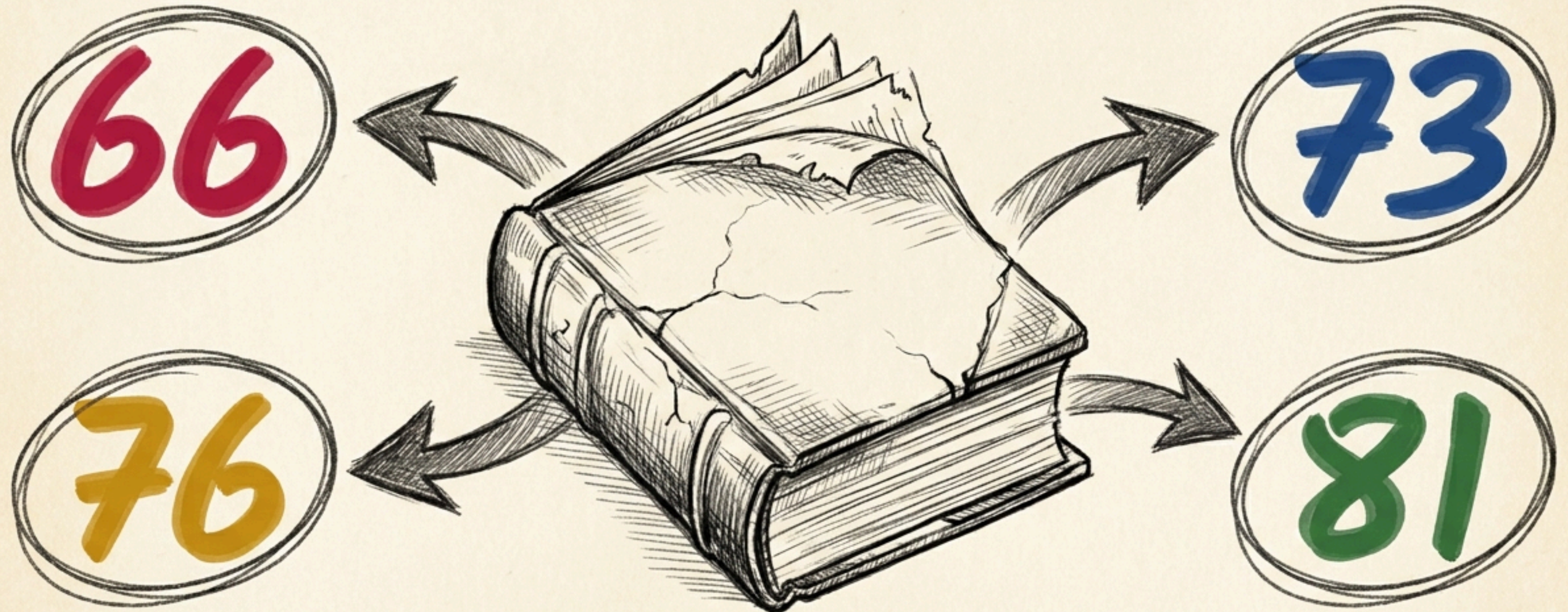


The Tale of Four Bibles

Why the Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Ethiopian traditions don't read the same book.



Across the world right now, four major Christian traditions are reading four different Bibles.

'Biblia' – A Greek word. It doesn't mean 'book.' It means 'books' (plural). A library written by dozens of authors over 1,000+ years.



Protestant
66 Books

Catholic
73 Books

Eastern Orthodox
76-79 Books

Ethiopian
81 Books

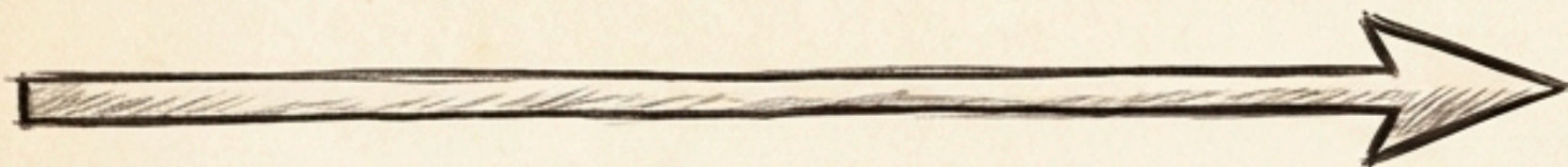
The Measuring Rod

Deciding which texts belonged in the collection is called canonization, from the Greek word *kanon*, meaning a measuring rod or rule.

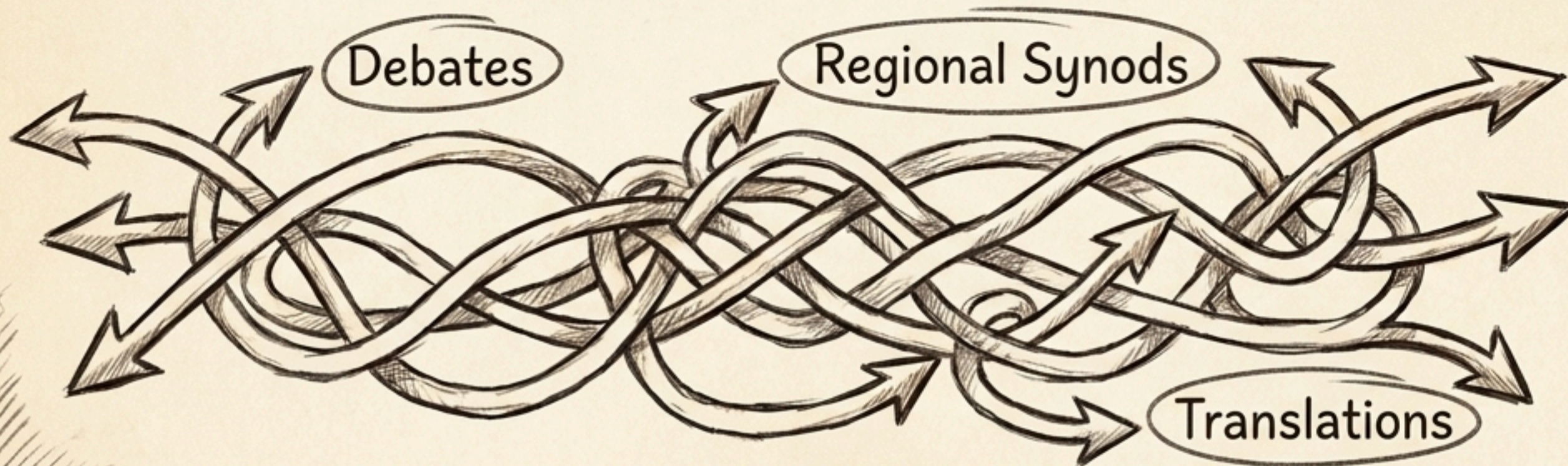


There was no single pope, no single council, and no single moment where every Christian agreed on a list. It was a messy, political, centuries-long process across different geographies.

