

Intro to Theology

- If Theology is culturally relevant reflection on God, and
- The authoritative source for Theology is the Bible, then
- Is the text we hold in our hands a reliable representation of what the inspired authors wrote down?



Intro to Theology

- In order to answer this question, we will hear the story of how the New Testament came together.



The New Testament Canon

- Theological Approach
- Apostolic Awareness
- Apostolic Fathers
- Historical Consensus





Theological Approach

- Herman Ridderbos: *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*
- Recognition not election
 - Myth of Nicaea
- Christic Authority



Christic Authority

- “The content of the Spirit’s testimony, then, is inseparable from that of the apostles, and *the power the apostles received from Christ to establish their word as the church’s canon was realized in terms of the Spirit’s leading and inspiring them,*” (p. 30).



Christic Authority

- “By giving authority to his apostles, Christ himself has given a foundation and canon to his church,” (30).
- “Christ is not only himself the canon in which God comes to the world and in which He hallows himself before the world, but Christ also establishes the canon and gives it a concrete historical form,” (37).



Christic Authority

- But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will *teach you all things and bring to your remembrance* all that I have said to you. (Jn. 14:26 ESV)
- But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, *he will bear witness about me.* 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. (Jn. 15:26-27 ESV)



Christic Authority

- When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. (Jn. 16:13 ESV)



Theological Approach

- Herman Ridderbos: *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*
- Recognition not election
 - Myth of Nicaea
- Christic Authority
- Apostolicity



Apostolicity

- “Therefore the question is whether a particular book has that apostolic and canonical significance for the church, whether its content embodies the foundational apostolic tradition, *not* whether it was written by the hand of an apostle,” (32).



Theological Approach

- Herman Ridderbos: *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures*
- Recognition not election
 - Myth of Nicaea
- Christic Authority
- Apostolicity
- Historical Consensus
 - *Always, everywhere, and by all*
- Spiritual Fruit
- Recognition of Faith



Spiritual Fruit/Recognition of Faith

- “Therefore it may appear that the only possible alternative is to seek the final ground for the recognition of the canon in the faith of the church or, more precisely, in the faith that the Holy Spirit produces and strengthens by continual confrontation with the canon, in the hearts of those who belong to Christ... No historical document, no recognition of the authority of the church, no appeal to the consensus of history can replace, even to the slightest extent, the element of faith necessary for recognition of the canon.” (36).

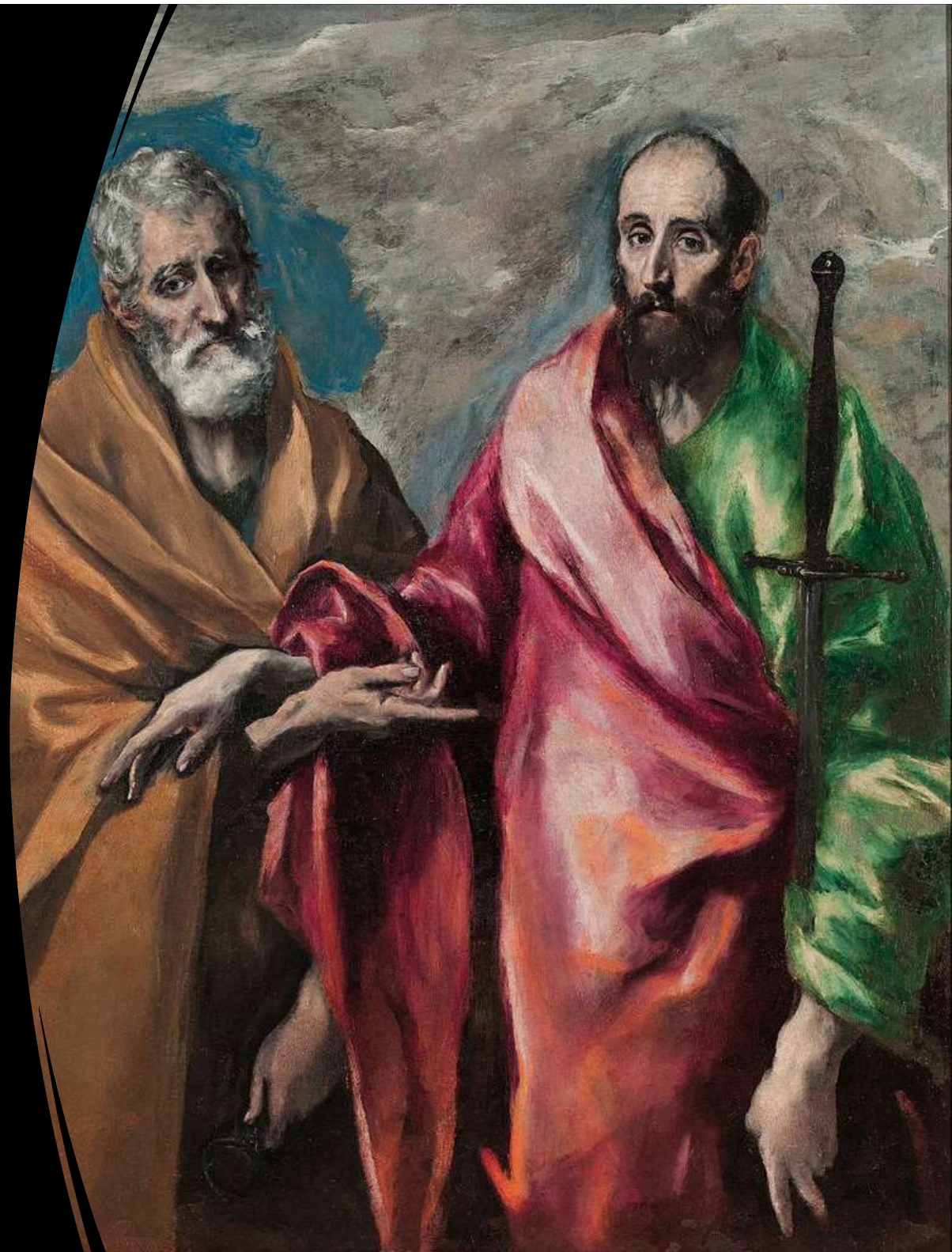


Historical Consensus

- “In our opinion, appeal to the witness of the Holy Spirit for recognition of the canon may never be detached in a timeless, spiritualistic sense from the *historical* aspects of the canon; such an appeal must remain closely tied to those aspects,” (36).
- “The absoluteness of the canon is not to be detached from the relativity of history,” (38).

