

An Apology

VOLUME 3

for the Bible

Part 1 - Transmission to Preservation



HIS STORY
The Disciples

Answering Questions About Your Faith



for the Bible

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why Apolo-

The word "apology" means to give an answer or defense for something.

Paul uses this word several times, most notably when he said...

"but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,"

(1 Peter 3:15)

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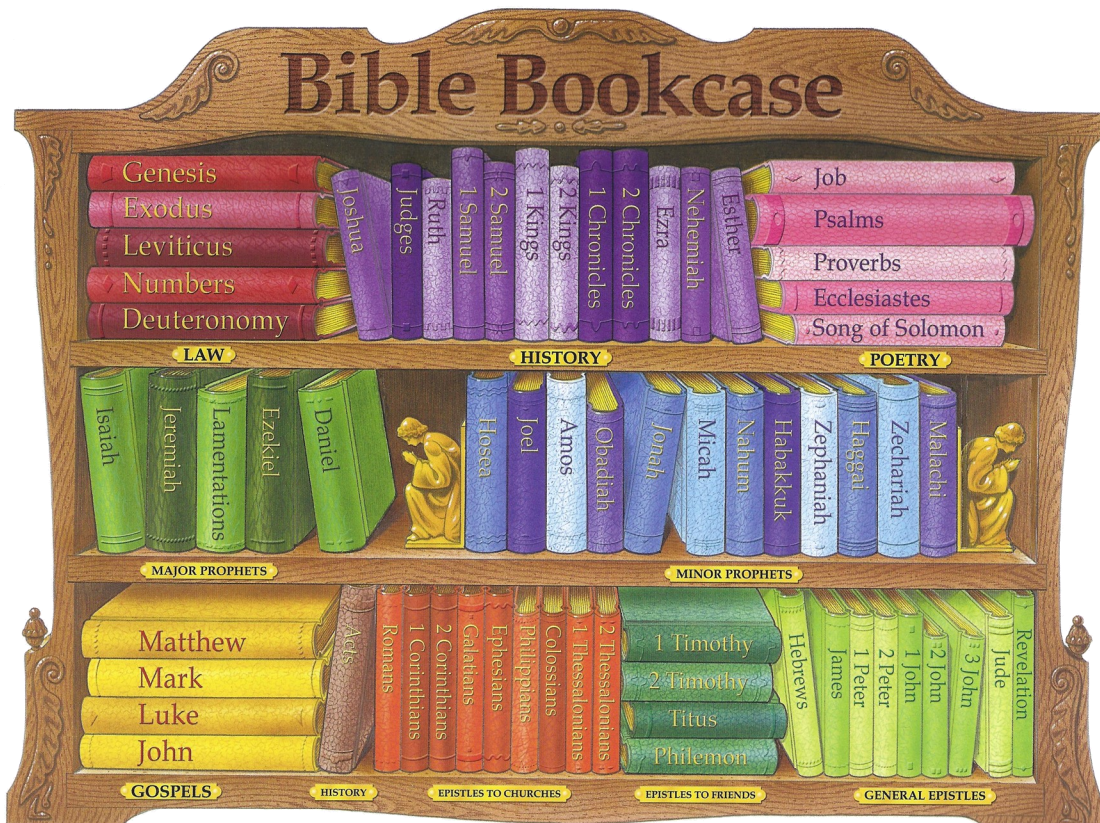
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From Rose Book of Bible Maps and Time Lines

The Protestant Bible consists of 66 books, 29 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

OLD Testament:

Pentateuch - 5 books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Historical Books - 12 books

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

Poetic books- 5 books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Prophetic books- 17 books

Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

NEW Testament:

Historical Books—5

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—(The 4 Gospels) and Acts

Pauline Epistles—13

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

General Epistles—8

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

Prophetic Book—1

Revelation

What people have said about the bible

“It is impossible to rightly govern the world without the Bible.” (George Washington)

“That book, sir, is the rock on which our Republic rests.” (Andrew Jackson)

“But for this Book we could not know right from wrong. I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man.” (Abraham Lincoln)

“I am busily engaged in the study of the Bible. I believe it is God’s word because it finds me where I am.” (Abraham Lincoln)

“Of the many influences that have shaped the United States into a distinctive nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.” (Ronald Reagan)

“We rest with assurance upon the impregnable rock of the Holy Scripture.” (Winston Churchill)

“Believe me, sir, never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed.” (Gen. Douglas Mac-Arthur)

“In all my perplexities and distresses, the Bible has never failed to give me light and strength.” (Robert E. Lee)

(upon hearing Philippians 4:11-13 read as he lay dying): “He that was Paul’s Christ is my Christ too.” (Oliver Cromwell)

“It pierces through the Intellect and plays directly upon the heart.” (Arnold J. Toynbee, historian)

“I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the will and the Word of God” (Daniel Webster)

“Young men, my advice to you is that you cultivate an acquaintance with, and a firm belief in, the Holy Scriptures.” (Benjamin Franklin)

“Without the Bible the education of a child in the present state of society is impossible.” (Leo Tolstoy)

“Within this awful volume lies the Mystery of mysteries” (Sir Walter Scott)

“It is the best Book that ever was or ever will be in the world...” (Charles Dickens)

“The Bible is the unfailing guide which points the way for men to the perfect life.” (J. Edgar Hoover)

“In the Bible I find a confidence mightier than the utmost evil.” (Helen Keller)

“Let us give in and yield our assent to the authority of Holy Scriptures, which knows not how either to be deceived or to deceive...” (John Chrysostom)

“They were spoken and written by God through men who spoke of God...Let no man add to them, neither let him take aught from these.” (Athanasius)

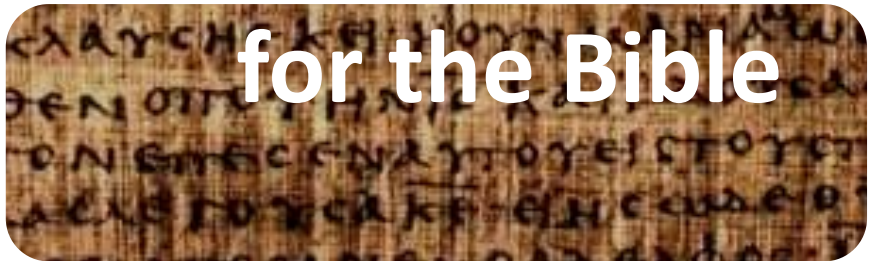
“For my part, I believe that not one jot or tittle of the divine instruction is in vain. We are never to say that there is anything impertinent or superfluous in the Scriptures of the Holy Spirit...” (Origen)

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.” (Jerome)

After spending 42 years studying Eastern books, he compared them with the Bible and said, “Pile them, if you will on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side—all by itself, all alone—and with a wide gap between them. For...there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly and forever...a veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought.”

Professor M. Montiero-Williams, former Boden Professor of Sanskrit

An Apolo- for the Bible



Transmission and Preservation

How did we get the Bible... What was it written on... How was it copied?

The text of the Bible is the best attested of any ancient writing and while a single autographa is not extant we can be confident that we have the very words of the original. Ancient copies of the Bible number in the tens of thousands while most other ancient works are known in a single manuscript. The volume of manuscripts confirm the accuracy of the text we now have and know as the Bible.

Autographa = an original copy of a writing

Matt Slick writes:

“The New Testament is constantly under attack and its reliability and accuracy are often contested by critics. But, if the critics want to disregard the New Testament, then they must also disregard other ancient writings by Plato, Aristotle, and Homer. This is because the New Testament documents are better-preserved and more numerous than any other ancient writings. Because they are so numerous, they can be cross checked for accuracy... and they are very consistent.”

Currently there are about 5,700 Greek New Testament manuscripts. If we were to compare the number of New Testament manuscripts to other ancient writings, we find that the New Testament manuscripts far outweigh the others in quantity.

The internal consistency of the New Testament documents is about 99.5% textually pure. That is an amazing accuracy. In addition there are over 19,000 copies in the Syriac, Latin, Coptic, and Aramaic languages. The total supporting New Testament manuscript base is over 24,000.

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Approximate Time Span between original & copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Lucretius	died 55 or 53 B.C.		1100 yrs	2	----
Pliny	61-113 A.D.	850 A.D.	750 yrs	7	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 yrs	7	----
Demosthenes	4th Cent. B.C.	1100 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Herodotus	480-425 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Suetonius	75-160 A.D.	950 A.D.	800 yrs	8	----
Thucydides	460-400 B.C.	900 A.D.	1300 yrs	8	----
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1300 yrs	9	----
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200	10	----
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000	10	----
Livy	59 BC-AD 17	----	???	20	----
Tacitus	circa 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400	49	----
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	1000 A.D.	1400 yrs	193	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (50-100 A.D.)	2nd Cent. A.D. (c. 130 A.D. f.)	less than 100 years	5600	99.5%

Almost all biblical scholars agree that the New Testament documents were all written before the close of the First Century. If Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., then that means that the entire New Testament was completed within 70 years. This is important because it means there were plenty of people around when the New Testament documents were penned who could have contested the writings. In other words, those who wrote the documents knew that if they were inaccurate, plenty of people would have pointed it out. But, we have absolutely no ancient documents contemporary with the First Century that contest the New Testament texts.

Furthermore, another important aspect is the fact that we have a fragment of the gospel of John that dates back to around 29 years from the original writing (John Rylands Papyri 125 A.D.—P52). This is extremely close to the original writing date. This is simply unheard of in any other ancient writing and it demonstrates that the Gospel of John is a First Century document.



The Texts

The term “transmission” describes the ancient process of copying Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to preserve them for future generation and to distribute them for greater use. Since there were no copy machines, the texts had to be copied by hand. In this way they were “transmitted.”

Writing Materials

The original writings of scripture were done on a variety of materials.

- Stone – Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 5:22; Joshua 8:31,32
- Papyrus (made by pressing and gluing two layers of split papyrus reeds to form a sheet) – perhaps mentioned in 2 John 12 (“paper”) and Revelation 5:1 (“scroll/book”)
- Animal skins (vellum – calf or antelope, parchment – sheep or goat, leather – cow or bull) – 2 Timothy 4:13 mentions parchment.

To inscribe on these materials a variety of tools were used, including stylus, chisel, pen and ink.

The copying process of the Old Testament (originally written in Hebrew)

- Early copying

At first, during the Old Testament era, the only copies of the scriptures were kept at the temple (At first only the 1st 5 books – the Law). For many years, even the copies of the Law were lost, until they were found during Josiah’s reign (2 Kings 22:8-23:3). As the books of history (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, etc.), the books of poetry (Job, Psalms, etc.) and the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.) were written and gathered together, scribes began to copy the scriptures for use in various synagogues and for private purchase and study.

- The Masoretes

The Masoretic scribes (A.D. 500-1000) in charge of the Old Testament manuscript copying used a very meticulous system of transcription and had a deep reverence for the text. God used their almost obsessive respect for the text to preserve the text’s accuracy. They had specific rules on the type of ink and the quality and size of parchment sheets. No individual letter could be written down without having looked back at the copy in front of them. The scribe could not write God’s name with a newly dipped pen (lest it blotch) and even if the king should address him, while writing God’s name, he should take no notice of him. They were so meticulous that they counted all the paragraphs, words and even letters, so they could know by counting, if they had done it perfectly. They knew the middle letter of each book so they could count back and see if they had missed anything.

