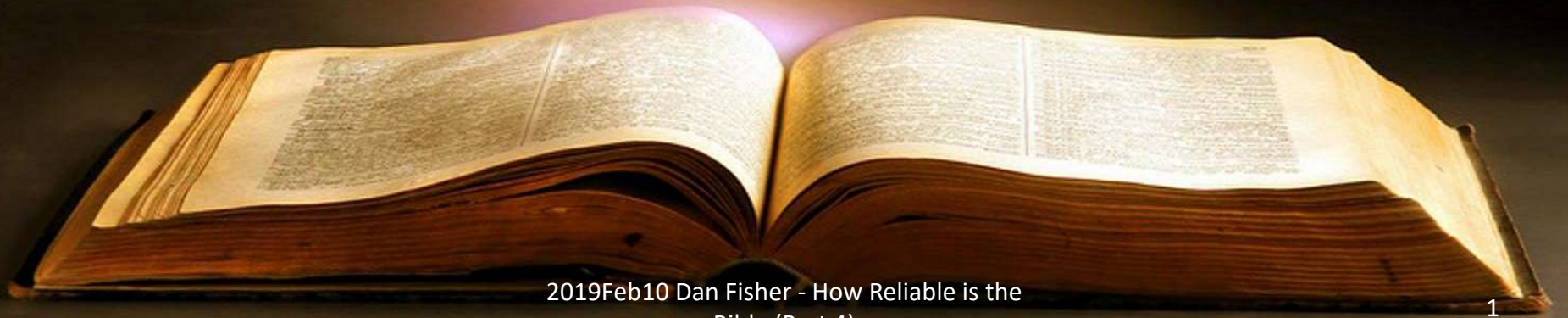


How reliable is the Bible?

Part 4: “Canonicity – how we got the Bible”



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1. The first link in the chain of God communicating His word to us is revelation.
2. The second link in the chain is inspiration.



Evidences of the Bible's inspiration:

- **The *prima facie* evidence:** the Bible on its surface seems to be inspired – it speaks with such authority (Jn 7:46 “No man ever spoke like this Man!”)
- **The testimony of the Holy Spirit:** He confirms to us scripture's authenticity
- **Its transforming nature:** Heb 4:12 “quick [living] and powerful
- **The unity of its books as a whole:** 66 books, written over 1500 yrs, by some 40 authors, on 3 continents, in several languages on hundreds of topics with amazing unity
- **Its historicity** – it is historically reliable

“There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.”

William F. Albright, renowned scholar and archeologist

“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.” Nelson Glueck, renowned historian & archeologist

- The confirmation of Jesus and the Apostles

3. The third link is interpretation.

- Revelation is “the fact” God communicated to man.
- Inspiration is “the how” God communicated to man.
- Interpretation is “the understanding” of God’s communication to man.

4. The fourth link is canonization.

Canonization: the process of how the books of the Bible were recognized as divinely inspired and how the collection of those books (the Bible) received its acceptance.

The term “canon” comes from the Greek “*kanon*” – a rod, ruler, staff, or measuring rod and eventually began to mean “a standard” or “norm”

Gal 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

5. Canoncity is determined by God and discovered by man.

Incorrect View

The Church is determiner of canon
The Church is mother of canon
The Church is magistrate of canon
The Church is regulator of canon
The Church is judge of canon
The Church is master of canon

Correct View

The Church is discoverer of canon
The Church is the child of canon
The Church is minister of canon
The Church is recognizer of canon
The Church is witness of canon
The Church is servant of canon

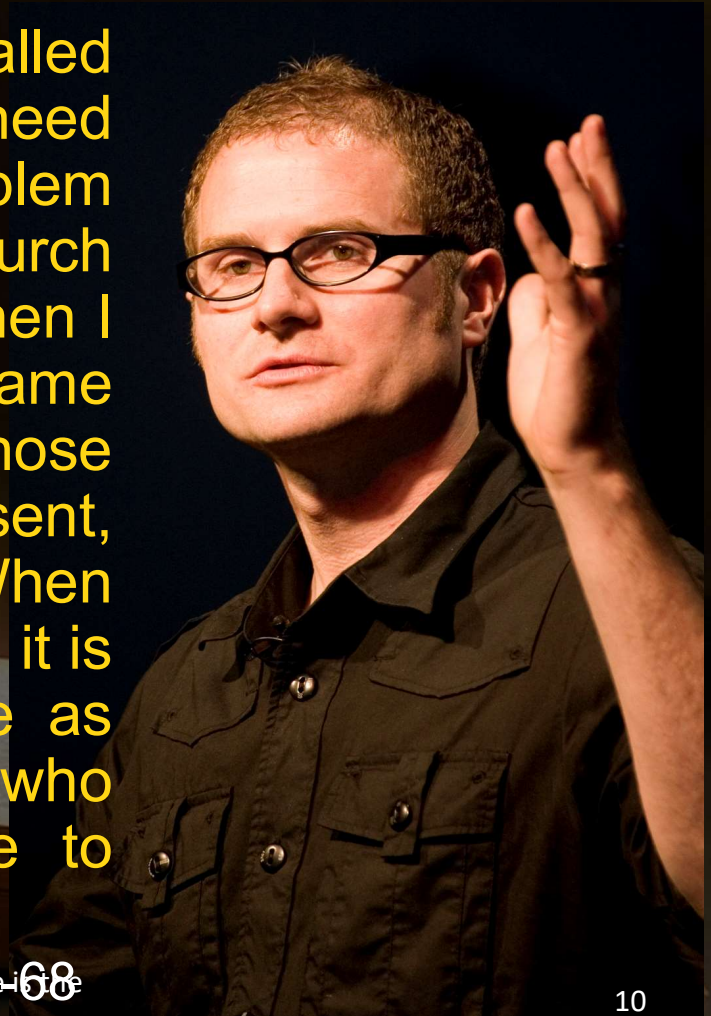
“The Bible is a collection of stories that teach us about what it looks like when God is at work through actual people. The Bible has the authority it does only because it contains stories about people interacting with the God who has all authority. ... But it wasn't until the 300s that what we know as the sixty-six books of the Bible were actually agreed upon as 'the Bible'. This is part of the problem with continually insisting that one of the absolutes of the Christian faith must be a belief that 'Scripture alone' is our guide. It sounds nice, but it is not true. In reaction to abuses by the church,