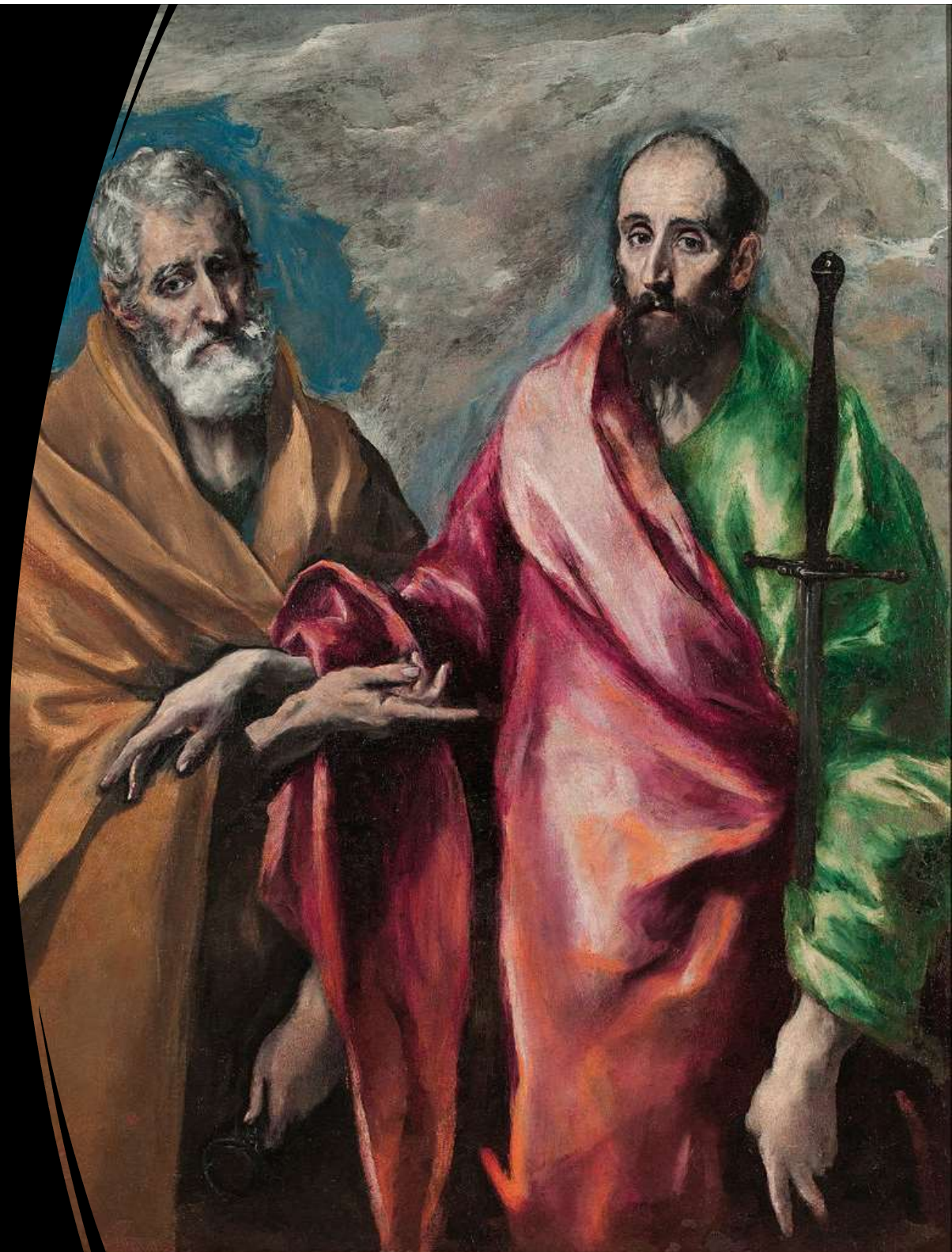
Apostolic Awareness

The apostles
demonstrate an
awareness that they
were writing scripture



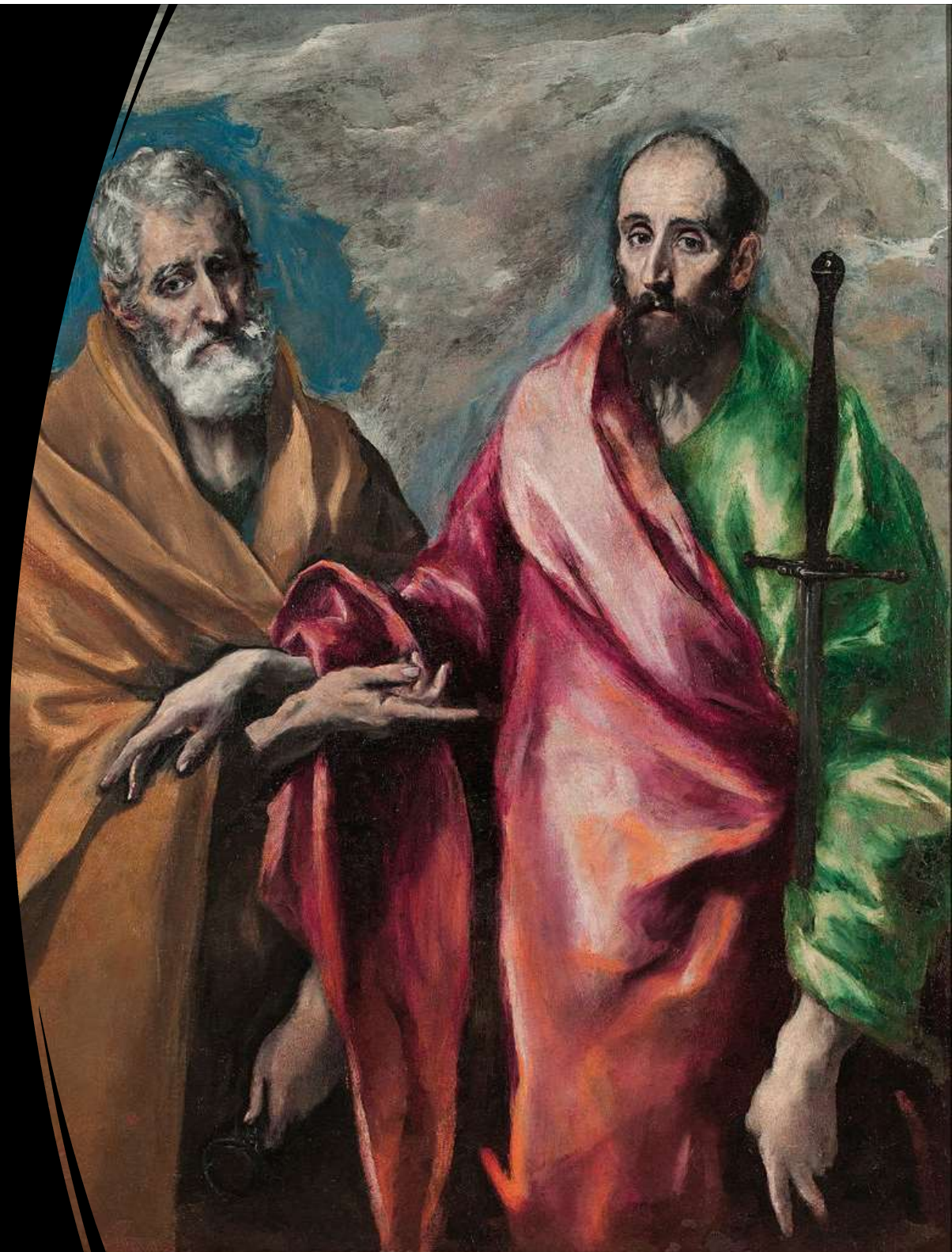
Apostolic Awareness

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17 ESV)