- Existing Old Testament manuscripts

1. Masoretic manuscripts

We actually have very few complete or nearly complete Old Testament manuscripts existing today. There are 4 or 5 really significant Masoretic manuscripts that are the basis of the best Hebrew Bible available today. These copies were made between about A.D. 900 and A.D. 1000 by the Masoretes.

2. The Septuagint evidence

The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language which was made in the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. There are about 300 existing copies of the Septuagint. This was the common Hebrew Bible used and quoted by Jesus and the apostles (who lived in a Greek culture, of course).

Although written in Greek, scholars can generally determine what Hebrew words were being translated in the Septuagint. It provides evidence that the Hebrew Bibles were copied extremely well for all the years between the Septuagint translation (2nd/3rd century B.C.) and our best existing Hebrew copies (A.D. 900-1000).

- The Dead Sea Scrolls

Since the oldest complete copy of a Hebrew Old Testament in existence is dated about A.D. 1000, that's a long time after the originals were written (1450-400 B.C.). But there are portions that date back farther. Most significant are the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in caves in 1947 by an Arabian shepherd boy. These well-preserved Hebrew text fragments date back to 100 B.C. They include many Bible portions, including some complete books. Their value to the credibility of our Bible is that amazingly, there is virtual agreement between these Hebrew texts and the ones dated 1,100 years later! This proves how accurately the scribes copied for all those years.

The evidence shows that our Old Testaments today are extremely accurate reflections of the original manuscripts.

The copying process of the New Testament (originally written in Greek)

- The types of Greek manuscripts

The New Testament books were originally written in papyrus sheets (plant material – see above) or parchment (animal skin – see above). Writing at that time was done all in capital letters with no punctuation or division between words (uncial). So all the copies from the 1st to about the 6th century A.D. were done that way. (This form is sometimes responsible for confusion by Greek textual scholars today who need to determine where one word stops and the next begins.) By the 7th or 8th centuries, Greek manuscripts were put into small letters with punctuation, word, and paragraph divisions (miniscule). Both types of ancient manuscripts exist today.

- The reliability of Greek manuscripts

The reliability of the New Testament Greek texts is even more certain than the Old Testament texts. The New Testament was written between A.D. 45 – A.D. 90. Some fragments of Greek texts exist that date back to A.D. 120 and A.D. 150. That's only 35-100 years after the originals that Paul, John, Luke and others wrote! Another big help to Greek textual scholars is the fact that there are 4,000-5,000 New Testament Greek manuscripts (partial or complete) existing. By comparing these many copies, scholars can weed out many possible copying mistakes.

So there are two factors confirming that the Greek texts, available to scholars today, are very accurate reflections of the original writing. 1) We have copies dated closely to the time of the original writing. 2) We have lots of copies.

Once again we see that God has sovereignly preserved His word in virtually accurate form. We can be confident that the Greek texts, used by scholars making modern translations are very accurate.

- Note on some differences in English translations.

Sometimes as we compare two translations of the New Testament, we find a substantial difference, such as verses or phrases being omitted (John 5:3-4; 7:53-8:11; Mark 16:9-20; 1 John 3:7,8, etc.). Some modern Bibles (NIV) also footnote a lot of smaller details (words, etc.) that differ in some manuscripts.

The debate centers on two theories about which Greek manuscripts are the best. One theory (Critical text view) is that the oldest manuscripts are the most accurate. The theory is that the oldest manuscripts are most significant although they are few. The other theory (Majority text view) is that the type of manuscripts that survived in greatest numbers are the most accurate (even if they are less ancient). Most modern translations are based on the Critical textual theory (NIV, NASV, RSV, etc.). The King James and the New King James Versions are based on the Majority textual theory.

This explains why occasionally a significant disagreement is found in the New Testament between the KJV and Modern Translations (Example: Are Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 really part of the inspired text of the New Testament – see notes in the New International Version for the Critical Text View). This writer prefers the Majority text theory behind the KJV, although most of the modern versions may still be preferred by most English readers for overall accuracy and readability.

Regardless, the discrepancies are usually not major. Scholars and interpreters will continue to debate the theories, but no major doctrines or principles are affected by the discrepancies between Greek text and the resultant English versions of the Bible.

The Books of the Bible

The Old Testament

The first divisions were made prior to the Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. The Pentateuch was divided into 154 groupings called seradim which was to provide lessons that would cover a three year cycle. Later the Prophets were sectioned (around 165 B.C.) and some 1500 years later the chapter divisions we see today were assigned (around 1330 A.D.).



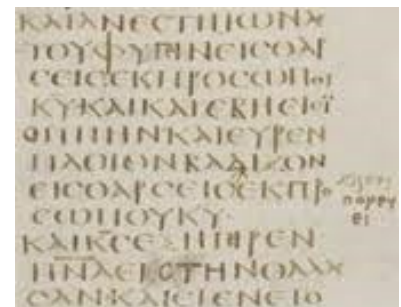
The first verses were actually space indicators between words as the words were run together continuously. However these spacing were not standardized until around 900 A.D.

The New Testament

The first paragraph divisions were made as early as 250 A.D. The Codex Vaticanus (350 A.D.) has chapter divisions in the margins but they are much smaller than the ones we have today.

Geisler and Nix write:

“It wasn’t until the thirteenth century that those sections were changed, and only then gradually. Stephen Langton, a professor at the University of Paris and afterward Archbishop of Canterbury, divided the Bible into the modern chapter divisions (about 1227). That was prior to the introduction of moveable type in printing. Since the Wycliffe Bible (1382) followed that pattern, those basic divisions have been the virtual base upon which the Bible has been printed to this very day.”



Verse markings similar to what we have in our modern Bibles did not appear in the New Testament until the middle of the sixteenth century. They followed the development of chapters, apparently in an effort to further facilitate cross-references and make public reading easier. The first occurrence of verses appears in the fourth edition of the Greek New Testament published by Robert Stephanus in 1551.

An Apolo- for the Bible

The Revelation of the Word of God

The Claim of the Bible

Even a casual reader of the Bible will soon discover he is reading a very unusual book. Even though he may not accept its claims, a careful and reflective reading will demonstrate, for most at least, that this book is not only unique, but makes some very unique claims. The following are a number of evidences that support this uniqueness.

Internal Evidence

In hundreds of passages, the Bible declares or takes the position explicitly or implicitly that it is nothing less than the very Word of God.

Some thirty-eight hundred times the Bible declares, “God said,” or “Thus says the Lord” (e.g. Ex. 14:1; 20:1; Lev. 4:1; Num. 4:1; Deut. 4:2; 32:48; Isa. 1:10, 24; Jer. 1:11; Ezek. 1:3; etc.). Paul also recognized that the things he was writing were the Lord’s commandments (1 Cor. 14:37), and they were acknowledged as such by the believers (1 Thess. 2:13). Peter proclaimed the certainty of the Scriptures and the necessity of heeding the unalterable and certain Word of God (2 Pet. 1:16-21). John too recognized that his teaching was from God; to reject his teaching was to reject God (1 John 4:6).¹⁷

For other passages which either declare or assume the Bible as God’s Word see Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 17-18; Joshua 1:8-9; 8:32-35; 2 Samuel 22:31; Ps. 1:2; 12:6; 19:7-11; 93:5; 119:9, 11, 18, 89-93, 130; Prov. 30:5-6; Matthew 5:17-19; 22:29; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; John 2:22; 5:24; 10:35; Acts 17:11; Romans 10:17; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 1:2; 22:18.

But isn’t this a circular kind of argument, and is that a valid argument? In a court of law, the accused has the right to testify on his own behalf. That testimony should be considered in the light of the evidence. In this case, the evidence, both external and internal, strongly supports the claims of the Bible.

In response to those who would reject the above-mentioned argument, it should be noted that the writers who made those claims for the Scripture were trustworthy men who defended the integrity of the Scripture at great personal sacrifice. Jeremiah received his message directly from the Lord (Jer. 11:1-3), yet because of his defense of the Scripture some attempted to kill him (Jer. 11:21); even his family rejected him (Jer. 12:6). Counterfeit prophets were readily recognized (Jer. 23:21, 32; 28:1-17). However, the Bible’s claims should not be understood as arguing in a circle or by circular reasoning. The testimony of reliable witnesses—particularly of Jesus, but also of others such as Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, and Nehemiah in the Old Testament, and John and Paul in the New Testament—affirmed the authority and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.¹⁸

The ever present assumption of the writers of the Bible is that the Bible is the God-breathed Word of God. A good illustration is seen in Psalm 19:7-11 which not only declares the Bible to be the Word of God, but identifies six perfections with corresponding transformations of human character that the Bible will produce in those who study and apply it in faith.

External Evidence

- **The continuity of the Bible.** One of the amazing facts about the Bible is that though it was written by a wide diversity of authors (as many as 40) over a period of 1600 years, from many different locations and under a wide variety of conditions, the Bible is uniquely one book, not merely a collection of sixty-six books. Its authors came from all walks of life. Some were kings, some peasants, still others were philosophers, fishermen, physicians, statesmen, scholars, poets, and farmers. They lived in a variety of cultures, in different experiences and often were quite different in their make up. Regardless of this diversity, as one book, it is:

... bound together by historical sequence, type and antitype, prophecy and fulfillment, and by the anticipation,

presentation, realization, and exaltation of the most perfect Person who ever walked on earth and whose glories are manifest in heaven.¹⁹

Enns has an interesting comparison as it pertains to the Bible's continuity. He writes:

The divine origin of the Bible is further seen in considering the continuity of its teaching despite the unusual nature of its composition. It stands distinct from other religious writings. For example, the Islamic Koran was compiled by an individual, Zaid ibn Thabit, under the guidance of Mohammed's father-in-law, Abu-Bekr. Additionally, in A.D. 650, a group of Arab scholars produced a unified version and destroyed all variant copies to preserve the unity of the Koran. By contrast, the Bible came from some forty different authors from diverse vocations in life. For instance, among the writers of Scripture were Moses, a political leader; Joshua, a military leader; David, a shepherd; Solomon, a king; Amos, a herdsman and fruit pincher; Daniel, a prime minister; Matthew, a tax collector; Luke, a medical doctor; Paul, a rabbi; and Peter, a fisherman.²⁰

Summing up the significance of the Bible's continuity, Enns writes,

It is apparent that many of the writers did not know of the other writers of Scripture and were unfamiliar with the other writings, inasmuch as the writers wrote over a period of more than fifteen hundred years, yet the Bible is a marvelous, unified whole. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies within its pages. The Holy Spirit is the unifier of the sixty-six books, determining its harmonious consistency. In unity these books teach the triunity of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the fall and depravity of man, as well as salvation by grace. It quickly becomes apparent that no human being(s) could have orchestrated the harmony of the teachings of the Scripture. The divine authorship of the Bible is the only answer.²¹

Speaking of the Bible as "a phenomenon which is explainable in but one way—it is the word of God," the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote,

"It is not such a book as man would write if he *could*, or could write if he *would*."²² It is beyond the scope of man's capacity to write a book like the Bible under the conditions describes above apart from its divine origin.

- **The Bible's revelation of God.** The Bible's revelation of God is unique among all the religious writings of either antiquity or of more modern times. While the Bible is a very ethical book, it never divorces its code of morality from a personal relationship with the God of the Bible, teaching that God's laws are not meant to hinder joy and pleasure, but to enhance man's capacity to know and love God and people. Morality is to be a product of knowing and loving the God of the Bible (Deut. 4:4-6; Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31).