The Nicaea Myth



325 AD: Council of Nicaea



Fact #1: Popularized by fiction, many believe the Council of Nicaea decided the biblical canon. In reality, Nicaea was called to settle debates about the nature of Jesus Christ—not to pick the books of the Bible.

The Protestant Bible (66 Books)

95 Theses,
October 1517,
Wittenberg



Input: Latin traditions
& Catholic practices
(Indulgences).

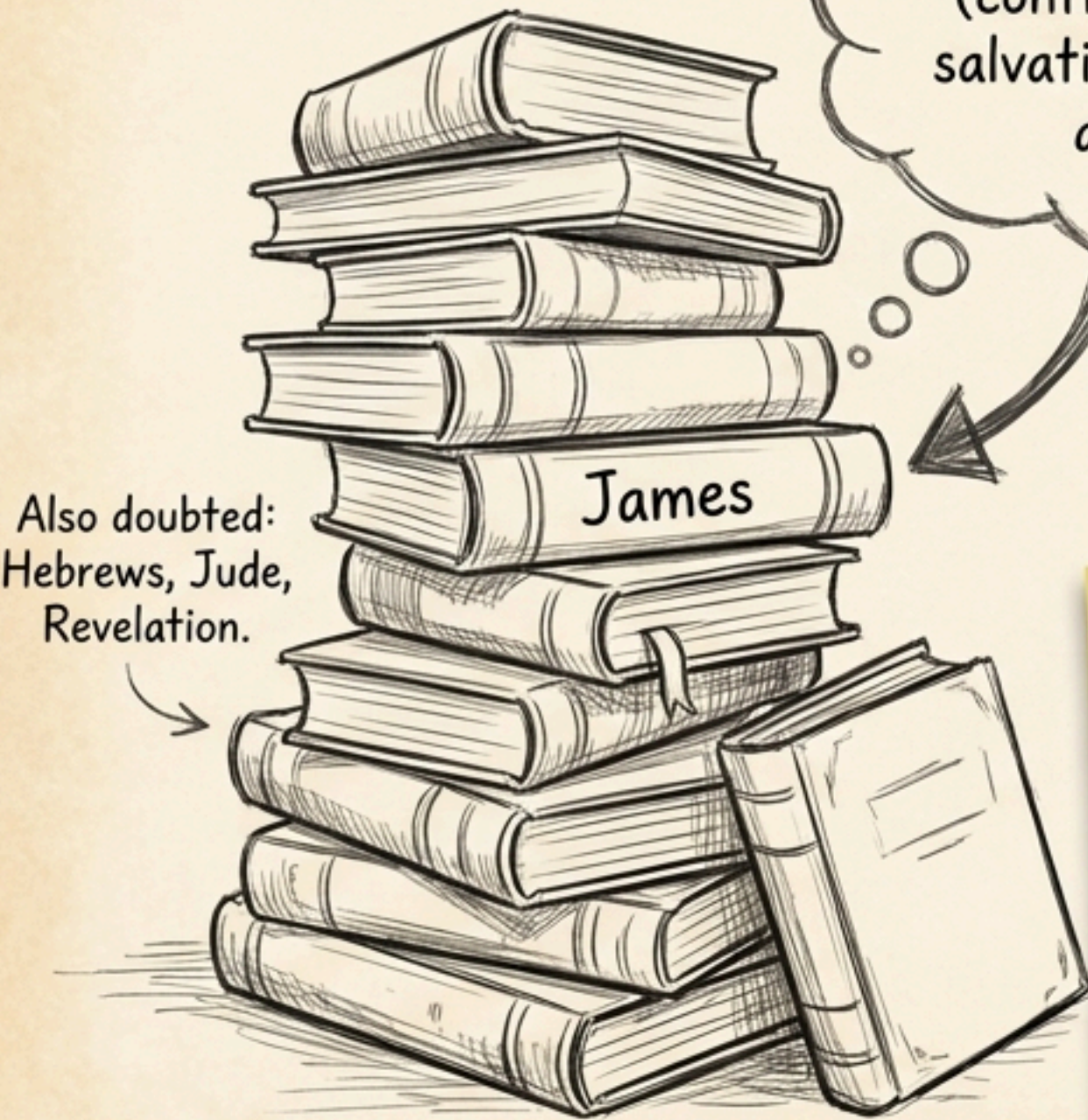
The Filter: Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone).
Luther rejected papal authority, turning back to
Hebrew texts recognized by Jewish scholars.

Output: 39 Old Testament + 27 New Testament
= 66 Books

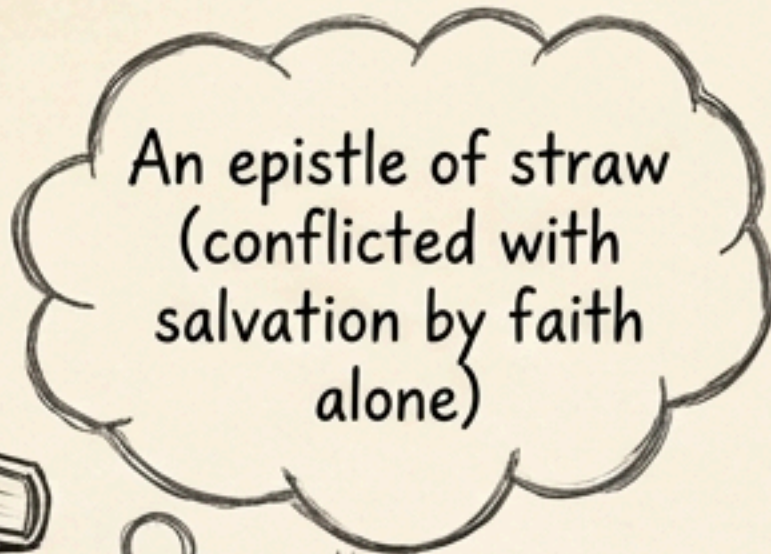
Used by Baptists, Anglicans, Lutherans,
Methodists, Presbyterians, and Evangelicals.

