

Foundations 12 THE CANON OF THE BIBLE. How was the Bible put together?

The authenticity of the Old Testament text was recognized in stages. The Pentateuch (The Law or first five books of the Bible) was recognized as authoritative (canonized) as Ezra read it in 444 B.C. (Nehemiah 8-10). Much of the prophets writings were accepted between 200 and 300 B.C. Acceptance came as much of what they predicted took place. The final recognition of the Old Testament text was affirmed at a synod of Jewish rabbis in Jamnia in 90 A.D. The authority of the Old Testament is furthered by the fact that the New Testament authoritatively quotes or alludes to it over 250 times.

The authority of all 27 New Testament books was finally affirmed in 397 A.D. at a council in Carthage. *“The Bible is self authenticating and the church councils have only recognized the authority already inherent in the book themselves...it is important to remember that the books of the Bible were authentic (canon) before any test of man was put to them. In the same manner as an intelligent person is intelligent before any test of intelligence is put to him/her. The test merely confirms what is already there. The early Church used several meetings (called Counsels) of learned men to verify, affirm and recognize that certain books were indeed worthy of inclusion in the Bible. They did not create the authenticity of the Bible but merely confirmed what was already present.”*¹ The three tests placed upon the New Testament writings to determine their authenticity were...

- 1. Authorship.** (Eye witness evidence). All the writings had to be either written or backed by an apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter was the backer of Luke, Mark and Paul.
- 2. Agreement.** (Internal evidence) The content of the writings had to agree with the revealed will of God. The Old Testament was a good source of comparison for this.
- 3. Acceptance.** (External evidence). All the writings had to receive unanimous acceptance by the early Churches. *“The early Church was in surprising agreement among itself as to which writings were authentic and where were not.”*²

Summary

Christianity is evidential. There is an enormous amount of evidence to discover for those so inclined. The Christian faith is not a blind leap into nothingness. It is not a “check your brain at the coat rack” religion. Instead, it incorporates logic and is based on reason. Its a belief system that stands the test of any objection or challenge. It

¹ Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1978, p. 1961.

² Ryrie. p. 2018.

welcomes tough inquiries and invites hard questions. The amount of verifiable facts, testimonies, signs and support for Christianity are overwhelming. In the words of Josh McDowell, the evidence “demands a verdict.”

The bible is the most amazing body of literature in all of human history. It stands alone as a one of a kind treatise. It is completely unique. It is the most fascinating writing anyone will ever come across. It's self agreement, prophetic fulfillment and transforming power puts it in a category all its own. It answers the deepest questions, addresses the most pressing needs and solves the most important problems of life. It humbles the prideful, softens the hardened, comforts the sorrowful, guides the lost and saves those destined to perish. It provides peace in the midst of turmoil, furnishes joy throughout this life and furnishes confident hope for the life to come. It is Scripture, the word of God.

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. (1 Th 2:13 NIV)

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