In addition, no other religious writing presents both the absolute holiness of God combined with God's love, mercy, and grace that reaches out to sinful man who has been separated from God not only because of man's sin, but because of God's absolute holiness. One of the great revelations and themes of the Bible is that which is expressed by Isaiah, "holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13a).

While other contemporary writers were primarily polytheistic, the Bible is monotheistic. It presents a monotheistic concept of God rather than the polytheism which was so flagrant in the days when the Scriptures were written. Furthermore, when later holy books like the Koran and others presented a monotheistic concept of God, the Bible remained unique because it is the only book about God that presents God as one (monotheism) yet one in three persons, the Triunity or Trinity. Indeed, the Bible's revelation of God is one that is starkly different from the ones depicted in all other holy books whether of antiquity or of modern times.

- **The nature, condition, and cure for man's sin.** Only the Bible describes man's condition in sin as it really is and demonstrates the impossibility for man to deal with his sin and sinfulness apart from God's grace solution in the person and death of His Son. Every other religion in the world, past and present, has man seeking to obtain his own salvation or gain God's favor by some form of human works or religious activity. Only the Bible presents a solution for man's sin that is truly life changing, when properly embraced and believed.

- **The ethics and morals of the Bible.** The ethics and morals of the Bible cover all areas of human conduct from the home, the husband/wife relationships, parent/child relationships, to human conduct in society as with employers and employees, neighbors and enemies, and the state and its citizens. It covers morals on all levels as well as business, economic, and social spheres. But as mentioned previously, the ethics and morals of the Bible are unique in that they are always related to one's belief in the existence of God and one's relationship with Him; in this way, the motives themselves are judged. Ethics and morals are never simply a matter of outward conformity to the moral standards of Scripture as other religions or religious books do. The emphasis of the Bible is "search me O God, and know my heart."
- **Fulfilled prophecy.** Another amazing illustration of the divine origin and uniqueness of the Bible is its many fulfilled prophecies.

Throughout Scripture, hundreds of prophecies were made by Old Testament writers concerning the Messiah, the future kingdom on earth, the restoration of Israel as a nation, and their return to their Promised Land. In the New Testament also many predictions are made of events to come. As Scripture unfolds, about half of these prophecies have already been fulfilled, but others, following the same pattern of literal fulfillment, are subject to fulfillment in the future. The perfect precision of prophecy extending to such details as the place of Christ's birth, the character of His execution, the very words He would speak on the cross testify to the absolute accuracy of the Word of God. In Scripture, prophecy is just as accurate as history.²³

- **The Bible as Revelation Beyond Human Comprehension.**

The extent of Bible revelation is beyond human comprehension. Like a telescope, the Bible reaches beyond the stars and penetrates the heights of heaven and the depths of hell. Like a microscope, it discovers the minutest details of God's plans and purposes as well as the hidden secrets of the human heart. The Bible deals as freely with things unknown as it does with the known. It can speak with complete freedom and assurance about situations and events outside the realm of human experience. The Bible knows no limits to the infinite knowledge of God who guided its writers. It permits its readers to gaze on events in eternity past as well as in eternity future. The comprehension of divine revelation is utterly beyond the capacity of even the most brilliant men unaided by the Spirit of God.²⁴

Other unique features of the Bible that give evidence of its divine origin are its *types and antitypes*, its nature as unique *literature*, its *scientific accuracy* when compared to true science, its *enduring freshness*, and its *power to change lives*.²⁵

God's Special Revelation

Definition of Revelation

The term revelation comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis* (ἀποκάλυψις), which means "a disclosure" or "an unveiling." It is used in the New Testament of the disclosure of truth in general (Luke 2:32; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:17), of the disclosure of a specific area of truth (2 Cor. 12:1; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3), of the second coming of Christ (1 Cor. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13), and of the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1). Theologically, Bible students use this word to signify God's work of revealing Himself to mankind through the various sources of revelation as in creation (Rom. 1:18-21; Ps. 19), in providential acts (Acts 14:17; Rom. 8:28), in miracles (John 20:30-31), through direct acts of communication (Ex. 3:1-9; Acts 22:17-21), through the person of Christ (John 1:14, 18), and through the Bible.

What then is revelation? Thiessen defines it as:

... that act of God whereby he discloses himself or communicates truth to the mind; whereby he makes manifest to his creatures that which could not be known in any other way. The revelation may occur in a single, instantaneous act, or it may extend over a long period of time; and this communication of himself and his truth may be perceived by the human mind in varying degrees of fullness.²⁶

Erickson defines "revelation" as:

"By special revelation we mean God's manifestation of himself to particular persons at definite times and places, enabling those persons to enter into a redemptive relationship with him."²⁷

The concept of revelation falls into two principal divisions or areas: (1) general, natural, or original, and (2) special, supernatural, or soteriological. The first pertains to revelation revealed through nature and history, the second to what God has revealed as He intervenes in human history to reveal Himself in supernatural ways.

General or Natural Revelation

By general revelation, we mean revelation that is simply general in its extent. Ryrie explains:

General revelation is exactly that—general. It is general in its scope; that is, it reaches to all people (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17). It is general in geography; that is, it encompasses the entire globe (Ps. 19:2). It is general in its methodology; that is, it employs universal means like the heat of the sun (vv. 4-6) and human conscience (Rom. 2:14-15). Simply because it is a revelation that thus affects all people wherever they are and whenever they have lived it can bring light and truth to all, or, if rejected, brings condemnation.²⁸

General revelation comes to mankind in a number of ways (creation, order and design, the nature of man as an intelligent being), but the most obvious and powerful means of general revelation is nature or creation. As powerful and universal as this is, however, it is inadequate or has certain limitations. It cannot tell us about the love and grace of God nor of His perfect holiness. Furthermore, creation does not tell us of God's plan of salvation nor how man may procure that salvation. Still, general revelation "is nonetheless an important antecedent to salvation. General revelation is God revealing certain truths and aspects about His nature to all humanity, which revelation is essential and preliminary to God's special revelation."²⁹

Creation

Creation as a part of God's general revelation affirms certain facts about God. Two key passages emphasize God's general revelation in creation:

- **Psalm 19:1-6** affirms (a) the heavens declare the fact of God's glory to the human race throughout the earth (vs. 1), (b) that this revelation is constant, occurring "day to day" and "night to night" (vs. 2), that (c) it is a nonverbal revelation, "there is no speech, nor are there words, their voice is not heard," (v. 3), and (d) its scope is worldwide, "Their line [sound] has gone out through all the earth, And their utterance to the end of the world" (v. 4). "Being unrestricted by the division of languages, natural revelation transcends human communication without the use of speech, words, and sounds. To those who are inclined to hear, revelation comes with no regard for linguistic or geographical barriers."³⁰

No one is excluded from this revelation of God. Wherever man peers at the universe, there is orderliness. At a distance of ninety-three million miles from the earth, the sun provides exactly the right temperature environment for man to function on earth. Were the sun closer, it would be too hot to survive, and were it further away it would be too cold for man to function. If the moon were closer than two hundred forty thousand miles the gravitational pull of the tides would engulf the earth's surface with water from the oceans. Wherever man looks in the universe, there is harmony and order. Similarly, God has revealed Himself on earth (v. 1). The magnificence of the human body is perhaps the best evidence of general revelation on earth. The entire human body—its cardiovascular system, the bone structure, the respiratory system, the muscles, the nervous system including its center in the brain—reveals an infinite God.³¹

- **Romans 1:18-21** develops the truth of general revelation through creation even further. It draws our attention to four vital characteristics of what the revelation of God in creation does. (a) It is a clear testimony, being clearly seen by the things which are made (vss. 19 and 20). (b) The word "understood" (noew, "of rational reflection, inner contemplation, *perceive, apprehend, understand ...*")³² indicates this general revelation goes beyond mere perception; creation's revelation is such that it is expected to result in reflection so there is a conclusion drawn about the Creator. (c) As Psalm 19 affirms, this testimony is constant being witnessed "since the creation of the world" (vs. 20). And (d) it is limited in what it reveals; only certain aspects about God's invisible qualities or nature are revealed, specifically, "his eternal power and divine nature."

As mentioned previously, to learn of God's love, grace, and plan of salvation, one must turn to God's special revelation, the Bible, and the revelation of His Son (John 1:14, 18). Natural revelation, however, is more than sufficient to make mankind responsible and to show he is "without excuse" for his indifference and failure to seek to know God and to be thankful.

Providence and Human Conscience

In addition to creation, God has also revealed Himself to the human race through His providential goodness in the world and through the human conscience.

It is through His providential goodness in supplying people with sunshine and rain that enables them to live and function (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15-17). Paul reminds the people at Lystra that God's providential goodness was a witness to them (Acts 14:17). God's providential control is also evident in His dealing with the nations. He disciplined His disobedient people Israel (Deut. 28:15-68) but will also restore them (Deut. 30:1-10); He judged Egypt for sinning against Israel (Ex. 7-11); He raised the nations to power and also caused their demise (Dan. 2:21a, 31-43).

Further, God has revealed Himself through conscience. Romans 2:14-15 indicates God has placed intuitional knowledge concerning Himself within the heart of man. "Man intuitively knows not only that God values goodness and abhors evil but also that he is ultimately accountable to such a righteous Power." (Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, p. 231.) While the Jews will be judged according to the written law, Gentiles, who do not have the written Law, will be judged according to an unwritten law, the law of conscience written on their hearts. Moreover, Paul says the conscience acts as a legal prosecutor (v. 15). "Conscience may be regarded as an inner monitor, or the voice of God in the soul, that passes judgment on man's response to the moral law within" (Ibid., pp. 232-33).³³

While God has revealed Himself in His creation, which gives us general revelation about God, and in the person of Jesus Christ, which gives us revelation of God incarnate, our focus in bibliology is on the revelation of God in the Bible, the written Word of God. As God's Word the Bible reveals much more about God than can be known from nature or creation or even through the person Christ.

Accordingly, the Bible may be regarded as completing the intended divine revelation of God partially revealed in nature, more fully revealed in Christ, and completely revealed in the written Word.

Special Revelation

The Nature of Special Revelation

This section will examine how God has revealed Himself in special revelation. The nature of this mode of revelation is that it consists primarily of *words*. The author of Hebrews reminds us that God has made Himself known by speaking long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, and in these last days has spoken to us in *His Son* (Heb. 1:1-2a). There are three elements to special revelation: specific times, specific modes, and specific persons. Later, still dealing with this special revelation that reveals our "so great salvation," the author of Hebrews says:

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Heb. 1:1-2).

Again we see the same elements: a *specific mode* (special revelation embodied in words), at a *specific time* (during the life of Christ and the apostles), and in *specific persons* (those who heard the Lord, His apostles whose teaching or words were confirmed by signs and wonders). This was precisely in keeping with Christ's own words in John 16:12-15.

Special revelation involves a narrower focus than general revelation and is restricted to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures. Of course, all that is known of Christ is through the Scriptures; therefore, it can be said that special revelation is restricted to the Scriptures.³⁴

The Necessity of Special Revelation

Why does man need special revelation? Special revelation is needed because of man's blind and sinful condition caused by his fall as recorded in Genesis 3, a blindness that is made even stronger by the blinding activity of Satan (cf. Eph. 4:17-19 with 2 Cor. 4:4). This necessitated the need for special revelation so God could reveal Himself and His plan of salvation that man in turn might be reconciled from his condition of alienation and restored to fellowship with God.