Luther and the Printing Press

The Apocrypha



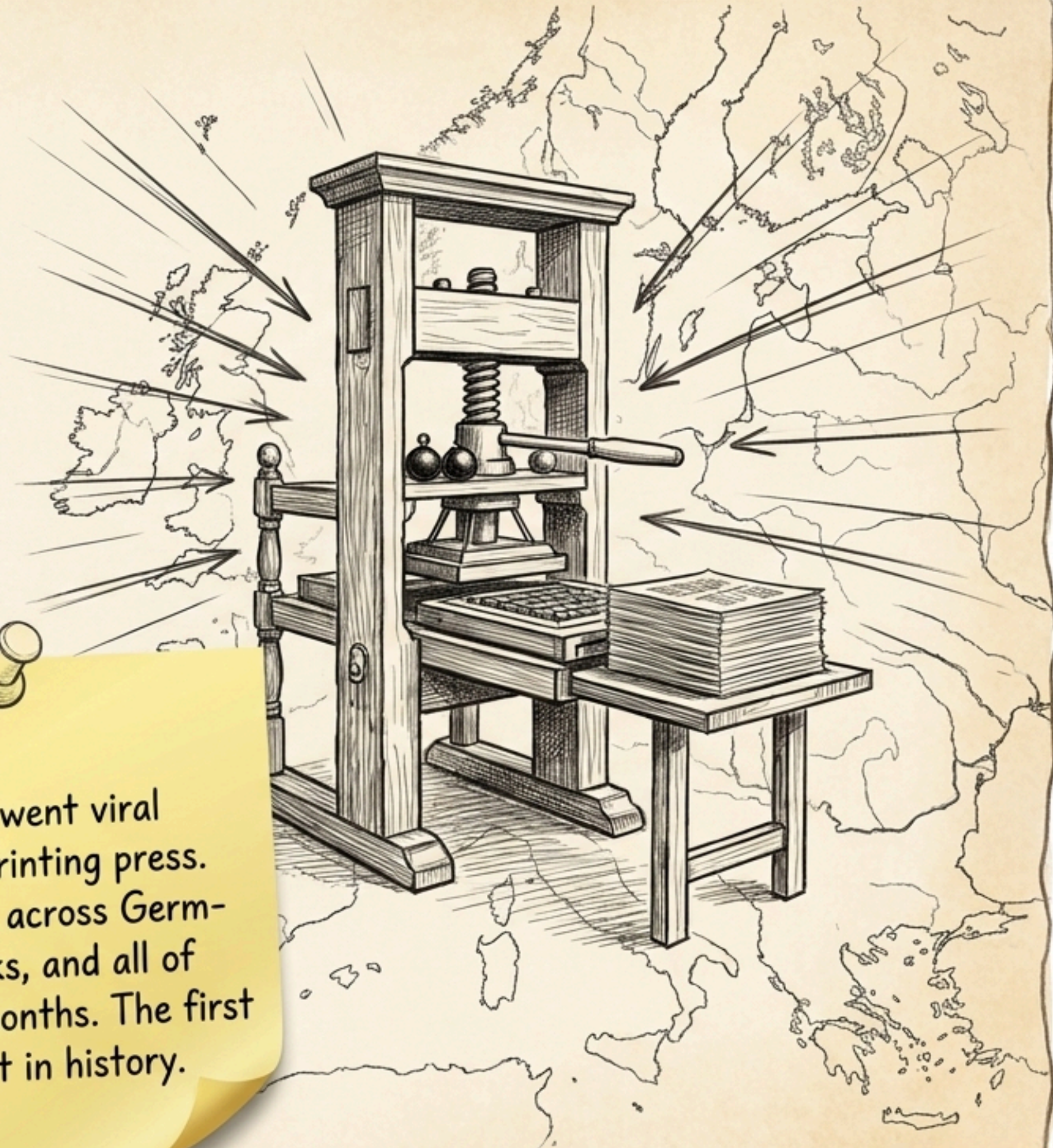
Also doubted:
Hebrews, Jude,
Revelation.



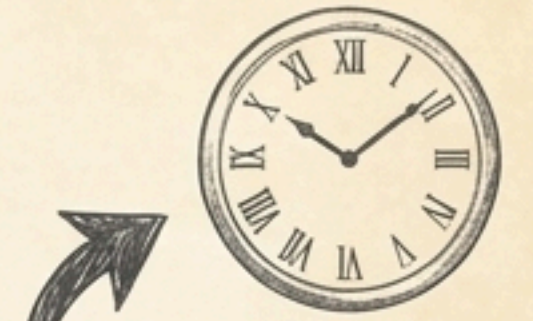
An epistle of straw
(conflicted with
salvation by faith
alone)

Fact #2:

Luther's protest went viral because of the printing press. His ideas spread across Germany in two weeks, and all of Europe in two months. The first viral media event in history.



The Catholic Bible (73 Books)



