



# INSPIRATION AND PROVIDENCE

**THE REVELATION, TRANSMISSION  
INTEGRITY & CANONICITY OF SCRIPTURE**



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## What is the canon?

- **Galatians 6:16** – “rule” – *kanōn* – from *κάνη kanē* (a straight reed, i.e. rod) (STRONG)
  - “(1) a rod or straight piece of rounded wood to which any thing is fastened to keep it straight...(1A1) a measuring rod, rule” (THAYER)
- “figuratively, as a measure of assessment of a prescribed norm of action or duty standard, rule, principle” (Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament)



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## What is the canon?

- **Galatians 6:16** – “rule” – *kanōn* – from *κάνη kanē* (a straight reed, i.e. rod) (STRONG)
- Was further used in reference to a list, or index.
  - The list of books representing the rule or standard of faith – inspired books of God – Holy Scripture.
  - The canonicity of a book is logically preceded by the authority of the book.

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## What is the canon?

- The canonicity of a book is logically preceded by the authority of the book.
- Verbal preaching preceded written epistles –  
2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- Disciples were to test for authority – 1 John 4:1, 5-6;  
1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:15-16)

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## What is the canon?

- The canonicity of a book is logically preceded by the authority of the book.
- Authority can and must be recognized – **Luke 20:1-8; Ephesians 5:17; Matthew 7:7-8**
  - “The early Christians were not exceptionally intelligent people, but they did have the capacity to recognize divine authority when they saw it.” (Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Early Evidence Within the New Testament

- The written word is God's chosen method to save –  
**2 Timothy 3:15; John 20:30-31**
  - When such writing was understood to be inspired of God it carried weight and was shared and read among brethren as binding scripture.
  - Example – **Acts 15:23, 28-31; 16:4-5** – decrees from Jerusalem council.

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## Early Evidence Within the New Testament

- Paul wrote down the mystery – **Ephesians 3:3-5**
  - (**v. 5**) – made know through other apostles as well.



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## Early Evidence Within the New Testament

- Paul wrote the commandments of the Lord –  
**1 Corinthians 14:37**
  - **1 Corinthians 4:14, 17** – taught everywhere.
  - Paul's epistles known as scripture – **2 Peter 3:15-16**
    - **2 Corinthians 7:8; 10:8-11** – previous writings.
    - **1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:14** – to be read authoritatively and obeyed.
  - Sharing and circulation commanded – **Colossians 4:16**

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## Early Evidence Within the New Testament

- Paul endorsed Luke's gospel – **1 Timothy 5:18; Luke 10:7**
- Luke referred to other accounts – **Luke 1:1-4** (believed Luke used Mark's account)
- Peter alluded to his previous epistle – **2 Peter 3:1-2** – on same level as prophets.
- There is evidence within the first century of a growing index of inspired books. Pointed toward completion (**cf. 1 Corinthians 13:10**).

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## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- “The further use of the word [canon] in connection with the decisions of church councils must not mislead one into thinking that the NT canon is an ecclesiastical creation.”

(Guthrie, D., *The Canon of the New Testament*, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 732)



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- “Long before the apostolic letters were recognized as elements in a canonical collection, they were recognized as authoritative by most of those for whom they were written. As we said before, authority is the necessary precedent of canonicity.”

(Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- “The New Testament did not make the Church; there was a Church before there was a New Testament. And ‘the Church assuredly did not make the New Testament; the two grew up together.’ Yet when the New Testament came into being, the Church recognized in it her foundation documents, the title deeds of her existence and purpose.”

(Bruce, F.F., *The Spreading Flame*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- First councils in AD 393, 397 – “what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of those communities.”

(Bruce, F.F., *The New Testament Documents*, e-book, Intervarsity Press, 2018)



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **“The Gospel”** – shortly after the gospel of John (AD 90) the four gospels were compiled in single volume and circulated.
- **“The Apostle”** – in similar time and fashion the 13 epistles of Paul were compiled and circulated.
- **The other epistles** – letters of other apostles and “apostolic men,” including “Revelation” recognized to bear divine authority.

