. Christian believers consider the Christian canon books as inspired by God and express the history of the solid relationship found between God and his people. For example, the Jewish Christian books are not included in the canon together with some other disputed books. In this respect, these books can be non-canonical, apocryphal or deuterocanonical. The division of the Christian canon into the early, Eastern and Western church and those of various Christian traditions including the Old and New Testament has helped to facilitate studies by scholars. Most of the Christian traditions accept the Hebrew protocanon and the deuterocanonical books as Christian canons. However, the Protestants and in the Lutheran and King James Bibles retain the deuterocanonical books as apocryphal. There are other accounts like the Prayer of Manasseh, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Psalms 152-155 and the Psalms of Solomon of the churches in Syriac, which are presently not included in the

canon but were initially significant books in the Christian tradition.

Essentially, different orthodox churches and traditions have either accepted or rejected varied books of the Bible as canonical or non-canonical. However, different Christian traditions concur that the New Testament comprise of 27 books, and acknowledge that the only variation occurs in the order of the books. The books in the New Testament are also Apocryphal (Mark 24).

Oral Traditions

In contrast to Canon, the Christian oral has been a significant factor in the transmission and development of the early Christian studies and the synoptic gospel studies. Oral tradition assumes a vital role in the establishment of pre-literary traditions concerning Jesus that goes along with its continual effect to the traditions literary descendants. There is also the oral Jesus tradition that has captured academic interest from as far as the eighteenth century. Oral tradition has assisted in the gradual formation of the biblical tradition. The oral tradition occurred before the gospels (Terrence 13).

The formation of the gospels is determined to have gone through distinct stages by scholars with the initial stage being oral. This accounts for the time when Jesus was healing the sick, debating the scribes, teaching and preaching. These oral works were then recorded collectively through writings. Later, the written works were combined into proto-gospels, and the last stage occurred when the Four Gospels books were authored from the proto-gospels. Therefore, the stories that surround Jesus of Nazareth passed down through writing together with the oral testimony from the early Christians. However, an oral tradition existed that preceded the recording

and writing of the New Testament. These were the oral pharisaic and schools traditions before by the Jews who had a tradition of writing scribes. They had references to other biblical documents supported by the historical records they kept. Scholars state that the gospels were drafted shortly after the events that they describe. Therefore, the origin and the development of the Gospel books meet the oral tradition criteria laid out by the historical scholars. It is correct to state that oral tradition took a very vital role in the development of the New Testament (Terrence 10).

The Synoptic Problem

Over the centuries, Christian scholars have attempted to solve the synoptic problem and explain the relationship between, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the first three gospels. The agreement and disagreement in terms of wording, content and order in the books is the main guideline in solving the synoptic problem. There are a number of many disparities in how the agreements and disagreements alternate among the gospels. A lot of similarity is evident in the contents of the gospel books. For example, almost three quarters of the material in Mark is in Matthew and half of the content in Mark is similarly in Luke. On the wording, it is evident that there are many similar verses between Matthew and Luke. Once agreement between the books is evident, the tense and even the mood is critically analyzed leading to discoveries of great similarities within the verses of the different synoptic books. The findings are more interesting given that Jesus probably spoke Aramaic. In some researches, scholars have identified exact materials in the gospels (Mark 23).

Oral transmission has also been effective in understanding the Synoptic Gospels of New Testament. Therefore, scholars have developed theories to link the relationship between the gospels. There is the two-source hypothesis that theorizes another fourth document, the Q document. The Q hypothesis assumes that the authors of the synoptic gospels extracted their material independently from the Q document. The Oral Transmission hypothesis based on oral tradition proposes that the agreement in the synoptic books was instead transmitted orally and not through a document that is now lost. The Farrer hypothesis identifies that Matthew used Mark to write and Luke being the last to write used both. However, the Griesbach hypothesis disqualifies Farrer by stating that Matthew appeared first, followed by Luke and lastly Mark who used Matthew and Luke. In contrast, Augustine argued that the order was Matthew, Mark and then Luke (Mark 10).

Works Cited

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