Rewind to
382 AD

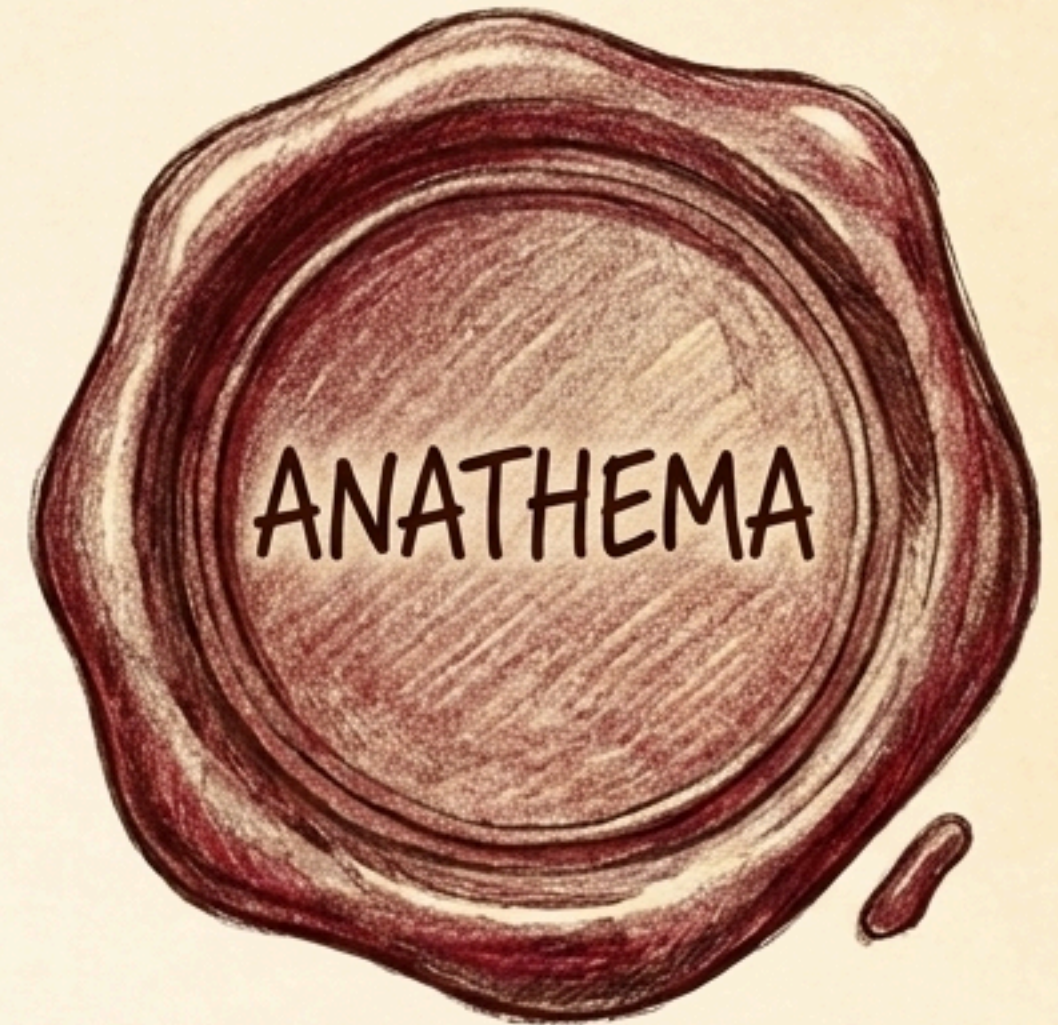
For the first four centuries, there was no single agreed list. In 382 AD, Pope Damasus commissioned Jerome, a brilliant scholar who moved to a cave in Bethlehem for 30 years to learn Hebrew and translate the texts.

The result was the Vulgate—from the Latin word for “common”—the Common People’s Bible.



Deuterocanonical
(Second Canon)

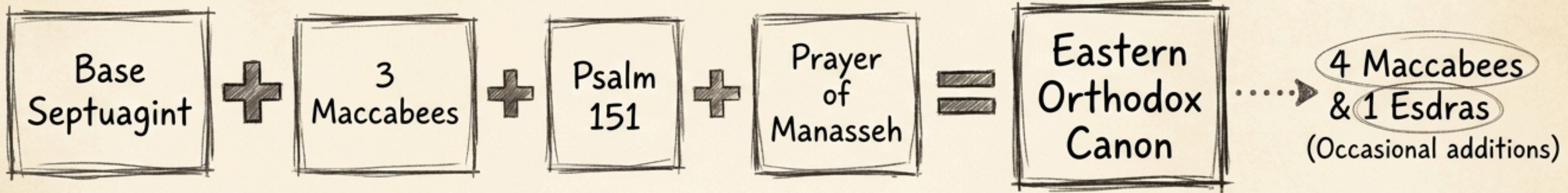
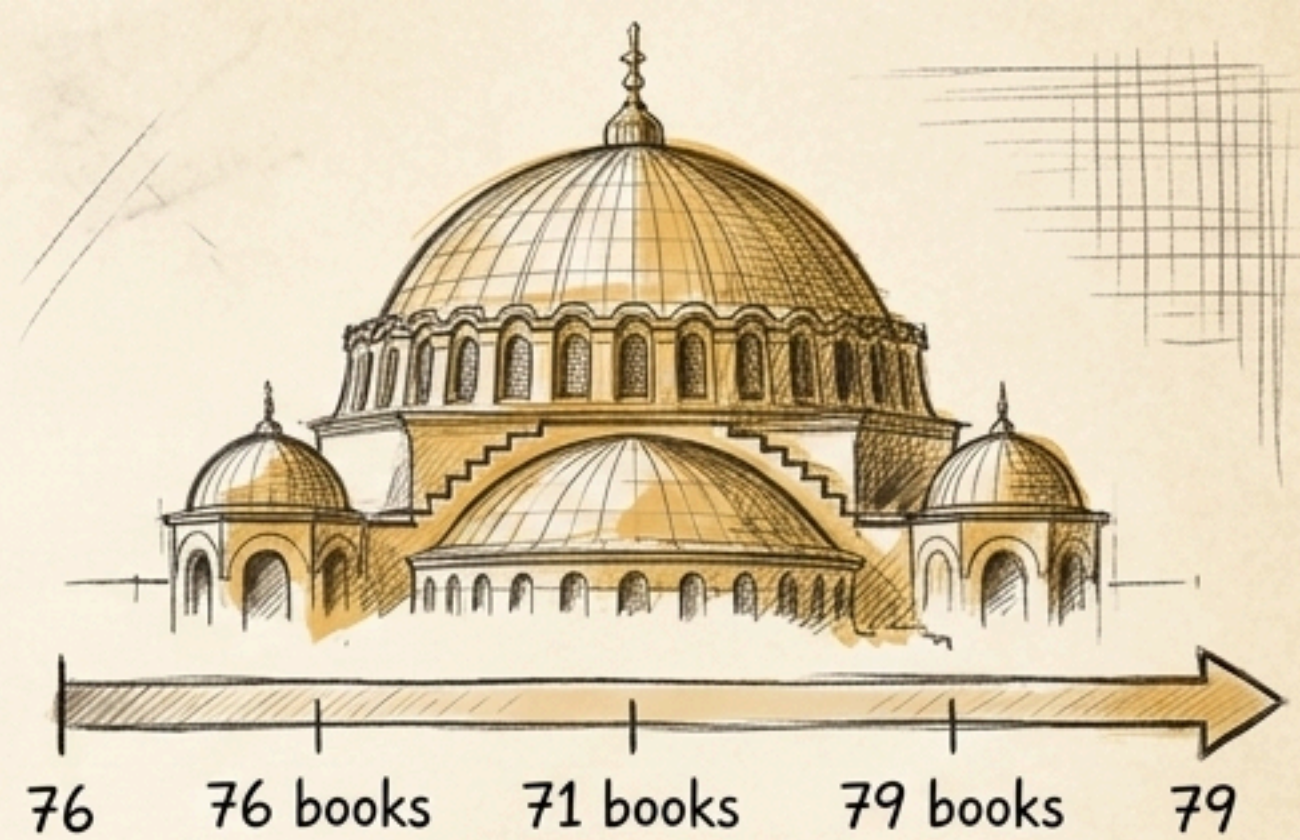
Fact #3: The original 1611 King James Bible included these extra books! It wasn't until 1826 that the British and Foreign Bible Society stopped funding their printing, making the 66-book version the Protestant standard.



