

Two weeks ago I taught in part the Doctrine of The Authenticity of The Bible. This morning I want provide a brief review and perhaps complete our study by reviewing the process of canonicity. First however we need to use 1Jo 1:9 as may or may not be necessary.

Earlier we studied how we get history. History is determined from ancient written records as confirmed or not confirmed by archaeology. There are three sets of history called the Cambridge Set; the sets are located at Cambridge University in Cambridge England. They are classified as the Ancient, Medieval and Modern History sets.

To determine what is fact versus fiction, the following tests are used: when there is a conflict the oldest documents take precedence. Important in the analysis is the number of documents available and the number of mistakes in the various manuscripts and the substance of any errors. The time interval between the events described is also important when more than one document exists; often this is the case. Various external evidence such as established contemporaneous events, rulers, names of cities, civilizations known to exist at the time and archaeological confirmations become critical in analyzing the authenticity of the events described.

The Christian can now take the Bible and say without fear, "this is the Word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation." All the more remarkable is the fact that more than 40 men, in three languages, spanning 60 generations and 1600 years have written the Bible from three different continents. This alone is a remarkable feat.

The relationship between archaeology and the NT is again nothing short of phenomenal. William Albright, a renowned Biblical archaeologist summed it up: "As critical study of the Bible is more and more influenced by the rich new material from the rich ancient Near East, we shall see a steady rise in respect for the historical significance of now neglected or despised passages ..."

Scientific data also provides evidence of Scriptural authenticity as we noted on 12-16-2007. Now for new material. The early church fathers agreed upon five criteria to determine which Books were to be included.

**Was the book of Divine origin? that is to say does the book in its entirety purport to be from God?**

2Pe 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2Pe 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

**Was its claim to inspiration adequately sustained** by the awareness of the writers that this was indeed sacred Scripture - in other words by internal evidence the writers in their sacred work believed they were providing the Canon.

**Documentation by quotation;** for example, The New Testament contains numerous quotations from the Old Testament made by not only Jesus Christ but by virtually every writer of Scripture.

**The law of public or official action** as in the case of the Old Testament, was there a record of the priest reading from it in public; since he had to know from what to read, such reading would serve to document the authenticity of the book being examined.

Neh 8:5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

**External evidence** was used in the sense that the Masoretic copyist only preserved for us that which all of Israel seemed to know as the Canon.

From the Grolier Encyclopedia and The World Book we find a rather unbiased description of what is known as the Pseudepigrapha and/or The Apocrypha:

### **Pseudepigrapha**

The word pseudepigrapha meaning "books with false titles," refers to books similar in type to those of the Bible whose authors gave them the names of persons of a much earlier period in order to enhance their authority. The best known are 3 and 4 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasses, which are included in the Apocrypha. The term is applied to many Jewish and Jewish-Christian books written in the period 200 BC to AD 200 ... Fragments of the Damascus Document have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls ... The pseudepigrapha are important for they throw light on Judaism and early Christianity ...

### **Apocrypha**

The Apocrypha are books of the Old Testament included in Roman and Orthodox Catholic Bibles as deuterocanonical (added to the earlier canon), but excluded from the Hebrew Bible and from most Protestant Bibles. It is not certain why the term apocrypha (hidden things) was originally applied to them but they were considered less authoritative than the other Biblical books because of the relatively late origin (300 BC to 100 AD) ...

The World Book "The Apocrypha includes the first and second books of Esdras, Tobit, additions to the book of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Judith, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, Susanna and the Elders, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses and the 1st and 2nd books of Maccabees ... "The Apocrypha is important source for Jewish history and religious developments in the 1st and 2nd centuries BC."

There are many other **pseudepigrapha** books such as the Book of Mormons and

Devotional/Prayer books of Christian Science Denomination which are accepted by some as biblical. There are also other Orthodox Catholic books accepted in their faith as supplemental to the Bible although rejected by the Roman Catholic Church.

Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit anticipated this problem and made a rather sarcastic remark in Gal 1:8 and 9.

Gal 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Gal 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

If you consider the copies available, age and accuracy of the documents it becomes quite obvious that we have the Inspired Word of God preserved for us and need no extra-Biblical Revelation.

Flavius Josephus was an unbeliever who in Contra Apion describes the sacred "Books of the Jew" for you see Canonicity was an accepted part of Jewish History. Not surprisingly he tells us (without any axe to grind) that the Old Testament is the Canon and has no need for added pseudepigraphai.

R. B. Thieme in his book Canonicity writes concerning the Apocrypha:

"The Rejection of the Apocrypha

1. The Apocrypha was never in the Hebrew Canon. Every card-indexing of the Canon of Scripture in the ancient world listed only ... the Old Testament, but it excluded the Apocrypha.

2. Neither Jesus Christ nor any of the NT writers ever quoted from the Apocrypha. Never even once.

3. Josephus expressly excluded them from his list of Sacred Scripture in his book. He explained that these books were excluded from the Canon because they were spurious.

