

How To Read, Study, and Understand The Bible

Theopneustos

Delayed Parousia

Pseudepigraphy

Canon: The list of *sacred* books that serve as the rule of faith and life for the Christian church

Canonization

Event

Oral Delay

Written

Scripture

Bible



By the beginning of the 2nd century

- ✓ The Hebrew Bible is canonized
- ✓ Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim are appropriated by the Christian Church as scripture
- ✓ Paul's Letters are being circulated beyond their intended audience – II Peter 3:15,16; Colossians 4:16
- ✓ Other gospel accounts have been written
- ✓ Non-Pauline epistles exist and are circulated

Deutero-Canonical Writings

Extant, fragments, referenced in other writings

Gospels: Infancy, Passion, Gnostic

Acts

Epistles

Apocalypses

Over 200

By the beginning of the 2nd century

Paul's *specific* letters were viewed as having lasting value and significance for other churches

An anthology of Pauline letters was collated in various churches

No *true* canon existed

The development of a formal canon is facilitated initially by individual religious leaders and then finally by church councils in the 4th century

Marcion (140 AD)

Developed a canon of only 11 books:

- 9 Epistles of Paul

- 1 Pastoral (Philemon)

- Gospel of Luke (Paul's traveling companion)

Gnosticism (2nd & 3rd centuries)

A heretical philosophical movement that gained great popularity in the early church

Produced a substantial body of writing preserved in *Nag Hammadi Library* (discovered in 1947)

Favored a much larger canon (40+ books)

By the end of the 2nd century the Church was faced with some critical questions: How do you distinguish between the writings? Which ones should be taken seriously and which ones rejected? Which should be read in the Church? Which ones are to be used for doctrine?

Muratorian Canon

Discovered by Ludovico Muratori in 1740

Books accepted by Rome in late 2nd century

Mt, Mk, Lk, Acts, Paul's epistles & 2 pastorals, two letters of John, Apocalypses of John and Peter, book of Wisdom

By the end of the 2nd century four criteria seemed to be operative in the development of the NT Christian canon

Four criteria in NT development

1. Orthodoxy – is this writing consistent with the basic doctrines already recognized by churches?
 - a. Soteriology
 - b. Christology
 - c. Relationship of Christianity to Judaism
 - d. Orthopraxis – correct Christian living

Four criteria in NT development

2. Apostolicity – is this writing presumed to have apostolic authorship or association?

The farther removed the writing was from the original apostles the less credible it was deemed to be

What does it mean for a writing to be viewed as sacred?

Can we attach, to some degree, a level of
sacredness to other writings that are not
canonical?

Four criteria in NT development

3. Acceptance – is this writing being used in the church universal and cited by reliable bishops and theologians?
4. Antiquity – the older the writing the closer it was considered to be to the historical Jesus

Eusebius (early 4th century scholar of canon)

Three kinds of writings in the church:

1. Universally accepted: four Gospels, Acts, Pauline epistles, 1 John, 1 Peter, Hebrews
2. Disputed but recognized: James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2-3 John
3. Spurious: Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Barnabas, Gospel of Hebrews

Revelation???

The Muratorian and Eusebian list show that there was general consensus about most of the books and consistent “fuzziness” about some others

Constantine (306-337)

- ✓ First Emperor to convert to Christianity
- ✓ Edict of Milan (313) – decreed tolerance of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire
- ✓ Called to the Council of Nicaea (325) – the first ecumenical council of Bishops to attain consensus on Christological doctrine that resulted in the Nicene Creed

Athanasius – 367 AD

In his festal Easter letter affirmed the 27 NT books that we now have in our Bible, “in these alone is the teaching of true religion proclaimed as good news; let no one add to these or take anything from them.”

In 397, Augustine affirmed the OT writings and
the same 27 books of the NT

The first official Church pronouncement came through the Council of Hippo (393) and then Carthage (397) – so that by 400 AD the 27 books of our NT canon were recognized as sacred writings that should serve as our rule of faith

The Council of Trent (1546) reaffirmed the 27 books and the content of the Bible was made an article of faith for the first time – “if anyone does not receive these books in their entirety... as sacred and canonical...let him be anathema”

Martin Luther (16th century)

- Objected to any writing that did not promote Christ
- Challenged: Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation
- Re-ordered his NT and placed these books at the end
- Raised the issue of “the canon within the canon”
- Rejected the Apocryphal books

27 Canonical Books Reaffirmed

Protestant Confessions of Faith –

French Confession of Faith (1559)

Belgic Confession (1561)

39 Articles of the Church of England (1563)

Westminster Confession (1647)

London Baptist Confession of (1689)

Catholic v. Protestant Bible

The *Protestant Reformation*

- ✓ Indulgences
- ✓ Priesthood of all believers
 - ✓ Papal Infallibility
 - ✓ Veneration of Saints
 - ✓ Sola Scriptura

The Council Of Trent (1545-1563)

Viewed as the counter-reformation and issued condemnations against the *heresies* of Protestantism

The council addressed and codified Catholic doctrine on various issues including church liturgy (Tridentine Mass) and the biblical canon

Vulgate became the official Catholic Bible

Vulgate

Latin translation of the Bible

Translated by St. Jerome in 382 AD

Contains 17 Prologues to different books

Contains 7 deuterocanonical Hebrew books (not found in Masoretic Judaism) later to become part of the inter-testamental section known as the

Apocrypha

Apocrypha

1 & 2 Esdras

Tobit*

Judith*

Rest of Esther

Wisdom*

Ecclesiasticus

Baruch*

Song of the 3 Children

Story of Susanna

Bel & Dragon

Prayer of Manassas

1 & 2 Maccabbees*

Sirach*

Apocrypha

Historical Information – exile, rebellion, battles,
Palestinian life,
Prayers for the dead
Pastiche of phrases from other books

Next: *Translations & Paraphrases*