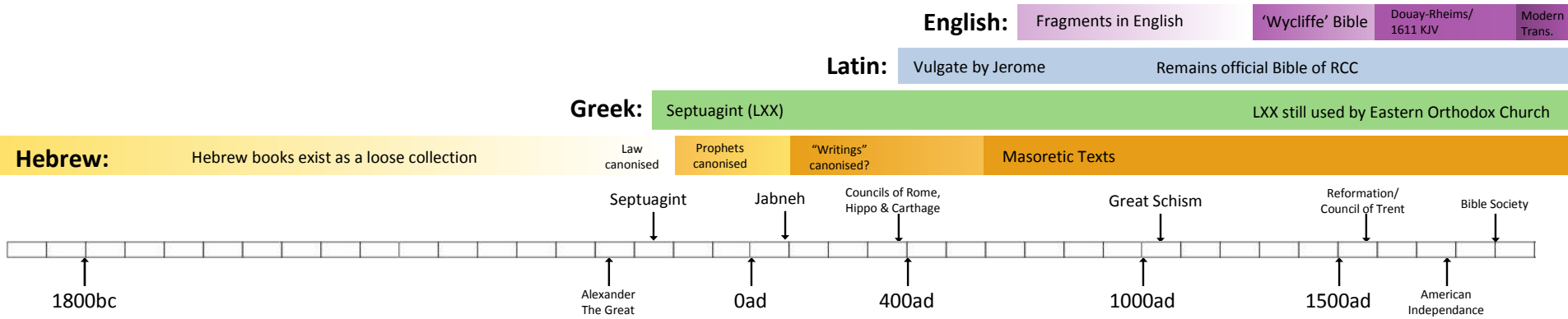


# How we got the Bible Canon



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- “Canon” – from the Greek *Kanon* meaning a “measuring rod”.
- a fundamental principle or general rule
  - an ecclesiastical rule or law enacted by a council or other competent authority
  - the books of the Bible recognized by any Christian church as genuine and inspired
  - the works of an author that have been accepted as authentic: *eg, there are 37 plays in the Shakespeare canon.*
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- Most modern bibles have 66 books in the canon
- It is generally known that the Catholic Church recognises 73 books, with the extra 7 books belonging to the Old Testament

# How the OT canon came about

**Hebrew:**



**Torah** (“The Law”)

**Nevi'im** (“The Prophets”)

**Ketuvim** (“The Writings”)

Torah (“The Law”)	Nevi'im (“The Prophets”)	Ketuvim (“The Writings”)

# How the OT canon came about

## Hebrew:

Hebrew books exist as a loose collection



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**Nevi'im** (“The Prophets”)

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*Undefined*

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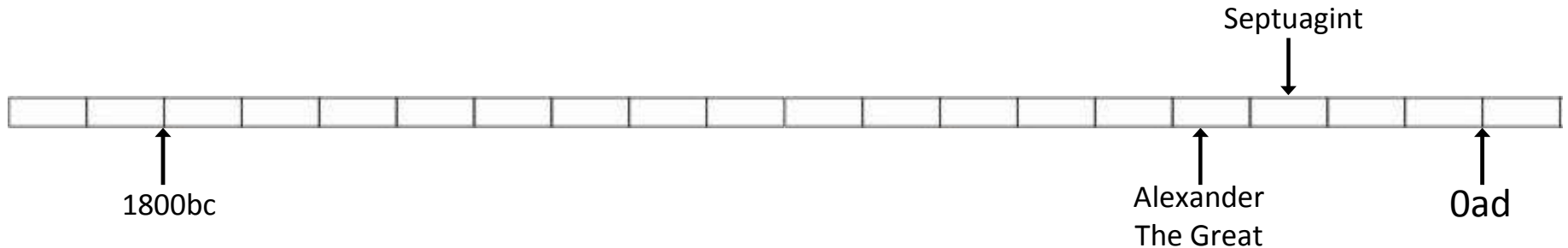
# Solidifying the Scriptures

## Hebrew:

Hebrew books exist as a loose collection

Law  
canonised

Prophets  
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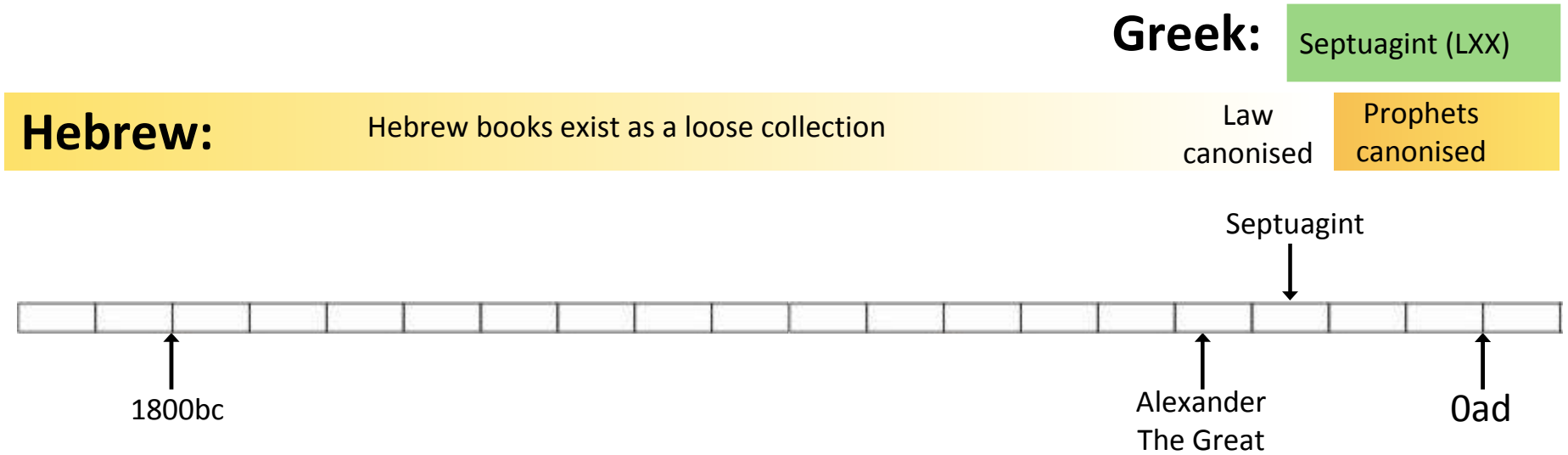
Defined by 400bc

Defined by 50bc

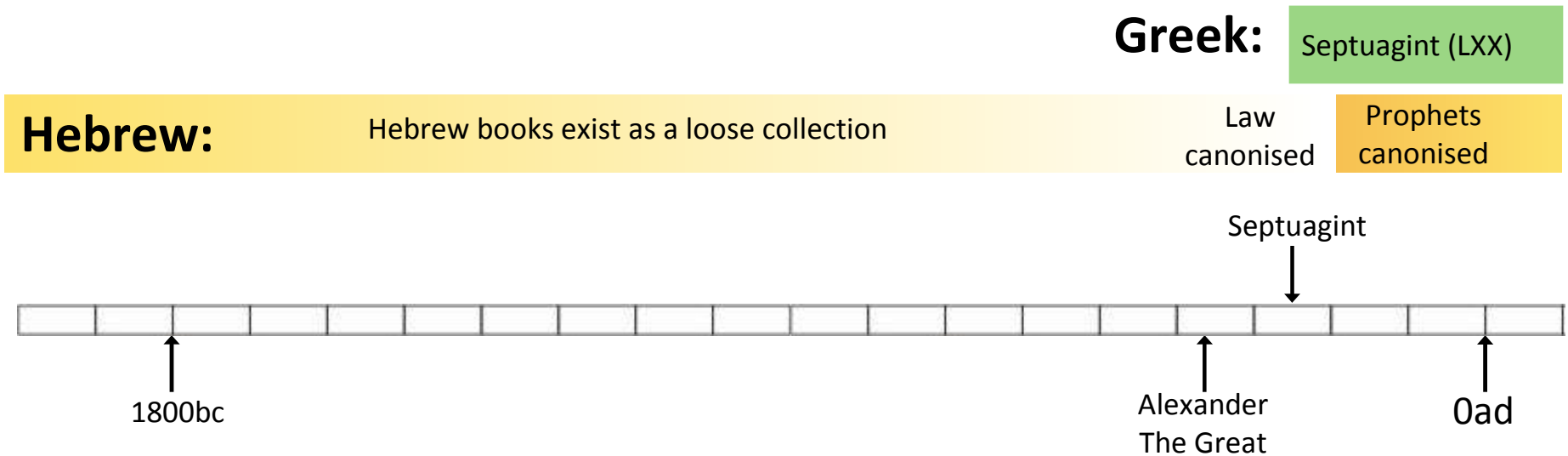
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Contains the 5  
books of Moses