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a group of believers during a time called the Reformation claimed that we only need the authority of the Bible. But the problem is that we got the Bible from the church voting on what the Bible even is. So when I affirm the Bible as God's word, in the same breath I have to affirm that when those people voted, God was somehow present, guiding them to do what they did. When people say that all we need is the Bible, it is simply not true. In affirming the Bible as inspired, I also have to affirm the Spirit who I believe was inspiring those people to choose those books."

Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, pp. 65-68
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Bible (Part 4)





“The Church no more gave us the New Testament canon than Sir Isaac Newton gave us the force of gravity. God gave us gravity, by His work of creation, and similarly He gave us the New Testament canon, by inspiring the individual books that make it up.” J. I.

6. A book is canonical because it is inspired.

7. A book is valuable because it is canonical.

The Old Testament

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The Old Testament, referred to as “sacred” writings by Paul (2 Tim 3:15), were revered as evidenced by the way they were handled:

Deut. 31:24-26 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: ²⁶ “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;

The Jews approached the O.T. scriptures with “fearful” reverence. According to the Talmud:

- There were specifications not only for the kind of skins to be used and the size of the columns, but there was even a religious ritual necessary for the scribe to perform before writing the name of God.
- Rules governed the kind of ink used, dictated the spacing of words, and prohibited writing anything from memory.
- The lines, and even the letters, were counted methodically.
- If a manuscript was found to contain even one mistake, it was discarded and destroyed.

Incorrect assumptions about qualifications for Old Testament canonicity:

1. Age determines canonicity
2. The use of Heb language determines canonicity
3. Agreement with the Torah determines canonicity
4. Religious value determines canonicity

Jesus and the apostles ultimately verified the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament by calling it “Holy Scripture” and quoting from it.

The rank and file Jew of Jesus' day understood the O.T. to be God's Word:

Jn 7:40-44 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" ⁴³ So there was a division among the people because of Him. ⁴⁴ Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

The Jews accepted as canonical those writings written during the “Prophetic Period” which stretched from Moses to Malachi:

“From Artaxerxes until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them.”

Josephus, Jewish historian, *Contra Apion* 1.8

Rabbinical statements about the Old Testament:

“With the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel.”

“Until then [coming of Alexander the Great and the end of the empire of the Persians] the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, ‘incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise’.”

“Since the day when the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise.”

The faithless disciples understood the O.T. to be God's Word:

Lk 24:32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

Acts 17:2 Paul reasoned from the scriptures in Thessalonica

Acts 17:11 The Berean believers searched the scriptures

Acts 18:24 Apollos used the Old Testament to preach Jesus

Rom 1:2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

Rom 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

1 Cor 15:3-4 Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

2 Tim 3:15 from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures

Angels recognized the Old Testament as Scripture:

Dan 10:21 But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth

Jesus recognized the Old Testament as Scripture:

Jn 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

Lk 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He [Jesus] expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

For starters, Jesus endorsed the following O.T. books:

Genesis (Mt 19:4-6)

Exodus (Mt 22:32)

Deuteronomy (Mt 22:29)

Leviticus (Mt 22:39)

Psalms (Mk 12:10-11)

Isaiah (Lk 4:21)

Jonah (Mt 12:40)

Zechariah (Jn 17:12)

John endorsed the following O.T. books:

Exodus and Numbers (Jn 19:36)

Psalms, Jonah, and Isaiah (Jn 19:24,28, 20:9)

Zechariah (Jn 19:37)

Paul endorsed the following O.T. books:

Genesis (Rom 4:3, Gal 3:8)

Exodus (Rom 9:17)

Deuteronomy (Rom 10:18)

1 Kings (Rom 11:3)

Isaiah and Hosea (Rom 9:25-29)

Joel (Rom 10:11)

Nahum (Rom 10:15)

James endorsed the following O.T. books:

Leviticus (Js 2:8)

Genesis (Js 2:23)

Proverbs (Js 4:6)

Peter endorsed the following O.T. books:

Psalms (Acts 1:16-10, 2 Pet 2:7)

Isaiah (1 Pet 2:6)

Philip and Luke endorsed the following O.T. book:

Isaiah (Acts 8:32-35)

How the books included in the Bible were selected:

1. For a book to be included in the canon it had to have been written by a prophet and carry the gift of “propheticity.”
2. The writer had to be confirmed by acts of God:
 - Moses – Ex 4:1-9
 - Elijah – 1 Kings 18
 - Deut 13:1-3, 18:20-22

3. The message had to be consistent with known inspired writings:

- God cannot contradict Himself – 2 Cor 1:17-18
- God cannot lie – Heb 6:18

4. It had to have the life changing power of God

5. It had to be accepted by the people of God

Eph 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*,

“We do not make statements true or false by affirming or denying them. They have truth or falsity regardless of what we think, what opinions we hold, what judgments we make.”

Mortimer J. Adler

