


CANONICITY #4: HOW IT ALL CAME TOGETHER TO FORM THE BIBLE WE HAVE TODAY


Coastline Life in 3d Class, Paul & Yvon Prehn

Review




- We looked at 3 parts and how they came about.
 - Old Testament
 - New Testament
 - Apocrypha & Gnostic Gospels
- Not all religions teach the same thing
 - Teachings based on their scriptures
 - Need to determine which scriptures are correct or not
- Christian faith is historical and evidential
- Important to understand what of these is truly the Word of God because our eternal salvation depends on it

Canonicity



- Canon means "rule or norm" e.g. in common usage the correct books that make up a collection of books
- It is not antiquity, authenticity, or religious community that makes a book canonical or authoritative.
- Its authority is *established* by God and merely *discovered* by God's people.

#1 Criteria for Canonicity




- Though history and an evaluation of the manuscripts are very important, they are not the most important thing
- This is the first thing we need to understand. The criterion of canonicity is inspiration. "God gives divine authority to a book and men of God receive it. God reveals and His people recognize what He reveals. Canonicity is determined by God and discovered by man." (Norman Geisler and William E. Nix, From God to Man: How We Got Our Bible)
- Citation: remainder of material based on The Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics edited by Norman Geisler

To emphasize this truth

"In this affair, then, the Church is a servant and not a mistress; a depository and not a judge. She exercises the office of a minister, not of a magistrate. . . . She delivers a testimony and not a judicial sentence. She discerns the canon of the Scriptures, she does not make it; she has recognized their authenticity, she has not given it. . . . The authority of the Scriptures is not founded, then, on the authority of the church: It is the church that is founded on the authority of the Scriptures."

I. Gaussen, *Theopneustia*

The Five Essential Questions



- Used to determine if a book is canonical
- Another way to say it: How did believers become aware of what God had one?
 1. Was the book written by a prophet of God?
 2. Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?
 3. Does the message tell the truth about God?
 4. Did it come with the power of God?
 5. Was it accepted by the people of God?

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#1 Was the book written by a prophet of God?

- "a Prophet was one who declared what God had disclosed"
- Characteristic OT words: "And the word of the Lord came to the prophet" "the Lord said unto" "God spoke"
- "If substantiated these claims of inspiration are so clear that it was hardly necessary to discuss whether some books were divine in origin. In most cases it was simply a matter of establishing the authorship of the book." Geisler
- This is also why, the anonymous books are rejected

Additional prophetic authority

- Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— Gal. 1:1
- Books either explicitly declare authorship by prophet or apostle or one close to them
 - e.g. Mark a close associate of Peter; Luke of Paul
- Or church community recognized authorship from earliest days.
 - Gospels attributed to apostolic writers from earliest church histories

#2 Was the writer confirmed by acts of God?

- "There were true and false prophets, so it was necessary to have divine confirmation of the true ones."
- Moses given miraculous powers (Ex. 4:1-9)
- Elijah triumphed over the prophets of Baal (1Kings 18)
- Jesus many miracles (all the Gospels)

More New Testament

- This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. Heb. 2:3,4
- The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance. 2 Cor. 12:12

#3 Does the message tell the truth about God?

- God is consistent in his message:
 - God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? Nu. 23:19
 - A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time Titus 1:2
- Therefore the message in the Scriptures should be consistent
- Apparent "inconsistencies" either not read in context or in overall view of scripture, i.e. justice as well as love of God
- In contrast, different messages in Koran

Any message contrary to already revealed truth to be rejected

- If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deut. 13:1-3
- ALL the cults and many religions that came after Christianity all make "new revelation"

Any message about the world that did not come true was to be rejected

- You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. Deut. 18:21-22
- Miracles alone NEVER enough
- Even in OT, prophets frequently prophesied good things instead of judgment, and they were false, e.g. in Ezekiel 13 and Jeremiah 28

Consistency is more of a negative test

- For inauthenticity to be discovered, have to know the Word
- Why much of Apocrypha rejected—the false teachings in it
- Berean test of the New Testament
"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures** every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11

Be very careful of a system of interpretation that is placed on top of the Bible.

Sola Scriptura*if you don't understand a passage, cross-reference, do word studies, read context of**

#4 Did it come with the power of God?

- **Hebrews 4:12:** For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
- **1 Peter 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- This is what separates canonical books from historical (Macabees) and devotional, edifying (Gospel of Barnabas)—though they have value, they lack POWER

#5 Was it accepted by the people of God?

- Both initial and acceptance and subsequent recognition
- INITIAL ACCEPTANCE, even when *first written*
 - **1 Thessalonians 2:13** And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.
 - Moses, writings immediately accepted
 - Joshua, **Joshua 24:26** And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God.
 - All the OT Prophets, e.g. Kings asking advice and a prophet answers
 - **2 Kings 19:20** Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says:

New Testament

- Paul's endorsement of OT and NT
- **1 Timothy 5:18** For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,"^[a] and "The worker deserves his wages."^[b]
 - **Footnotes:**[a] Deut. 25:4 [b] Luke 10:7**Both OT & NT spoken of as Scripture
- **2 Pet 3: 15-16**....Our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other

Later acceptance by the community of faith: OT formalized prior to NT times

- **Josephus: Contra Apion 1:8** also defines which books he viewed as being in the Jewish Scriptures: (written: 90s AD)
- "For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from



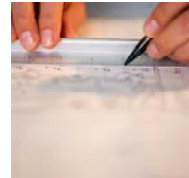
New Testament formalized

- Athanasius of Alexandria first to formally list the 27 books of NT as we have them today in his Easter Letter 367
- Synod of Hippo 393 and Synod of Carthage 397 again repeated list



Summary of Canonicity

- Though gathered through the centuries
- Formalized as a process
- God decided the writers and content
- Humanity's job
 - To recognize what God did
 - To study it
 - To obey



Questions

- **Why is it important to understand what books properly belong in the Bible?**
- **How does what we read influence what we believe?**
- **What application does this have for what we read and look for us today?**