# The first Greek scriptures



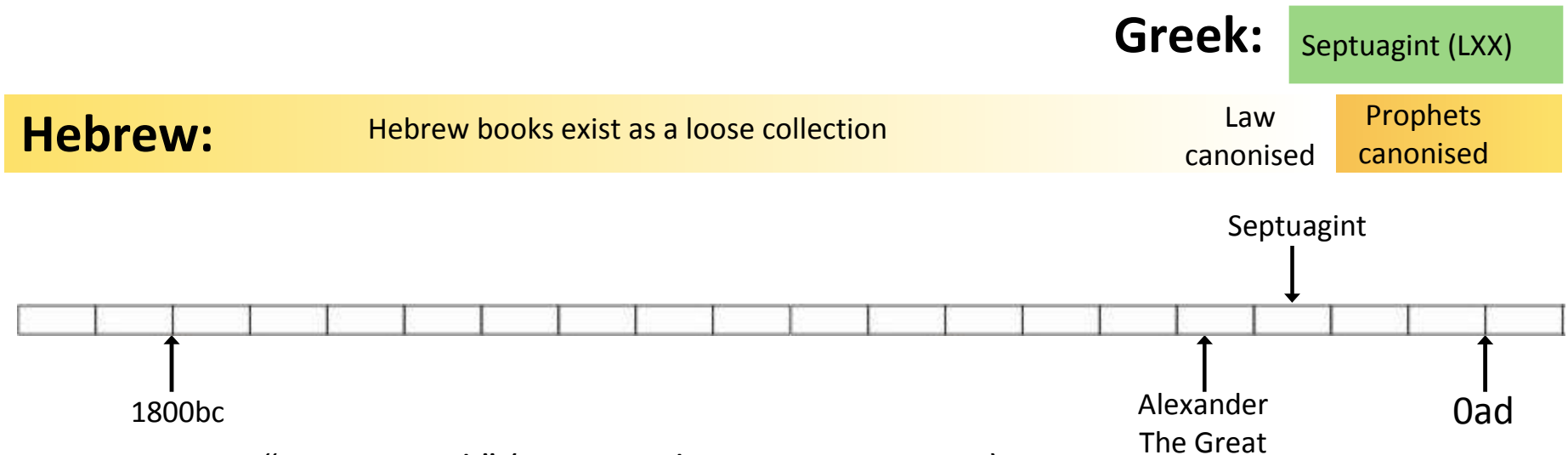
# The first Greek scriptures



## The Septuagint (Gk: "Seventy")

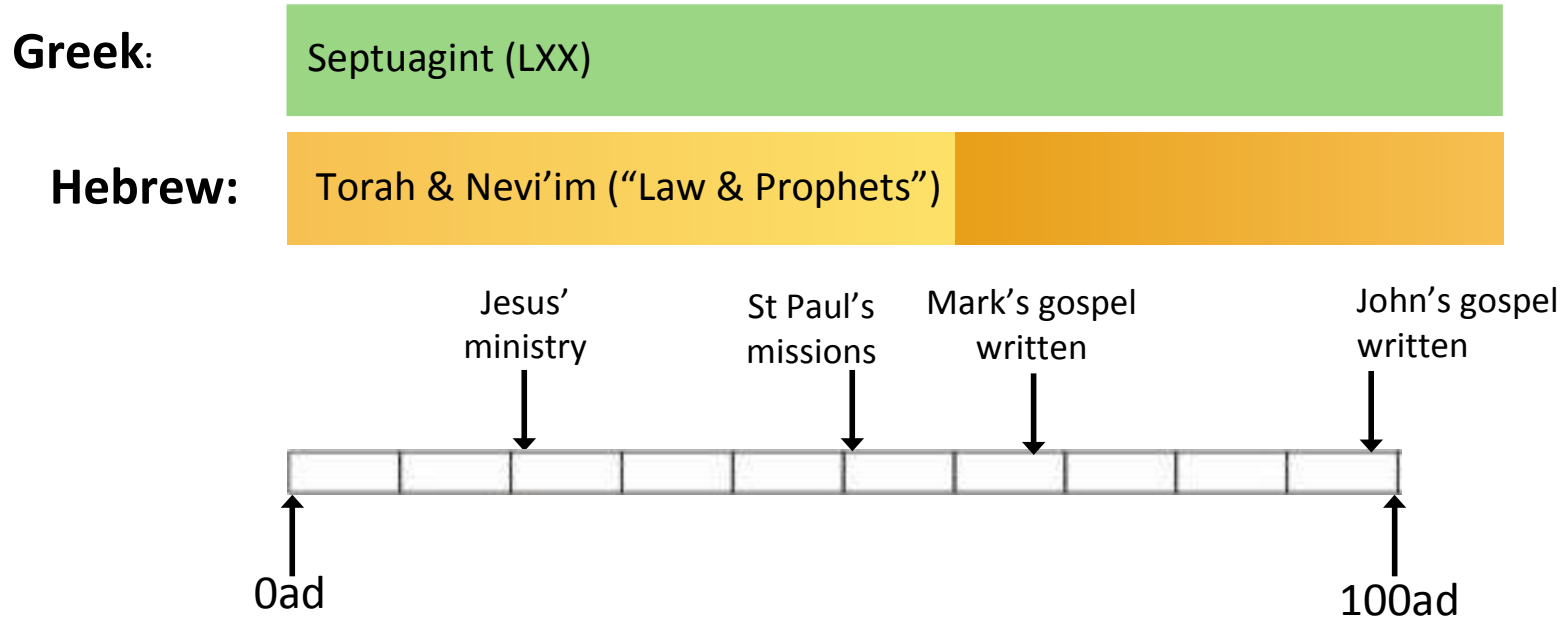
*'King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Write for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did' - Tractate Megillah 9, from the Talmud*

# The first Greek scriptures



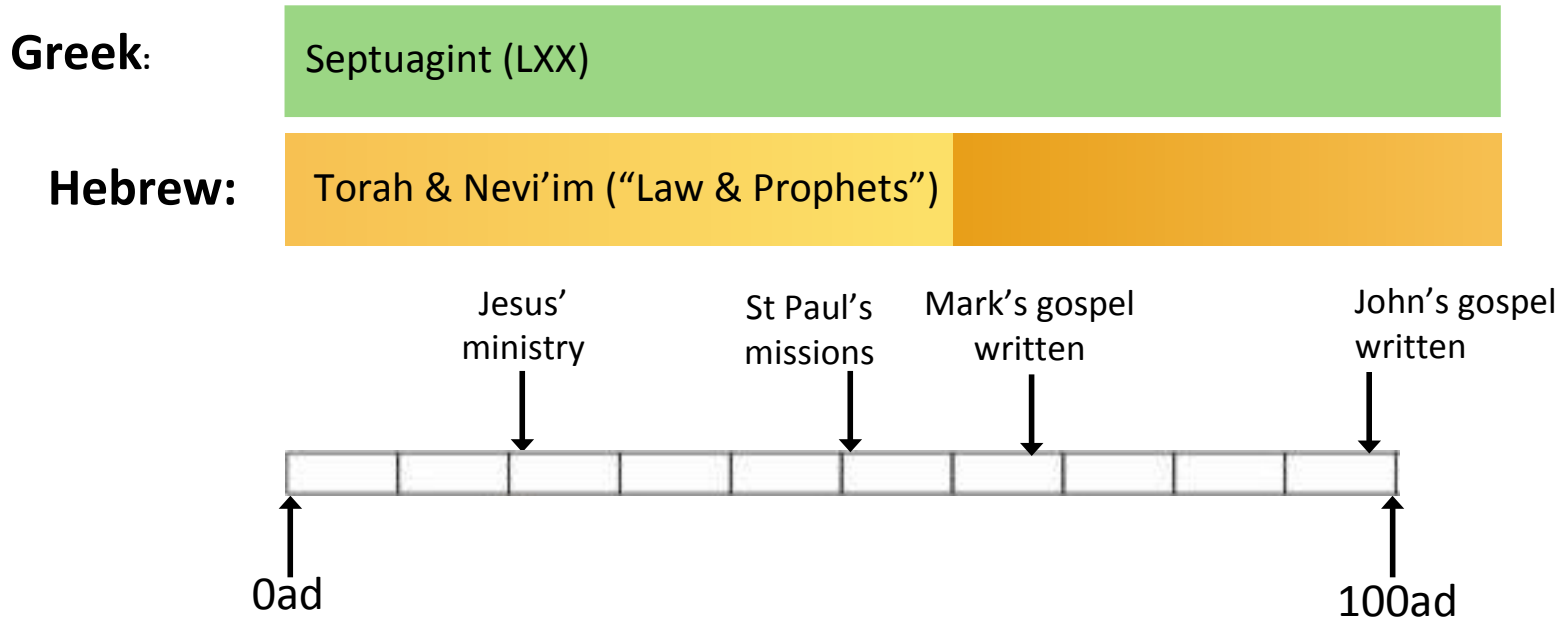
- Written in “Koine Greek” (same as the New Testament)
- Used throughout the Greek speaking Jewish ‘diaspora’ (“dispersion”)
- Well regarded by the Jews, even considered divinely inspired by some
- Came to include books which would not later be included in the Hebrew “writings”
- Sometimes denoted in literature as “LXX”, which is the Roman numeral for “seventy”

# The Septuagint and the Church



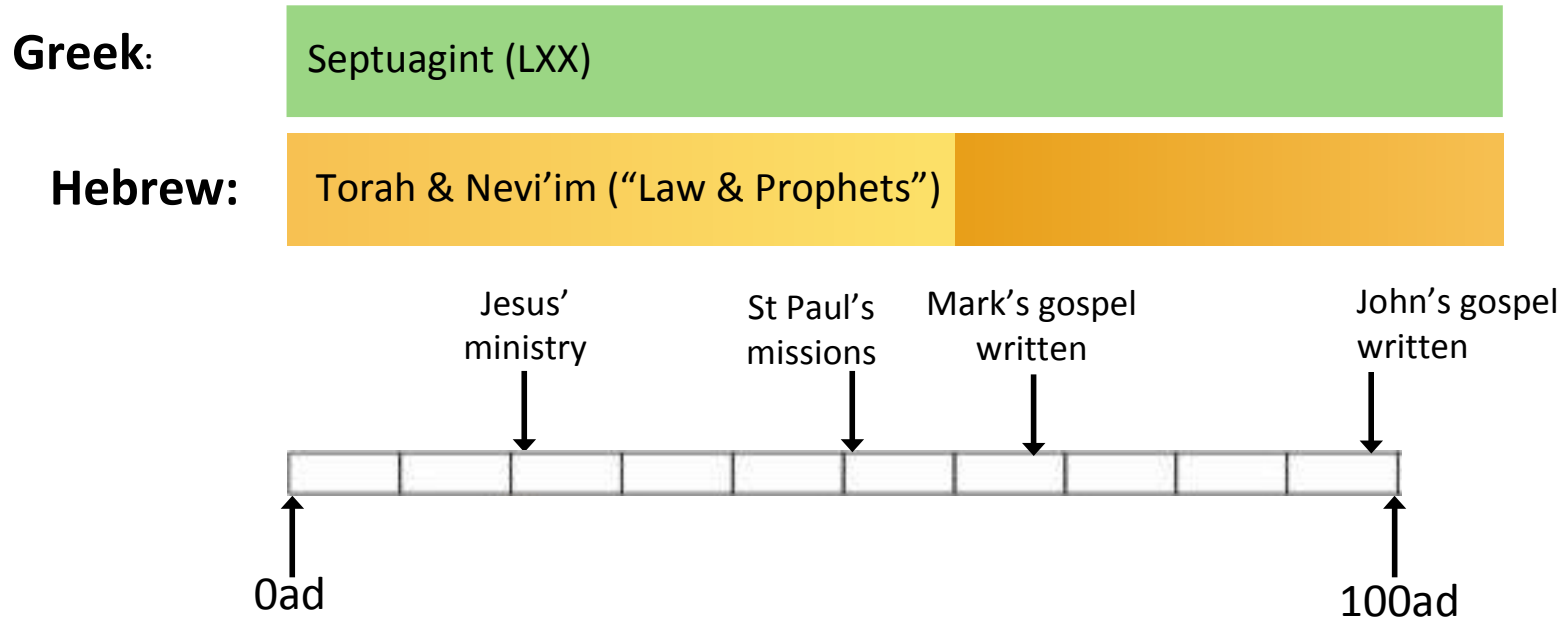


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The Septuagint was the bible used by the apostles.

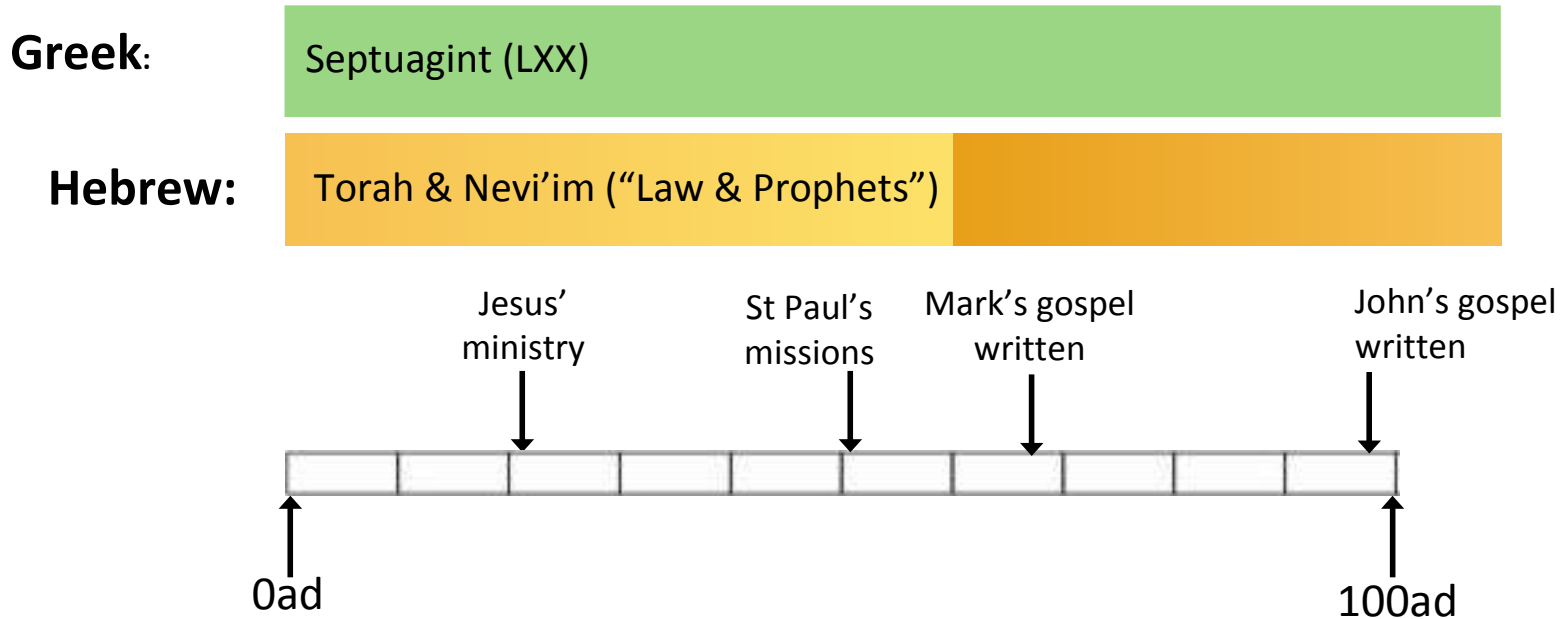
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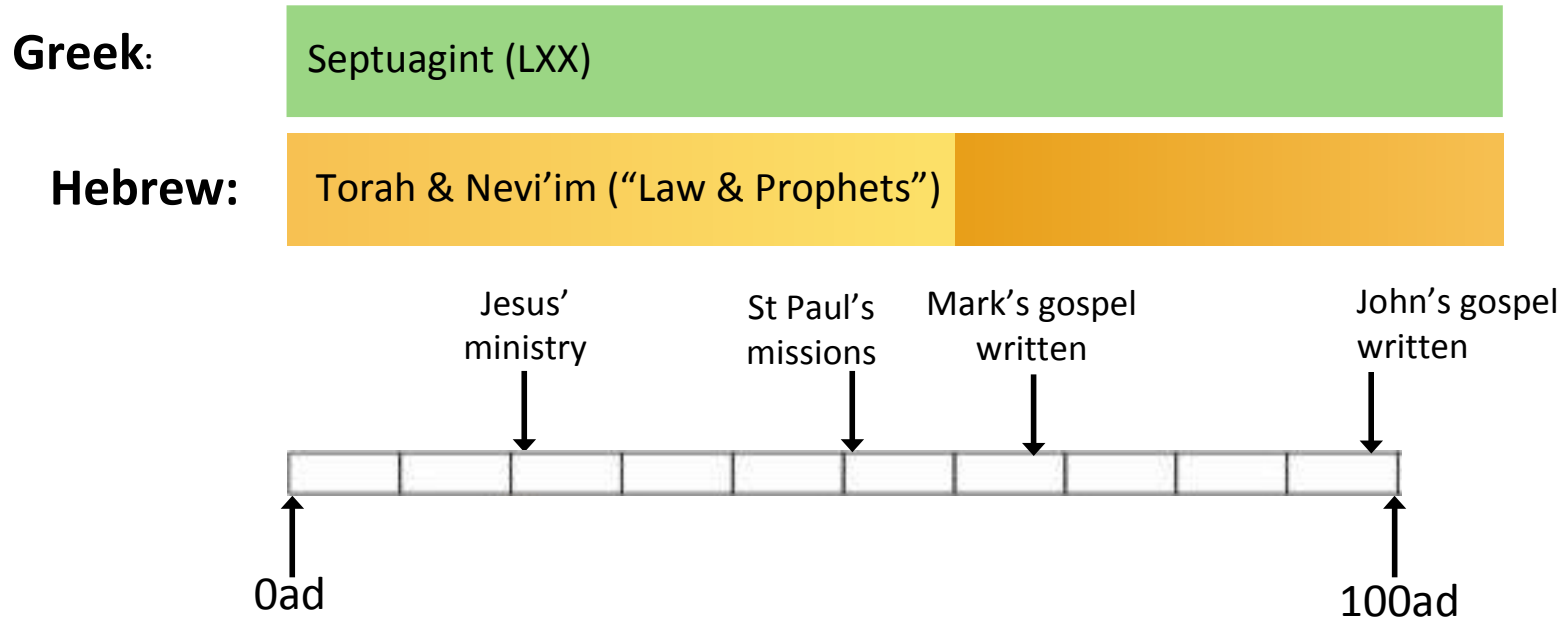
# The Septuagint and the Church