The Council of Trent (1545–1563) met to respond to Luther. It declared these 73 books formally canonical.

Anyone who disagreed was anathema (cut off from the church).

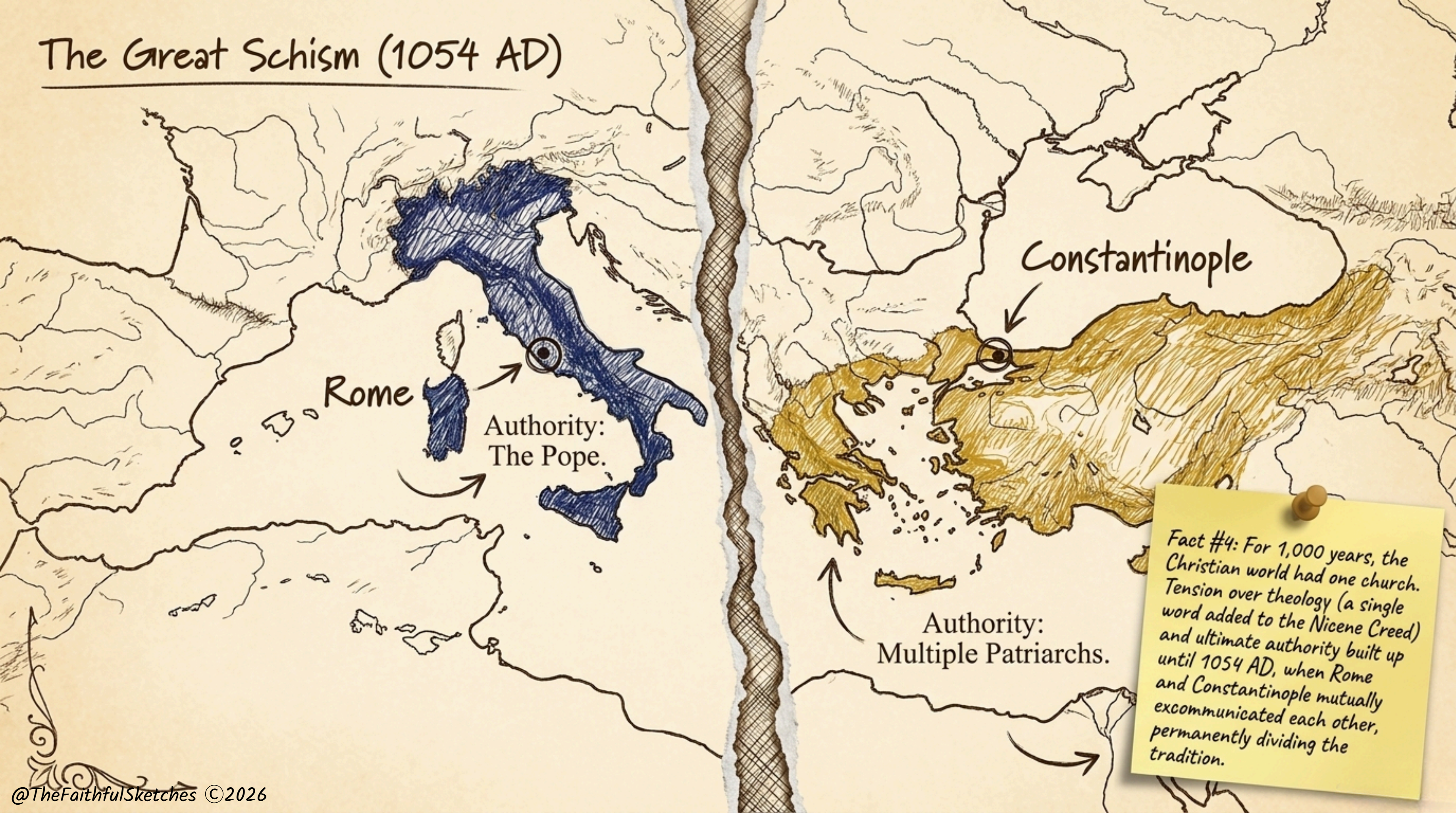
The Eastern Orthodox Bible (76-79 Books)



Used by 300 million people globally.
Unlike Trent, there was no single defining moment.
The Quinisext Council (692 AD) affirmed the texts,
but variation between regions remains.

This flexibility is a feature, not a bug.
It reflects the Orthodox belief that
the church is a living community,
not a top-down institution.

The Great Schism (1054 AD)