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## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Marcion (fl. AD 140)** – earliest writer to suggest a formal list of books as authoritative.
  - Heretic – believed the OT was to be completely rejected.
    - Accepted Paul as the sole faithful apostle.
  - His list – expurgated edition of Luke, 10 Pauline epistles (excluding Timothy and Titus)

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## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Irenaeus (fl. AD 180)** – fourfold Gospel, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, 1 John, and Revelation.
- **Muratorian fragment (no later than AD 170)** – Mentions Luke as “third gospel” (implying Matthew and Mark), John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Jude, 1 and 2 John, Revelation.



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## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Tertullian (AD 160-240)** – writings contain statements concerning the 4 gospels, Paul's epistles (13) and all other books EXCEPT 2 Peter, James, 2 and 3 John.
- **Clement of Alexandria (AD 165-220)** – “we find in his extant writings that he names and quotes from every book in the New Testament except Philemon, James, 2 Peter and 3 John.” (McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 61)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Origen (AD 185-254)** – names all the New Testament books as we now have them in a homily on the book of Joshua.

After describing the fall of Jericho, when the trumpets were blown by the priests, he says: "So, too, our Lord, whose advent was typified by the son of Nun, when he came, sent his apostles, bearing well-wrought trumpets. Matthew first sounded the priestly trumpet in his Gospel. Mark also, Luke and John, each gave forth a strain on their priestly trumpets. Peter, moreover, sounded loudly on the two-fold trumpet of his Epistles; and so also James and Jude. Still the number is incomplete, and John gives forth the trumpet-sound in his Epistles and Apocalypse; and Luke, while describing the Acts of the Apostles. Lastly, however, came he who said, 'I think that God hath set forth us Apostles last of all,' and, thundering on the fourteen trumpets of his Epistles, threw down even to the ground the walls of Jericho, that is to say, all the instruments of idolatry and the doctrines of philosophers."

(Homily on Joshua vii. 1, quoted and translated by Westcott, *Canon of New Testament*, 358)

(McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 57)



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Eusebius (AD 270-340)** – “Eusebius, early in the fourth century, mentions all the books of the New Testament as generally acknowledged except James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John. These, he says, were still disputed by some Christians, but recognized by the majority.”

(Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- **Athanasius (AD 326-373)** – compiled a list of all 27 New Testament books.
  - “These are the fountains of salvation, that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the oracles contained in them: in these alone the doctrine of religion is taught: let no one add to them or take anything from them.”  
*(Lardner’s Credibility, iv., 282-284) (McGarvey, J.W., Evidences of Christianity, 53-54)*
  - “It must not, however, be supposed that in this Easter letter Athanasius was imposing an alien opinion upon his churches. The letter rather presents a clarification of an established usage.”  
*(Guthrie, D., The Canon of the New Testament, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 739)*

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## Evidence Prior to Church Councils

- “Is it credible that all of these were deceived, or that they all, in widely separated parts of the world, conspired together to impose upon their fellow-men as apostolic, books which their fellow-men must have known to be of recent origin? If it is not, then the evidence from catalogues alone is credible proof that all of the New Testament books originated in the days of the Apostles.”

(McGarvey, J.W., *Evidences of Christianity*, 66)



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## What did the church councils do?

- African Synods – Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) – lists all 27 New Testament books.
- “It did not happen, in fact, until nearly three centuries of church usage had virtually fixed the canon. In spite of the variety of churches, subjected as they were to different influences and each exercising independent judgment regarding the separate books, the area of common agreement was remarkable.”

(Guthrie, D., *The Canon of the New Testament*, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 740)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## What did the church councils do?

- African Synods – Hippo (AD 393) and Carthage (AD 397) – lists all 27 New Testament books.
- “What is particularly important to notice is that the New Testament canon was not demarcated by the arbitrary decree of any Church Council...it did not confer upon [the books] any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity.”

(Bruce, F.F., *Books and the Parchments*, e-book, Kingsley Books, 2017)

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CANON

## What about the apocryphal books?

- The apocryphal books are those that failed in marks of inspiration, whose character was vastly different than that of inspired books.
- **Apocryphal** – of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true. (New Oxford American Dictionary)



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## What about the apocryphal books?

- “Apocryphal works...were composed in the first four centuries, in the interest of heresies or for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, and sent forth under the name of an apostle or other eminent person. These apocrypha...were merely designed either to fill chasms in the history of Jesus and the apostles by fictitious stories, or to glorify Christianity by vaticinia post eventum, in the way of pious fraud at that time freely allowed.”

(Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church (8 Vols.)*, e-book, Olive Tree, 2017)

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