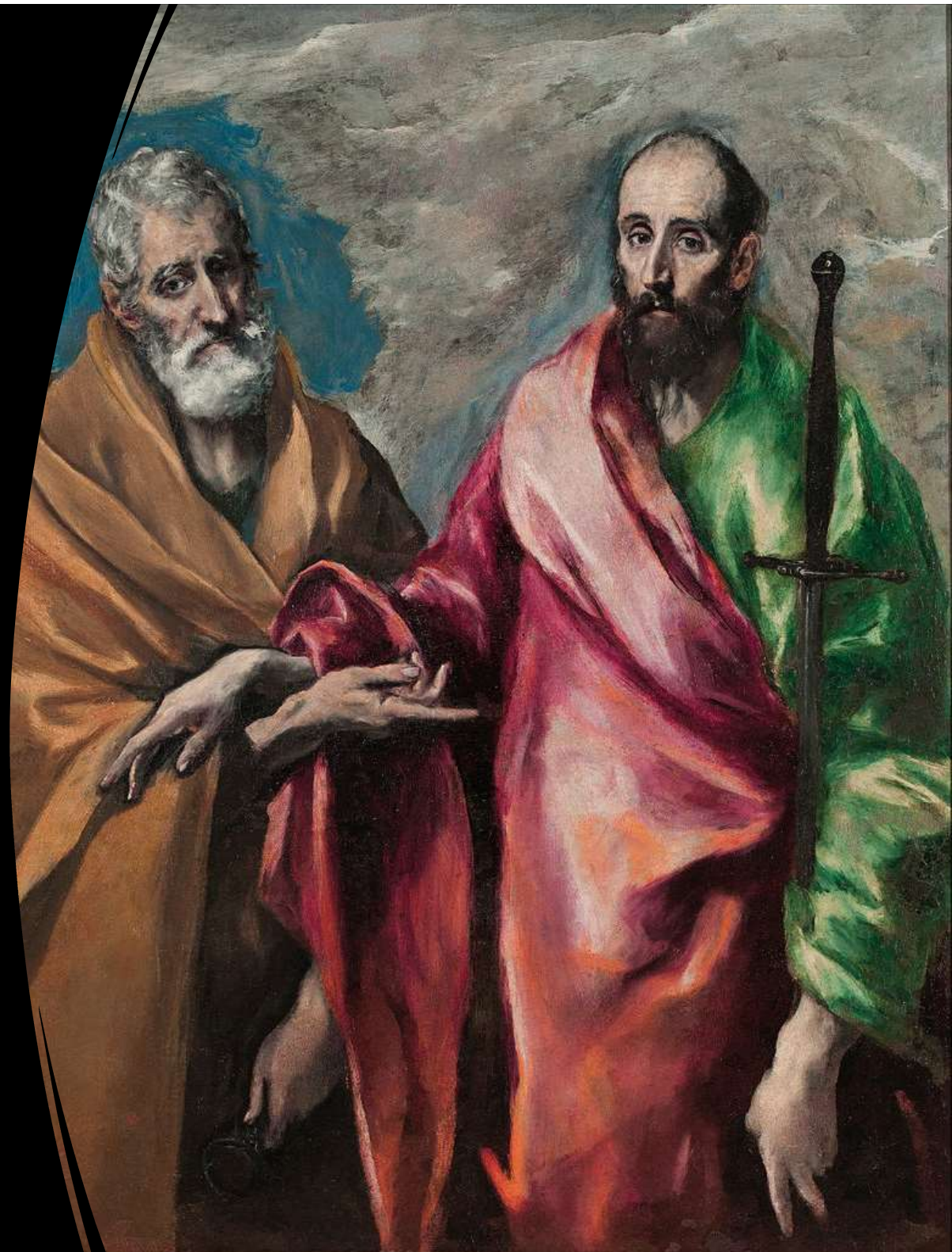
Apostolic Awareness

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ...we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, ... no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet. 1:16-21 ESV)