Rome

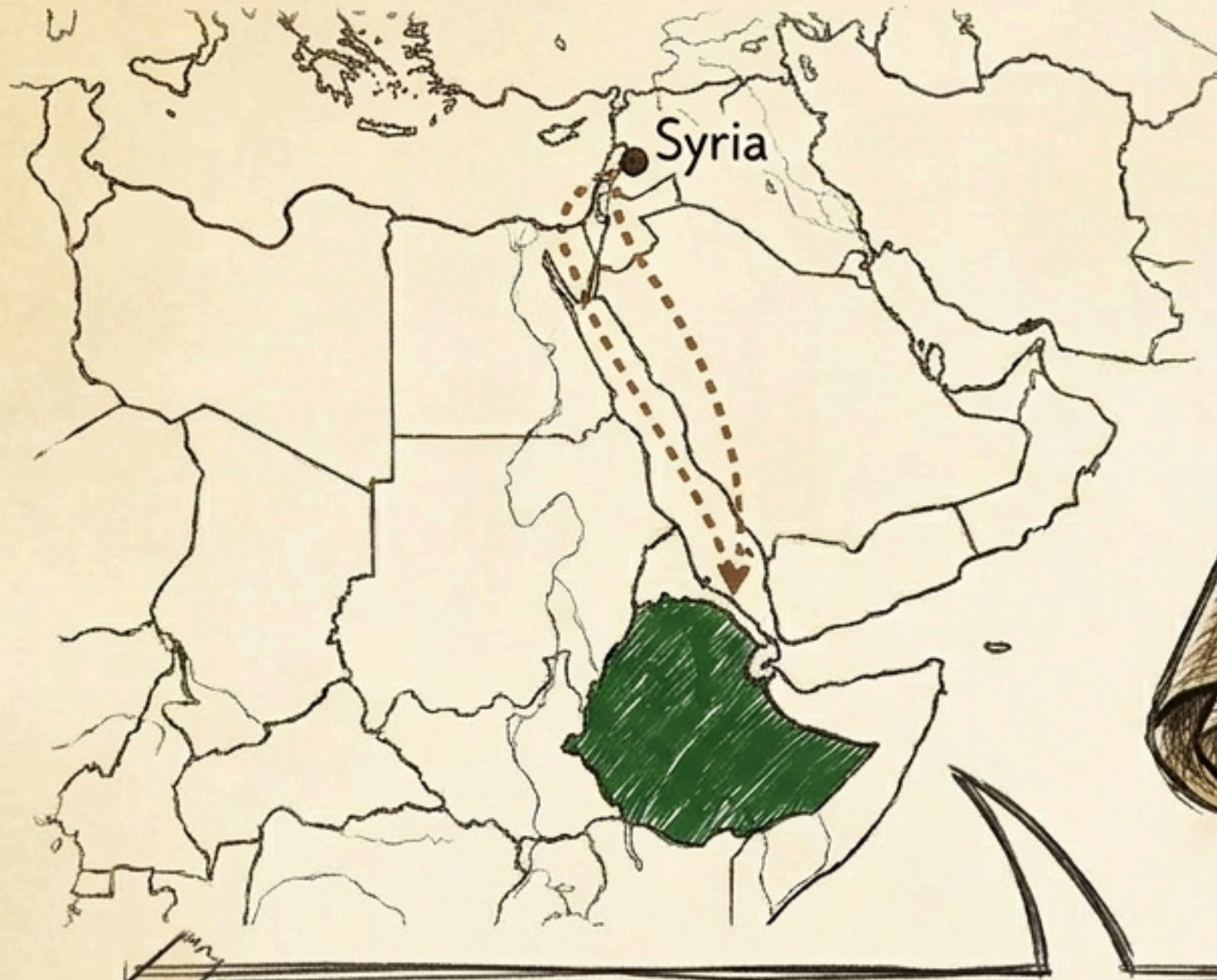
Authority:
The Pope.

Constantinople

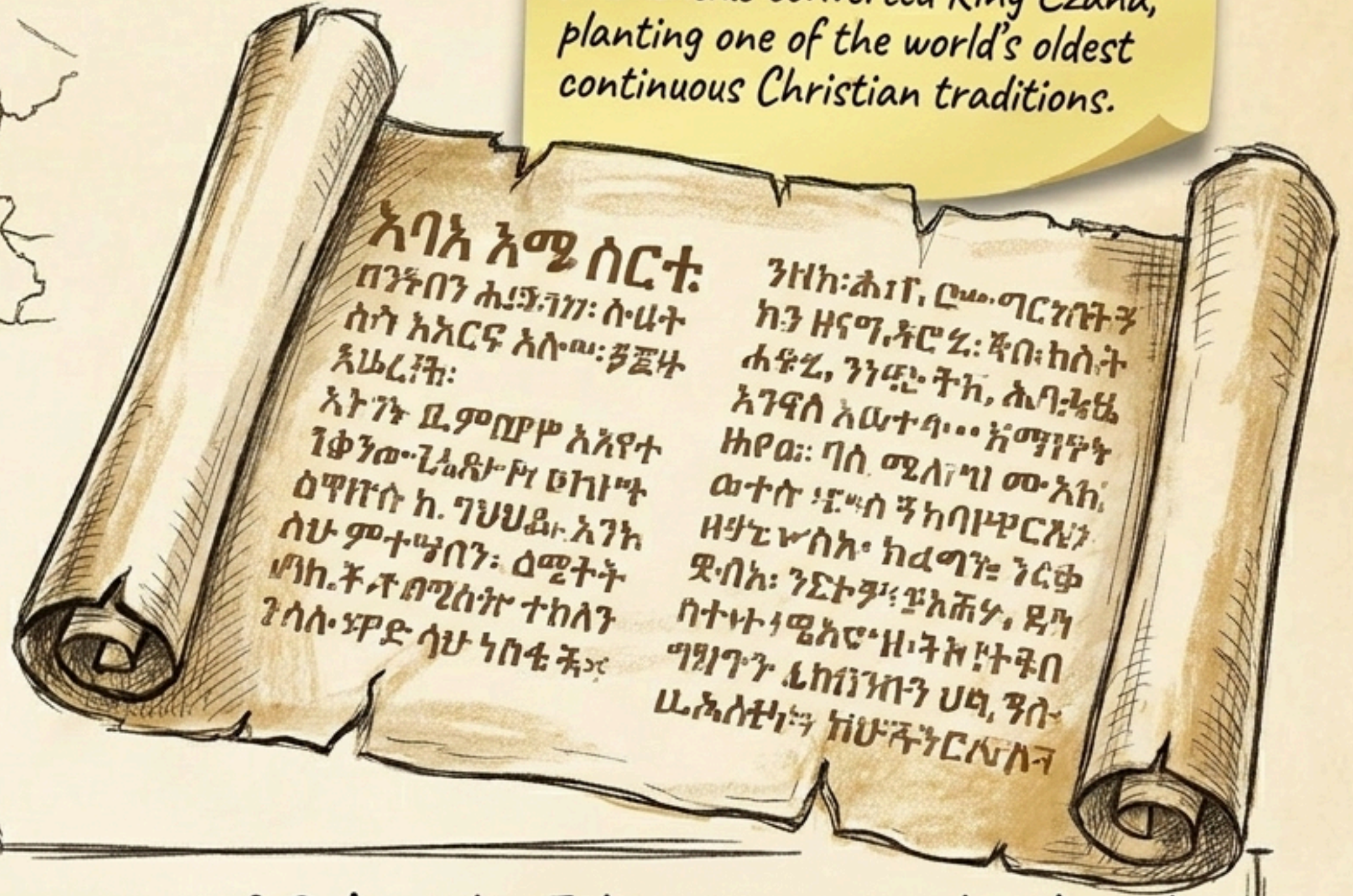
Authority:
Multiple Patriarchs.

