

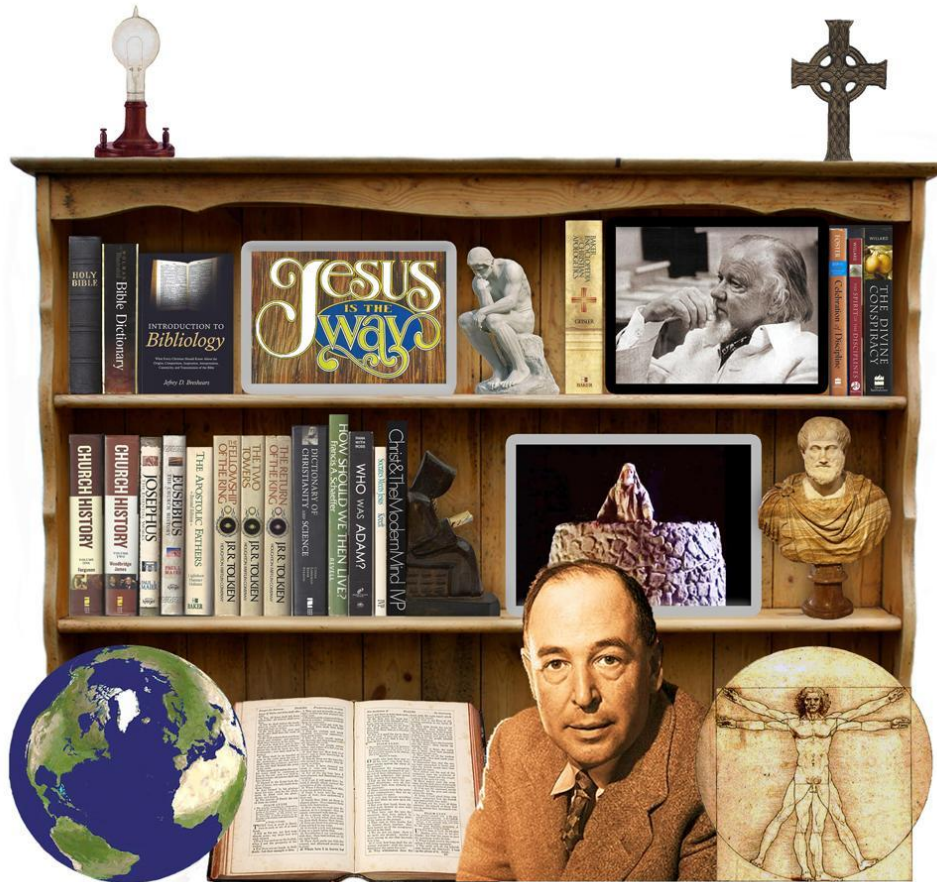
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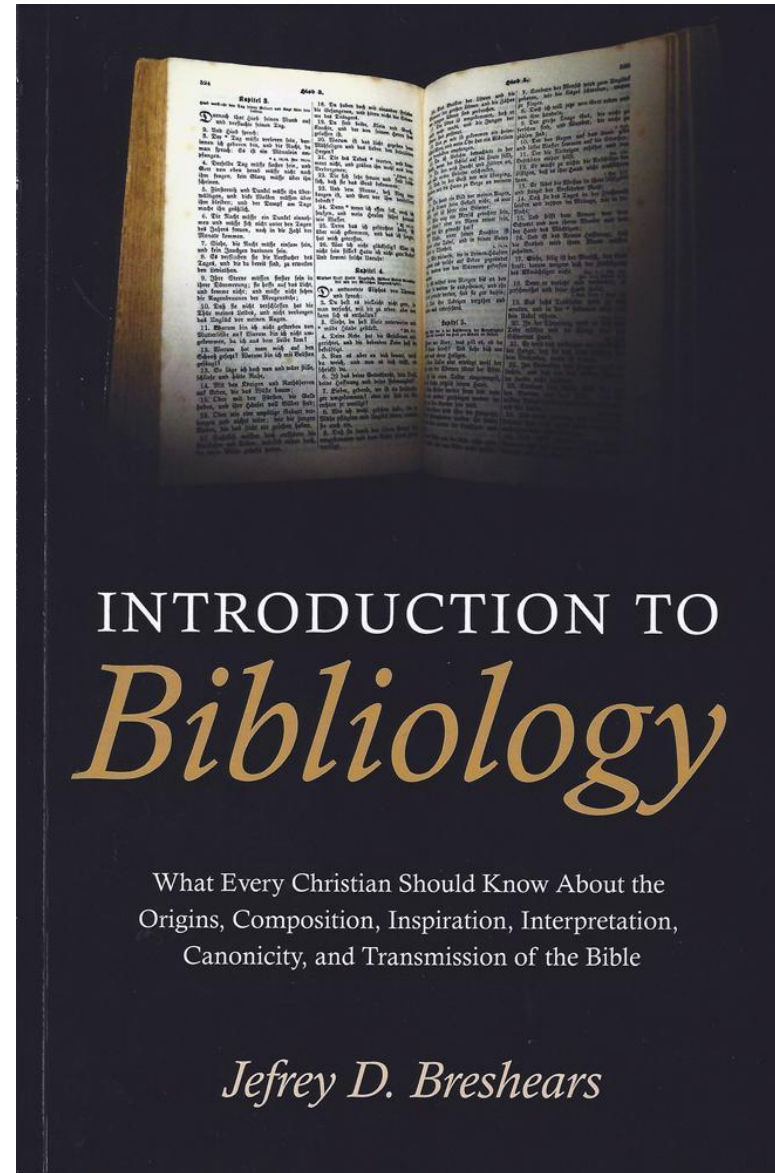
Christian History