Apostolic Awareness

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother *Paul also wrote to you* according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, *as they do the other Scriptures*. (2 Pet. 3:15-16 ESV)





The Apostolic Fathers

- The first leaders of the church after the death of the Apostles
- The Fathers demonstrate an awareness that what Peter and Paul wrote was inspired Scripture, but what they were writing was not.
- Clement of Rome c. 100 AD
- Ignatius of Antioch c. 110 AD



1 Clement 47:1-3

Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he first write to you in the beginning of the gospel? Truly he wrote to you in the Spirit about himself and Cephas and Apollos.



Ignatius to the Romans 4:3

I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul: they were apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am now still a slave.

Historical Consensus

- Muratorian Fragment (c. 180 AD)
- Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 325)
- Early Manuscripts (2nd-4th c.)
- Athanasius of Alexandria (367 A.D.)
- Council of Carthage (419 A.D.)
- The historical data paint a picture of unanimity on the contents of the canon.



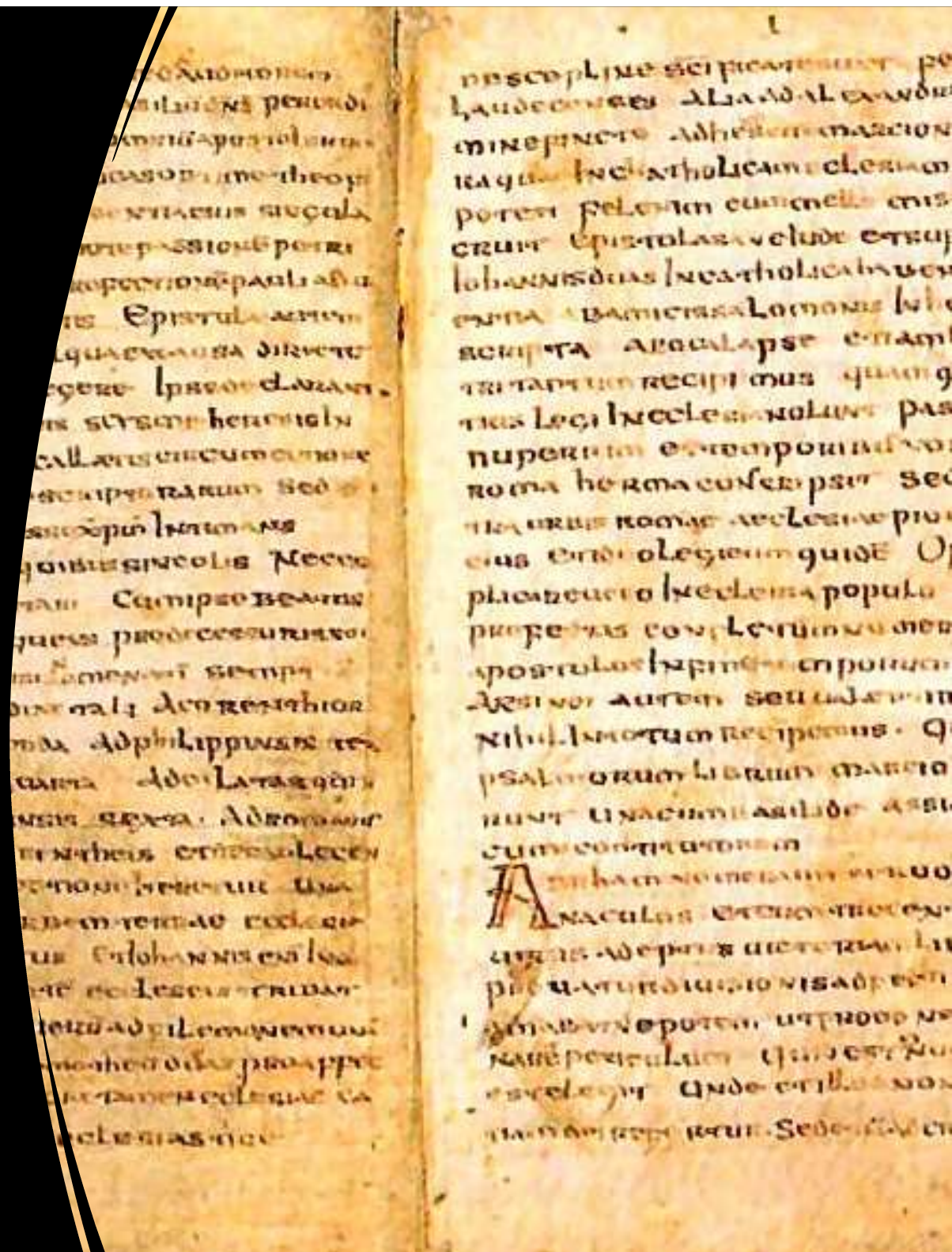
Muratorian Fragment (c. 180 AD)

- Wrote as a response to the Marcionite heresy
- Marcion removed many books from the Bible that did not fit his teachings
- As a fragment some parts of the list are missing
- This list demonstrates the true canon as it was understood in the mid 2nd c.



