

## THE CANON AND THE APOCRYPHA

1. **Int.** To show which books are to be included in the scriptures and why the apocryphal books are to be excluded.
2. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).
  - a. These two verses are the alpha and omega of the biblical text, the first and last verses in our Bible.
  - b. In between (and including) these two verses lays God's Word, the Bible—sixty-six generally accepted books composing one book that defines Christianity and its tenants.<sup>1</sup>
3. These 66 books are what we call Scripture
  - a. II Tim. 3:16-17
  - b. Definition of word scripture - a writing that was authorized by God and as such it is characterized as the voice of God.
4. Many religious books were written during the period of time when the O.T. and the N.T. were being written. Which of these books rightfully belongs in the Bible and which should be excluded? Should they all be included in the Bible and considered as Divine in origin?
5. This involves the study of the Canon
  - a. Greek = reed, measuring stick, standard, rule
  - b. Those books which are received as scriptures
  - c. A canonical book is from God. - Index of scriptures
  - d. Each book had to be measured, examined and tested before it could be admitted as part of the scriptures

6. Those books not admitted into the canon, but included by some others, were called apocryphal books
  - a. Apocrypha means = hidden away, secretive or concealed
  - b. Those books whose origin was doubtful and unknown are not included in the canon.

## **Discussion** Part I - The Canon

### **I. WHAT IS THE STANDARD FOR THE CANON?** Tests for canonicity

A. The question of: "Which books belong in the Bible?" was determined gradually and on the basis of evidence.<sup>2</sup>

1. By "gradually" we mean that there was not a definite historical date when a synod or council made a determination - "these are the true biblical books!"
2. Rather, over a period of years, by the application of reasonable tests, the documents truly inspired were separated from those works that are spurious.
3. The evidence leading to this decision.

B. Five Tests of Canonicity of the Scriptures

1. **Inspiration**<sup>3</sup> The proper definition of inspiration must include the following:
  - a. • Since God is perfect and infallible, an inspired book is absolutely infallible and errorless in its facts and doctrines as presented in the original manuscript.
  - b. • Since God is perfectly holy and pure, an inspired book must present only holy and pure doctrines.

- c. • Since God is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent, then an inspired book should reflect these characteristics in such ways as fulfilled prophecy and accurate statements with regard to geography, astronomy, science, math, psychology, and all areas of knowledge to the extent that it makes reference to these. If God is the Creator of both the world and man, He could not make an inaccurate statement about them. A book that does is not inspired.
  - d. • Since God is absolute truth, one inspired book cannot contradict another.
  - e. • Since God is absolutely just and fair, an inspired book must be impartial, without prejudice
2. Was it written or endorsed by a spokesman of God?<sup>4</sup>
- a. Any writing that was not written by God's spokesman could not truly lay claim to being inspired.
  - b. II Pet. 1:20-21
3. Can it be proved to be genuine?
- a. Is it possible for us to find out who wrote it?
  - b. Does it contain the same matter that it did when it was first written?
4. Is it an authentic book?
- a. Does it present the facts as they were?
  - b. It reports the truth not any falsehoods or errors.

5. Does the testimony of those who lived in or close to the time of writing favor the canonicity of the book?
  - a. Do those who lived when the book was written or at least in the same age that the book was written, testify to its divinity?
  - b. If they do, then this is strong evidence that the books should be in the canon.
  - c. However, one could not accept this alone as a conclusive test.

C. Inadequate views of canonicity

1. Age - antiquity does not make it a part of the canon
2. Hebrew language - Many other books in Hebrew
3. Religious book - many religious books not in canon

## **II. THE CANON OF THE O.T. & N.T.**

A. The Canon of the O.T.

1. Proof from the N.T.
  - a. N.T. writers quoted from these books and called them scriptures
    - (1) Jn. 5:39,46,47
    - (2) Jn. 7:38, Jn. 10:35
    - (3) Acts 17:11 - searched the scriptures
    - (4) Mt. 22:29
  - b. About 300 quotations of O.T. in the N.T. give proof that the N.T. writers felt that this was the word of God.

- c. Jesus called these writings "The word of God"
  - d. Lk. 24:44 Jesus refers to the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms - This was the Hebrew way of dividing the scriptures
2. O.T. itself
- a. Ex. 24:1-8 - God spoke to the people
  - b. They had laws from God - Deut. 17:18-20 Deut. 31:24-29
  - c. The writers claimed it was from God.
3. JOSEPHUS
- a. He lived in the 1st century - born A.D. 37
  - b. Received an extensive education in Jewish and Greek culture!
  - c. He says that the books of the O.T. had been completed and fixed for about 400 years.
  - d. He refers to the 22 books - P. 861 "The life and works of Josephus"
  - e. They combined, Kings, Samuel, Chronicles, Judges-Ruth, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, and all the 12 minor prophets.
4. ORIGEN
- a. 3<sup>rd</sup> century
  - b. 22 books of O.T.