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INTRODUCTION TO *Bibliology*

What Every Christian Should Know About the
Origins, Composition, Inspiration, Interpretation,
Canonicity, and Transmission of the Bible

Jefrey D. Breshears

Introduction To Bibliology

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Biblical Canonicity

INTRODUCTION



Biblical Canonicity

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

II Peter 1:20-21

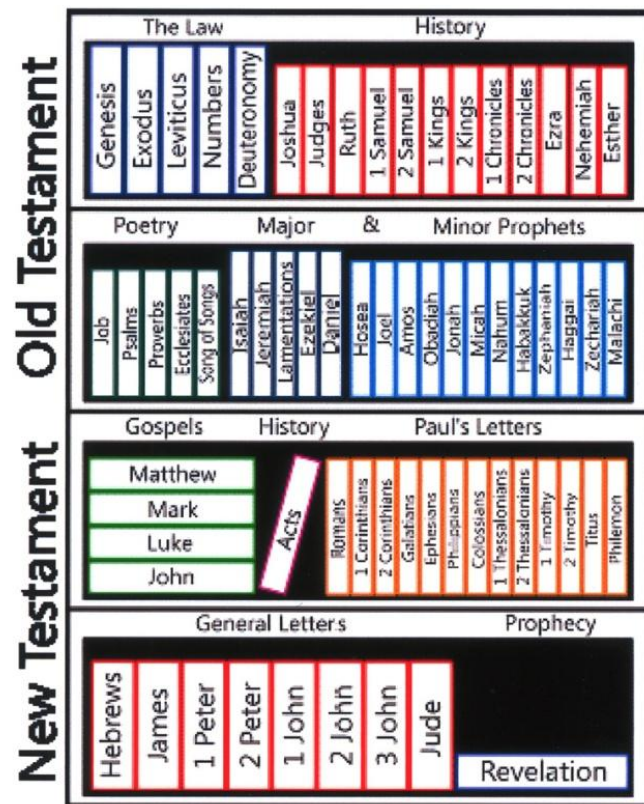
Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

- “Without the Bible, the Christian faith would be an amorphous mix of traditions, beliefs and practices lacking a clear vision, mission or parameters....

“But the question is: What exactly constitutes the Bible? This is the area of canonicity.”

[p. 163]



Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

Three Areas of Study:

- (1) Why were certain books included and excluded in the Bible, and what were the criteria in making this determination?

Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

Three Areas of Study:

- (1) Why were certain books included and excluded in the Bible, and what were the criteria in making this determination?
- (2) Who made the decisions regarding which books to include?

Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

Three Areas of Study:

- (1) Why were certain books included and excluded in the Bible, and what were the criteria in making this determination?
- (2) Who made the decisions regarding which books to include?
- (3) When was the biblical canon finalized?

Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

What Is a “Canon”?

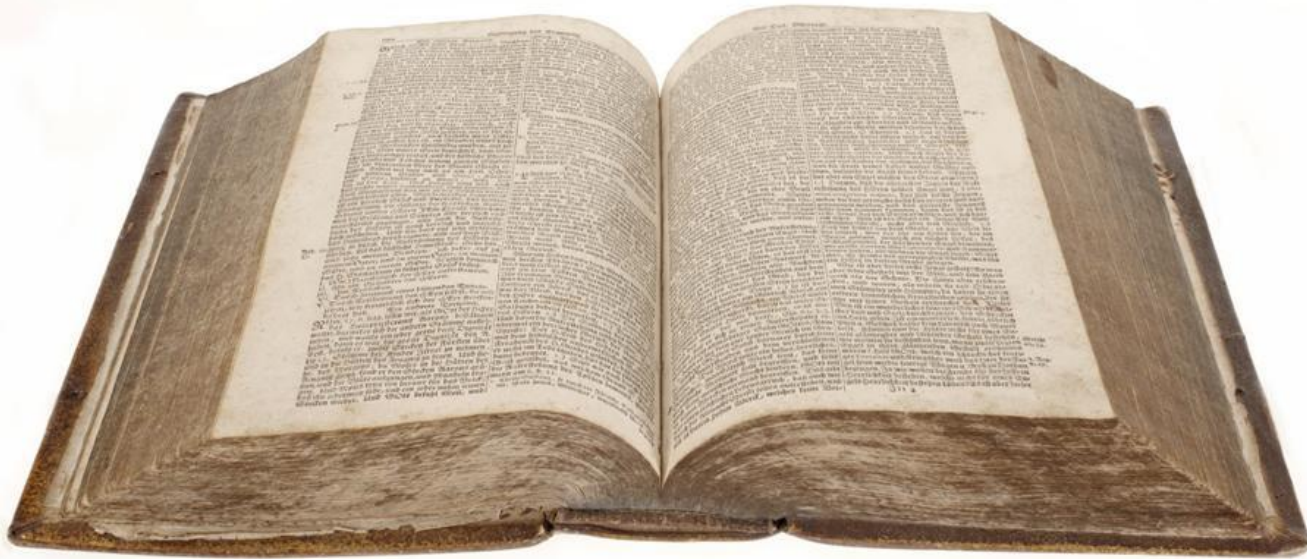
- *Kanon* – a “rule” or “standard.”

Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

What Is a “Canon”?

- *Kanon* – a “rule” or “standard.”
- A set collection of authoritative books.



Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

What Is a “Canon”?

- *Kanon* – a “rule” or “standard.”
- A set collection of authoritative books.
 - Thomas Aquinas:
“Canonical scripture
alone is the rule of
faith.”



Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

What Is a “Canon”?

- F. F. Bruce: “In the canon of Scripture we have the foundation documents of Christianity, the charter of the church, the title-deeds of faith. For no other literature can such a claim be made.” [p. 164]

Biblical Canonicity

Introduction

A Long, Deliberative Process:

- Historically, the process of canonization was a 300-year-long deliberative process that was complicated and sometimes contentious.

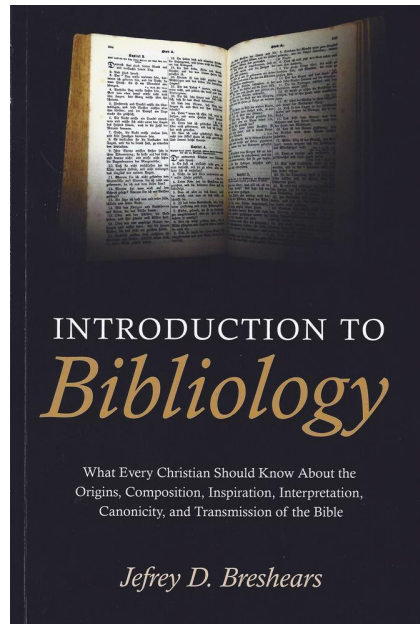
Biblical Canonicity

PART 1: THE OLD TESTAMENT



Biblical Canonicity

PART 1: THE OLD TESTAMENT and THE APOCRYPHA



See pages 163-199

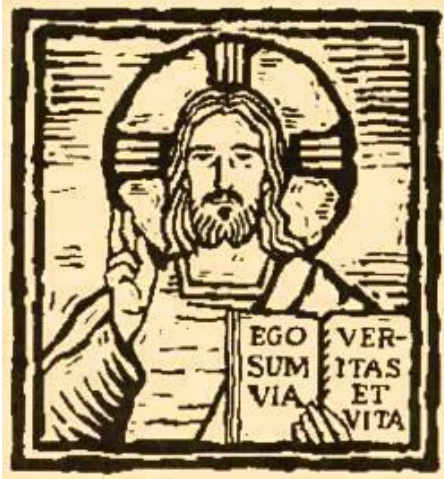
Biblical Canonicity

PART 2: THE NEW TESTAMENT



Biblical Canonicity

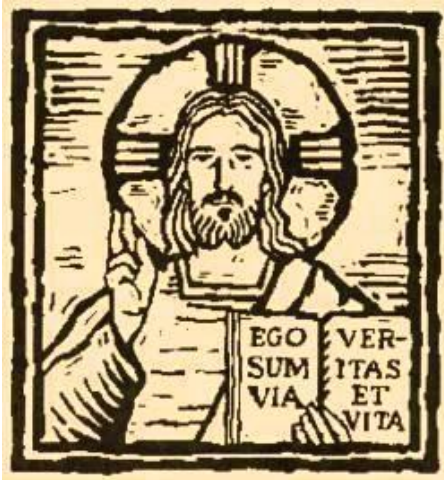
The New Testament The Living Word.



- “The Christian faith was founded not on a book of sacred writings but on a person – the living Word of God, Jesus Christ – and the Gospel message as propagated by his apostles. The ancient Hebrew Scriptures were revered because they bore witness prophetically to Christ, while the writings of the apostles and their associates...

Biblical Canonicity

The New Testament The Living Word.



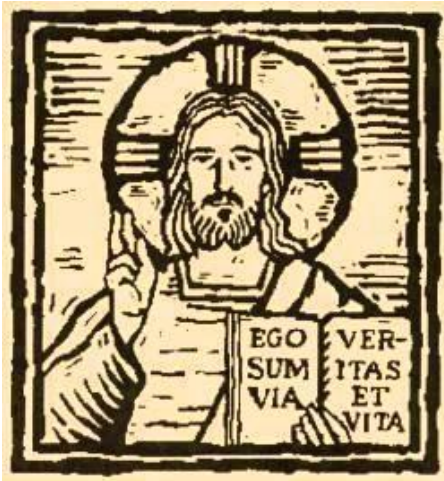
“... gained scriptural status due to their accurate testimony to his life and teachings. So in a sense, the original Christian ‘canon’ (the standard of faith) was Jesus himself....