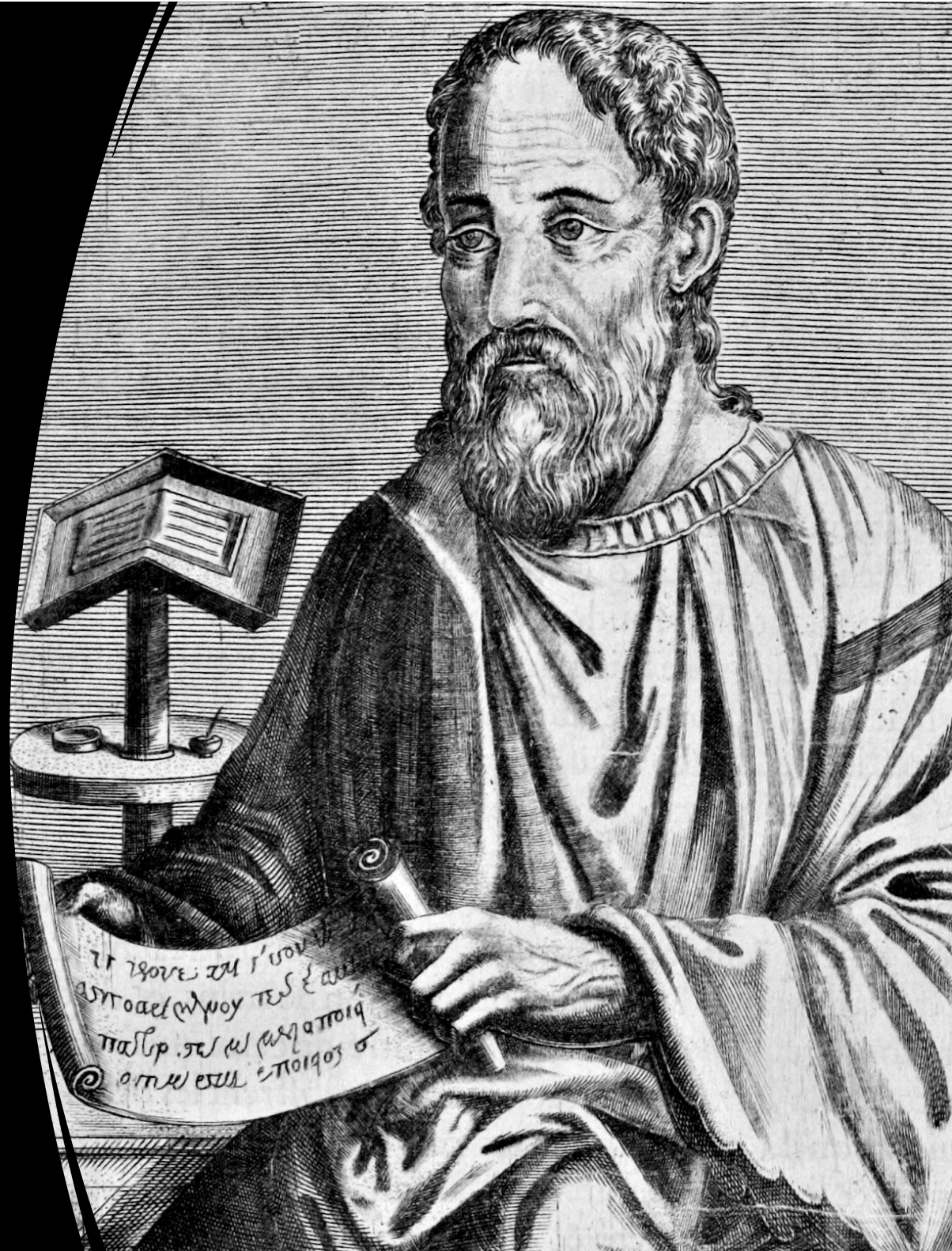
Muratorian Fragment (c. 180 AD)

- Identifies four true gospels and Acts, mentioning Luke and John by name.
- Accepts 13 letters of Paul
 - Hebrews is not mentioned
 - Calls spurious two letters claimed to be Pauline
- Accepts Jude and the Epistles of John
 - Doesn't mention James or 2 letters of Peter
- Accepts Revelation



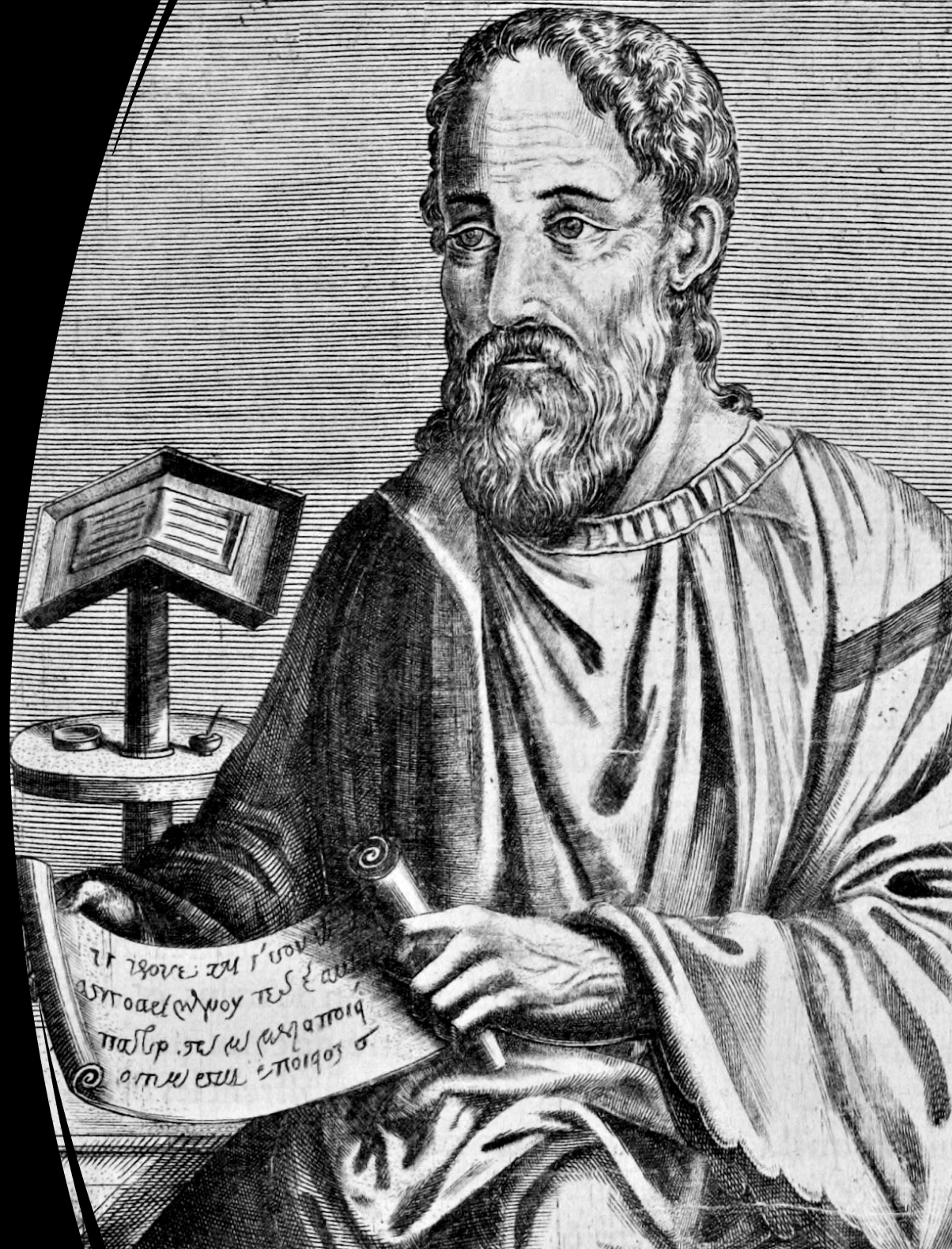
Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 325 AD)