Fact #4: For 1,000 years, the Christian world had one church. Tension over theology (a single word added to the Nicene Creed) and ultimate authority built up until 1054 AD, when Rome and Constantinople mutually excommunicated each other, permanently dividing the tradition.

The Ethiopian Bible (81 Books)

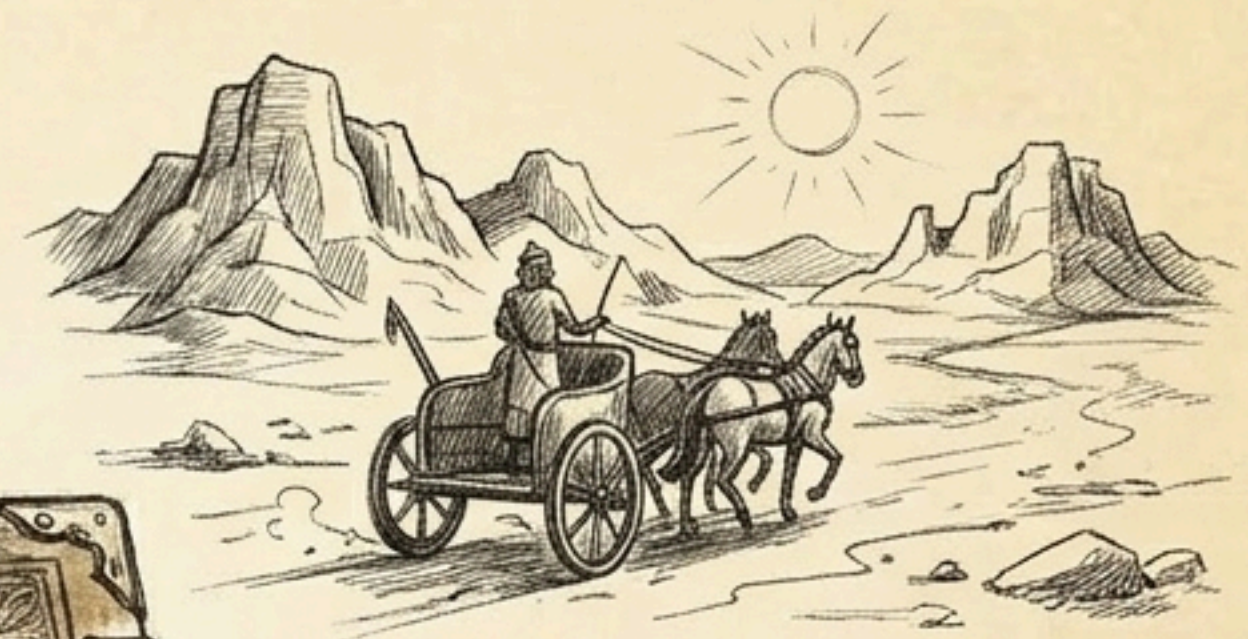
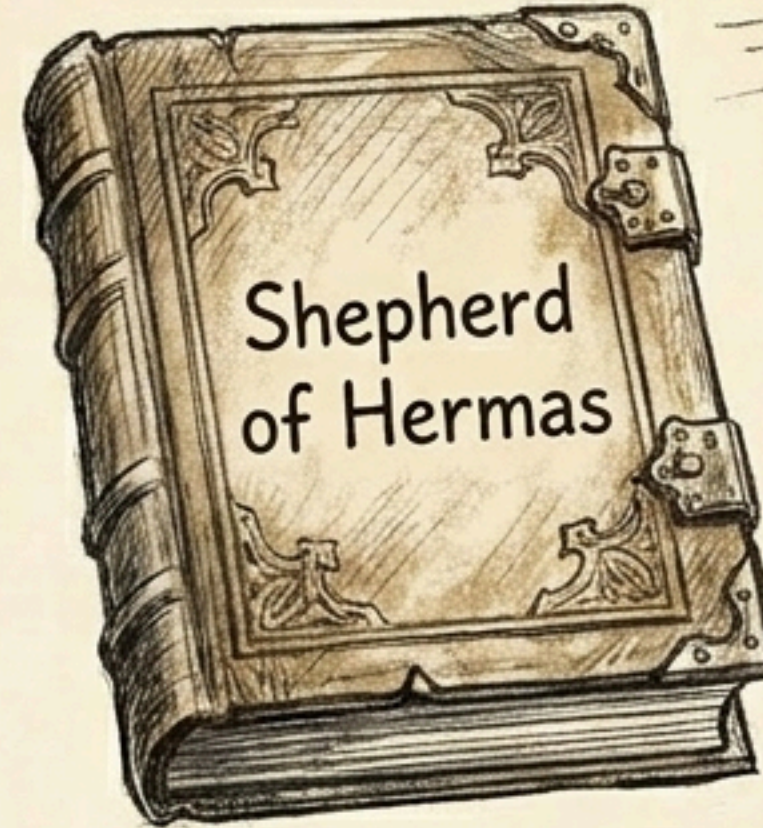
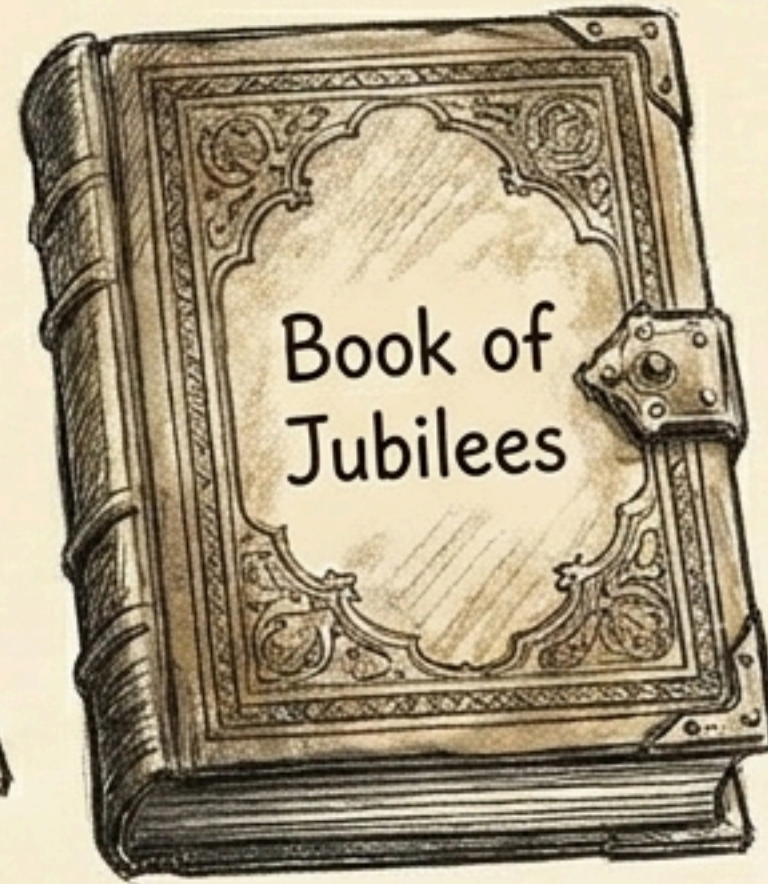
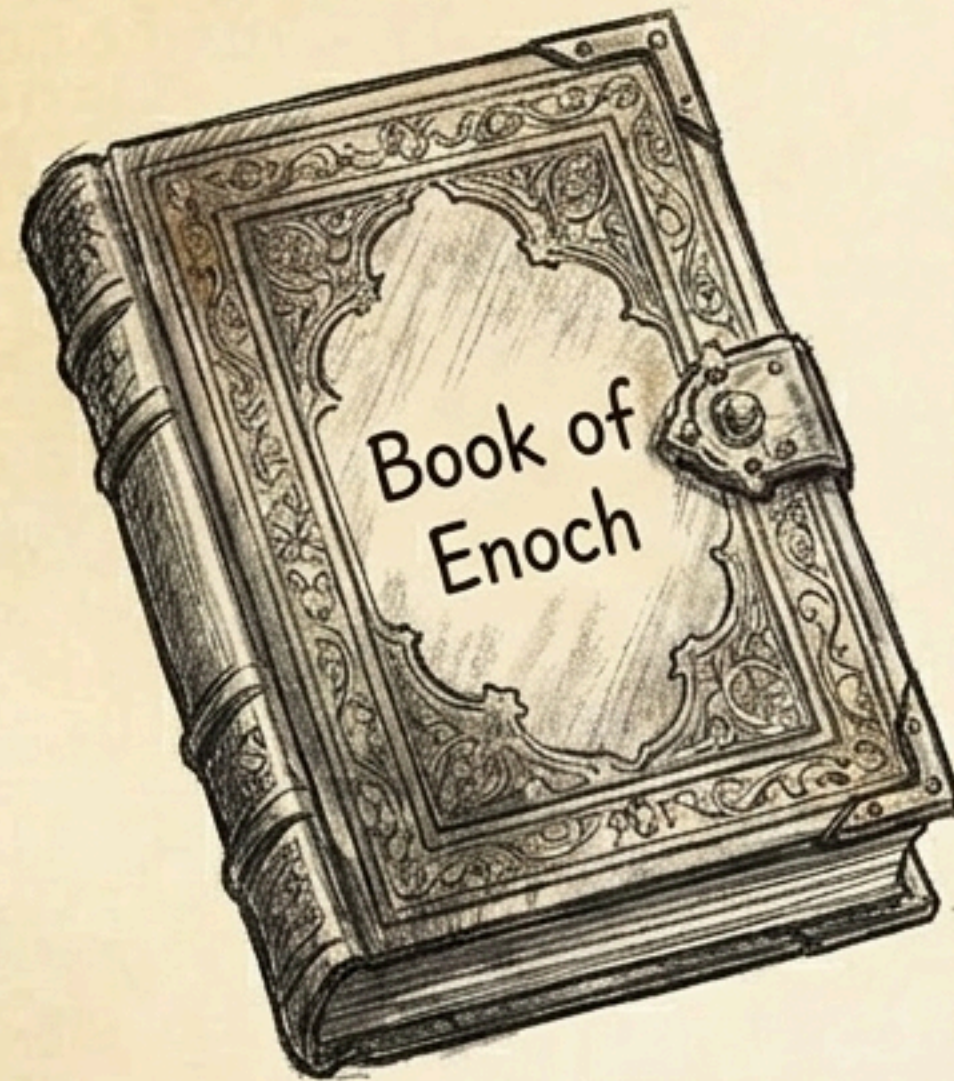