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- Some references actually *rely* on the LXX rendering (eg, Matt 1:34, Heb 1:6)

# The Septuagint and the Church

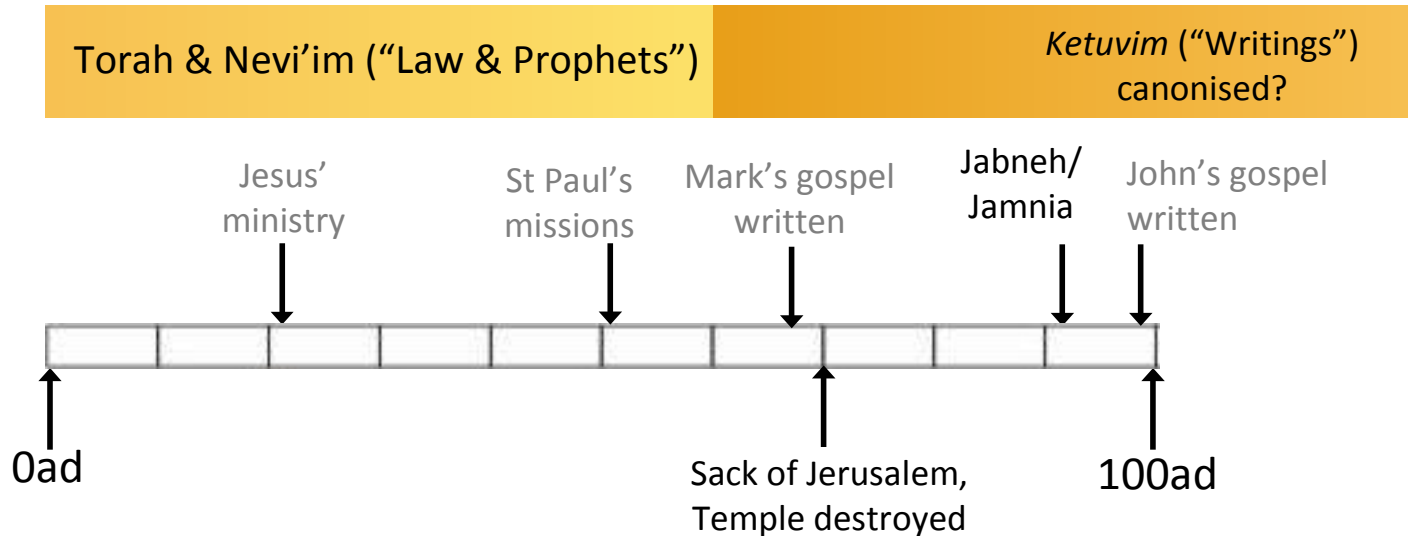


The Septuagint was the bible used by the early church.

- Most conversions took place among the Greeks, where the OT most readily available was the LXX.
- Other early Christian authors (eg, Clement of Rome, ca. 90ad) cite the LXX

# The 'Council' of Jamnia

**Hebrew:**



- The school at Jamnia became a “substitute” Sanhedrin after the sack of Jerusalem.
- There was no ‘council’ as such. Councils in this sense were a Christian concept.
- Jamnia declared that only Hebrew scrolls should be used in synagogues, and rejected the LXX.
- Jamnia also introduced a curse on the Christians into the Jewish liturgy
- Jamnia is popularly thought to have produced a closed “Palestinian canon”

# The question of the ‘apocrypha’

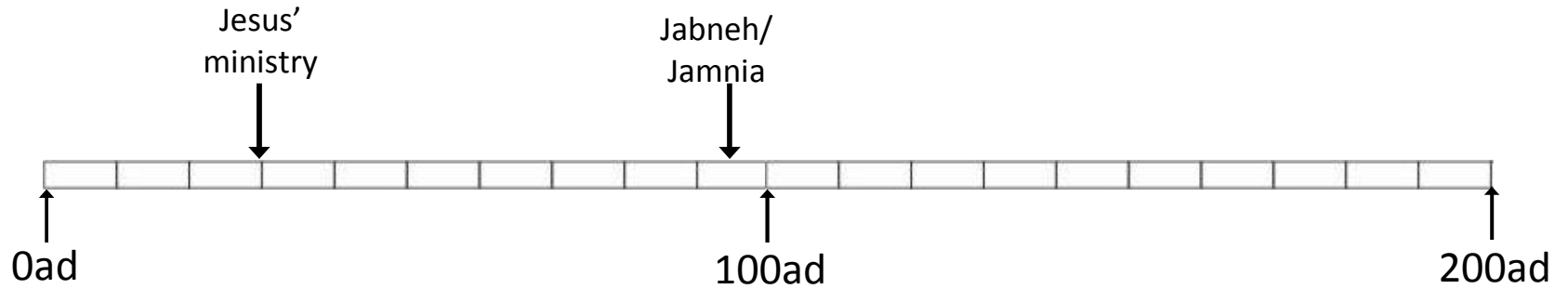
The LXX contains books which were not included in the Hebrew scriptures, and has become known as the “Alexandrian canon”:

- Tobit
- Judith
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (aka, “Sirach” or “Ecclesiasticus”)
- Baruch
- Epistle of Jeremy (which later became chapter 6 of Baruch in the Vulgate)
- Additions to Daniel (The Prayer of Azarias, the Song of the Three Children, Sosanna and Bel and the Dragon)
- Additions to Esther
- 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees,
- 1 Esdras
- Odes, including the Prayer of Manasses, and Psalm 151

# The Early Church: Scholarly consensus

- J.N.D.Kelly: “In the first two centuries at any rate the Church seems to have accepted all, or most of, these additional books as inspired and to have treated them without question as Scripture.”
- Stuart G. Hall: “[the Apocrypha] was not questioned by the Church till they were challenged by the Jews.”
- Henry Chadwick: “There was agreement that the scriptures included Judith, Tobit, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and the Wisdom of Solomon, disagreement about the books of Maccabees, Baruch and the epistle of Jeremiah.”

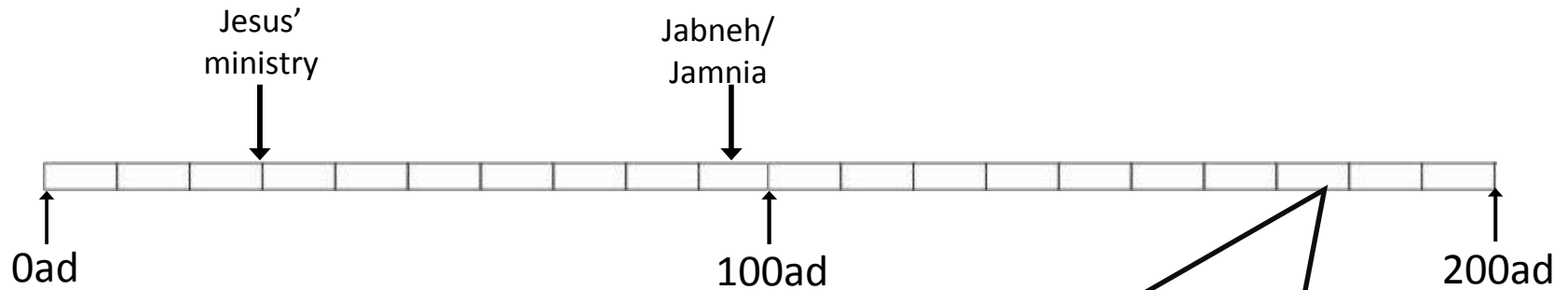
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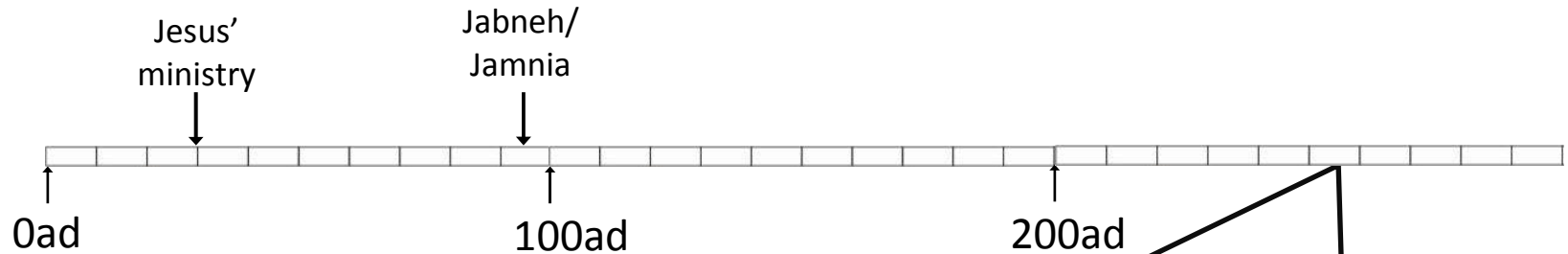


## Melito of Sardis – 177ad

“I went to the East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament.”

- Matches Hebrew canon except:
  - Esther
  - + Wisdom of Solomon

# The question of the 'apocrypha'



## Origen of Alexandria – 255 ad

- Catalogues a canon identical to the Hebrew, noting that the OT canon contains 22 books (corresponding to letters in the Hebrew alphabet)
- Even so, uses all of the apocrypha as scripture in his writings
- In a letter to Julius Africanus, he defends the sacredness of Tobit, Judith and additions to Daniel
- His “Hexaplar” edition of the Old Testament includes all the apocrypha

# The question of the ‘apocrypha’



## CASE STUDY – Cyril of Jerusalem

- Provides a list of books which matches the Hebrew canon, except for the inclusion of Baruch
- Says “those books which are not read in the Church do not even read by yourself”.
- Despite this, he quotes the apocrypha *as scripture* at least 25 times in his lectures.