God's special revelation of Himself centers in the Person of Jesus Christ as the only One who fully reveals both God and His plan of salvation; Jesus is the heart and testimony of Scripture in its promises and fulfillment and the means of salvation (John 1:14, 18; 3:16-18; 6:63; 14:6; Heb. 1:3; 2:3; Rev. 19:10).

In addition to the above, man needs special revelation for two more important reasons. First, so he correctly interpret the truths revealed in general revelation, and second, because these general truths are very limited. As is obvious from the many religions of the world, man consistently misinterprets what he can learn from creation or providence. Therefore, man desperately needs God's special or supernatural revelation.

The Avenues of Special Revelation

Drawing on his knowledge of the Old Testament and the testimony of those who had personally heard the Lord Jesus, the author of Hebrews speaks of the various ways God has spoken to reveal Himself in history through the prophets and then through His Son who is the very outshining of God (Heb. 1:1-2). Ryrie gives us an excellent summary of the various avenues God has used to reveal Himself.

- The Lot: While today we would not highly regard the use of the lot, it did serve sometimes to communicate the mind of God to man (Prov. 16:33; Acts 1:21-26).
- The Urim and Thummim: The breastplate which the high priest wore in the Old Testament was a square piece of beautiful material which was folded in half and open at the top like a pouch. It was adorned with twelve precious stones on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Urim and Thummim possibly were two precious stones placed inside the pouch which were used, like the lot, to determine God's will (Ex. 28:30, Num. 27:21, Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6, Ezra 2:63).
- Dreams: God apparently used dreams to communicate many times during the Old Testament period, and He will do so again at the time of the second coming of Christ (Gen. 20:3, 6; 31:11-13, 24; 40-41; Joel 2:28). Nonbelievers as well as believers experienced God-given dreams (Gen. 20:3; 31:24). Though a common experience, dreams were used by God in this special way to reveal truth.
- Visions: In a vision the emphasis seems to be on what is heard, while in a dream, on what is seen. Also the human being involved seems to be more active in receiving a vision (Isa. 1:1; 6:1; Ezek. 1:3).
- Theophanies: Before the Incarnation, theophanies were associated with the appearance of the Angel of the Lord who communicated the divine message to people (Gen. 16:7-14; Ex. 3:2; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12).
- Angels: God also uses created angels to carry His message to people (Dan. 9:20-21, Luke 2:10-11, Rev. 1:1). (Notice Rev. 19:17 where God will use an angel to communicate to birds!)
- The Prophets: Old Testament prophets brought God's message to mankind (2 Sam. 23:2; Zech. 1:1) as did New Testament prophets (Eph. 3:5). They spoke with authority because they were communicating the Word of the Lord. A preacher or teacher today does not qualify as a prophet since he proclaims or explains God's Word, previously given and encoded.
- Events: God's activity in history also constitutes a channel of revelation. Delivering the people of Israel from Egypt revealed the righteous acts of the Lord, according to Micah 6:5. Acts of judgment reveal who God is (Ezek. 25:7). And, of course, the incarnation of Christ exegeted God (John 1:14). It does not go without saying today that these events have to be historical and factual in order also to be communicative; for today some are putting existential faith before the historical. In other words, they are attempting to create revelation apart from historical facts. Such existential historiography was never a part of the framework of the biblical writers.

Not only must the events be historical, but they also need to be interpreted through divine inspiration if we are to understand accurately their meaning. For example, many people were crucified; how do we know that the crucifixion of one Jesus of Nazareth paid for the sins of the world? The Word of special revelation clarifies and correctly interprets the obscurity of the meaning of events.

- Jesus Christ: Undebatably the incarnation of Jesus Christ was a major avenue of special revelation. He exegeted the Father (John 1:14), revealing the nature of God (14:9), the power of God (3:2), the wisdom of God (7:46), the glory of God (1:14), the life of God (1 John 1:1-3), and the love of God (Romans 5:8). Our Lord did all this by both His acts (John 2:11) and His words (Matt. 16:17).

- The Bible: Actually the Bible serves as the most inclusive of all the avenues of special revelation, for it encompasses the record of many aspects of the other avenues. Though God undoubtedly gave other visions, dreams, and prophetic messages that were not recorded in the Bible, we know no details of them. Too, all that we know about the life of Christ appears in the Bible, though, of course, not all that He did or said was recorded in the Scriptures (John 21:25). But the Bible is not simply the record of these other revelations from God; it also contains additional truth not revealed, for example, through the prophets or even during the earthly life of Christ. So the Bible, then, is both the record of aspects of special revelation and revelation itself.

The revelation in the Bible is not only inclusive yet partial, it is also accurate (John 17:17), progressive (Heb. 1:1), and purposeful (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Two approaches exist as to the credibility of the scriptural revelation. Fideists insist that the Scripture and the revelation it contains is self-authenticating, that is, autopistic. The infallibility of the Bible must be presupposed and can be because the Scripture says it is inspired and the Spirit accredits it. Empiricists, on the other hand, stress the intrinsic credibility of the revelation of the Bible as being worthy of belief, that is, axiopistic. The Bible's claim to authority is not in itself proof of its authority; rather there exist factual, historical evidences which constitute the Bible's credentials and validate the truth of its message. My feeling is that there is truth in both approaches so that both can and should be used.³⁵

17 Ibid, p. 154.

18 Ibid.

19 Chafer, p. 52.

20 Enns, pp. 154-155.

21 Enns, p. 155.

22 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1947-48, p. 22.

23 *Lewis Sperry Chafer Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Abridged Edition, Walvoord, Campbell, Zuck, p. 53.

24 Ibid., p. 51.

25 For further reading on these and the features mentioned above see Chafer's *Systematic Theology*, pp. 22-36, or the Abridged Edition of *Chafer's Theology* by Walvoord, Zuck, and Campbell, pp. 48-55.

26 Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1949, p. 31.

27 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 175.

28 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media.

29 Enns, p. 156.

30 *NIV Bible Commentary*, Kenneth Barker & John Kohlenberger III, Consulting Editors, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1994, electronic media.

31 Enns, pp. 156, 158.

32 Walter Bauer, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979, electronic version.

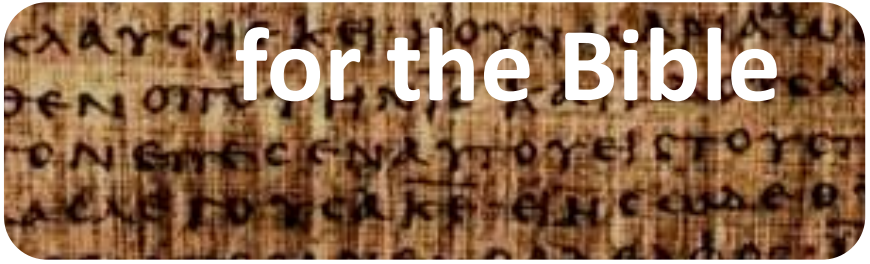
33 Enns, p. 158.

34 Enns, p. 158.

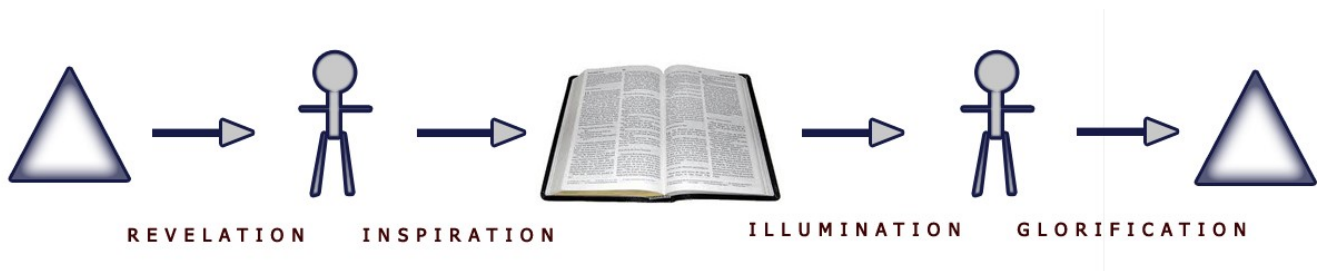
35 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media.

Voltaire (died in 1778) said that within 100 years of his time, Christianity would be swept away from existence and pass into the obscurity of history.

An Apolo- for the Bible



Revelation Process Illustrated



God's revelation to man undergoes several steps beginning with Him and ultimately ending with Him.

Revelation

First He has revealed Himself to us through the process of Revelation. First in natural or general revelation and then more precisely through special revelation He has made himself known to man. God has revealed Himself through many means including the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration

Man has then recorded this revelation in the writings we know as the Scriptures or the Bible. This was done through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Illumination

The process of illumination is whereby the Holy Spirit enlightens us to the meaning and understanding of His Word.

Glorification

With this understanding we should be driven to worship and service to Him bringing honor and glory to His name for His purpose.

**Notice that in each step the Holy Spirit is instrumental to the process.

the Bible

The Word of God

The Scriptures



Bible

Our English term *bible* is from the Greek word *biblion* (βιβλίον), which means “book” or “roll.”

The name comes from *Byblos* (βύβλος), which denoted the papyrus plant that grew in marshes or river banks, primarily along the Nile. Writing material was made from the papyrus plant by cutting the pith of the plant in one foot strips and setting it in the sun to dry. The strips were then laid in horizontal rows with rows of vertical strips glued to the horizontal rows in a criss-cross fashion similar to the way plywood is constructed today. The horizontal rows were smoother and became the writing surface. Sections of these strips were glued together to form a scroll up to thirty feet in length. Eventually, the plural form *biblia* (βιβλία) was used by Latin-speaking Christians to denote all the books of the Old and New Testaments.

Scripture

Another term used for the Bible is the word, “Scripture,” from the Greek γραφή, meaning “a writing, that which is written.” The plural is used collectively of the sacred writings as a whole, *the Scriptures* (i.e., the Old Testament, Matt. 21:42; 26:54; John 5:39; Rom. 15:4). The singular is sometimes used of the sacred writings as a whole (Rom. 4:3; John 7:42) and sometimes of a specific passage (Mark 12:10; 15:28; Luke 4:21). In the New Testament this term is used exclusively of the Scripture.

In the Old Testament this writing was recognized as carrying great authority (e.g. 2 Kings 14:6; 2 Chron. 23:18; Ezra 3:2; Neh. 10:34). The “writings” of the Old Testament were eventually collected into three groups called the law, prophets, and writings (or psalms). This was originally organized in a twenty-four book division beginning with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles. It contained the same books or content as the present thirty-nine book arrangement of the Old Testament, but with a different arrangement and division. These writings were formally combined into Old Testament canon. The statement, “the Scripture says,” is equivalent to “God says” (cf. Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Gal. 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18). To stress the character of these writings as sacred and unique, they are also described as “holy” or “sacred” (Rom. 1:2; 2 Tim. 3:15), and stated to be “inspired of God,” literally, “God-breathed.” Consequently, with God as the author behind the human authors, the Bible is both profitable and authoritative. The noun form, *scripture*, occurs fifty times in the New Testament (used mostly of the Bible) and the verb form, often found in a form meaning “it is written” or “it stands written,” is used about ninety times.