“The early Jesus movement was animated by the testimony of those who had known Jesus and witnessed his resurrection from the dead.” [p. 200]

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

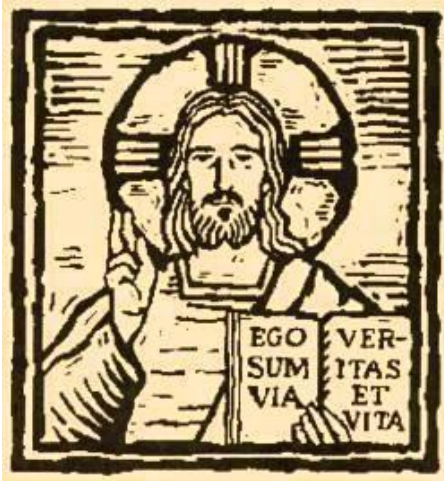
1. To preserve an accurate account of the life and teachings of Jesus.



Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

1. To preserve an accurate account of the life and teachings of Jesus.

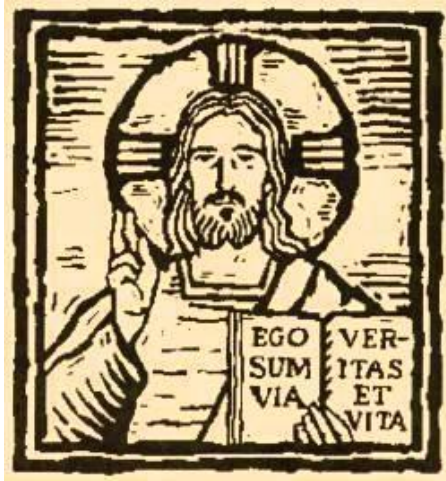


- The passing of the apostolic generation.
- F. F. Bruce: “The perpetuation of the words and deeds of Jesus could not be entrusted indefinitely to oral tradition.”
- Cyril Richardson: “The corruptions to which the oral tradition was subject soon necessitated the writing of Christian books.”

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

1. To preserve an accurate account of the life and teachings of Jesus.

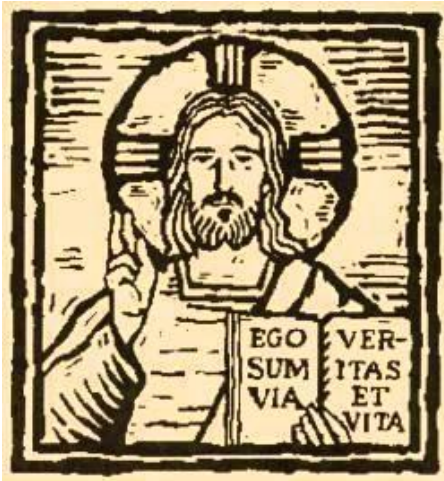


- Development of the codex.
- Tatian's Diatessaron (c. 165).

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

1. To preserve an accurate account of the life and teachings of Jesus.

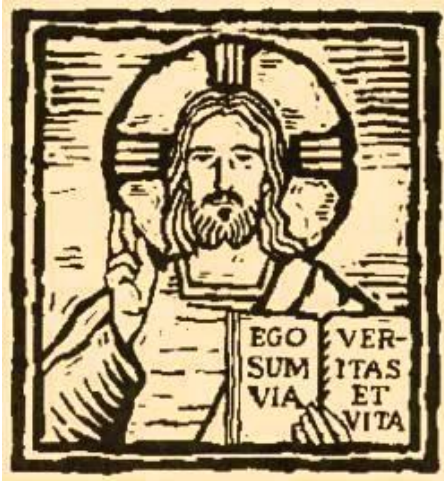


- The problem of spurious gospels: “This made it all the more imperative that church leaders draw a clear distinction between these pseudo-gospels and those authored by Christ’s apostles and their associates.” [204]

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

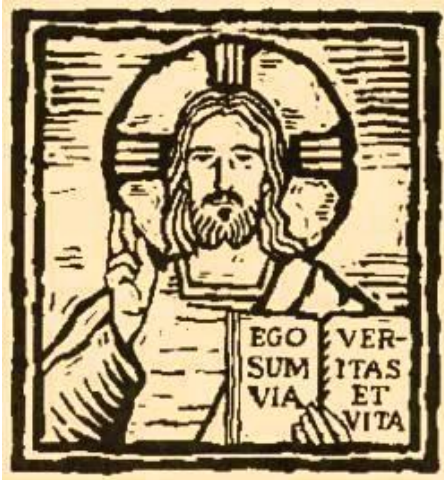
2. To complete the story of God's redemption throughout history.



Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

2. To complete the story of God's redemption throughout history.

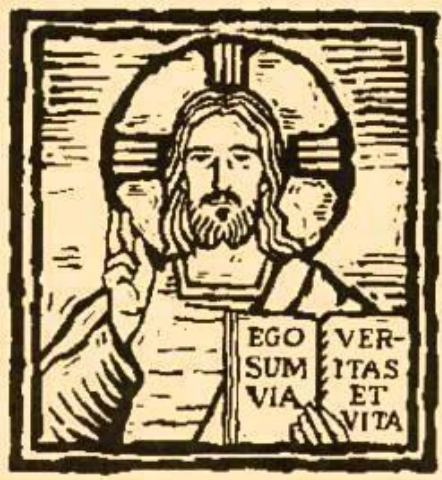


- Jesus as the fulfillment of God's revelation and redemption of mankind.
- The genealogy of Christ: from I Chron. 1ff to Matt. 1:1ff.