# Other Greek Fathers

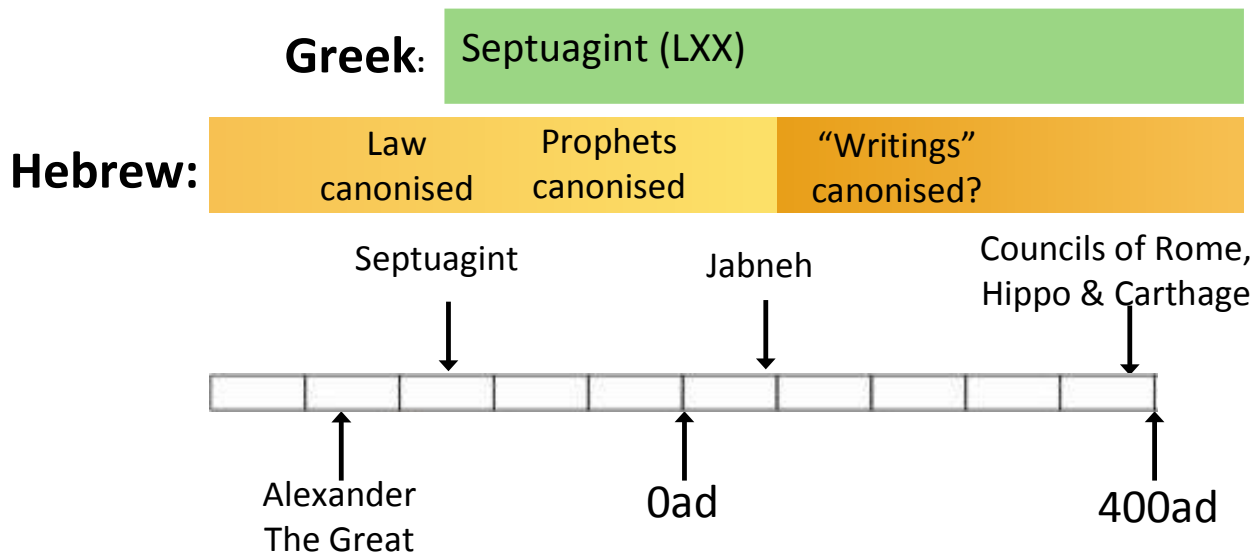
**Gregory of Nanzianz:** Cites the Hebrew canon, does not even mention the apocryphal books.

**Athanasius:** “There are other books besides these, indeed not received as canonical but having been appointed by our fathers to be read to those just approaching and wishing to be instructed in the word of godliness: Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being merely read.”

**Epiphanius:** “And they have two more books of disputed canonicity, the Wisdom of Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon, apart from certain other apocrypha.”

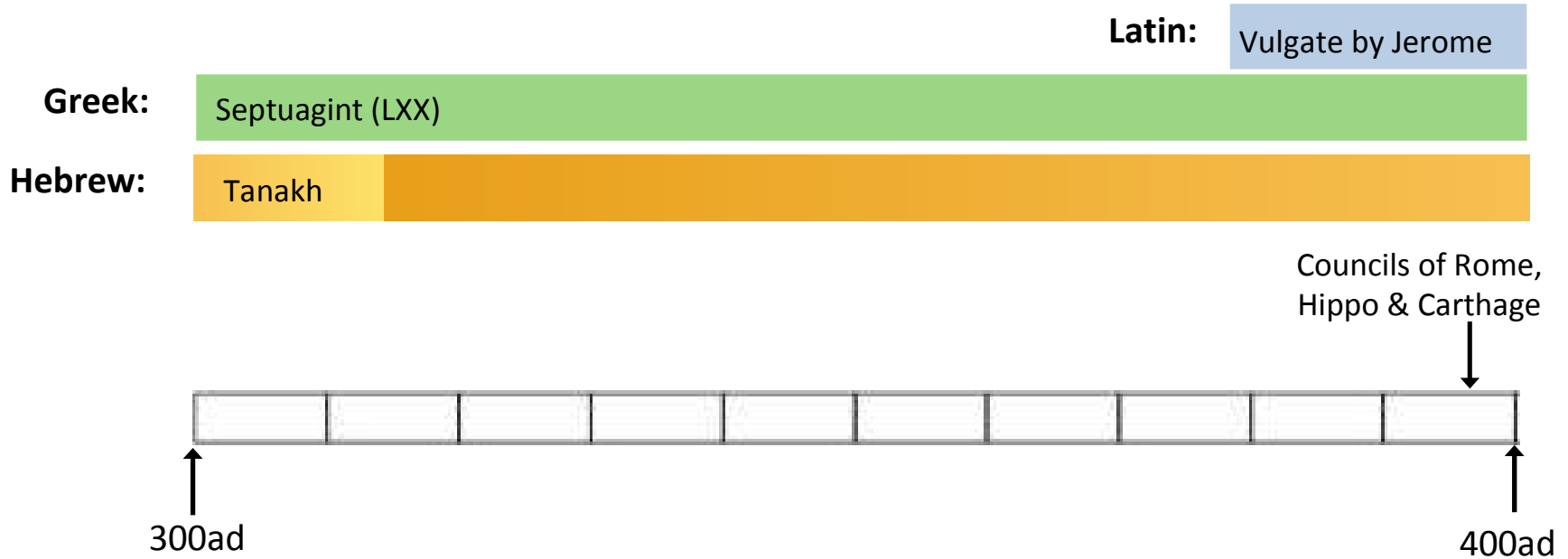
**Amphilochius:** “With these, some approve the inclusion of Esther.”

# How the OT canon came about



- Apocrypha generally not questioned during the first 100 years of the Church age
- Questioned during the following 200 years:
  - **In the Western Church & North Africa:** Generally accepted where Jewish influence is less.
  - **In the Eastern Church:** Becomes strongly distrusted, demoted to a secondary rank, sometimes proscribed for reading only by catechumens.

# How the OT canon came about



- Jerome makes “Vulgate” translation of scripture
- Councils of Rome, Hippo & Carthage ratify and confirm the full canon of scripture



- Jerome asked to create a new Latin translation of the scriptures by Pope Damasus I in 382.

## Jerome's doubts



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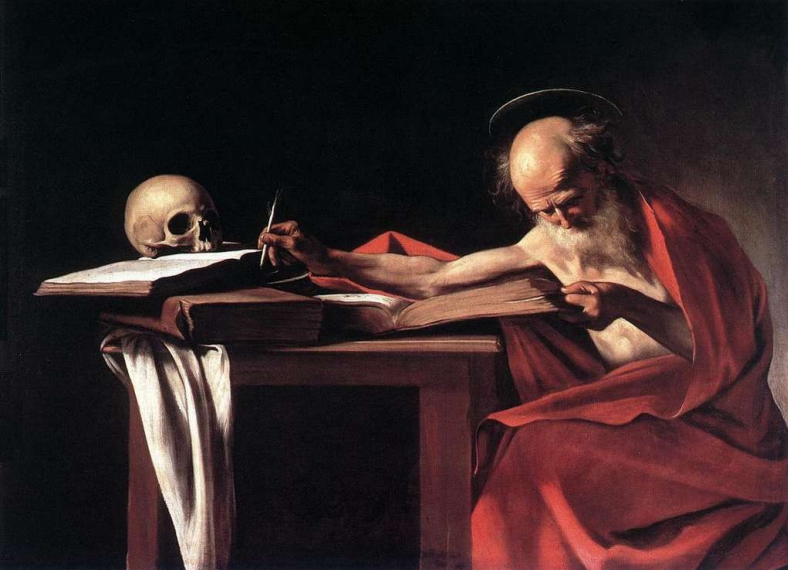
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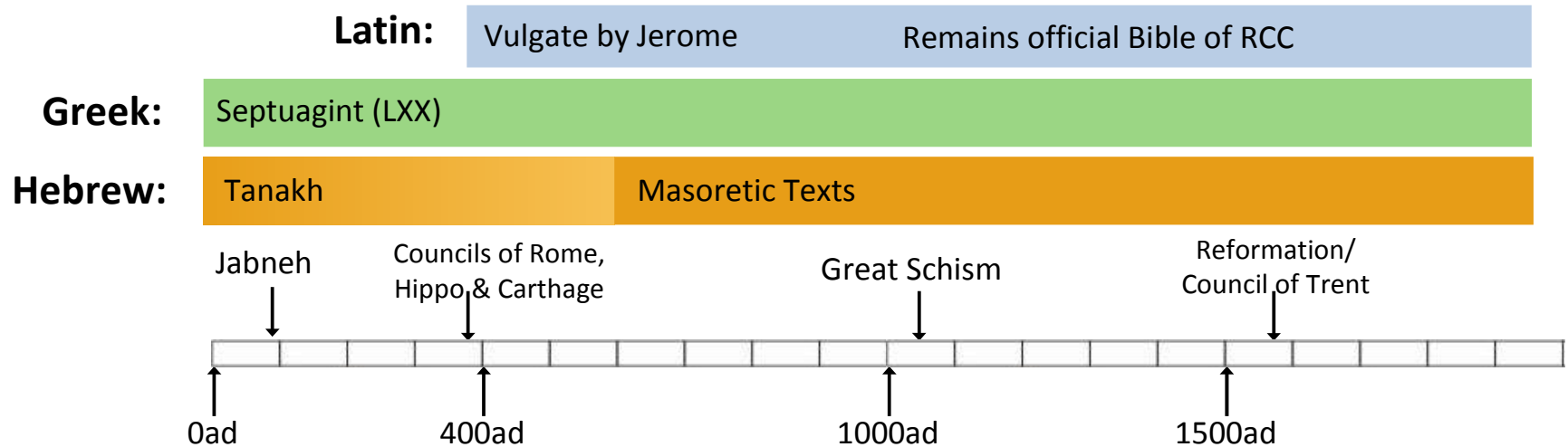
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- **He was heavily criticised by the Western Church, including figures such as Augustine, who regarded these books as canonical**

# The Question Settled

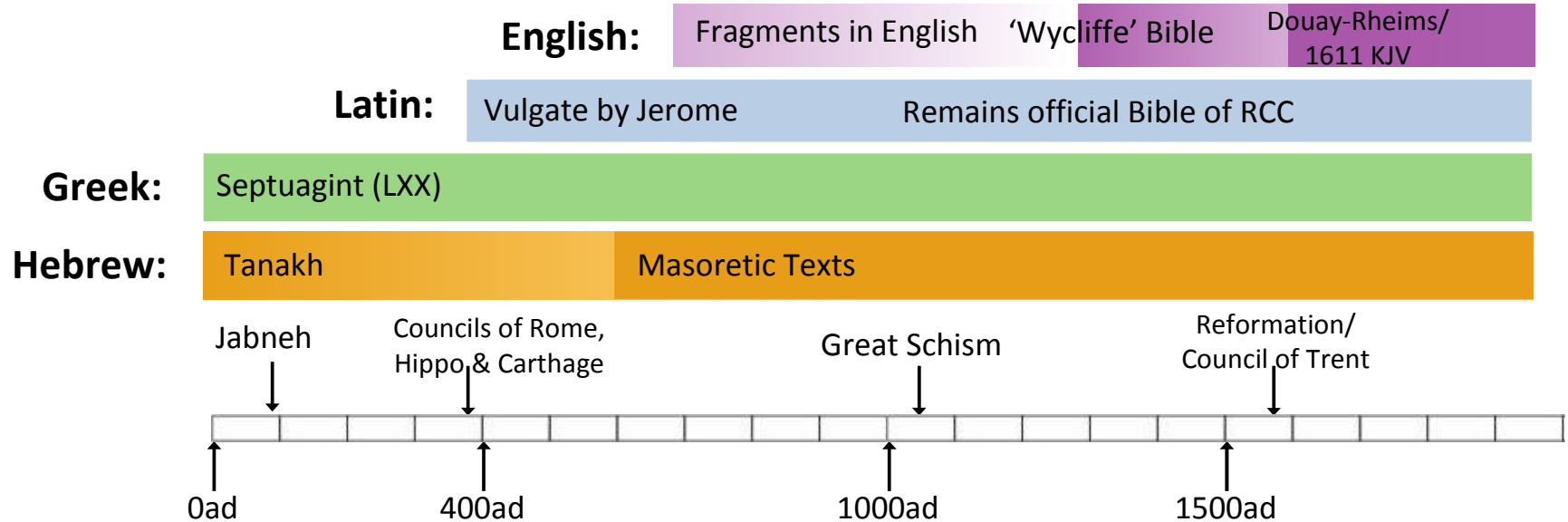
- **DECREE OF DAMASUS (382ad):** "Now indeed we must treat of the divine scriptures, what the universal Catholic Church accepts and what she ought to shun. The order of the Old Testament begins here: Genesis, one book; Exodus, one book; Leviticus, one book; Numbers, one book; Deuteronomy, one book; Joshua [Son of] Nave, one book; Judges, one book; Ruth, one book; Kings, four books [that is, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings]; Paralipomenon [Chronicles], two books; Psalms, one book; Solomon, three books: Proverbs, one book, Ecclesiastes, one book, [and] Canticle of Canticles [Song of Songs], one book; likewise Wisdom, one book; Ecclesiasticus [Sirach], one book . . . Likewise the order of the historical [books]: Job, one book; Tobit, one book; Esdras, two books [Ezra and Nehemiah]; Esther, one book; Judith, one book; Maccabees, two books"
- **COUNCIL OF HIPPO (393ad):** "[It has been decided] that besides the canonical scriptures nothing be read in church under the name of divine Scripture. But the canonical scriptures are as follows: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the Son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, the Kings, four books, the Chronicles, two books, Job, the Psalter, the five books of Solomon [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, and a portion of the Psalms], the twelve books of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, Ezra, two books, Maccabees, two books . . ."
- **COUNCIL OF CARTHAGE III (397ad):** "[It has been decided] that nothing except the canonical scriptures should be read in the Church under the name of the divine scriptures. But the canonical scriptures are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, Paralipomenon, two books, Job, the Psalter of David, five books of Solomon, twelve books of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, two books of Esdras, two books of the Maccabees . . ."

