

CANON OF SCRIPTURE

- I. Introduction
 - A. English word "canon"
 - A. Derived from Greek word *kanon* meaning "measure, rule, standard, norm." Later meant "list" or "collection."
 - B. Greek word derived from Hebrew word *qaneh* meaning "reed."
 - C. Greek word *kanon* not used of standard collection of Scripture until 4th century.
 - B. Greek word *kanon* used in New Testament
 - 1. II Cor. 10:13,15,16 - "a *measure*"
 - 2. Gal. 6:16 - "walk by this *rule*"
 - 3. Phil. 3:16 - "living by that *standard*" (not in best MSS)
 - C. Distinguishing between
 - 1. Revelation
 - 2. Inspiration
 - 3. Enscripturalization
 - 4. Preservation
 - 5. Authorization
 - 6. Canonization
 - D. Criteria for canonization? Determined from early Christian sources.
 - 1. Early dating
 - 2. Apostolic origin
 - 3. Divine inspiration
 - 4. Divine authority
 - 5. No contradiction to accepted teaching, "rule of faith."
 - 6. Relevance and value to church at large
 - E. Some regard study of the canonization of Scripture as a threat to their faith in the Bible.
- II. Canon of the Old Testament.
 - A. Hebrew writings of Jews were progressively divided into three parts:
 - 1. Law - *Torah* - Pentateuch - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
 - 2. Prophets
 - a. Former prophets - Joshua, Judges, Samuel (I,II), Kings (I,II)
 - b. Latter prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 12 prophets
 - 3. Writings - Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles (I,II).
 - B. Later Ruth was attached to Judges, and Lamentations to Jeremiah to cause sum of books to be 22, corresponding to number of letters in Hebrew alphabet.
 - C. The Hebrew O.T. writings that Jesus was familiar with were likely collected in one of the foregoing ways. Matthew 23:35 tends to illustrate this.
 - D. Josephus, Jewish historian, c. 100 A.D., wrote that Jews had 22 books containing the history of all time.
 - E. Canonization process was gradual. Divisions due both to content and chronology of acceptance as canonical.
 - F. Councils of Jamnia, 90, 118 A.D., Jewish rabbis discussed canon of O.T.
 - G. Septuagint (LXX), Greek translation of O.T. employed different order and included apocryphal literature. Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation used LXX.
 - H. Roman Catholic Bibles include O.T. apocrypha - Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, I,II Macabees, and additions to Esther and Daniel.

III. Canon of the New Testament

- A. Early Christian writings gradually collected. Gospels. Paul's writings - (II Peter 3:16).
- B. Marcion, Gnostic heretic, (139 A.D.) determined list of writings. Rejected O.T., revised Luke's gospel, ten Pauline epistles. Restricted list.
- C. Montanus claimed divine revelation. Expanded list.
- D. Church responded to these attempts to expand or restrict.
- E. Irenaeus, 180 A.D. cites 22 writings as acceptable: 4 gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles, I Peter, I,II John and Revelation.
- F. Muratorian list - named after Italian Muratori (1740) who discovered such. Fragment dated late 2nd to 4th century. 22 books plus Apocalypse of Peter. Hebrews, I,II Peter, III John and James omitted.
- G. Tertullian (150-230) - 22 books accepted: 4 gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline epistles, I Peter, I John, Jude, Revelation.
- H. Origen (185-255). Three categories of writings:
 - 1. Acknowledged: 4 gospels, 13 Pauline epistles, I Peter, I John, Acts, Revelation.
 - 2. Disputed: II Peter, II,III John, Hebrews, James and Jude; also Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Didache.
 - 3. Heretical: Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, etc.
- I. Eusebius (260-340).
 - 1. Acknowledged: 4 gospels, 14 Pauline epistles (Hebrews included), I Peter, I John, Acts
 - 2. Disputed: James, Jude, II Peter, II,III John, Revelation. Spurious: Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache, Acts of Paul.
 - 3. Heretical: Gospel of Thomas, Peter, Acts of Andrew etc.
- J. Codex Sinaiticus (4th century). 27 books plus Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermas.
- K. Council of Laodicea (363) - 26 books. Revelation omitted.
- L. Athanasius (367) - first time list includes the 27 books of present N.T.
- M. Jerome's Vulgate included 27 books of N.T.
- N. Augustine (397), 3rd Council of Carthage, accepted 27 books of N.T.
- O. Martin Luther. Put Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation at back of His German N.T. as inferior writings.

IV. Questions

- A. Was Christianity ever intended to be a religion of Scripture?
 - 1. II Cor. 3:6
 - 2. *Anchor Bible Dict.* I, 853 - "Christianity was not originally a Scriptural religion in the same sense as Judaism. The faith of the earliest Christian community was evoked by and centered on a person, Jesus of Nazareth."
- B. Is the Bible intended to be the basis of authority for Christians?
 - 1. Matt. 28:18
 - 2. "Word of the Lord" - I Cor. 7:10; 9:14; 11:23; I Thess. 4:15
- C. What if the New Testament had never been written, preserved, or collected?
- D. Is the Bible the infallible Word of God?
- E. Did the Church put the Bible together?
- F. Is canonicity God-given or Church-conferred? ...or combination of both?
- G. Did God determine what writings should be in the Bible, and then Christians in the Church recognized and affirmed these as the normative and authoritative standard?