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

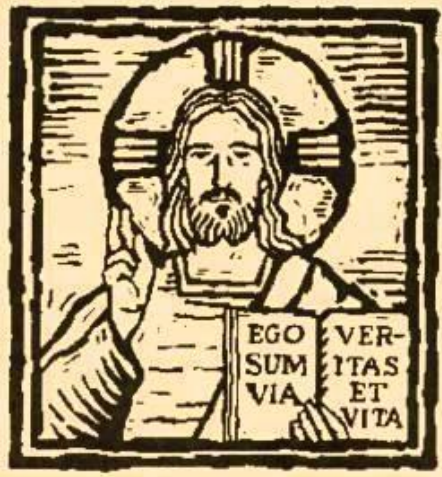
3. To preserve orthodoxy vis-à-vis heresy.



Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

3. To preserve orthodoxy vis-à-vis heresy.

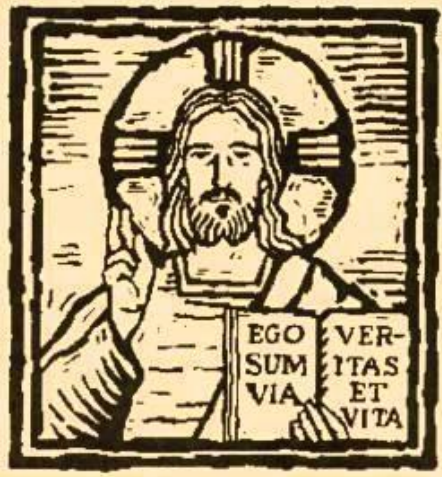


- Rivalries and factionalism in the early Jesus movement.
 - II Cor. 11:26
 - Gal. 1:6-7
 - I John 2:18-25; 4:1
 - II John 7;
 - III John 9-10
 - Jude 3-4^{ff}

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

3. To preserve orthodoxy vis-à-vis heresy.

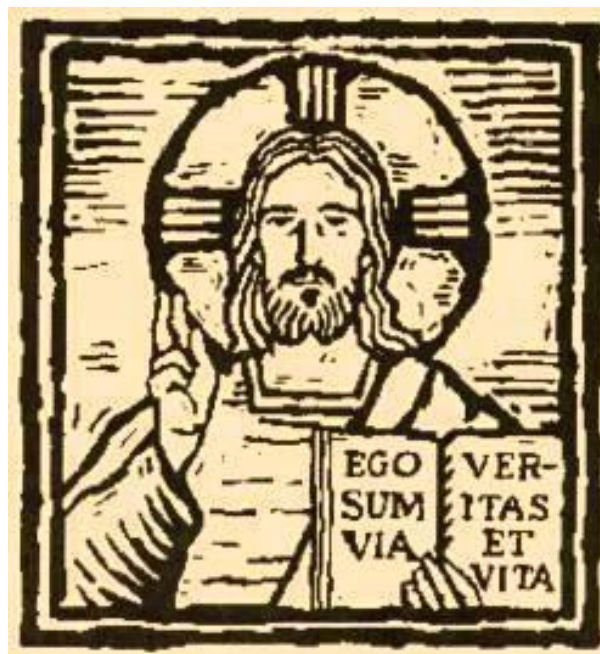


- Marcion.
- Valentinus.
- The Gnostic Gospels:
 - *Gospel of Thomas*;
 - *Gospel of Mary [Magdalene]* ;
 - *Gospel of Truth*; etc.

Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

4. To preserve orthodoxy vis-à-vis persecution.

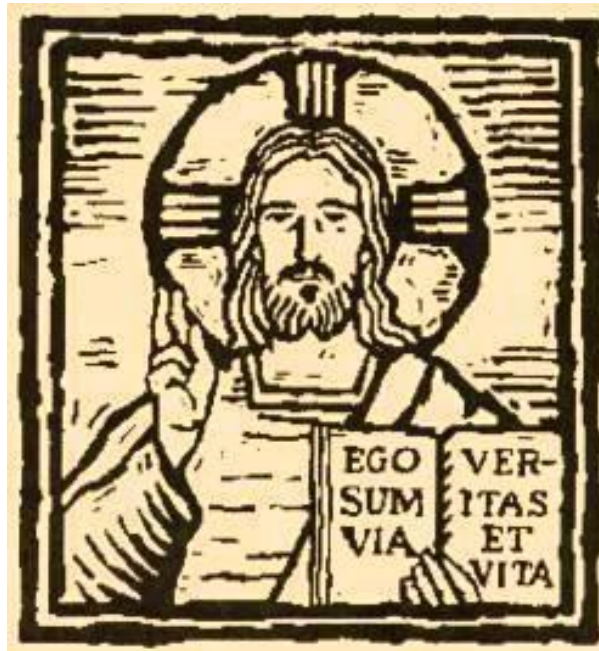


Biblical Canonicity

Motives for the Compilation of a NT Canon

4. To preserve orthodoxy vis-à-vis persecution.

- The periodic destruction of the Scriptures.



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

1. Apostolicity.



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

1. Apostolicity.

- Was the book written by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle?
- Post-apostolic writings offered no new revelations.
 - At best, they interpreted, illuminated, or amplified the apostolic writings.