# The 5<sup>th</sup> Century onwards



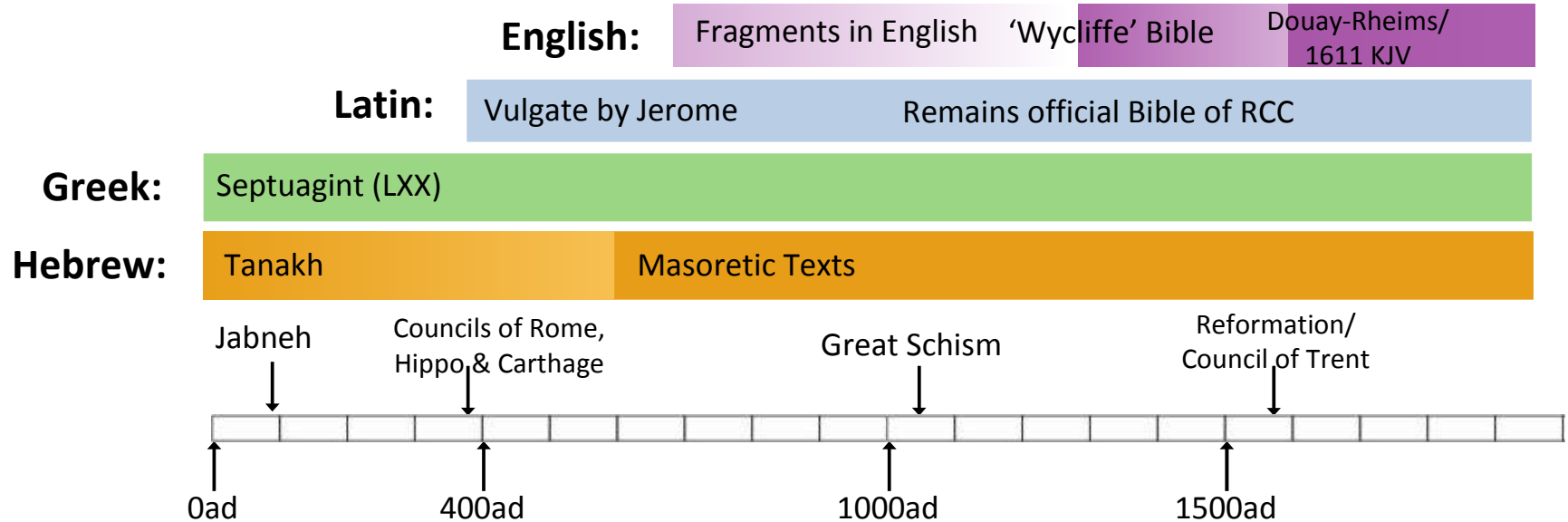
- **In the east (Septuagint employed):** Apocrypha eventually accepted without reserve.
- **In the west (Vulgate employed):** The canon is fixed; doubts cultivated by Vulgate prefaces.

# The Bible in English



- Fragments of the bible translated into English from 7<sup>th</sup> Century onwards

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- Fragments of the bible translated into English from 7<sup>th</sup> Century onwards
- Wycliffe Bible produced in 14<sup>th</sup> century – included the apocrypha plus extra books



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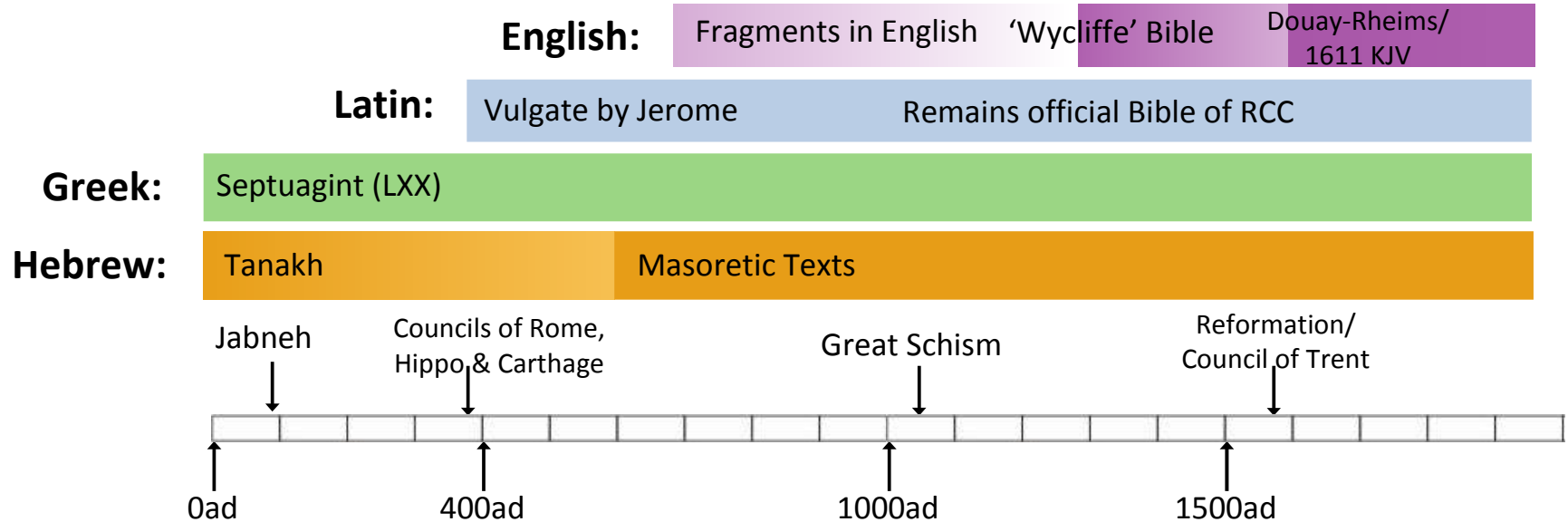
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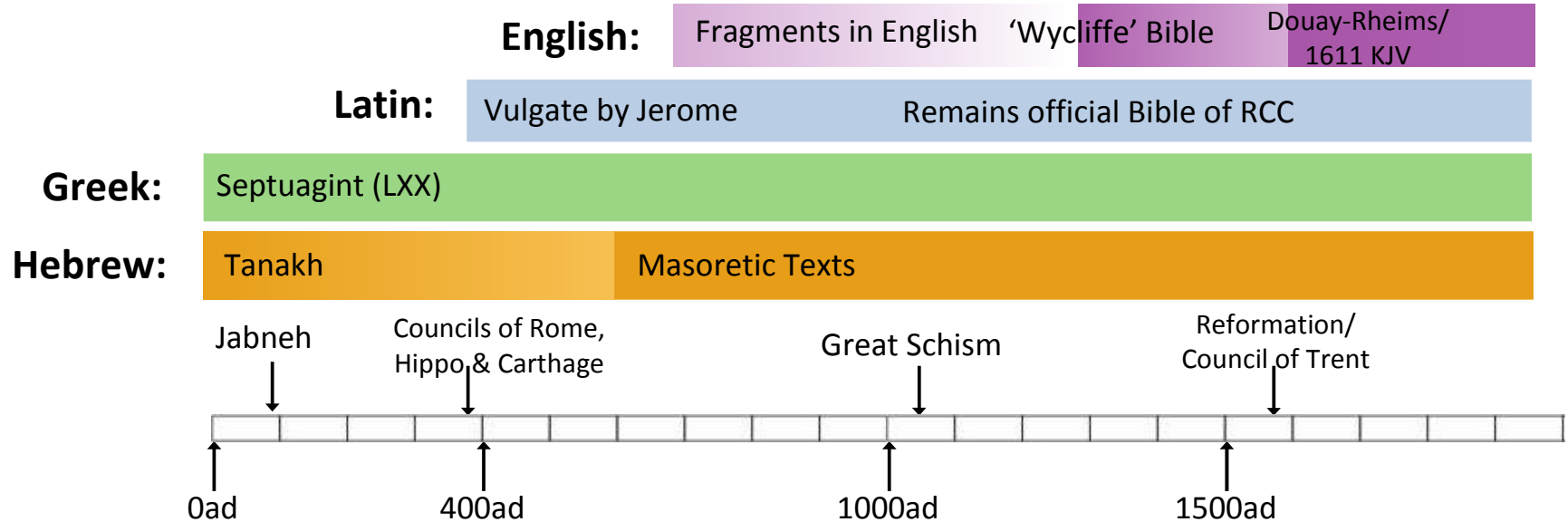
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- His Bible eventually included the Apocrypha, but in a separate section.