In 330 AD, a Syrian scholar named Frumentius converted King Ezana, planting one of the world's oldest continuous Christian traditions.



Preserved in the ancient Semitic language of Ge'ez, the Ethiopian canon developed in geographic isolation. Uninfluenced by the political disputes of Rome and Constantinople, Ethiopian scholars assembled the largest Bible on earth.

The Lost Books of Ethiopia



Not footnotes.
Not apocryphal legends.
Considered sacred,
authoritative word of God.



Fact #5: The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church traces its roots even further back to Acts 8. Philip the Apostle baptized an Ethiopian royal treasurer, meaning Ethiopia had a Christian convert before most of Europe had ever heard the name of Jesus.

The Master Ledger

	Total Books	Old Testament Count	Foundational Moment / Text	Defining Characteristic
Protestant	66	39	Luther / 1517	Sola Scriptura (Hebrew Base)
Catholic	73	46	Council of Trent / 1545	Included the Deuterocanonicals
Eastern Orthodox	76-79	49-52	Quinisext Council 692	Living Community (Septuagint Base)
Ethiopian	81	46*	King Ezana 330 AD	Geographic Isolation (Ge'ez Texts)

*Note: exact OT/NT split varies in classification, focus on the 81 total.

The Shared Core



Gospels, Paul's Letters, Acts, Revelation. 100% agreement across all four traditions.

The Root of the Divergence



Fact #6:

In the 3rd century BC, 72 Jewish scholars in Greek-speaking Alexandria translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, creating the Septuagint. It included extra books. Because many early Christians and Apostles spoke Greek, they used the Septuagint.

Every difference in these Bibles traces back to this ancient tension: Should Christians use the Hebrew texts from Palestine, or the expanded Greek texts from Alexandria? Each of these 4 Bibles tells us exactly how our ancestors answered that question.