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

1. Apostolicity.

- Ignatius (c. 112): “I do not command you like Peter and Paul. They were apostles.” [Rom. 4:3]



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion 2. Orthodoxy.



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

2. Orthodoxy.

- Does the book conform to “the rule of faith?”
- Justin Martyr: “I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another.”

[*Dialogue with Trypho*, c. 163]



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

2. Orthodoxy.

- The Gnostic heresy: The Holy Spirit continued to reveal new knowledge and prophecies to *pneumatics* who are spiritually illuminated.
- F. F. Bruce: “In the canon of Scripture we have the foundation documents of Christianity, the charter of the church, the title-deeds of faith.”



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

3. Catholicity.



Biblical Canonicity

The Criteria for Inclusion

3. Catholicity.

- Was the book generally received over time by most orthodox/catholic churches as authentic and authoritative, and did the book prove to be inspirational, edifying and instructional?



Biblical Canonicity

Disputed Books

Apostolic Writings:

- Hebrews
- James
- II Peter
- II and III John
- Jude
- Revelation



Biblical Canonicity

Excluded Books

1. Early Christian (“Apostolic”) Fathers:

- *I Clement*
- *The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)*
- *The Shepherd of Hermas*
- *Epistle of Barnabas*
- The writings of Ignatius, Polycarp, *II Clement*, Justin Martyr, Aristides, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, *et al.*

Biblical Canonicity

Excluded Books

2. Apocryphal Gospels:

- Christian fiction
- *Gospel of Peter*
- *Apocalypse of Peter*
- *Acts of Peter*
- *Acts of Paul*
- *Protoevangelium (Infancy Gospel) of James*
- *Acts of Paul and Thecla*
- *III Corinthians*
- Etcetera...

Biblical Canonicity

Excluded Books

3. Gnostic Gospels:

- Gnosticism: a syncretistic theology that sought to synthesize Christianity with Hellenistic philosophy, Jewish and Zoroastrian mysticism, and Eastern religions.
- *Gospel of Thomas*
- *Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)*
- *Apocryphon of John*
- *Gospel According to the Egyptians*
- *Gospel of the Hebrews*
- *Gospel of Truth...* etc.

Biblical Canonicity

Acceptance of the New Testament Texts A Consensus Acknowledgement.

- The skeptics' argument:
 - A centuries-long power struggle.

Biblical Canonicity

Acceptance of the New Testament Texts A Consensus Acknowledgement.

- The skeptics' argument:
 - A centuries-long power struggle.
- The reality:
 - A deliberative process of discernment.
 - F. F. Bruce: "It was not until the 27 books had been generally accepted by Christians ... that they were first made the subject of a decree by an ecclesiastical council."

Biblical Canonicity

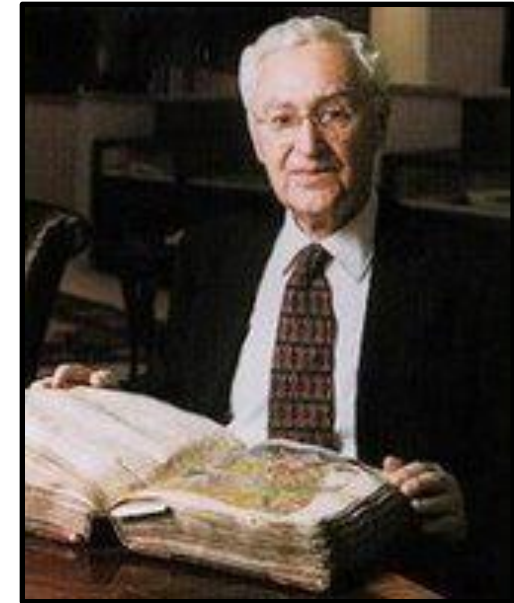
Acceptance of the New Testament Texts A Consensus Acknowledgement.

- The reality:
 - Lee Martin McDonald: “The final biblical canon for both religious communities [i.e., Judaism and Christianity] was determined not by a council so much as by widespread use of sacred literature in the communities of faith.”

Biblical Canonicity

Acceptance of the New Testament Texts A Consensus Acknowledgement.

- The reality:
 - Bruce Metzger: “The canon is a list of authoritative books more than it is an authoritative list of books.”



Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Muratorian Fragment (c. 170).

- All New Testament books except Hebrews, James, I and II Peter.
- Also included *Apocalypse of Peter* and *Wisdom of Solomon*.
- Also recommended *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Irenaeus (c. 180).

- No formal list, but his writings cited all NT books except James, II Peter, III John, and Jude.
- Recommended *I Clement*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, and *The Shepherd of Hermas*.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Clement of Alexandria (c. 200).

- All NT books except II Peter, III John, and Revelation.
- Regarding Hebrews:
 - Paul wrote the epistle in Hebrew, and Luke translated it into Greek.
 - Paul “wrote it anonymously because many Jews were prejudiced against him.”
- Also included some “disputed writings”: Jude, *Epistle of Barnabas*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Tertullian (c. 200).