# The Bible in English



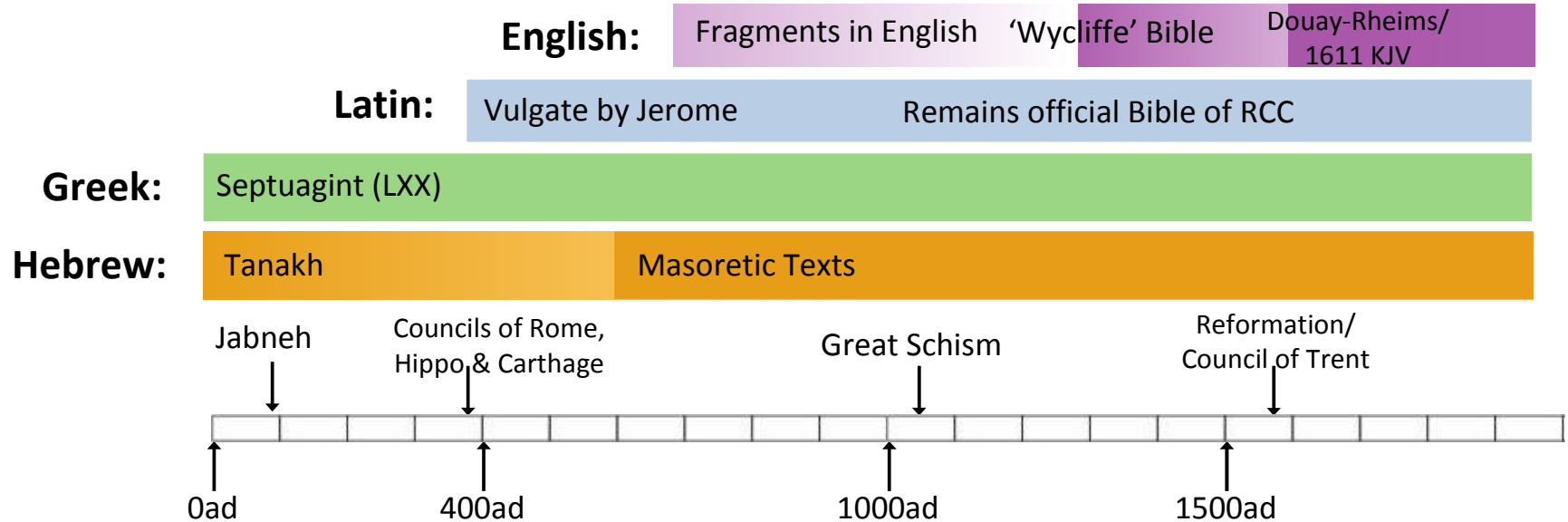
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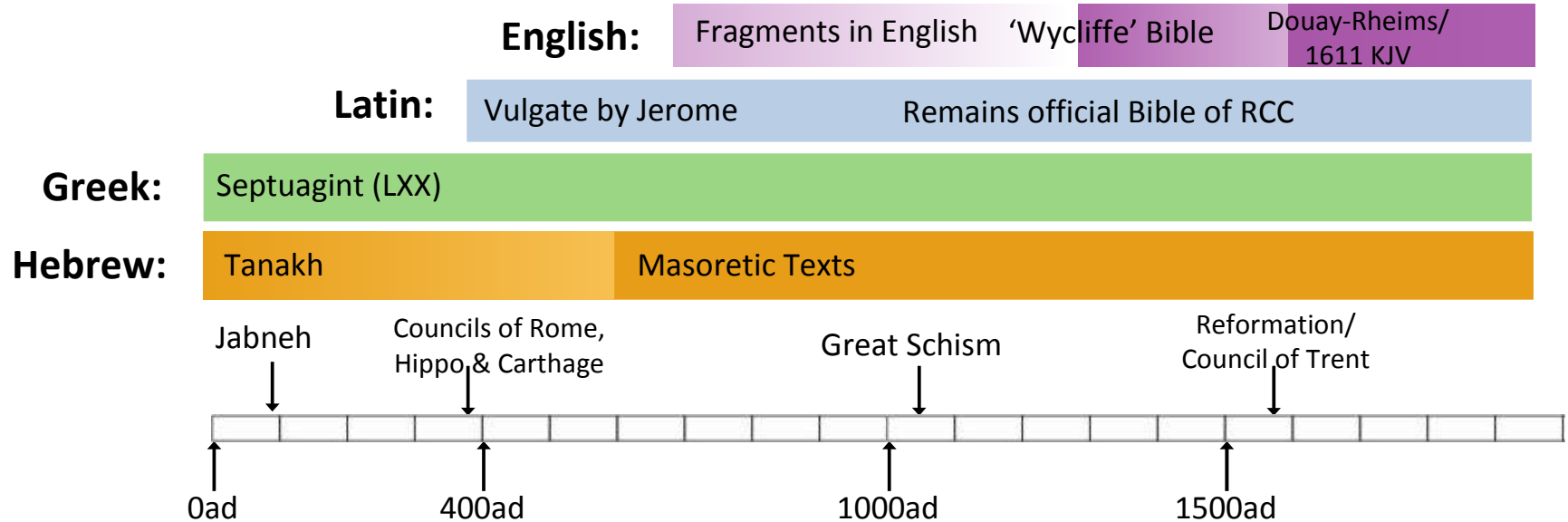
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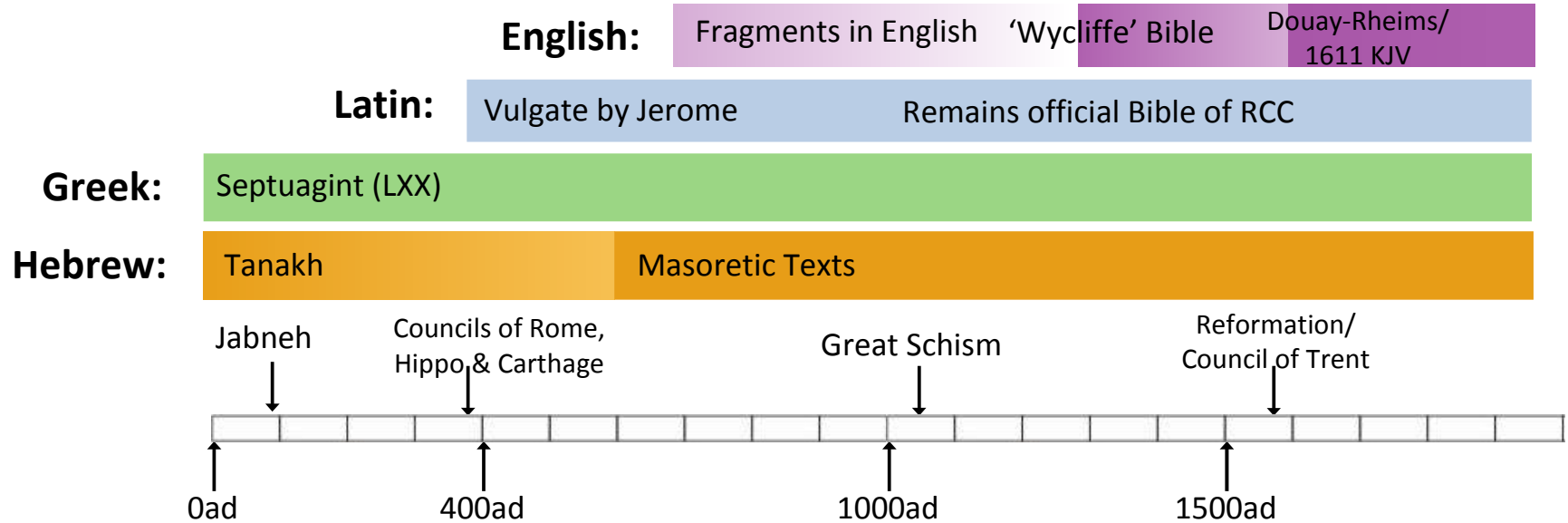
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- Geneva Bible (1560) – Calvinist English translation, included apocrypha

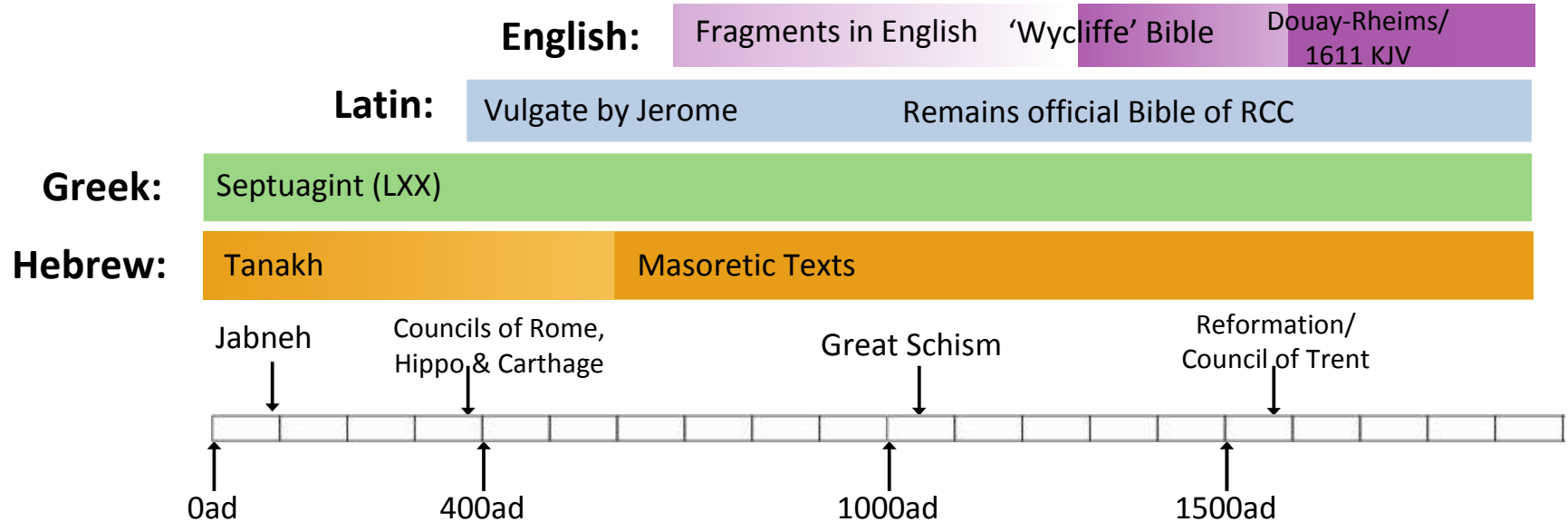
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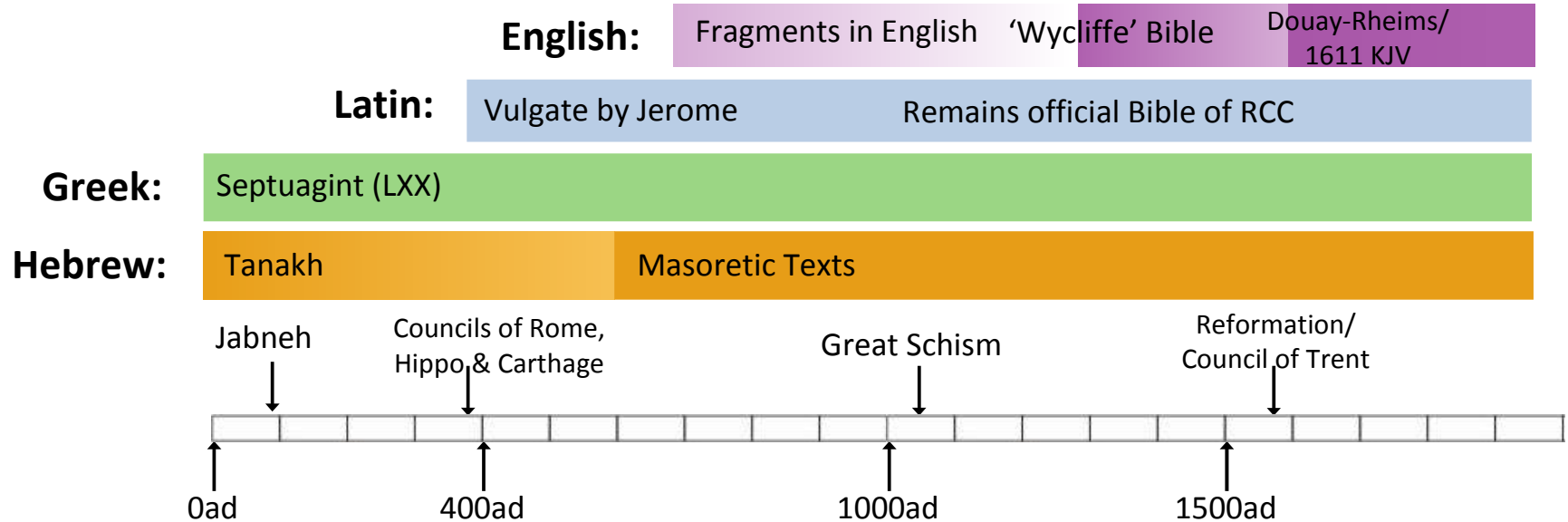