The Word of God

“The word of God” is another title used of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. This expression highlights the nature of the Bible as the revelation of God in written form as well as its source; it is the revelation from God. The Greek term used is *logos* (λογος), which means “a word as embodying a conception or idea, speech or discourse.” But it is also used of the “revelation of God, of God’s word, God’s command.” In Mark 7:13, “the word of God” is used of Moses’ command regarding honoring father and mother and is seen as equivalent to the phrase, “the commandment of God” (vs. 8). In Matthew 15:6, this expression is used specifically of the Law of Moses. In John 10:35, it is used of the Old Testament and further defined as Scripture. In Hebrews 4:12, the “word of God” is used of all Scripture, referring to both the Old and New Testaments.

The Oracles of God

Another term used of the Bible, especially of the Old Testament Scripture, is *logion*, a diminutive form of *logos* meaning, “an oracle, divine response or utterance.” It is used of Scripture in Romans 3:2 and Acts 7:38 where it is translated *oracles*. In Acts 7:38 the Old Testament law received on Mount Sinai is referred to as the *living oracles*.

Testament

A less common term for Scripture is the word *testament*. The Greek word is διαθήκη, “covenant, testament, will.” This term is used to distinguish between the Old and New Covenants, the Old Testament and the New Testament. In particular, the word is used in dealing with the specific, unique covenants of Scripture, but since these covenants are contained in God’s revelation, it is a synonym of the Scripture. Paul wrote about the “reading of the old covenant” (2 Cor. 3:14).

The Law

Another term often used in the New Testament for the Old Testament Scripture is *the law*. On the principle that the most authoritative part gives its name to the whole, sometimes the expression *the law* refers to the entire Old Testament. Under this principle and because the whole of the Old Testament is authoritative as God's Word of instruction to men, Jesus quoted from Psalm 82 in John 10:34 and referred to it as *the law*. In John 12:34, the multitudes answered Jesus and said, "We have heard out of the law that the Christ is to remain forever." Here again *the law* is used of the entire Old Testament for the passages in mind included other portions like Psalm 110:4, Isaiah 9:7, and Ezekiel 37:25, and the first five books of Moses.

The Law and the Prophets

Another expression used for the entire Old Testament is *the law and the prophets*. This particular expression looks at the Old Testament from the standpoint of its divisions—the law, the prophets, and the writings. Compare Matthew 5:17; 7:12; Luke 16:16; Romans 3:21. See also Luke 24:27 and 44.

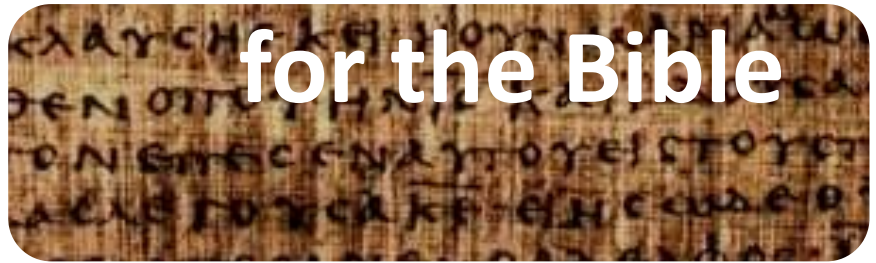
Other Terms Used of the Old Testament

Psalm 19:7-9 presents us with a number of synonyms in a six-fold description of God's special revelation, the Word of God. It is called *law*, God's revealed direction, or will; *testimony*, a witness of God's person and purpose; *precepts*, a general term for the responsibilities of God's people; *commandments*, God's authoritative words of instruction; *fear*, reverential trust that the Word produces in God's people; *judgments*, specific directions relating to different human circumstances.

Psalm 119, where devotion to the Word of God is the dominant theme, has even more terms used for the Word of God. The multiple terms used by the Psalmist convey the truth that the Word of God contains all we need for the life God wants to give us. At least nine different terms may be seen in Psalm 119—*law*, *testimonies*, *ways*, *precepts*, *statutes*, *commandments*, *judgments*, *word*, and *path*. Focusing on eight of these terms, the NIV Bible Commentary comments:

The psalmist uses eight words for God's law:

1. "Law" (*torah*—תּוֹרָה) occurs twenty-five times. In the broad sense it refers to any "instruction" flowing from the revelation of God as the basis for life and action. In the narrow sense it denotes the Law of Moses, whether the Pentateuch, the priestly law, or the Deuteronomic law.
2. "Word" (*dabar*—דָּבָר) is any word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. It is a general designation for divine revelation.
3. "Laws" (*mishpatim*—מִשְׁפָּטִים) pertain to particular legal issues ("case laws") that form the basis for Israel's legal system. God himself is the Great Judge.
4. "Statute(s)" (*eduth/edoth*) derives from the word that means "witness," "testify"; "testimony" is often synonymous with "covenant" (cf. 25:10; 132:12). The observance of the "statutes" of the Lord signifies loyalty to the terms of the covenant between God and Israel.
5. "Command(s)" (*mitswah/mitswoth*) is a frequent designation for anything that the Lord, the covenant God, has ordered.
6. "Decrees" (*huqqim*) is derived from the root for "engrave," "inscribe." God reveals his royal sovereignty by establishing his divine will in nature and in the covenant community.
7. "Precepts" (*piqqudim*) occurs only in the book of Psalms and appears to be synonymous with "covenant" (103:18) and with the revelation of God (111:7). Its root connotes the authority to determine the relationship between the speaker and the object.
8. "Word" or "promise" (*imrah*) may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised.



Canonicity of the Bible

<http://bible.org/seriespage/canonicity>

Introduction

The fact of the inspiration of the Bible as God's special revelation to man naturally leads to the question (since many other religious books were written during both the Old and New Testament periods) what particular books are canonical, that is, what books are inspired and should be recognized as a part of God's authoritative revelation? Are any inspired books missing? Are any books included that should not be in our Bible? Is our Old Testament Bible the same as the Lord's and is our New Testament the same as the Bible of the church fathers? These are obviously vital questions for the people of God to determine.

Meaning of "Canon" or "Canonicity"

The word *canon* is used to describe those books recognized as inspired of God. The word comes from the Greek *κανον* and most likely from the Hebrew *קֶנֶן* and Akkadian, *qanu*. Literally, it means

- a straight rod or bar;
- a measuring rule as a ruler used by masons and carpenters;
- a rule or standard for testing straightness.

Historically, the word was first used by the church of those doctrines that were accepted as the rule of faith and practice. The term came to be applied to the decisions of the Councils as rules by which to live. All these employ the word in the metaphorical sense of a rule, norm, or standard.

In the course of time, the terms *canon* and *canonical* came to be applied to the catalogue or list of sacred books distinguished and honored as belonging to God's inspired Word. "Greek Christians by the fourth century A.D. had given the word a quasi-technical religious meaning, applying it to the Bible, especially to the Jewish books."⁶⁰

... It is important to note that religious councils at no time had any power to cause books to be inspired, rather they simply recognized that which God had inspired at the exact moment the books were written.

Jews and conservative Christians alike have recognized the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as inspired. Evangelical Protestants have recognized the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as inspired. Roman Catholics have a total of eighty books because they recognize the Apocrypha as semicanonical.⁶¹

The Logical Necessity for a Canon of Scripture and Its Preservation

That God would provide and preserve a Canon of Scripture without addition or deletion is not only necessary, but it is logically credible. If we believe that God exists as an almighty God, then revelation and inspiration are clearly possible. If we believe in such a God, it is also probable that He would, out of love and for His own purposes and designs, reveal Himself to men. Because of man's obvious condition in sin and his obvious inability to meet his spiritual needs (regardless of all his learning and technological advances), special revelation revealed in a God-breathed book is not only possible, logical, and probable, but a necessity.

The evidence shows that the Bible is unique and that God is its author. The evidence declares that "all Scripture is God breathed and profitable ..." (2 Tim. 3:16) and that "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no

prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). In view of this, the logical question is: “Would it not be unreasonable for God to fail to providentially care for these inspired documents to preserve them from destruction and so guide in their collection and arrangement that they would all be present with none missing and none added that were not inspired?”⁶²

Important Considerations

There are a number of important considerations that must be kept in mind when considering the issue of canonicity or how the books of the Bible came to be recognized and held to be a part of the Bible. Ryrie summarizes these issues as follows:

1. *Self-authentication.* It is essential to remember that the Bible is self-authenticating since its books were breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16). In other words, the books were canonical the moment they were written. It was not necessary to wait until various councils could examine the books to determine if they were acceptable or not. Their canonicity was inherent within them, since they came from God. People and councils only recognized and acknowledged what is true because of the intrinsic inspiration of the books as they were written. No Bible book became canonical by action of some church council.
2. *Decisions of men.* Nevertheless, men and councils did have to consider which books should be recognized as part of the canon, for there were some candidates that were not inspired. Some decisions and choices had to be made, and God guided groups of people to make correct choices (not without guidelines) and to collect the various writings into the canons of the Old and New Testaments.
3. *Debates over canonicity.* In the process of deciding and collecting, it would not be unexpected that some disputes would arise about some of the books. And such was the case. However, these debates in no way weaken the authenticity of the truly canonical books, nor do they give status to those which were not inspired by God.
4. *Completion of canon.* Since A.D. 397 the Christian church has considered the canon of the Bible to be complete; if it is complete, then it must be closed. Therefore, we cannot expect any more books to be discovered or written that would open the canon again and add to its sixty-six books. Even if a letter of Paul were discovered, it would not be canonical. After all, Paul must have written many letters during his lifetime in addition to the ones that are in the New Testament; yet the church did not include them in the canon. Not everything an apostle wrote was inspired, for it was not the writer who was inspired but his writings, and not necessarily all of them.

The more recent books of the cults which are placed alongside the Bible are not inspired and have no claim to be part of the canon of Scripture. Certainly so-called prophetic utterances or visions that some claim to be from God today cannot be inspired and considered as part of God’s revelation or as having any kind of authority like that of the canonical books.⁶³

Canonicity of the Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible of today is substantially the same as the original writings, with only physical changes like the addition of vowel pointings, reading aids in the margins, and a change to a more open form of the letters, etc. In Romans 3:2 we are told that the “oracles of God,” the Old Testament Scripture, had been entrusted to the Jews; they were to be the custodians of the Old Testament. This precisely fits what we know about the Jews and the Old Testament. They have always been a people of one book who have guarded it with extreme care and precision. From the time of Ezra and even before, there were priests (Deut. 31:24-26) and later scribes called *sopherim* who were given the responsibility to copy and meticulously care for the sacred text so they could hand down the correct reading.

To ensure this accuracy, later scribes known as the Masoretes developed a number of strict measures to ensure that every fresh copy was an exact reproduction of the original. They established tedious procedures to protect the text against being changed. For instance, (a) when obvious errors were noted in the text, perhaps because a tired scribe nodded, the text was still not changed. Instead, a correction was placed in the margin called *qere* (קִרְיָה), “to be read,” and that which was written in the text was called, *kethibh*, “to be written.” (b) When a word was considered textually, grammatically, or exegetically questionable, dots were placed above that word. (c) Minute statistics were also kept as a further means of guarding against errors: in the Hebrew Bible at Leviticus 8:8, the margin has a reference that this verse is the middle verse of the Torah. According to the note at Lev. 10:16 the word *darash* is the middle word in the Torah, and at 11:42 we are assured that the *waw* in a Hebrew word there is the middle letter. At the end of each book are statistics as: the total number of verses in Deuteronomy is 955, the total in the entire Torah is 5,845; the total number of words is 97,856, and the total number of letters is 400,945.⁶⁴

In this we see something of the painstaking procedures the Jews went through to assure the accurate transmission of the text. Our English Bible is a translation of this Hebrew text which has been handed down to us. God made the Jews the custodians of the Old Testament record. Though their eyes may be blind to its truth (Isa. 6:10; John 12:40; Rom. 10:1-3; 11:7), they have guarded its transmission with great accuracy.