- Wrote the first comprehensive history of the Church from Christ through around 325 AD.
 - Ecclesiastical History
- Identified four categories in the Church's recognition of the canon (EH 3:25)
 - Recognized
 - Disputed
 - Spurious
 - Heretical



Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 325 AD)

- Recognized
 - Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), Acts, 14 Letters of Paul, 1 John, 1 Peter, (Revelation)
- Disputed
 - James, Jude, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John
- Spurious
 - Good writings that are not canonical
- Heretical
 - Gospel of Thomas, etc.
 - “Forgeries of Heretics!”



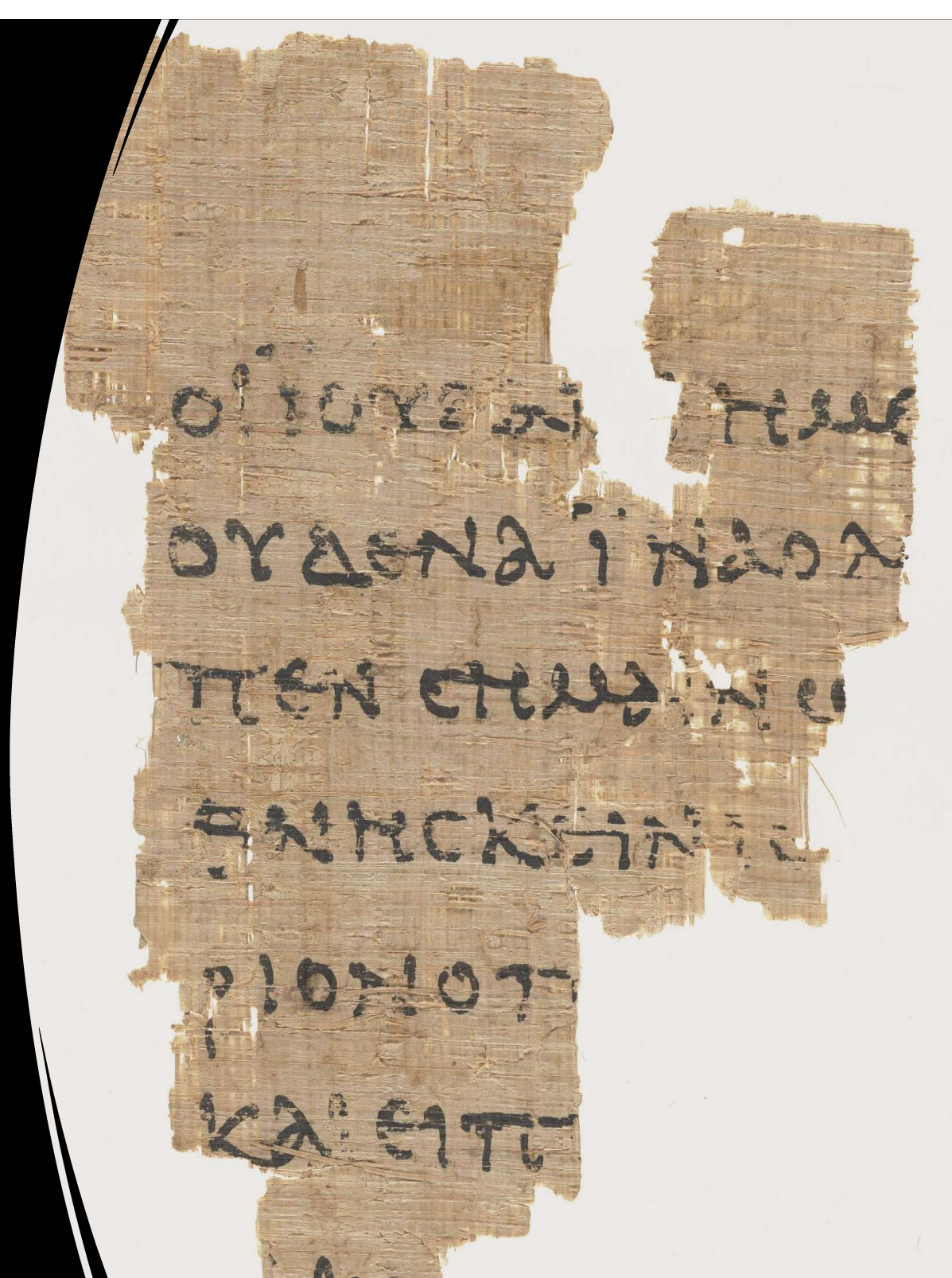
Early Manuscripts

- Eclectic Text
- The oldest known copies of the Bible
- Located in libraries throughout the world
- Oldest are papyrus scroll fragments (2nd-3rd c.)
- Next are Uncial Codices (4th c.)
- These MSS uniformly testify to the Bible we have today.



