

REDATING THE NEW TESTAMENT

Section 1 - The Biblical Canon

Just what do I mean by the Bible? Following Ivan Panin, I maintain that the Biblical canon consists solely of the 39 books of the Hebrew Masoretic text of the Tenakh or Old Testament (where Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles have each been split into Books I and II) and the 27 books of the Hebraic-Greek¹ Messianic Writings - also known as the New Covenant Scriptures or the New Testament - only the latter of which is enumerated in Table 1H-1 below.

TABLE 1H-1 - THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON			
No. in Bible	No. in Category	Name of Book or Category	Author
THE GOSPELS			
1	1	Matthew	Anonymous
2	2	Mark	Anonymous
3	3	Luke	Anonymous
4	4	John	Anonymous
THE ACTS			
5	1	Acts	Anonymous
THE EPISTLES			
6	1	James	James
7	2	1st Peter	Peter
8	3	2nd Peter	Peter
9	4	1st John	Anonymous
10	5	2nd John	Anonymous
11	6	3rd John	Anonymous
12	7	Jude	Jude
13	8	Romans	Paul
14	9	1st Corinthians	Paul
15	10	2nd Corinthians	Paul
16	11	Galatians	Paul
17	12	Ephesians	Paul
18	13	Philippians	Paul
19	14	Colossians	Paul
20	15	1st Thessalonians	Paul
21	16	2nd Thessalonians	Paul
22	17	Hebrews	Anonymous
23	18	1st Timothy	Paul
24	19	2nd Timothy	Paul

¹ Greek became a *lingua franca* in the greater Middle East during the Macedonian Supremacy (330-147 BC). It continued to be used extensively during the Roman Supremacy (147 BC to 487 BC). Consequently, the authors of the New Covenant Scriptures, who wrote during the years 33-70 AD, used a Hebraic form of Greek to reveal to the non-Hebrew speaking world of the 1st century the Gospel of the Jewish Messiah.

25	20	Titus	Paul
26	21	Philemon	Paul
THE REVELATION			
27	1	Revelation	John

I hasten to add that I do not regard the *Apocryphal* writings, which consist of Esdras 1-2, Tobit, Judith, Daniel additions, Esther additions, Prayer of Manasseh, Prayer of Jeremiah, Book of Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon, and Maccabees 1-2 (and sometimes 3-4) - to say nothing of the *Pseudepigrapha* – as part of the canon, because I don't believe that they were inspired by God. Not only were these writings rejected by the early church for inclusion in the canon, but they sometimes contradict both the canonical works and one another as well.

Section 2 - Redating the Canon

Before I encountered John A.T. Robinson's book, Redating the New Testament,² I had already decided that the entire New Covenant Scriptures had been written prior to 70 A.D., because the Destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in that year was one of the most traumatic events in Hebrew History and would not have gone unmentioned by the authors of the New Covenant Scriptures, particularly since they were all Jews³ and most of them were members of the first church in Jerusalem and would have been affected by the banishment of the Jews from Judea by the Romans.

When I encountered Robinson's book, I was confirmed in my opinion by the following points:

- "...all the various types of the early church's literature (including the Didache, a version of its 'manual of discipline') were coming into being more or less concurrently in the period between 40 and 70. This, I believe, is what we naturally expect" (p. 352).
- "The notion that all the Pauline epistles, with the theology they imply, were prior to the Gospels, is not one that we should derive from the documents themselves" (p. 352).
- "The pattern of early church history suggested by the New Testament documents now reinforces that which we would independently deduce from the Acts narrative (up to the point that it takes us) This could approximately, decade by decade, be plotted as follows: 30-40 early mission in Palestine, 40-50 consolidation of bases for the next thrust, 50-60 rapid expansion into Asia Minor and Europe, 60-70 testing from within and without, [and] 70 + reorientation and reappraisal" (p. 353).
- "The epistle of James affords us a glimpse into the period prior to 50 (p. 353).

² Robinson, John A.T., Redating the New Testament, Wipf and Stock, Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, October 2000 - previously published by SCM Press, 1976.

³ Some scholars argue that Luke was a Gentile, but I firmly believe that he was a Jew because the Bible indicates that God elected the Jews to serve as the "Oracles of God" (Romans 3:2, Hebrews 5:12, I Peter 4:11).

- “...the really creative period in the primitive church, its ‘Elizabethan era’ from the point of literary output, was undoubtedly the 50s. These saw the full flowering of the preaching and teaching tradition in the gospels and the Didache and the creation of the Pauline corpus” (p. 353).
- “The 60s mark the beginning of the silver age (already shadowed by the Pastorals), with its confirm for the confirmation and defense of the faith against the threat of heresy and schism, persecution and defection (Acts, Jude and II Peter, the Johannine epistles, I Peter, the prologue and epilogue of the fourth gospel, Hebrews and Revelation)” (p. 353).
- “...the glow remains till the end of the first apostolic generation, fed by the fire of the martyrs and reflected in I Clement. Thereafter the spiritual temperature drops and the literary production of the church falls away, both in quantity and quality (Barnabas and Hermas) till it begins to emerge with the martyrs and apologists of the second century (Ignatius and Polycarp, Justin and the Epistle to Diognetus)” (pp. 353-354).

Robinson’s redating of the books of the New Covenant Scriptures appears in Table 1H-2 below.

TABLE 1H-2 - REVISED DATES		
No.	Title	Date
1	James	47-48, circa
2	I Thessalonians	50, early (winter)
3	II Thessalonians	50-51
4	I Corinthians	55, spring
5	I Timothy	55, autumn
6	II Corinthians	56, early (winter)
7	Galatians	56, later
8	Romans	57, early (winter)
9	Titus	57, late spring
10	Philippians	58, spring
11	Philemon	58, summer
12	Colossians	58, summer
13	Ephesians	58, late summer
14	II Timothy	58, autumn
15	<i>The Didache</i> ⁴	40-60, circa
16	Mark	45-60, circa
17	Matthew	40-60, circa
18	Luke	57-60
19	Jude II	61-62
20	II Peter	61-62

⁴ Italics indicates books that are not part of the Biblical Canon.

21	Acts	57-62
22	II, III, and I John	60-65
23	I Peter	65, spring
24	John	40-65, circa
25	Hebrews	67, circa
26	Revelation	68-70
27	<i>I Clement</i>	<i>70, early</i>
28	<i>Barnabas</i>	<i>75, circa</i>
29	<i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i>	<i>85, circa</i>

I heartily recommend Robinson's book - and particularly *Chapter XI - Conclusions and Corollaries* - which delivers what I regard as an iron clad argument for the redating that he is proposing.