4. No mention of the **Apocrypha** was made in any catalogue of Canonical Books in the first four centuries A.D. It was not until the 5th century A.D. that a well known organization slipped them into the catalogue.

5. These Apocryphal books were never asserted to be divinely inspired or to possess Divine authority in their contents.

6. No Prophets were connected with these writings! Each Old Testament book was written by a man who was a prophet either by office or by gift or both.

7. These books contained many historical, geographical and chronological errors. They so distorted and contradicted Old Testament narratives that in order to accept the

**Apocrypha** one had to reject the Old Testament.

8. The **Apocrypha** teaches doctrines and upholds practices which are contrary to the Canon of Scriptures! Documentation regarding the false doctrine found in the **Apocrypha** is as follows:

a. **Prayers and offerings for the dead.** In 2Ma 12:41-46, not only are prayers offered for the dead, but monetary offerings are brought on their behalf and even recommended! I am quoting from the Douay version ... of the Old Testament, which is a revised version of the Vulgate: "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sin..."

b. **Suicide Justified.** 2Ma 14:41-46 deals with a revolt against the "Syrians", led by the Maccabean brothers ... the Apocrypha justifies this suicide and calls it a noble death.

c. **Atonement and Salvation by Almsgiving.** At least two of the books of the Apocrypha state that sins may be atoned for and salvation may be obtained by giving large donations.

Tobit 4:11 "For alms deliver from all sin, and from death and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness ..."

d. **Cruelty to Slaves Justified.** In Ecc 33:25-29 we read that the best way to treat a slave is to pile the work on him, and that, if need be, cruelty to slaves is fully justified ...

e. **The Doctrine of Emanations.** This is a cosmological concept characteristic of ... Gnosticism. It explains the world as an "outflowing" from One Absolute source but never uses the word God ...

f. **The preexistence of souls** is also mentioned ... which claims that the soul, as well as the body is produced in procreation ... We know that ultimately only God can give soul-life."

g. **Other fallacies in the Apocrypha** ... hatred of Samaritans ... lying is sanctified in certain cases ... incantations are encouraged as is assassination ... seven angels are said to have the power of intercession ... purgatory is established as a place ..."

12. Interestingly neither the Roman or Greek Orthodox Church accepts all of the theology of the Apocrypha but rather they have chosen to pick and choose and have therefore no absolute standard or Canon. Much of that taught in the Apocrypha is vehemently opposed to sound Catholic Teaching and many of the early Church Fathers without question considered the Apocrypha as questionable and not to be considered as equal with the Bible.

There has been far less controversy with reference to what represents the New Testament.

Criteria for New Testament Canonicity can be summarized:

- a. Apostolicity - every Book must be written by an Apostle or someone close to an Apostle.
- b. Reception by the early local Churches as being authentic.
- c. Consistency - doctrines in the Book must be consistent with extant Christian teaching.
- d. Each Book must give either internal or external evidence of Divine Inspiration.

The Church Councils finally resolved all question as to what constituted our New Testament.

- a. Council of Laodicia-336 AD
- b. Council of Damascus-382 AD
- c. Council of Carthage-397 AD
- d. Council of Hippo-419 AD

The Council of Laodicia recognized and accepted all Books of the New Testament except Revelation however the next three councils included the Revelation into the Canon.

The question of Canonicity never came up again until the rise of liberalism in the nineteenth century which led to our twentieth century modernism.

In closing I want to read in part a sermon given by James Kennedy entitled THE ANVIL.

"If the Bible had not been written, many critics would have been out of work. It is the most attacked of all books. Years ago I saw a painting of a very large anvil and around the anvil lay scattered many shattered hammers and underneath the picture was written "the Word of God endureth forever. The anvil is an appropriate metaphor for the Word of God, which like the anvil has endured the attacks of numerous skeptics and unbelievers and yet still stands unscathed in spite of the onslaught of the ages.

**Hammer away ye hostile hands your hammers break, God's Anvil stands."**

The Word of the Lord endureth forever. God in a supernatural way has sustained His Word down through the centuries against the attacks of all ranks and classes of men. Numerous kings with the scepter of state in one hand have taken up the hammer of unbelief, and with the other, they attempted with all their power of government to smash the Anvil of God. The cases are numerous:

One of the early ones involved Herod sometimes called "the Great." He gathered together the wise men to find out where the Messiah should be born. Their reply,

"It is written in the prophet, thou Bethlehem Ephratah though thou be least among the

tribes of Judah yet out of thee shall He come forth to me who shall rule my people Israel. Whose goings forth have been from old, even from everlasting. Thus said the Prophet, thus declared the Word of God."

Then King Herod took up the hammer of his might and sent forth his soldiers to destroy that promise and nullify the prophecy. They killed all of the children two years old and younger in all of the environs of Bethlehem. And the King said

"I have brought to naught the prophecy of the Word of God."

But God had warned Joseph in a dream. He took the child and his mother and fled into Egypt and so the prophecy came to pass. The Word of God was fulfilled. He that was to rule His people came forth out of Bethlehem after all.