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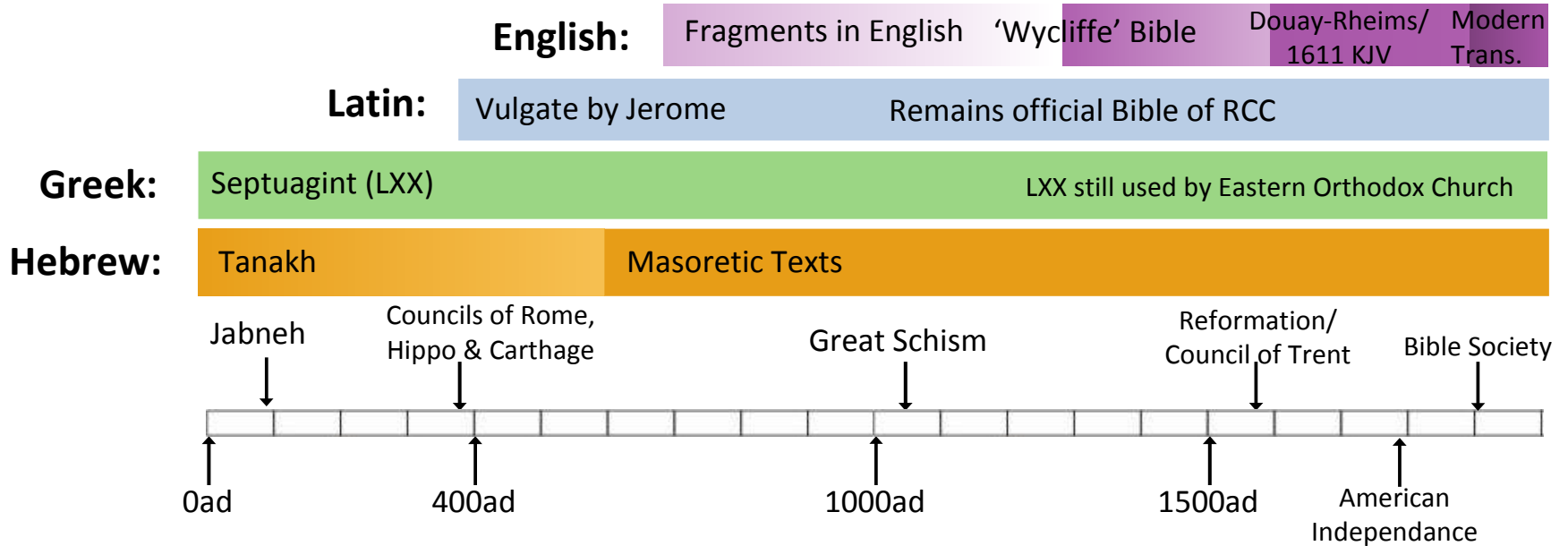
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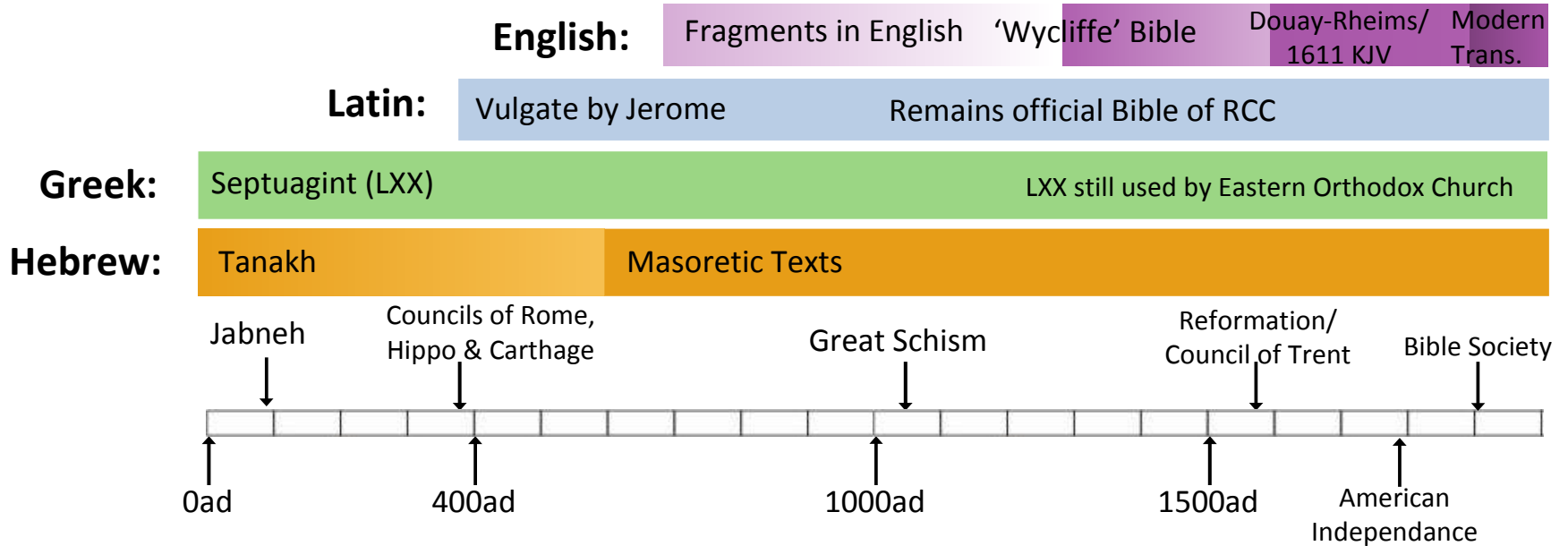
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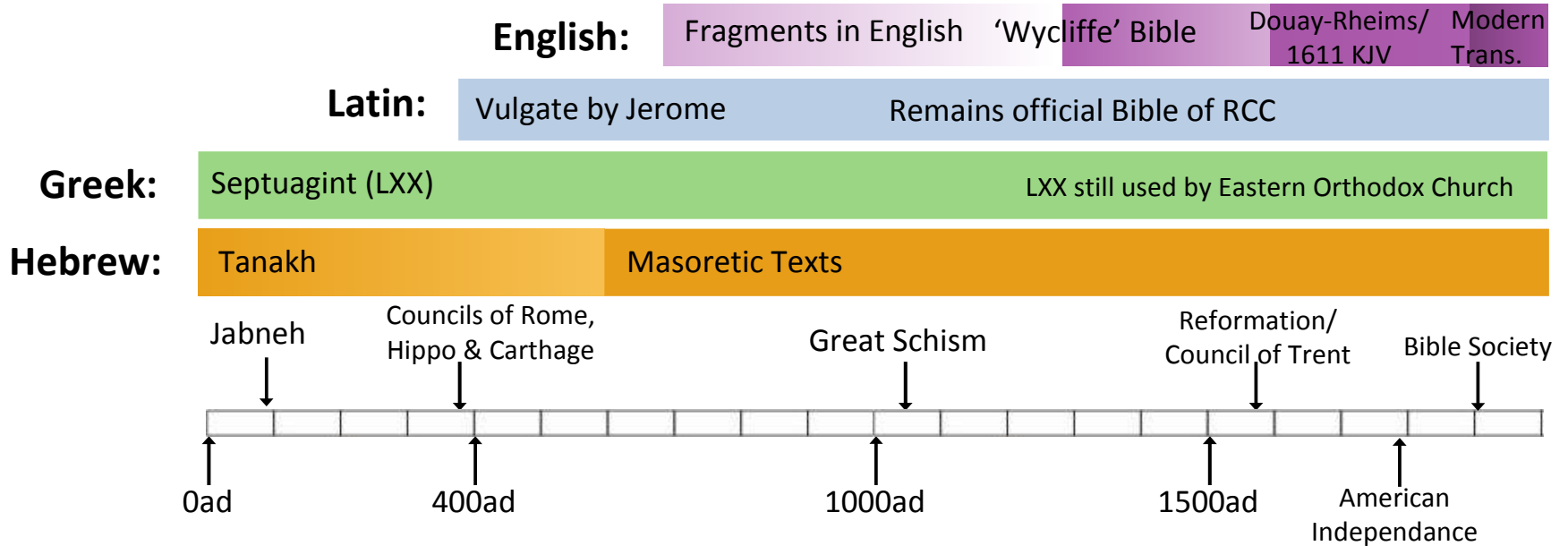
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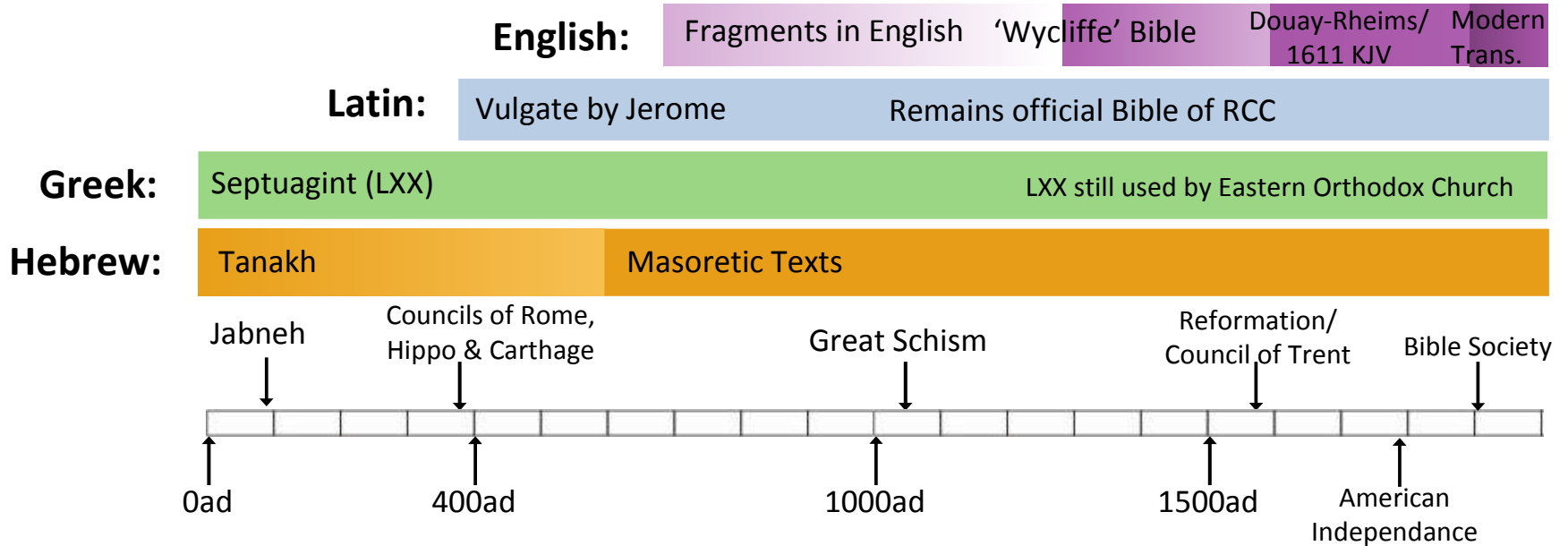
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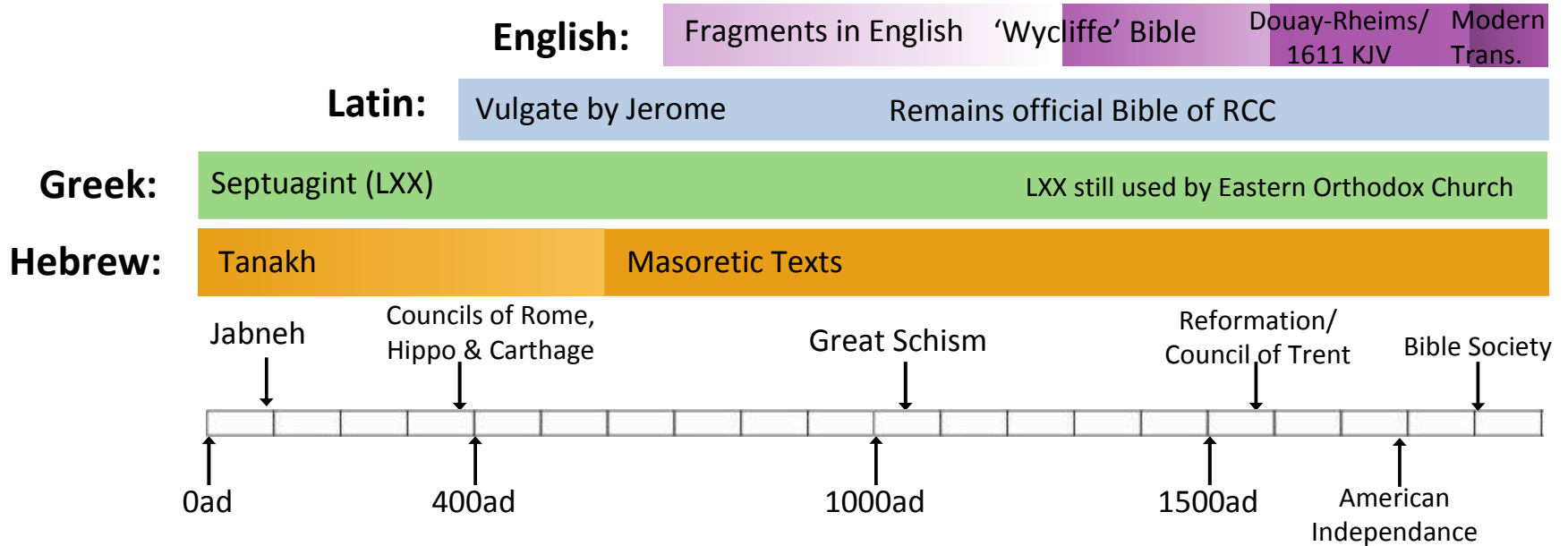
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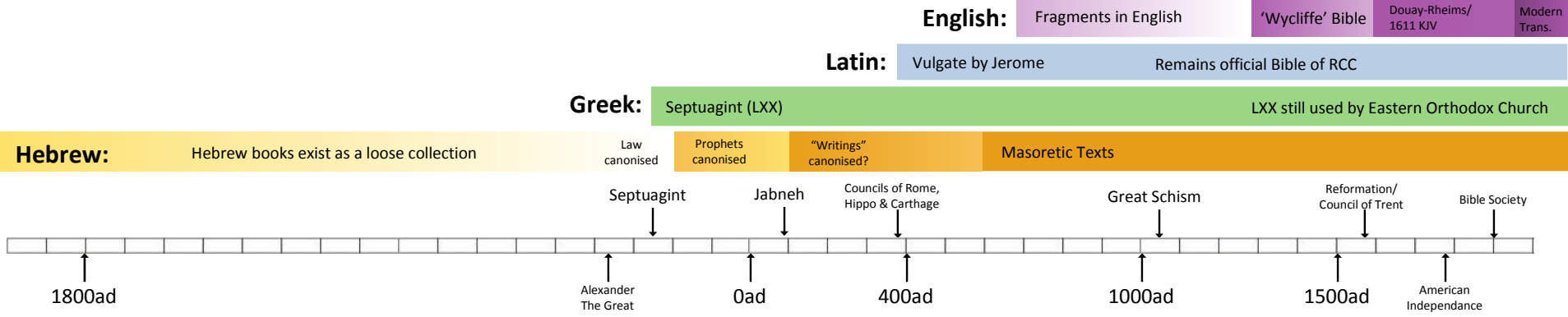
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- From 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society stops printing apocrypha after a controversy and a withdrawal of subsidies
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- Revised Version, American Standard Edition (later known as American Standard Version) released in 1901 *without* apocrypha