## B. The Canon of the N.T.

### 1. Justin Martyr

- a. Writer of the 2nd century
- b. Quoted as saying that "on Sunday's in the Christian worship the people read from the memoirs of the apostles."
- c. Shortly after the close of the apostolic age the N.T. writings were being read among the churches

### 2. Murtorian fragment

- a. Dates to late second century - A list of the N.T. books
- b. Starts with Luke and calls it the 3rd gospel
- c. Does not include Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and I John
- d. But this was only a fragment
- e. Other lists found that date just a few years later included all 27 books.

### 3. N.T. Itself

- a. Col. 4:16 - circulating of an epistle
- b. II Pet. 3:16
  - (1) Writings of Paul
  - (2) Wrest these as they do the other scriptures
- c. I Thes. 2:13
- d. I Tim. 5:18 - from Lk. 10:7

4. When the church of Christ was first established it had no thought of a New Testament.
  - a. Its Bible was the Old Testament and its new teachings were based on the authority of Christ as personally mediated through the apostles.
  - b. Soon inspired men came to put in writing divine regulations directed both to churches and individuals.
  - c. It was inevitable that these regulations would become normative, for Christians could not have less respect for them than for their Christ.
  - d. Thus Paul's letters were carefully gathered into a single whole; next came a collection of the Four Gospels, and then all the others followed.
  - e. Because these collections were made at different times and places, the contents of the various collections were not always the same.
  - f. This helps to explain why not all of the New Testament books were at first received without hesitation; while in other instances uncertainty of a book's authorship, as in the case of Hebrews, presented temporary obstacles to universal acceptance.
  - g. This was the exception, however, rather than the rule; and gradually each book on its own merit - not without, Christians believe, a guiding Providence - took its place in the accepted canon of New Testament Scripture.<sup>5</sup>

### **III. THREE STEPS IN THE PROCESS OF CANONIZATION**

- A. Inspiration by God - God inspired the book
- B. Recognition by men of God
- C. Collection and preservation by the people of God

#### **IV.** **Conclusion**

- A. In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize that no church through its councils made the canon of Scripture.
- B. No church - in particular the Roman Catholic Church its decrees gave to or pronounced upon the books of the Bible their infallibility.
- C. The Bible owes its authority to no individual or group.
- D. The church does not control the canon, but the canon controls the church.
- E. Although divine authority was attributed to the New Testament books by the later church, this authority was not derived from the church but was inherent in the books themselves.

### Part II The Apocrypha

#### **I.** **THE APOCRYPHA**

- A. The word Apocrypha means hidden
  - 1. These books were secretive or hidden
  - 2. The adjective "apocryphal" is applied to those books that do not bear the marks of divine inspiration.
  - 3. Generally used to refer to books added to the O.T. but also applies to those added to N.T.
  - 4. Also called - Deutero Canonical or the second canon
- B. Books of the O.T. Apocrypha - I & II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther [additions] , Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, I & II Maccabees

- C. None of these books were ever received into the canon of the Hebrew O.T. !
  - 1. They were produced between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D.
  - 2. Since they were never received into the canon they are also called extra-canonical books
  - 3. No apocryphal book claims to be inspired by God.
  - 4. They are never quoted in the New Testament
- D. But the compelling reason to reject the apocryphal books is because of....

## **II. O.T. APOCRYPHA REJECTED BECAUSE OF CONTENTS**

- A. Examples
  - 1. Wisdom 18:13-17 p. 53 touched heaven while standing on earth
  - 2. Baruch 6:56-60 p.115
  - 3. Sirach 31:20-23 - to sleep good, eat little p.86
- B. Weird readings
  - 1. Fish Story - Tobit 6:1-8 p.5
  - 2. Gory - Judith 13:6-10 p.21
  - 3. God hears prayer of dead - Baruch 3:4 p.110
  - 4. Almsgiving delivers or atones
    - a. Tobit 4:10 p.4
    - b. Tobit 12:9 p 9
    - c. Tobit 14:10,11 p.10
    - d. Ecclesiasticus or Sirach 3:30 p.58

C. Why are they rejected?

1. Never included in Hebrew Canon
2. Never considered scripture by Jesus or his apostles
3. Not accepted as scripture in the first century

D. The Apocrypha contains a great variety of historical, geographical, chronological, and moral errors. <sup>6</sup> Here are some examples:

1. Rather than the creation being spoken into existence from nothing by the word of Almighty God, as affirmed in the Scriptures (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6-9; Heb. 11:3), the Apocrypha has God creating the world out of "formless matter" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:17). (P. 45)
2. There are two contradictory accounts of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, that dreaded enemy of the Jews. One narrative records that Antiochus and his company were "cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea by the treachery of Nanaea's priests" (2 Maccabees 1:13-16), [P.153] while another version in the same book states that Antiochus was "taken with a noisome sickness" and so "ended his life among the mountains by a most piteous fate in a strange land" (2 Maccabees 9:19-29). [P.165]
3. It applauds suicide as a noble and manful act. Second Maccabees tells of one Razis who, being surrounded by the enemy, fell upon his sword, choosing "rather to die nobly" than to fall into the hands of his enemy. He was not mortally wounded, however, and so threw himself down from a wall and "manfully" died among the crowds (14:41-43). [P.173]
4. It describes magical potions which are alleged to drive demons away (Tobit 6:1-17). [P.5]

### **III. N.T. APOCRYPHA**

#### A. List of Some -

1. Gospel of Thomas
2. Acts of Pilate
3. Gospel of Peter
4. Acts of John
5. Acts of Paul
6. Acts of Andrew
7. Shepherd of Hermas
8. Epistle of Barnabas
9. The infancy gospels - James and Thomas among several

#### B. The main reason for rejecting these is because of the contents. Notice examples:

#### C. Jesus as discussed In the first Infancy Gospel <sup>7</sup> is portrayed as an evil young boy.

1. On one occasion, while playing with some other boys, Jesus' play fellows ran and hid from Him.
  - a. Upon finding them hidden in a furnace, He turned them into goats.
  - b. The women watching the scene begged Jesus to turn the goats back into boys, which Jesus promptly did (1 Infancy 17:10 in The Lost, 1979, p. 54).
2. About two chapters later,
  - a. 1 Infancy states: "Another time, when the Lord Jesus was coming home in the evening with Joseph, he met a boy, who ran so hard against him, that he threw him down;

- b. To whom the Lord Jesus said, As thou has thrown me down, so shalt thou fall, nor ever rise. And that moment the boy fell down and died" (1 Infancy 19:22-24 in The Lost, p. 57).
  3. Narratives such as these directly contradict the personality of Christ as presented in the canonical gospels, and are evidence of the lack of divine inspiration in such works.
  4. Jesus did not turn his playmates into goats, nor kill boys who bumped into Him.
    - a. Neither did God allow any pertinent books to be left out of the canon of Scripture.
    - b. Truly, "all things that pertain to life and godliness" can be found in the 66 inspired books of the Bible.
- D. Notice these statements found in the Gospel of Thomas <sup>8</sup>
  1. "Simon Peter said to them: 'Let Mary (Magdalene) go out from among us, because women are not worthy of the Life.'" "Jesus said: See I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'" (Saying 114, Funk, p. 532; see also Yamauchi, p. 186).
  2. Does that even remotely resemble the dignified status that women are afforded in the New Testament?
- E. The N.T. Apocrypha has strange stories about JESUS. One story says he gave life to a dried fish

## Conclusion

1. The canon of scriptures include the 66 books of the Bible. These contain God's inspired word - 2 Tim. 3:16-17
2. Question: Did any of the manuscripts contain any portion of the Apocryphal books?
  - a. Only 1 of those in the O.T. Apocrypha
  - b. Portions of Ecclesiasticus were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls <sup>9</sup>
  - c. In Jude 14-16 there is a quote that refers to a writing of Enoch - but this does not mean that Enoch should be included in the canon of scriptures. He was just quoting an uninspired writer to make a point. Preachers today quote other sources than the Bible to make a point.
3. The 66 Books that are accepted have good evidence that they belong.
4. Those books called Apocryphal books have quite an abundance of evidence that they should be excluded.
5. They are not inspired works and should not be so considered.
6. These 66 books contain everything we need to know. We have the Word of God just as He wanted us to have it - nothing more, nothing less.
7. God's providence was also involved in making sure His word was preserved and transmitted down through the ages.

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**End Notes:**

- 1.The Canon and Extra-Canonical Writings by Zach Smith Apologetics Press
- 2.The "Canon" of Sacred Scripture - by Wayne Jackson Christian Courier Feb. 4, 2004
- 3.Which Books Belong in the Bible? By F. Furman Kearley - Apologetics Press
- 4.A study of the Apocrypha by David Lemmons - Report for Memphis School of Preaching
- 5.How We Got the Bible - Lightfoot P. 109
- 6.The Apocrypha: Inspired of God? By Wayne Jackson Christian Courier Sept. 21, 1999
- 7.Obviously Not The Bible - by Kyle Butt Apologetics Press
- 8.The Gospel of Thomas - So Called by Wayne Jackson Christian Courier Aug. 26, 2002
- 9.- Donald E. Demary - "A layman's guide to our Bible" - p. 19

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