- All NT books except James, II Peter, II and III John.
- Regarding Hebrews:
 - Tertullian speculated that Barnabas wrote it.
- Regarding Jude:
 - Tertullian defended Jude despite its reference to *I Enoch* as prophetic (Jude 14).

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 250).

- All NT books except II Timothy, Philemon, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Jude.
- Excluded Hebrews because of unknown authorship.
- Referred to *The Shepherd* of Hermas as “divine Scripture.”

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Origen (c. 220).

- Regarded all 27 NT books as Scripture.
- Five books are “disputed”: II Peter, II and III John, Jude, and “the reputed epistle of James.”
 - Regarding II Peter:
 - F.F. Bruce: “The book does not appear to have been known much before [Origen’s] day.”

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Origen (c. 220).

- Regarded *The Didache* and *The Shepherd of Hermas* as Scripture.
- Referred to the *Epistle of Barnabas* as a “catholic epistle.”

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

The Clermont List (c. 300).

- All NT books except Philippians, I and II Thessalonians, and Hebrews.
- Also included *Epistle of Barnabas*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *Acts of Paul*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Eusebius (c. 325).

- Three categories of books.
 - (1) *Homologoumena* (universally accepted):
 - Four Gospels
 - Acts of the Apostles
 - 14 Pauline epistles (including Hebrews)
 - I John
 - I Peter
 - Revelation

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Eusebius (c. 325).

- Three categories of books.

(2) *Antilegomena* (disputed):

James

II Peter

II and III John

Jude.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Eusebius (c. 325).

- Three categories of books.

(3) *Nothos* (spurious):

The Didache

Epistle of Barnabas

Acts of Paul

Apocalypse of Peter

Epistle of Barnabas

“the so-called *Shepherd*” (of Hermas)

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Eusebius (c. 325).

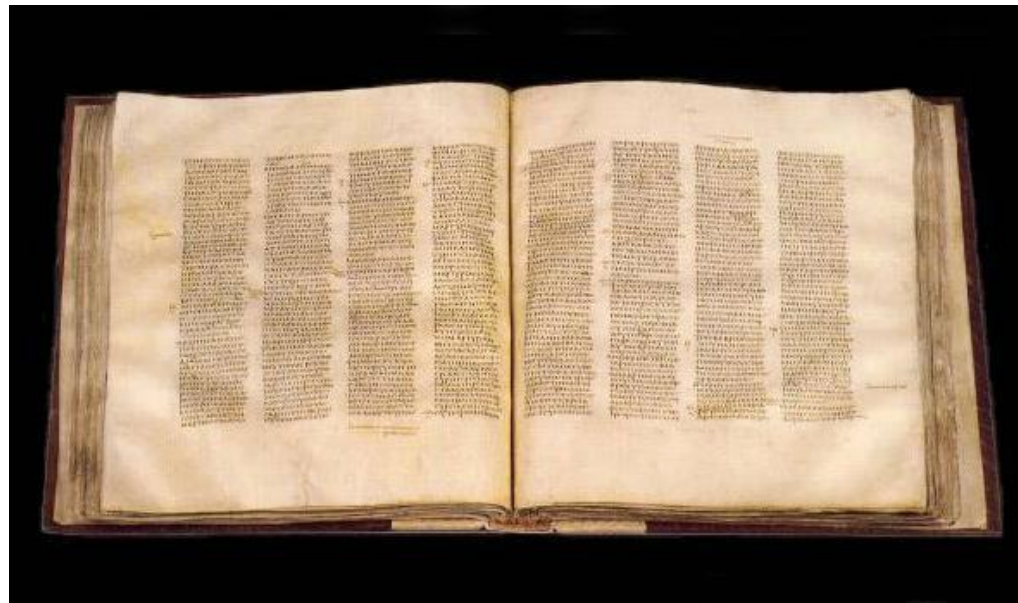
- Regarding the Gnostic Gospels:
 - These are “figments of heretics that are not to be reckoned even among the ‘spurious’ books but must be shunned as altogether wrong and impious.”

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Codex Sinaiticus (c. 350).

- All New Testament books.
- Also: *Epistle of Barnabas* and *The Shepherd of Hermas*.



Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Synod of Laodicea (363).

- All New Testament books except Revelation.

Cheltenham List (c. 365).

- All NT books except Hebrews, James, II Peter, II and III John, and Jude.

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists

Athanasius (367).

- All NT books – the “springs of salvation.”
- The *Didache* and *The Shepherd* of Hermas are efficacious for catechetical purposes.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 375).

- “Learn diligently from the church what are the books of the Old Testament, and what are those of the New. But read none of the apocryphal [i.e., Gnostic/heretical] writings.”

Biblical Canonicity

New Testament Canonical Lists The Questionable Status of Revelation.



Biblical Canonicity

The Official Canonical Lists

Council of Rome and the Damasian List (382).