Second Century Papyri

- P⁷⁷, P⁹⁰, and P¹⁰³ 100 AD
- P⁵² 125 AD
- P⁹⁸ and P¹³⁷ 150 AD
- They contain fragments of Matthew, Mark, John, and Revelation.
- These are old enough that the copyists could have known the Apostles who originally wrote them or made their copies from the autographs!



The Oldest Papyri (100-300 AD)

- All four gospels
- Acts
- 13 Letters of Paul
 - No 2 Timothy
- 5 Catholic Epistles
 - No 2 or 3 John
- Revelation
- All told, 24 of the 27 NT books are represented.



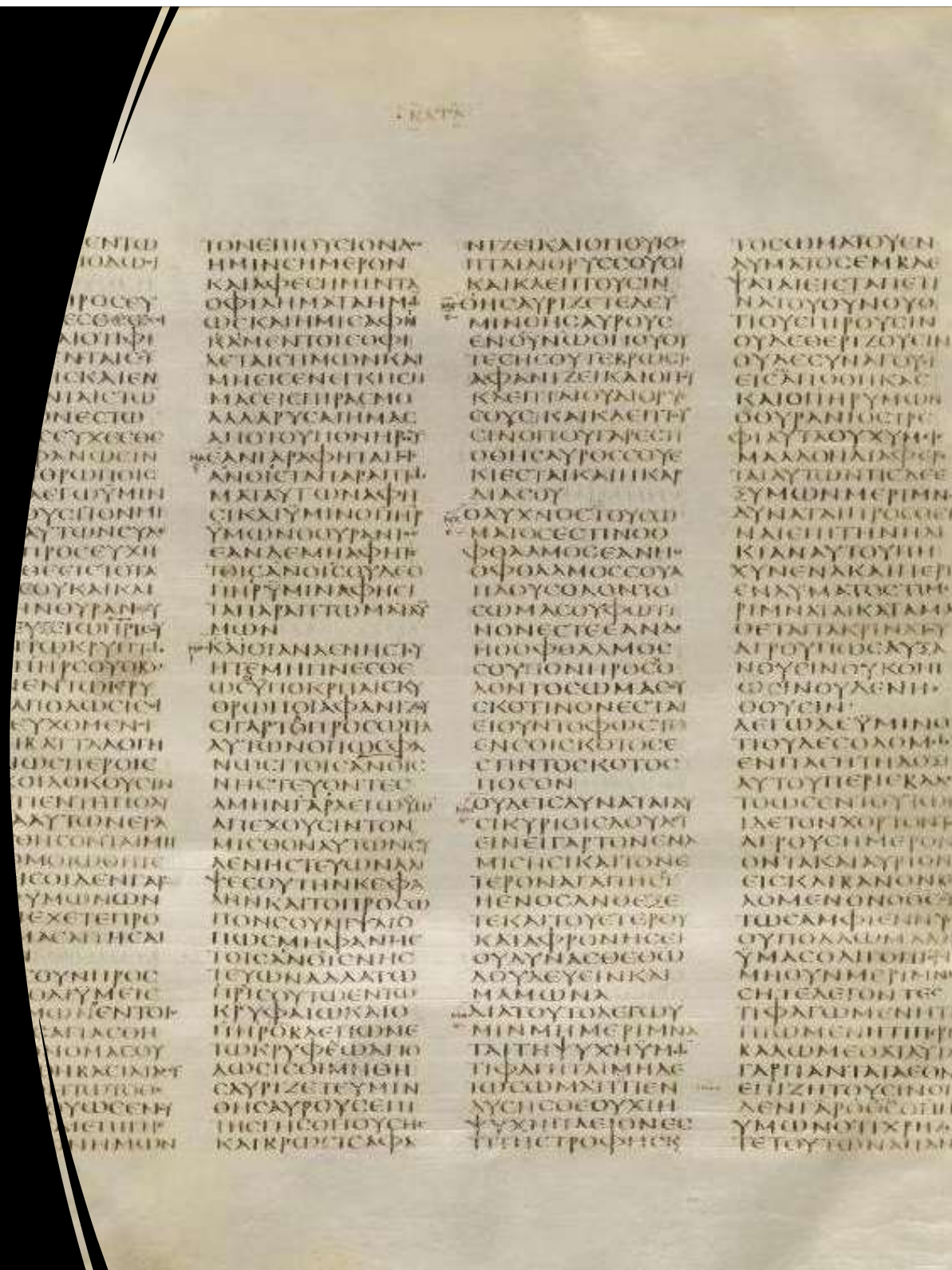
Uncial Codices

- Uncials are texts written in all caps
- A codex is a folded and bound book
- Instead of fragile papyrus, the codices are constructed with vellum (leather).
- We have four great bibles and two other gospel books that date from the 4th and 5th c.