The original copies of the Old Testament were written on leather or papyrus from the time of Moses (c. 1450 B.C.) to the time of Malachi (400 B.C.). Until the sensational discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 we did not possess copies of the Old Testament earlier than A.D. 895. The reason for this is simply that the Jews had an almost superstitious veneration for the text which impelled them to bury copies that had become too old for use. Indeed, the Masoretes (traditionalists) who between A.D. 600 and 950 added accents and vowel points and in general standardized the Hebrew text, devised complicated safeguards for the making of copies (*as described above*) ... When the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, they gave us a Hebrew text from the second to first century B.C. of all but one of the books (Esther) of the Old Testament. This was of the greatest importance, for it provided a much earlier check on the accuracy of the Masoretic text, which has now proved to be extremely accurate.

Other early checks on the Hebrew text include the Septuagint translation (middle of third century B.C.), the Aramaic Targums (paraphrases and quotes of the Old Testament), quotations in early Christian writers, and the Latin translation of Jerome (A.D. 400) which was made directly from the Hebrew text of his day. All of these give us the data for being assured of having an accurate text of the Old Testament.⁶⁵

The Contents of the Old Testament Canon

The Three-fold Division

The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Old Testament contains twenty-four books, beginning with Genesis and ending with 2 Chronicles. Though this arrangement of the Old Testament is in only twenty-four books, the subject matter is identical with the thirty-nine book division of our Protestant English Bible. The difference is in the *order* and *division* of the arrangement of the books. The reason for this is that the Protestant canon of the Old Testament has been influenced by the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX) made about 250-160 B.C.

The Septuagint divided the books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah each into two, which makes eight instead of four. The Twelve Minor Prophets were divided into twelve, instead of being counted as one book as in the twenty-four book division. This adds fifteen making a total of the thirty-nine books as in the Protestant English Bible.

Since the year 1517, modern Hebrew Bibles divided the books into thirty-nine, but kept the three-fold division including the arrangement of the books (Genesis through 2 Chronicles) as in the ancient Hebrew Bible. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus said, "that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar." The murder Jesus spoke of is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22. Abel's death is recorded in Genesis and in the Hebrew Bible 2 Chronicles is the last book. In essence then, Christ was saying "from the first to the last murder in the Bible." This was equivalent to saying from Genesis to Malachi and demonstrated what He considered as the canon of the Old Testament.

This twenty-four book division in its three-fold division which became the thirty-nine book division is as follows:

1. *The Law* or The Pentateuch (5 books)—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
2. *The Prophets* (originally 8 books, then 21)
 - The Former Prophets (originally 4 books, then 6)—Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 & 2), Kings (1 & 2)
 - The Latter Prophets (originally 4 books, then 15)Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (3 books)Minor: The 12 (originally 1 book, then 12)
3. *The Writings* (originally 11 books, then 13)
 - Poetical (3 books) —Psalms, Proverbs, Job
 - The Rolls (5 books) —Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
 - Historical (originally 3 books, then 5) —Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (2), Chronicles (1 & 2)

... By the time of the New Testament this three-fold division was recognized (Luke 24:44). Other designations such as “The Scripture” (John 10:35) and “The Sacred Writings” (2 Tim. 3:15) suggest a generally accepted Old Testament canon. This three-fold division was also attested to by Josephus (A.D. 37-95), Bishop Melito of Sardis (ca. A.D. 170), Tertullian (A.D. 160-250), and others (Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Moody, Chicago, 1964, pp. 62-65). The Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90 is generally considered the occasion whereby the Old Testament canon was publicly recognized (while debating the canonicity of several books).

There is evidence of the manner in which the Old Testament books were recognized as canonical. Laird Harris (R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1969, pp. 62-65), traces the continuity of recognition: Moses was recognized as writing under the authority of God (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; cf. Josh. 8:31; 23:6). The criterion for acknowledging the Pentateuch was whether it was from God’s servant, Moses. Following Moses, God raised up the institution of prophecy to continue revealing Himself to His people (cf. Deut. 18:15-19; Jer. 26:8-15). The prophets to whom God spoke also recorded their revelation (cf. Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; Isa. 8:1; Ezek. 43:11). Harris concludes, “The law was accorded the respect of the author, and he was known as God’s messenger. Similarly, succeeding prophets were received upon due authentication, and their written works were received with the same respect, being received therefore as the Word of God. As far as the witness contained in the books themselves is concerned, this reception was immediate.” (Ibid., p. 167).⁶⁶

The Apostle Paul wrote, regarding the Old Testament, “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Cor. 10:11). The use of the Old Testament Scriptures by the church of Christ has been the subject of some debate from the early church fathers up to the present day. The debate is primarily concerned with the question of what writings are truly in the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures. The word “canon” is from a Greek word that means a “rule” or “standard”; in the second century Christian church it came to be understood as “revealed truth.” Yet for some Christians the “revealed truth” represented more than for others. Augustine is a fine example of this, as he “. . . regarded the church to be the custodian of Scripture and thus may easily have concluded that on matters of the extent of the canon the church had the authority to decide. . . Augustine seemed to consider church reception to be sufficient warrant for canonical authority; this he gave as the reason for accepting the Maccabean books as canonical.” Initially, it was not as if the canon itself was debated as much as it was looked at differently. Some held that the canon was extensive enough to encompass all the books read in the church for edification, which would include the Apocrypha and sometimes the Pseudepigrapha (anonymous apocalyptic writings). Others held that the canon was simply that of the Jewish Bible, representing also the Protestant Bibles of today. It was not until the age of the Reformation that the debate began to rage. In 1546 when the Council of Trent made a formal statement that all not accepting the selected Apocryphal writings should be damned, the Protestants retorted with an equally resolute voice.

The Non-Canonical Books

The non-canonical books which were excluded from the canon had a foot in the canonical door mainly by virtue of the disputed books’ arguments. The thought was, “If we can dispute about these five canonical books, can we not also dispute about these other books as being canonical too?” For the most part, the books in question from the Pseudepigrapha (anonymous authors) and Apocrypha could not be included in the canon, for one reason, because their date is much later than the previously attested date of the closing of the canon recognized by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BC. The confusion comes in that many of the books in question are impeccable historical sources, and are true in what they say, but truth does not necessarily equate with canonicity. The books such as 1 Maccabees, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus, just to name a few, contain great value in and of themselves. But value is not enough to warrant canonicity. Even within the book of such value as Ecclesiasticus are personal biases that Holy Scripture would not commend. The author, Jesus the son of Sira, reveals a great deal of his personal character as he “not only expresses his views quite frankly on a variety of subjects, making no secret, for instance, of his intense dislike for the fair ‘weaker’ sex (9:8; 23:22-27. . .).”

Augustine believed that some of the Apocrypha was inspired.

Nevertheless, in the heat of the argument, Augustine limits his Old Testament to the Jewish canon when he writes in his tract on ‘Faith of Things not Seen’ appealing to the Scriptures as follows: ‘Unless haply unbelieving men judge those things to have been written by Christians, in order that those things which they already believed might have greater weight of authority if they should be thought to have been promised before they came. If they suspect this let them examine carefully the codices of our enemies the Jews. There let them read those things of which we have made mention.’

“Philo, the Egyptian Jew of the first century AD, evidently accepted the twenty-two Hebrew books, for he quotes from many of them and from them only, as authoritative.” Jerome as well as Rufinus. . . were crystal clear on the matter [of not considering them canonical] but their reaction to the pressure exerted on them indicates that many leaders thought the additional

books ought to be recognized as inspired. . . Jerome yielded to the popular request in furnishing a translation to the church at large but never permitted his scholarly convictions to yield to the point of recognizing these books as canonical.

The Essene canon contained some of the Pseudepigrapha which they claimed to be divine. Most of these writings were midrash on canonized books and logically therefore would not be Scripture. For if the Pseudepigrapha contained a copy of a canonical book as well as commentary on it, why would it not negate the original canonical book, because the Pseudepigrapha with its inspired commentary would be much more valuable? In addition, "If they were conscious of being inspired, why did they not have the confidence to use their own names?" Even the quote in Jude 14 of 1 Enoch 1:9 does not require that 1 Enoch is Scripture. To quote what is true in Scripture is different than saying that what is quoted *is* Scripture. Even Paul quoted a pagan poet in Acts 17:28, yet he certainly did not regard it as Scripture but as simply true. The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes also all recognized a closed canon and generally saw that prophecy had ceased before the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha were even written. None of the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha were in the canon of the Jews and it was to this canon that Jesus Himself and the Apostles appealed.

The Tests of Canonicity

Specific tests to consider canonicity may be recognized.

1. Did the book indicate God was speaking through the writer and that it was considered authoritative? Compare the following references: (a) God was speaking through the human author—Ex. 20:1; Josh. 1:1; Isa. 2:1; (b) that the books were authoritative—Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4. Note also Joshua 6:26 compared with 1 Kings 16:34; Joshua 24:29-33 compared with Judges 2:8-9; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 compared with Ezra 1:1-4; Daniel 9:2 compared with Jeremiah 25:11-12.
2. Was the human author recognized as a spokesman of God, that is, was he a prophet or did he have the prophetic gift? Compare Deuteronomy 18:18; 31:24-26; 1 Samuel 10:25; Nehemiah 8:3.
3. Was the book historically accurate? Did it reflect a record of actual facts? Did the message tell the truth about God? God cannot contradict Himself (2 Corinthians 1:17-18), nor can He utter what is false (Hebrews 6:18). Hence, no book with false claims can be the Word of God. For reasons such as these, the church fathers maintained the policy "if in doubt, throw it out".
4. Does it come with the power of God? The fathers believed the Word of God is "living and active". (Hebrews 4:12), and consequently ought to have a transforming force for edification and evangelization. (2 Timothy 3:17; 1 Peter 3:17). If the message of a book did not affect its stated goal, if it did not have the power to change lives, then God apparently was not behind it.
5. Was it accepted by the people of God? Paul said of the Thessalonians, "We also constantly thank God that when you received from us the Word of God's message you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

When a book was received, collected, read and used by the people of God as the Word of God, it was regarded as canonical. One instance is when the apostle Peter acknowledges Paul's writings as Scripture on a par with the Old Testament. (@ Peter 3:16)

Historical Evidence Supporting the Canonicity of the Old Testament

There are a number of important historical evidences drawn from the ancient writings that give support to the Old Testament canon as we have it in our Protestant Bible.

1. *Prologue to Ecclesiasticus*. This noncanonical book refers to a threefold division of books (namely, the Law, the Prophets, and hymns and precepts for human conduct) which was known by the writer's grandfather (which would be around 200 B.C.).
2. *Philo*. Philo (around A.D. 40) referred to the same threefold division.
3. *Josephus*. Josephus (A.D. 37-100) said that the Jews held as sacred only twenty-two books (which include exactly the same as our present thirty-nine books of the Old Testament).