Another king 400 years later, Constantine the Great, made Rome a Christian Empire; at his death his nephew Julian, later to be known as Julian the Apostate, rose to the throne. He was determined to reestablish the pagan religions of Rome; so he set out to study the Scripture and with his army to disprove Christianity by disproving its many prophecies, thus bringing the effect of the Bible to naught.

When he saw the prophecy concerning the destruction of the Temple he determined that he would build the Temple therefore disproving the Scripture. He sent forth the money and the men to do just that; but there was a great earthquake that destroyed the work before it was hardly started. Undaunted, he started again, but this time, from fissures in the earth, there came forth great clouds of gas which were ignited in great explosions, terrifying the men. His men fled from the scene refusing to return in spite of all the inducements offered by the apostate Julian. **Hammer away ye hostile hands your hammers break, God's Anvil stands.**

Hitler who called himself a complete pagan and Mussolini who declared the church would soon cease to exist set themselves obstinately against Christ's Church and the Word of God. Hitler determined to uproot Christianity root and branch. Hitler's charred body was discovered in a bunker. Mussolini hung by his feet in the town square. The Word of God however goes on today. **The Word of the Lord endureth forever.**

Many of those breaking their hammers against the Anvil were changed into avid defenders of the very Word they hated. One such man was the brilliant and erudite Sir William Michael Ramsey, Oxford trained, born into a house of skepticism and atheism, his parents were wealthy unbelievers. He was determined that he would see the Word of God demolished. Unlike the philosophers who discoursed and made claims, he would use his training as an archaeologist to prove the Bible was the product of ambitious monks of the second and third century. After much study he determined the achilles heel of the New Testament was the book of Acts because it included detailed accounts of Paul's missionary journeys with the names of places throughout the Roman world.

The critical world waited expectantly. Even some Christians were fearful of his findings. Beginning in 1881, he labored indefatigably for 15 years following the routes laid out by

Luke. In 1896, he produced his work "Saint Paul, Roman Citizen, World Traveler. Much to the dismay of those scholars who waited for his findings, Ramsey declared he had found Luke to be an astonishingly accurate guide for his journeys ... For forty years he continued his excavations and writings all to the increasing chagrin of the unbelieving world. He found Luke to be accurate in the minutest detail. Ramsey committed his life to the Christ of the Scriptures which he had found to be unfailingly sure.

Colonel Robert Ingersoll was a famous skeptic and unbeliever ... He met a General on the train as he was traveling to one of his many speaking engagements against the Bible. As they discussed Theology, he told the General, "you have great literary skills. Why don't you use these skills to demolish the myth and uncover the truth about this Jesus and show Him as a man among men." The general decided to take up the challenge and began his research.

As he searched he found himself astonished that this peasant from Nazareth from which no good thing could come, having never attended school, never earned any degrees, walked upon a mountain and yet he delivered the most astounding sermon on human ethics the world has ever seen. This general considered, how can He know these things? His amazement increased until there at the cross he received the Lord as His Savior. The General's name was Lou Wallace, a hero of the Civil war and the author of Ben Hur.

A school devoted to skepticism of the Word was established in the early nineteenth century. They were determined to demolish all traditional views of the Bible. They said it was quite obvious Moses could not possibly have written the Pentateuch because writing had not been invented in Moses' day. About the time the school really got going so also developed the science of archaeology.

The spade of the archaeologist became the bane of the school of higher criticism. The postulation concerning the incipience of writing post dating Moses was soon disproved. According to several digs, writing was found to have predated Moses by 1500 years, thus shattering the notion that Moses could not write.

The Empire of Assyria with its capital of Nineveh was believed to never have existed except in the mythological Bible. None of the secular historians had written about Assyria. An archaeologist named Layard went to Masul where in an ancient dig he found a brick with the name Sargon. He sent it to the museum in Paris where it was declared to be fraudulent because the empire never existed.

Layard later dug up the whole city of Nineveh and discovered thousands of inscriptions detailing the history of Assyria.

The Hittites mentioned over 40 times in the Bible were believed to be mythical. In 1906, Hugo Winkler uncovered in central Turkey the city of Burgoscoi which turned out to be the capital of the Empire of the Hittites.

The story about Jericho and Joshua was a nice laughable story that made a nice song but it was not believed. Professor John Startang in 1930 spent 6 years uncovering one layer after another until he reached the time of Joshua. The story of Joshua, even to the detail

of the walls falling inside out was proven as fact, furthermore the city was burned as the OT declares.

The birth of Jesus was a familiar target. Luke was a frequent target of several critics. Scholars said there was no such thing as a census required by Rome. People were not required to return to their ancestral homes said the critics. A papyrus was discovered which said, "because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their homes should prepare at once to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment and that the tilled lands may return to those belonging to them."

In conclusion, we have seen overwhelming data supporting the authenticity of both the Old and New Testaments and yet there are those today who very subjectively dismiss the historicity of these books. Though the Old and New Testaments are not history books per se, their contents meet the tests of history and stand head and shoulders above any other documents which claim to be historically accurate.

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