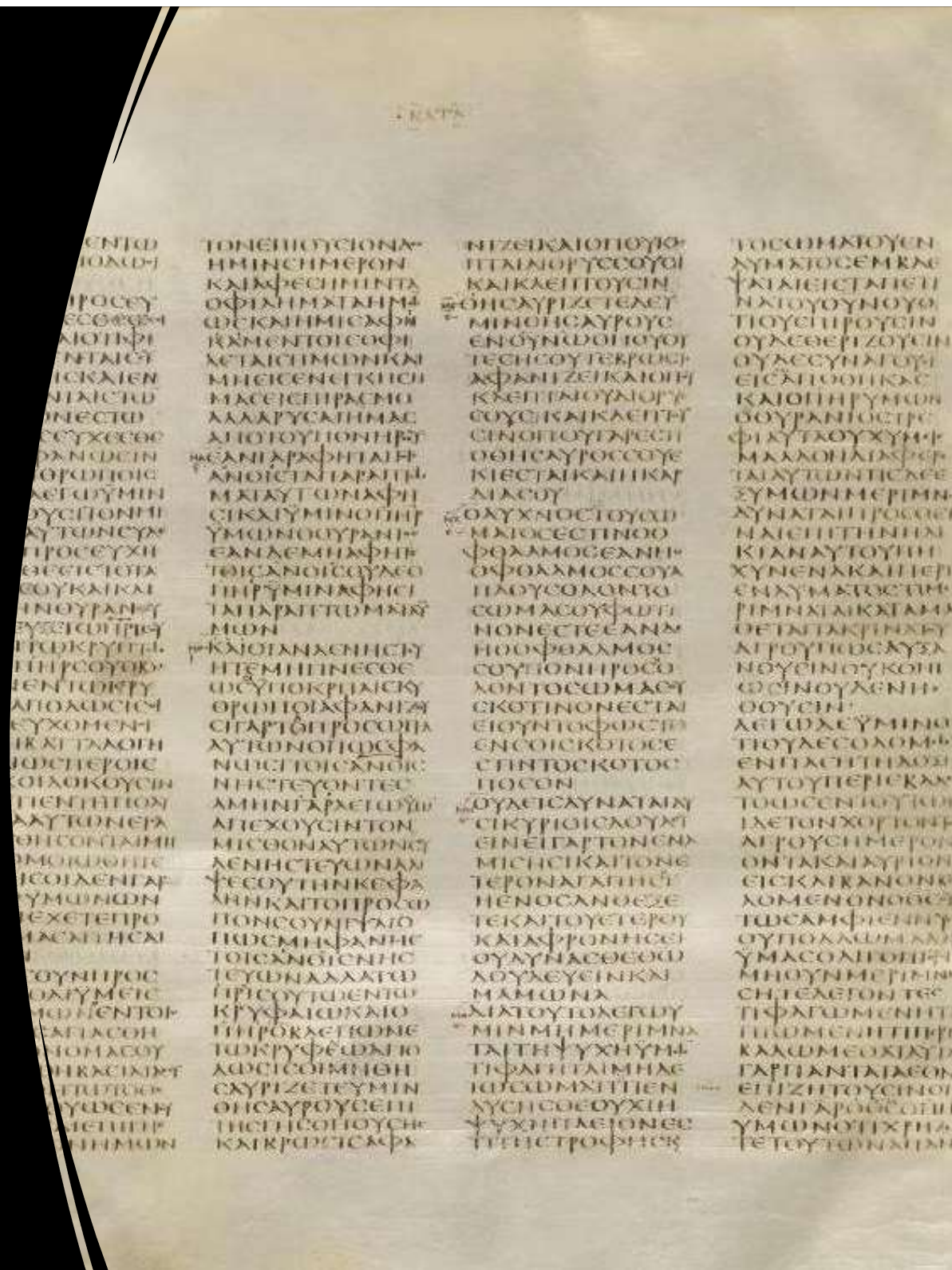
Uncial Codices

- Great Bibles that contain the entire NT (and most of the OT)
 - Sinaiticus 4th c.
 - Vaticanus 4th c.
 - Alexandrinus 5th c.
 - Ephremae 5th c.
- We have two 5th c. Gospel Books
 - Bezae and Washingtonianus
- These codices testify to the 27 book NT that we have today.



Athanasius's Easter Letter

- Written by St. Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 AD
- Contains a list of all 27 books of the NT.
- Lists the books of the apocrypha and states that they are good to read but are not canonical
- Effectively closes the book on the NT canon.



Council of Carthage, 419 AD

- Convened the bishops of North Africa
- St. Augustine was in attendance
- In canon 24 it states lists the 27 books of the New Testament
- The first and only council to articulate a canon until the 16th c.



Historical Consensus

- Muratorian Fragment (c. 180 AD)
- Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 325)
- Early Manuscripts (2nd-4th c.)
- Athanasius of Alexandria (367 A.D.)
- Council of Carthage (419 A.D.)
- The historical data paint a picture of unanimity on the contents of the canon.



NT Canonicity Summary

- The early church recognized the Spirit breathed Apostolic writings
- The testimony of the early church from the 1st-5th centuries confirms the Bible that you hold in your hand.
- No other texts were ever accepted.
- This is a remarkable and sure testimony to the reliability of text of Scripture!



The Apocrypha

- Deuterocanonical Books
- Apostolic Fathers
- Pseudepigrapha
- Legends



Deuterocanonical Books

- OT Apocrypha
- Historical books written during the intertestamental period
- Written in Greek and included in the Septuagint.
- Not heretical, but not inspired scripture



Deuterocanonical Books

- Tobit
- Judith
- Baruch
- Sirach
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- Wisdom (Solomon)
- Additions to Esther, Daniel, and Jeremiah



Apostolic Fathers

- Historical books written after the NT Period
- Not canonical, but good to read
- Were included in some Bibles
- Didache, Shepherd, Barnabas, 1 and 2 Clement



Pseudepigrapha

- Heretical forgeries (EH 3:25)
- No where considered as scripture or as helpful to the church
- Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Jude, etc.
- Written much later than the NT or the Apostolic Fathers



Legends

- Nonhistorical stories about Jesus
- Not based on any facts