4. *Jamnia*. Jamnia (A. D. 90), was a teaching house of rabbis who discussed canonicity. Some questioned whether it was right to accept (as was being done) Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. These discussions concerned an existing canon.
5. *The church fathers*. The church fathers accepted the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. The only exception was Augustine (A. D. 400) who included the books of the Apocrypha (those “extra” books that some Bibles include between the books of the Old and New Testaments). However, he did acknowledge that they were not fully authoritative. The books of the Apocrypha were not officially recognized as part of the canon until the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) and then only by the Roman Catholic church.⁶⁷

New Testament Evidence for the Canonicity of the Old Testament

1. **Old Testament quotations in the New.** There are some 250 quotes from Old Testament books in the New Testament. None are from the Apocrypha. All Old Testament books are quoted except Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.
2. **Old Testament quotations by Jesus Christ.** In Matthew 5:17-18, the Lord declared that the Law and the Prophets, a reference that includes all of the Old Testament, then summarized as “the Law” in verse 18, would be fulfilled. This declared it was therefore God’s authoritative Word. Christ’s statement in Matthew 23:35 about the blood (murder) of Abel to the blood of Zechariah clearly defined what Jesus viewed as the Old Testament canon. It consisted of the entire Old Testament as we know it in our Protestant English Bible. This is particularly significant in view of the fact there other murders of God’s messengers recorded in the Apocrypha, but the Lord excludes them suggesting He did not consider the books of the Apocrypha to belong in the Canon as with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles.

The above evidence shows the books of the Old Testament, as we have them in our Protestant Bible, were God breathed and therefore authoritative and profitable the very moment they were written. “There was human recognition of the writings; normally this was immediate as the people recognized the writers as spokesmen from God. Finally, there was a collection of the books into a canon.”⁶⁸

Canonicity of the New Testament

Factors Leading to the Recognition of the New Testament Canon

What were the factors that led to the recognition of a New Testament canon as we have it today? For almost twenty years after the ascension of Christ none of the books of the New Testament were even written and about sixty-five years elapsed before the last New Testament book was written. James was undoubtedly the first, being written between 45-50 A.D., and Revelation was most surely the last, being written about 90 A.D. But several things began to happen that promoted the formation of the New Testament canon. Enns summarizes these:

1. Spurious writings as well as attacks on genuine writings were a factor. Marcion, for example, rejected the Old Testament and New Testament writings apart from the Pauline letters (he altered Luke’s gospel to suit his doctrine).
2. The content of the New Testament writings testified to their authenticity and they naturally were collected, being recognized as canonical.
3. Apostolic writings were used in public worship, hence, it was necessary to determine which of those writings were canonical.
4. Ultimately, the edict by Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303, demanding that all sacred books be burned, resulted in the New Testament collection.⁶⁹

The Process of Recognition of the New Testament Canon

1. **In the Apostolic Era.** Since the books were inspired when they were written, they were already canonical and possessed authority as being a part of God’s Word. The responsibility of the church was simply to attest to the fact of their inspiration. This process began immediately with the writers recognizing that their own writings were the Word of God (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 4:15). But they also recognized that other writings of the New Testa-

ment were Scripture and on a par with the Old Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul quoted Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 and referred to both passages as Scripture. Peter likewise attested to Paul's writings as Scripture in 2 Peter 3:15-16. Furthermore, the New Testament epistles were being read and circulated among the churches as authoritative revelation from God (cf. Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27).

2. **In the Post-Apostolic Era.** Clement of Rome (c. A.D. 95) mentioned at least eight New Testament books in a letter; Ignatius of Antioch (c. A.D. 115) also acknowledged about seven books; Polycarp, a disciple of John, (c. A.D. 108), acknowledged fifteen letters. That is not to say these men did not recognize more letters as canonical, but these are ones they mentioned in their correspondence. Later Irenaeus wrote (c. A.D. 185), acknowledging twenty-one books. Hippolytus (A.D. 170-235) recognized twenty-two books. The problematic books at this time were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and 2 and 3 John.

Even more important was the witness of the Muratorian Canon (A.D. 170), which was a compilation of books recognized as canonical at that early date by the church. The Muratorian Canon included all the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and one epistle of John.

In the fourth century there was also prominent recognition of a New Testament canon. When Athanasius wrote in A.D. 367 he cited the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as being the only true books. In A.D. 363 the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (A.D. 393) recognized the twenty-seven books, and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) affirmed that only those canonical books were to be read in the churches.⁷⁰

Ryrie has an important note in connection with Martin Luther's opinion of the epistle of James.

Sometimes it is claimed that Martin Luther rejected the Book of James as being canonical. This is not so. Here's what he wrote in his preface to the New Testament in which he ascribes to the several books of the New Testament different degrees of doctrinal value. "St. John's Gospel and his first Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, especially those to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter's Epistle—these are the books which show to thee Christ, and teach everything that is necessary and blessed for thee to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book of doctrine. Therefore, St. James' Epistle is a perfect straw-epistle compared with them, for it has in it nothing of an evangelic kind." Thus Luther was comparing (in his opinion) doctrinal value, not canonical validity.⁷¹

Summary

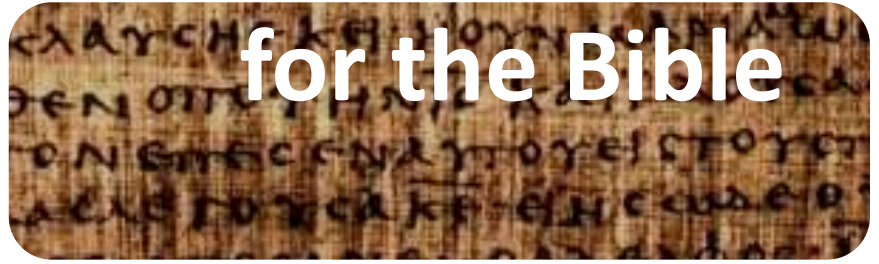
The question naturally arises, what process and by what means did the early church recognize which books were canonical and which books were not? The following summarizes the tests used to discern which books were canonical.

1. **Authentication on the Divine side—Inspiration.** Did the book give internal evidence of inspiration, of being God breathed? Was it of proper spiritual character? Did it edify the church? Was it doctrinally accurate? "The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha were rejected as a result of not meeting this test. The book should bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit."⁷²
2. **Authentication on the human side.** Three issues were important here: (a) Was the author an apostle or did he have the endorsement of an apostle? Mark wrote the gospel of Mark, but he did so under Peter's endorsement. Luke, as a close associate of the Apostle Paul, wrote under the endorsement of his authority. (b) Universal acceptance was another key factor. On the whole, was the book accepted by the church at large? The recognition given a particular book by the church was important. By this standard, a number of books were rejected. There were some books that enjoyed an acceptance by a few, but were later dropped for a lack of universal acceptance. Then there were a few books that some questioned because of doubts about the author, not the content, but were later accepted because the majority accepted them.⁷³

60 Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1951, p. 47. 61 Enns, p. 170. 62 For an excellent treatment of these evidences, see Josh McDowell's book, *Evidence Demands a Verdict, Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*, Revised Edition, Here's Life Publishers, Inc. San Bernardino, CA, 1979. 63 Ryrie, electronic media. For other articles on canonicity, see our web page at www.bible.org under "Theology," and then under "Bibliology--The Doctrine of the Written Word." 64 Frederick W. Danker, *Multipurpose Tools For Bible Study*, Concorida Publishing House, St. Louis, 1960, p. 57. 65 Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1972, pp. 45-46. 66 Enns, p. 170-171. 67 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media. 68 Enns, p. 171. 69 Enns, p. 171. 70 Enns, p. 172. 71 Ryrie, electronic media. 72 Enns, p. 172-173. 73 For more reading on canonicity, see the BSF web page under the Theology/Bibliology section at www.bible.org.

An Apolo-

for the Bible



The Apocrypha

Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Bibles have thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New. The difference is that a Roman Catholic Bible has an additional eleven books inserted between the Testaments. Where did these books come from?

To begin, we must realize that both branches of Christendom acknowledge the existence of books that are false writings that have never laid serious claim to canonicity. The Book of Enoch and The Assumption of Moses are known to have existed, but all agree that they lack the stamp of inspiration. In the New Testament the Shepherd of Hermas was thought by some to be authoritative, so it hovered around the canon for sometime before it was dismissed as a forgery

But there was another group of books that are accepted by the Roman Catholic church but rejected by Protestants. These books originated in a canon in Alexandria in Egypt. It was in this city in 250 B.C. that the Old Testament was translated into Greek and called the Septuagint, meaning “seventy.” (Allegedly the translation was made in seventy days utilizing seventy scholars.) This explains why some of the earliest manuscripts of the Septuagint that exist today (dating back to the fourth century) contain these additional books.

These books, commonly called the Apocrypha (the word means “hidden”), are interwoven among the books of the Old Testament. In all, there are fifteen books, eleven of which are accepted as canonical by the Roman Catholic church. But because four of the eleven are combined with Old Testament books, the Douay Version contains only seven additional books in its table of contents.

There are several reasons why the Roman Catholic church considers the wider Alexandrian list of books to be canonical. Briefly, they are

1. The New Testament quotes mostly from the Septuagint, which contained the Apocrypha.
2. Some of the early church fathers accepted the Apocrypha as canonical—Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria for example.
3. Augustine and the great councils of Hippo and Carthage, which he led, are said to have accepted them.
4. The Council of Trent called to respond to the inroads of the Reformation pronounced them canonical in A.D. 1546. The council said that if anyone does not receive these books in all of their parts, “let him be anathema.”

Reasons to Reject the Apocrypha

Protestants give numerous reasons for rejecting these additional books:

1. Though there are some allusions to the apocryphal books by New Testament writers ([Hebrews 11:35](#) compares with 2 Maccabees 7, 12) there is no direct quote from them. Also, no New Testament writer ever refers to any of these fourteen or fifteen books as authoritative. Quotes from the accepted books are usually introduced by the phrase, “It is written,” or the passage is quoted to prove a point. But never do the New Testament writers quote the Apocrypha in this way.
2. There is no evidence that the books were in the Septuagint as early as the time of Christ. Remember, the earliest manuscripts that have them date back to the fourth century A.D. Even if they were in the Septuagint at this early date, it is noteworthy that neither Christ nor the apostles ever quoted from them.

3. Though some of the early leaders of the church accepted them, many did not—Athanasius, Origen, and Jerome, to name a few.
4. The evidence that Augustine accepted the Apocrypha is at best ambiguous. For one thing, he omits Baruch and includes 1 Esdras, thus accepting one and rejecting another in contrast to the Council of Trent. For another, he seemed to change his mind later about the validity of the Apocrypha.

Jerome, while making a Latin translation of the Bible, disputed with Augustine about the value of these additional books. Though Jerome did not want to translate them, he eventually made a hurried translation of them but kept them separate from his translation of the Bible. However, after his death, these books were brought into his Latin translation.

Augustine, as mentioned, argued in favor of the Apocrypha, though he later seemed to give them a kind of secondary canonicity. His testimony, though important, is not entirely clear.

5. Even the Roman Catholic church made a distinction between the Apocrypha and the other books of the Bible prior to the Reformation. For example, Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther at Augsburg, in 1518 published *A Commentary on all the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament*. His commentary, however, did not include the Apocrypha.
6. The first official council of the Roman Catholic church to ratify these books was at the Council of Trent in 1546, only twenty-nine years after Luther posted his ninety-five theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg. The acceptance of these books at this time was convenient since the books were being quoted against Luther. For example, 2 Maccabees speaks of prayers for the dead (2 Macc. 12:45-46) and another book teaches salvation by works (Tob. 12:19).

Even so, the Roman church accepted only eleven of the fifteen books; we naturally would expect that these books, since they were together for so many centuries, would be either accepted or rejected together.

