

## Lecture 23: Judaism, Gnosticism, and Authority

March 18, 2020

### Judaism

Hostility to “the Way” (Jesus as the Messiah)  
Synagogues only, no Temple  
Rabbis only, no priests  
*Potential reasons why Judaism became a “new” religion...*

### Gnosticism

Definition: *anti-cosmic dualism* [i.e. a dualistic religion that is negative towards this material world]

Features:

Unknown God  
Lesser Demiurge created the world—an evil act!  
Spark of God in man  
Secret knowledge (lit. *gnosis*) redeems you!

New Testament: Jesus is confessed as coming “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2).

Opp. Doceticism

Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*

Cf. Kurt Randolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*

### Second-Century Authority Challenge

Apostles no present

Apostles impersonated – even in the NT era (1 & 2 Thessalonians)

Illus. Lots of apostolic “decoys” on the water, but no apostle.

Solution: The permanent, public, apostolic word

E.g. Multiple gospels, multiple apostles – possibly explains tension between apostle and word (Gal. 1 & 2)

### The Bible: Sixty-Six Books

Canon – lit. “reed” (Greek), which became the standard measure (like a *yardstick*) or rule (like a *ruler*).

Definition – the official list of biblical books

Canonization = the process of picking the books for the Bible

Question: *What gives the biblical books their authority?*

Church History – Catholic vs. Protestant answer

Illus. An all-star athlete at pre-season tryouts.

Cf. C. E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*

### External & Internal Criteria for Canonization

The external criteria involve *two epicenters of revelation*:

OT – Moses

Deuteronomy 18 – “a prophet like you”

➔ Prophetic Tradition

Apocrypha (or Deuterocanonical Books)?

Not accepted by the Jews

Textual Confidence: Scribal Accuracy

NT – Jesus

John 14-16 – “the Spirit of Truth”

➔ Apostolic Authority

Pseudepigrapha?

Not “according to the Scriptures”

Textual Confidence: Over 5000 manuscripts, many early

The internal criteria involve *spiritual receptivity*:

Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17).

The Bible has authority because it is inspired by *God*—it is literally “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Recognizing this divine voice is less a matter of the head, than of the heart (a willingness to obey).