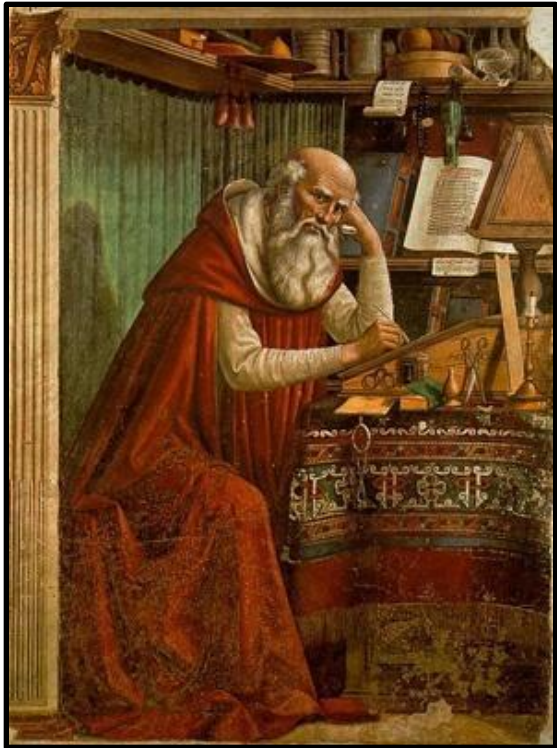
- Ratification of the Athanasian list.

Biblical Canonicity

The Official Canonical Lists

Jerome and the Latin Vulgate (c. 394).

- All 27 New Testament books.



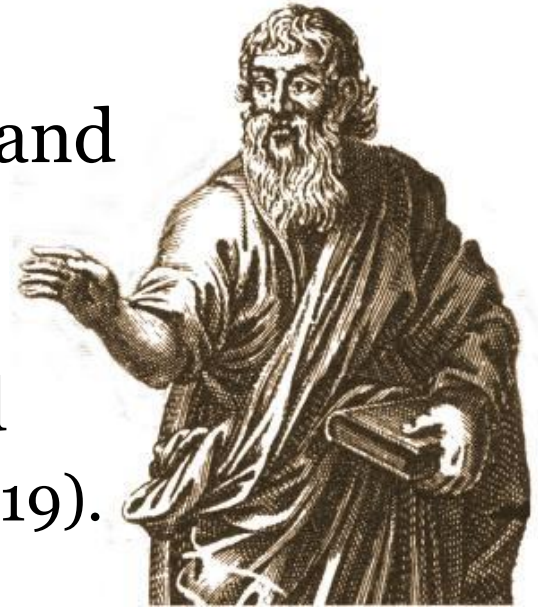
Jerome in his study in Bethlehem

Biblical Canonicity

The Official Canonical Lists

Augustine (c. 400).

- Ratification of the Athanasian and Damasian lists.
- Synod of Hippo (393), Third Council of Carthage (397), and Fourth Council of Carthage (419).



Biblical Canonicity

The Official Canonical Lists

Pope Innocent I (r. 401-17).

- Only the 27 books of the NT are canonical.
- “As for the rest of the books [the Gnostic Gospels?], they are to be not only rejected but also condemned.”

Biblical Canonicity

The Protestant Canon

Martin Luther (1522).

- Appendicizing Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.



Martin Luther

Biblical Canonicity

The Protestant Canon



William Tyndale

William Tyndale (1525).

- Appendicizing Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

**The Coverdale Bible (1535) and
The Matthew's Bible (1537).**

- Appendicizing Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.

The Great Bible (1539).

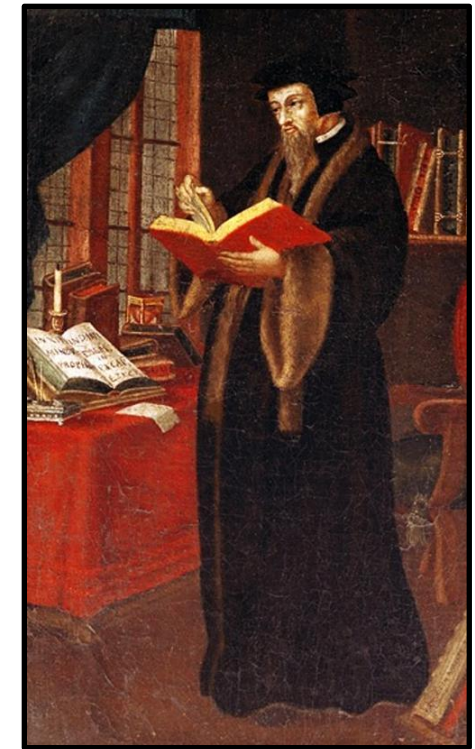
- Restoring the traditional order.

Biblical Canonicity

The Protestant Canon

John Calvin (1525).

- Doubted the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.
- Doubted the Petrine authorship of II Peter.
- Accepted the Epistle of James.
- No comment on II and III John or Revelation.



John Calvin

Biblical Canonicity

The Summa

The Process of Canonization.

- “The process of canonization was a long, complicated and sometimes contentious process. However, the popular myth that the compilation of the biblical canon was the result of power struggles between various factions within the church to define and control the parameters of orthodoxy is historically unsupportable. The books that eventually were accorded canonical status...

Biblical Canonicity

The Summa

The Process of Canonization.

- “... were chosen on the basis of accepted criteria – apostolicity, orthodoxy, and catholicity – and over a period of several generations they demonstrated conclusively their divine authority. In retrospect, it is apparent that church leaders were guided by the Holy Spirit to the point that they ultimately reached a sensible consensus – or more accurately, a providential consensus.”

[231]

Biblical Canonicity



The Gutenberg Bible – circa 1456



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