# The Bible in English



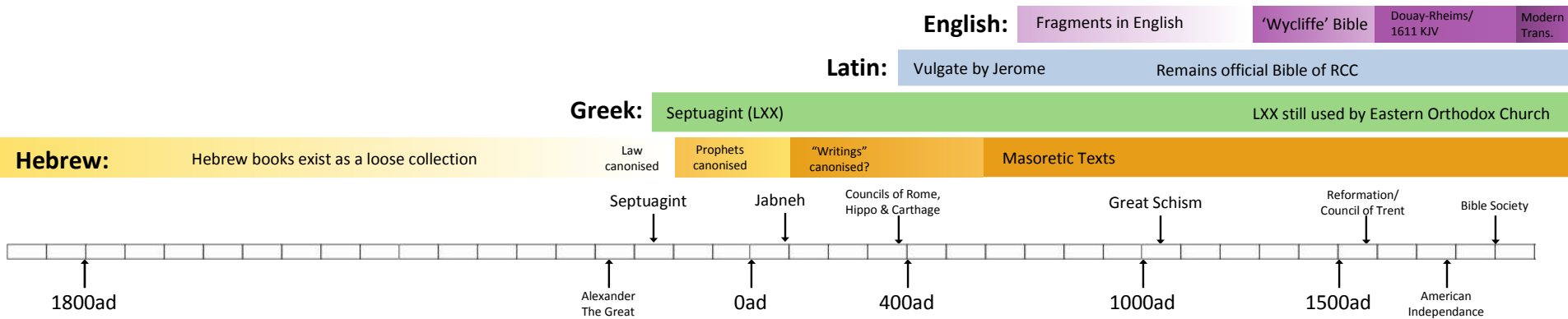
- During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, almost every translation has been made in America, and has excluded the apocrypha. Examples are:
  - New King James Version (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1975)
  - Good News Bible (American Bible Society, 1976)
  - New Internation Version (Zondervan, 1978)
  - English Standard Version (Crossway Bibles, 2001)
- Some of them (RSV, NRSV, Good News Bible) later published a “Catholic Edition”, including the apocrypha.

# Conclusion



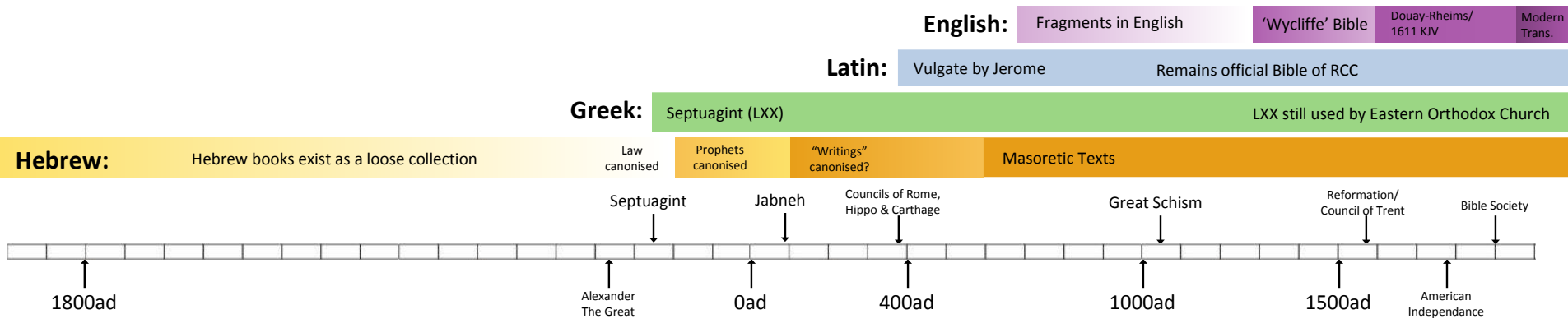


# Conclusion: Is the apocrypha canonical?



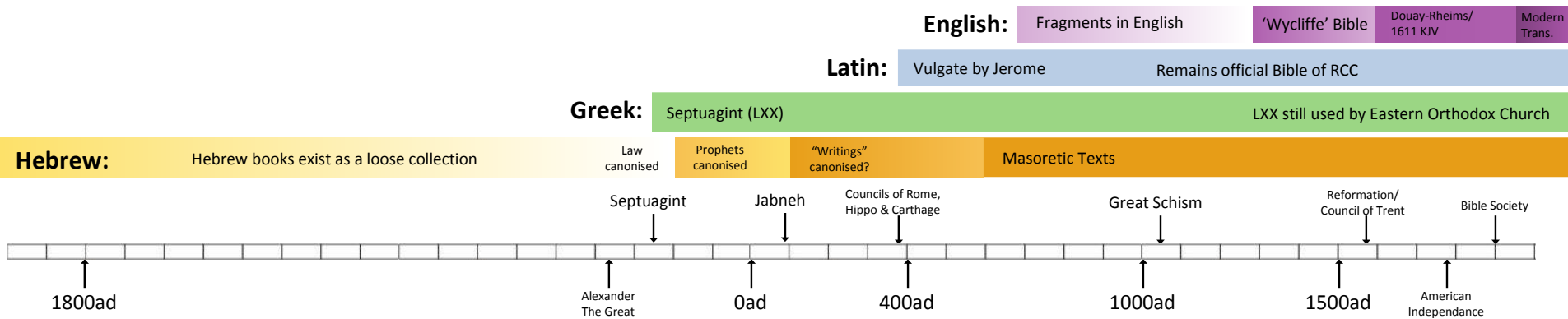
- No solid conclusion can be drawn on the basis of individual or collective early witnesses because:
  - a) Very few of them provide a canon which matches Protestant *or* Catholic exactly
  - b) Individuals have different opinions of the status of the Apocrypha
  - c) Many early cited canons are simply relating the Hebrew 'canon'
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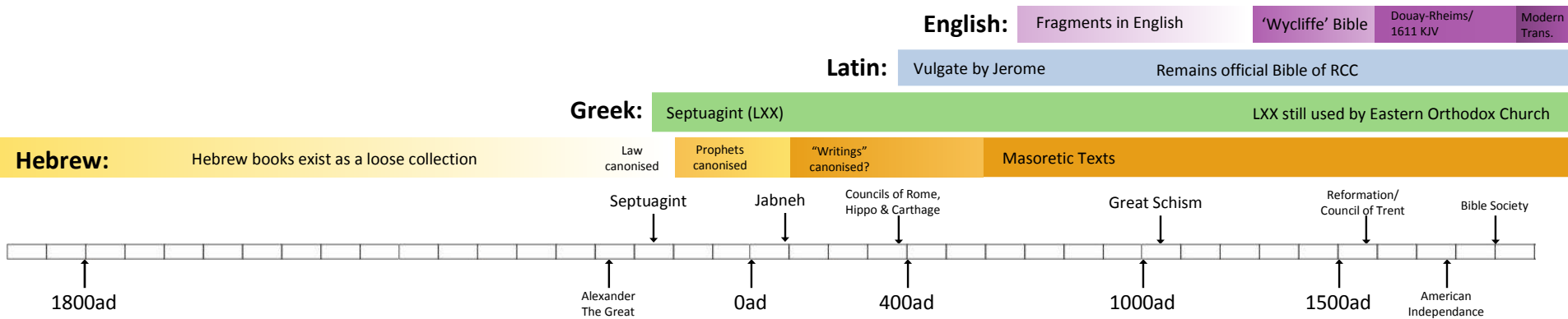
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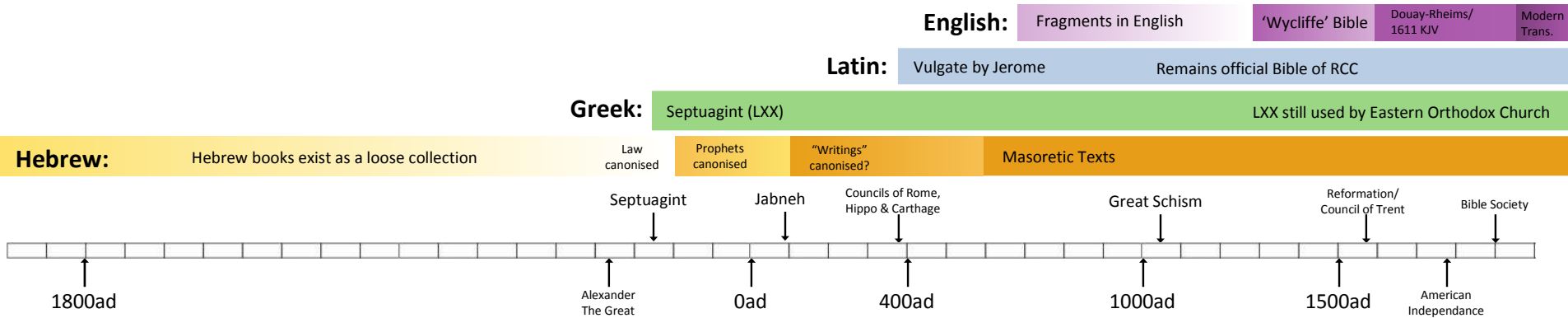
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- Again, the canon is a matter of **Church Tradition**. The pronouncement of the Church, when it came, included the apocrypha

# Conclusion: Is the apocrypha canonical?



The pertinent questions:

- From whom do you receive your Bible canon?
- What criteria for canonicity do you consider reasonable?

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There are many other Old Testament books which are not quoted in the New. A New Testament quote has never been a criterion for canonicity.

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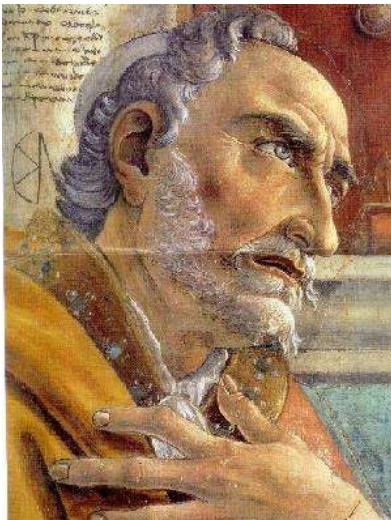
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It is impious to set ourselves up to discern scripture this way. Romans 3:28 can be seen to contradict James 2:24, and indeed Martin Luther questioned the book of James for this reason. Scripture is scripture because it is revealed, it is up to us to discover how the truth is reconciled to itself.

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*“We read in the books of the Maccabees [2 Macc. 12:43] that sacrifice was offered for the dead. But even if it were found nowhere in the Old Testament writings, the authority of the Catholic Church which is clear on this point is of no small weight, where in the prayers of the priest poured forth to the Lord God at his altar the commendation of the dead has its place” – St Augustine, 421ad (The Care to be Had for the Dead 1:3 )*

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Full canonical status of the Apocrypha was formally recognised at the Councils of Rome, Hippo and Carthage at the end of the fourth century. Ironically, Orr-Ewing actually cites these councils in support of the New Testament canon!

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Very true, but Orr-Ewing fails to mention that these same councils confirmed the Apocrypha as part of the Christian OT canon as well! And indeed the pronouncement at Trent did the same thing.