7. The content of the Apocrypha is sub-biblical. Some of the stories are clearly fanciful. Bel and the Dragon, Tobit, and Judith have the earmarks of legend; the authors of these books even give hints along the way that the stories are not to be taken seriously.

What is more, these books have historical errors. It is claimed that Tobit was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 B.C. and also when Jeroboam revolted against Judah in 931 B.C., which would make him at least 209 years old; yet according to the account, he died when he was only 158 years. The Book of Judith speaks of Nebuchadnezzar reigning in Nineveh instead of Babylon.

These inaccuracies are inconsistent with the doctrine of inspiration which teaches that when God inspires a book it is free from all errors.

8. Finally, and most important, we must remember that the Apocrypha was never part of the Old Testament Hebrew canon. When Christ was on earth, he frequently quoted from the Old Testament but never from the Apocryphal books because they were never a part of the Hebrew canon.

In Christ's time, there were twenty-two books in the Old Testament, but the content was identical to the thirty-nine books in our present Old Testament (several of the books in the Hebrew Bible were combined, which accounts for the different figure). Genesis was the first book in the Hebrew canon and 2 Chronicles was the last. On at least one occasion, Christ referred specifically to the content of the Hebrew canon when he said:

Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar ([Matt. 23:34-35](#))

In the Hebrew canon, the first book of the Bible was Genesis, where the death of Abel is recorded, and the last book was 2 Chronicles where near the end of the book the murder of Zechariah is described (24:21). In between these two events lay the entire content of the Old Testament. He assumed it ended with the Hebrew Scriptures and not the Apocrypha.

The Apocryphal books were written in Greek after the close of the Old Testament canon. Jewish scholars agree that chrono-

logically Malachi was the last book of the Old Testament canon. The books of the Apocrypha were evidently written about 200 B.C. and occur only in Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament. Since Christ accepted only the books we have in our Old Testament today, we have no reason to add to their number.

Pseudepigrapha

Beyond the Apocrypha, there were many other books that were considered false and were called the pseudepigrapha. These were spurious writings, especially writings falsely attributed to biblical characters or times. They included a number of texts written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 and spuriously ascribed to various prophets and kings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Bible Terms



- **Autograph** - An original writing of a biblical document. The original manuscript written.
- **Canon** - The collection of books that are considered inspired from God and authoritative in all areas addressed.
- **Codex** - An early book form made from papyri leaves cut, folded, and sewn together in the middle to make a book. First used in the 2nd century.
- **Coptic** - The Afro-Asiatic language of the Copts, which survives only as a liturgical language of the Coptic Church.
- **Extant** - That which exists.
- **Inerrancy** - Without error. The Bible is without error.
- **Inspiration** - The teaching that the Bible is "God-breathed." It is, therefore, accurate in all it addresses. The authors of the Bible were inspired of God; that is, they wrote under the divine guidance of God.
- **LXX** - The Roman numerals for 70. It is used to describe the Septuagint which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures done (traditionally) by 70 scholars around 250 - 150 B.C.
- **Manuscript** - A document or a copy of an original writing.
- **Minuscule** - The Greek characters of lower case: abgde, etc. Different copies of Greek manuscripts appear in minuscule form. See Uncial.
- **Opisthograph** - a scroll with writings on both sides.
- **Palimpsest** - Vellum that was previously used for a writing surface that has been scraped clean and dressed and then another writing is made on the surface. Codex Ephraemi rescriptus is one of these. It is possible to use certain chemicals and ultraviolet light to uncover the writings underneath the second writing.
- **Papyrus** - A plant growing along the Nile in Egypt during biblical times. It was used as writing material. Papyrus scrolls were made by cutting and pressing sections of the papyri plant together at right angles. They typical maximum length of a scroll was about 35 feet. The scribe, when using papyrus, would often use the natural horizontal fibers of the papyrus plant as guidelines. He would take a blunt instrument and score horizontal lines and then score two or more vertical lines as margins for the edge of the sheet or to define columns on it. We get the word "paper" from this word. Many of the biblical manuscripts were on papyrus.
- **Pentateuch** - The first five (penta) books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These are attributed to Mosaic authorship.
- **Pericope** - per-ik-o-pee - A selection from a book. A small set of Bible verses, read.
- **Quire** - A collection of leaves of parchment or paper, folded one within the other, in a manuscript or book.
- **Testament** - Latin for Covenant. Old Testament and New Testament are Old and New Covenants.
- **Textual Criticism** - The study of the biblical documents, their copying, transmission, writing style, instruments, etc. It deals with the reconstruction of the original writings through these elements.
- **Uncial** - The Greek characters of upper case: ABGDE, etc. Different copies of Greek manuscripts appear in Uncial form. See Minuscule.
- **Vellum** - A material used for writing, like paper. It was made from animal skins, usually from cattle, sheep, goats, and antelope. The hair was scraped off of the skins, then they were washed, smoothed, and dressed with chalk. Vellum was used until the late Middle Ages until paper was introduced into Europe from China via Arab traders. Vellum lasted longer than papyrus and was tougher, but the edges sometimes became torn and tattered. The two oldest parchment manuscripts are the Codex Vaticanus (from Egypt) and the Codex Sinaiticus.



History tells the story of God's plan.

History is all about HIS STORY

Spotlight on The Disciples

The Disciples were from the region of Galilee except for Judas Iscariot who was from Judea. Their occupations range from fishermen to tax collectors. Some were married some were not (Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:3-6). Some were well-versed in Scripture (John 1:46)

Peter:

Simon bar Jona (Simon, son of Jona) was also called Simon Peter and Cephas meaning rock or stone.

General Information:

- Born in Bethsaida (John 1:42-44)
- Lived in Capernaum (Matthew 8:5-14)
- Fisherman (Matthew 4:18)
- Brother of Andrew (Matthew 4:18)
- Partner with James and John (Luke 5:10)
- Was Married (Matthew 8:14)
- A pillar of the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9)
- Imprisoned by Herod for preaching the gospel (Acts 12:3-19)
- Wrote 1 and 2 Peter
- Crucified by Nero

Peter was very impulsive (Matthew 14:28), hot tempered at times (John 18:10) , tender-hearted (Matthew 26:75) , yet was very insightful (Matthew 16:16) and courageous after Pentecost (Acts 5:27-30).

Was called to be a fisher of men by Jesus (Matthew 4:19) and left everything to follow Him (Luke 5:11). He was one of the three core disciples along with James and John (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33) In Matthew 16 we have recorded where Peter declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God (v. 16-19)

He witnessed the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8). He was with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus (Matthew 26:36-46) and was instructed by Jesus after the resurrection (John 21:5-19)

Papias (2nd century Christian) records that Mark served as Peter's scribe and wrote the Gospel of Mark based on Peter's testimony. According to some stories, Peter asked to be crucified upside down. He was crucified during the reign of Nero in Rome around 67-68 A.D..

James, son of Zebedee:

He was also called James, the Elder and James the Great.

General Information:

- Son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)
- Son of Salome (Matthew 27:56)

- Brother of John (Matthew 4:21)
- A fisherman with his brother (John) and father (Matthew 4:18-22)
- One of the pillars of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9)
- Put to death by the sword by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2) - Only one of the 12 disciples whose death is recorded in Scripture).

He was called to be a fisher of men and left everything to follow Jesus (Matthew 4:19; Luke 5:11). He was one of three core disciples of Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). Jesus named him John "Son of Thunder" (Mark 1:37). Jesus rebuked him and his brother John for requesting God rain fall on a Samaritan village (Luke 9:54,55).

He witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-8) and was with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). He witnessed the miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee after Jesus' resurrection (John 21:2-7)

John

A son of Zebedee and brother of James. He was called the "Beloved Disciple", the "Evangelist" and the "Revealer".

General Information:

- Son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21)
- Brother of James (Matthew 4:21)
- Son of Salome (Matthew 27:56)
- Partner with Peter (Luke 5:10)
- One of the pillars of the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9)
- He was exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:1,9)
- He wrote the Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John and the book of Revelation
- Only disciple to die of natural causes

He was one of three core disciples of Jesus (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). He suggested that driving out demons could only be performed by those who follow Jesus and his disciples (Mark 9:38)

He witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration (Mark 9:28). He was sent with Peter to prepare the upper room for the Last Supper (Luke 22:8) He reclined next to Jesus during the Last Supper (John 13:23) He was given the responsibility for the caring of Mary, the mother of Jesus (John 19:26,27)

Some stories suggest that John was released from exile on the island of Patmos and returned to Ephesus where Timothy was pastor and dies there around 100 A.D.

Andrew

He was the first of the twelve disciples called by Jesus (John 1:35-40).

General Information:

- Son of Jona (John 1:42)
- Born in Bethsaida (John 1:44)
- Lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:29)
- Brother of Peter (Matthew 4:18)
- He was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35-40)

He was the first to follow Jesus. He told Jesus of the boy with the loaves of bread and fish that Jesus used to feed 5,000 men (John 6:8-9). He witnessed Jesus being taken up into heaven (Acts 1:8-9)

Some suggest that Andrew preached in Greece, Asia Minor and Russia before being crucified on an X-shaped cross. Because of this the X-shaped cross is often called a St. Andrew's cross.

Philip

Bartholomew

Matthew

Thomas

James, son of Alphaeus

Thaddaeus

Simon the Zealot

Judas Iscariot

Paul

Timothy

Barnabas

Silas

Living by the Book

By Howard Hendricks and William Hendricks

- Why People don't study the Bible:
 - Truths in the Bible are de-emphasized or ignored.
 - "Folk religion"- popular belief based on misperceptions, misinterpretations, stereotypes, sentimentality, and wishful thinking. None of these are Christianity.
 - The only way to experience authentic Christianity is through 1st hand acquaintance with the Word.
 - We can't just be taught; we need to dive in ourselves.
 - Reason we don't study the Bible:
 - Relevance: Bible is archaic (out of date)
 - Technique: confused by inability to understand
 - "I'm just a layperson": the "I can't study the Bible without training" type of mentality/belief
 - Priorities: lower on the list or time is short
 - Reliability/Authority: hard to believe
 - Boring: isn't important/applicable to life
- Why Study the Bible:
 - 3 Essentials to reading the Bible:
 - Essential to growth. 1 Peter 2:2
 - Attitude to grab bottle of milk to sustain life.
 - Appetite to crave (what we get out of it). There are 3 types:
 - Nasty medicine (scripture is yuck!) but good for what ails you.
 - Shredded wheat (scripture is nourishing, but dry).
 - Strawberries and cream (can't get enough of it!)
 - Grow to Christ's image.
 - Essential to spiritual maturity. Hebrews 5:11-14
 - Maturity comes through constant use of scripture over time.
 - Not measured by how much that's understood, but used
 - Bible Study is essential to spiritual effectiveness. 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - Jesus was effective against temptation (Matt 4:1-11) by using scripture
 - Scripture is useful for 4 things:
 - Doctrine (teaching): structures your thinking for structuring behavior.
 - Rebuke (our wrongs): tells us what God wants for us.
 - Correction (purifier): helps clean out sin and conform to God.
 - Training in righteous living: gives positive guidelines.
 - The Bible is a Unit that's bound together with mankind.
 - Revelation means "reveal" or "unveil." Whatever is behind it is truth that cannot be speculated, conjectured, or hypothesized.
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Word of God is "inspired" which means "God-breathed." The word "breath" also means "Spirit" (links Holy Spirit into revealing truth to Authors).
 - The Bible must either be 100% true or 100% false — no middle ground.

