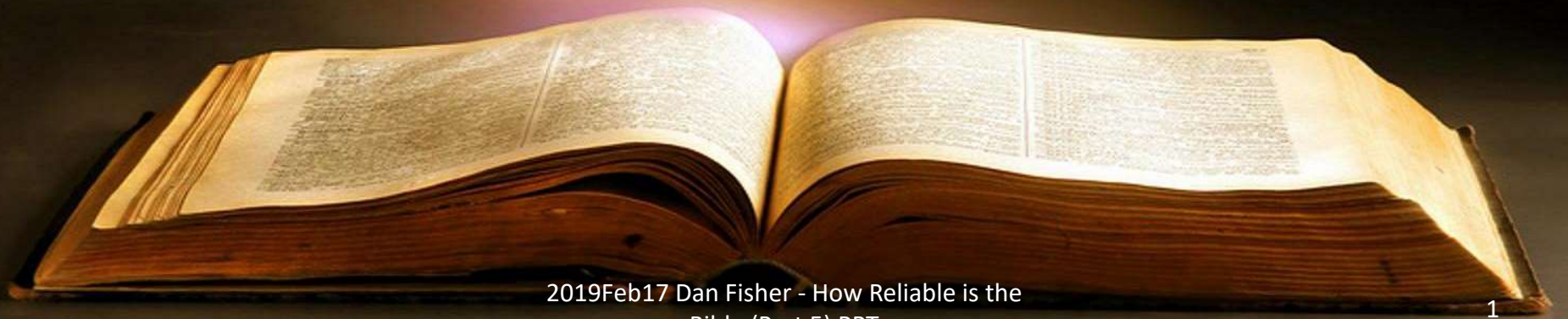


How reliable is the Bible?

Part 5: “Canonicity – why the Apocrypha is not in the evangelical Bible”



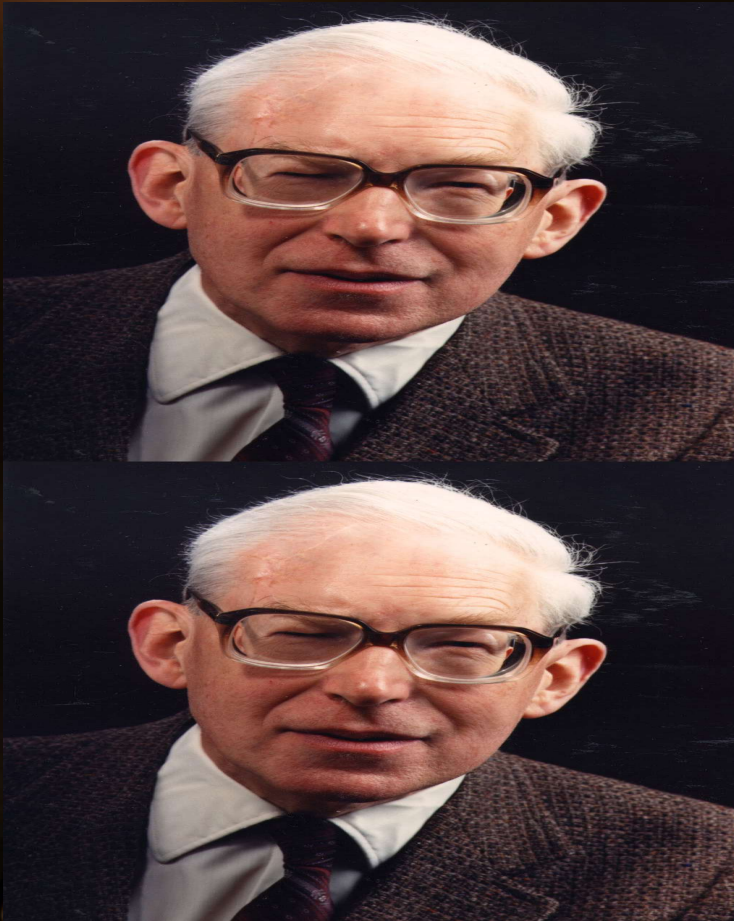
1. The first link in the chain of God communicating His word to us is revelation.
2. The second link in the chain is inspiration.
3. The third link is interpretation.
4. The fourth link is canonization.

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”

“[I]t wasn’t until the 300s that what we know as the sixty-six books of the Bible were actually agreed upon as ‘the Bible’.” Rob Bell, *Velvet Elvis*, pp. 65-68





“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.

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

Jn 7:40-42 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?"

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



Josephus
Jewish historian

“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. ... 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.” *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.”

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

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

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?"

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:

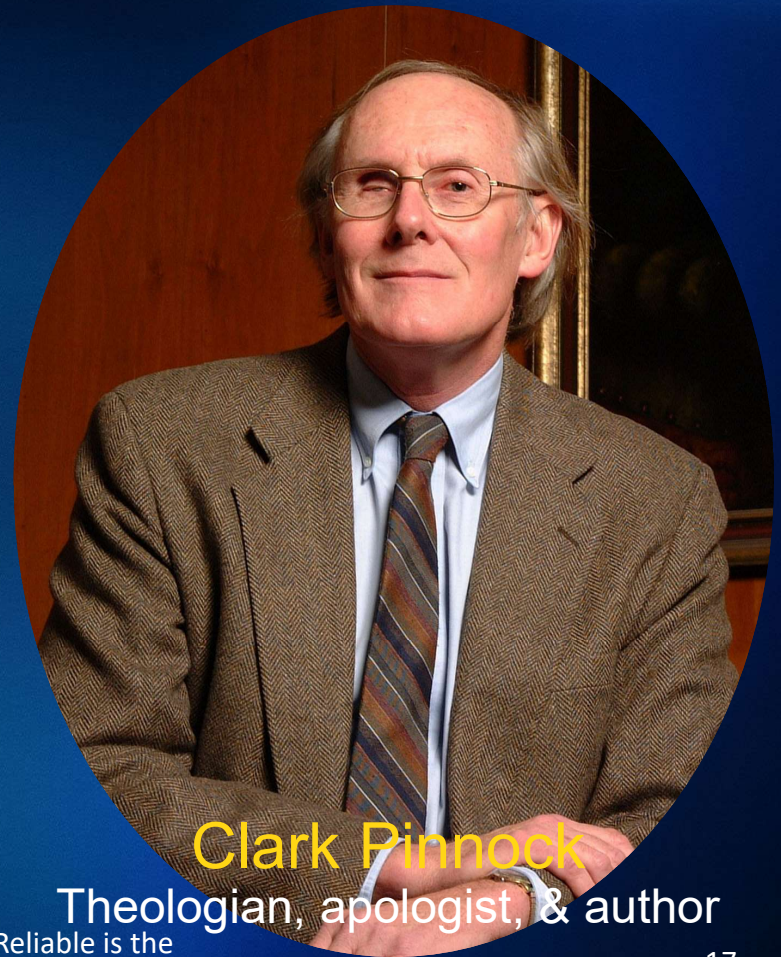
Psalms (Acts 1:16-10, 2 Pet 2:7)

Isaiah (1 Pet 2:6)

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

Isaiah (Acts 8:32-35)

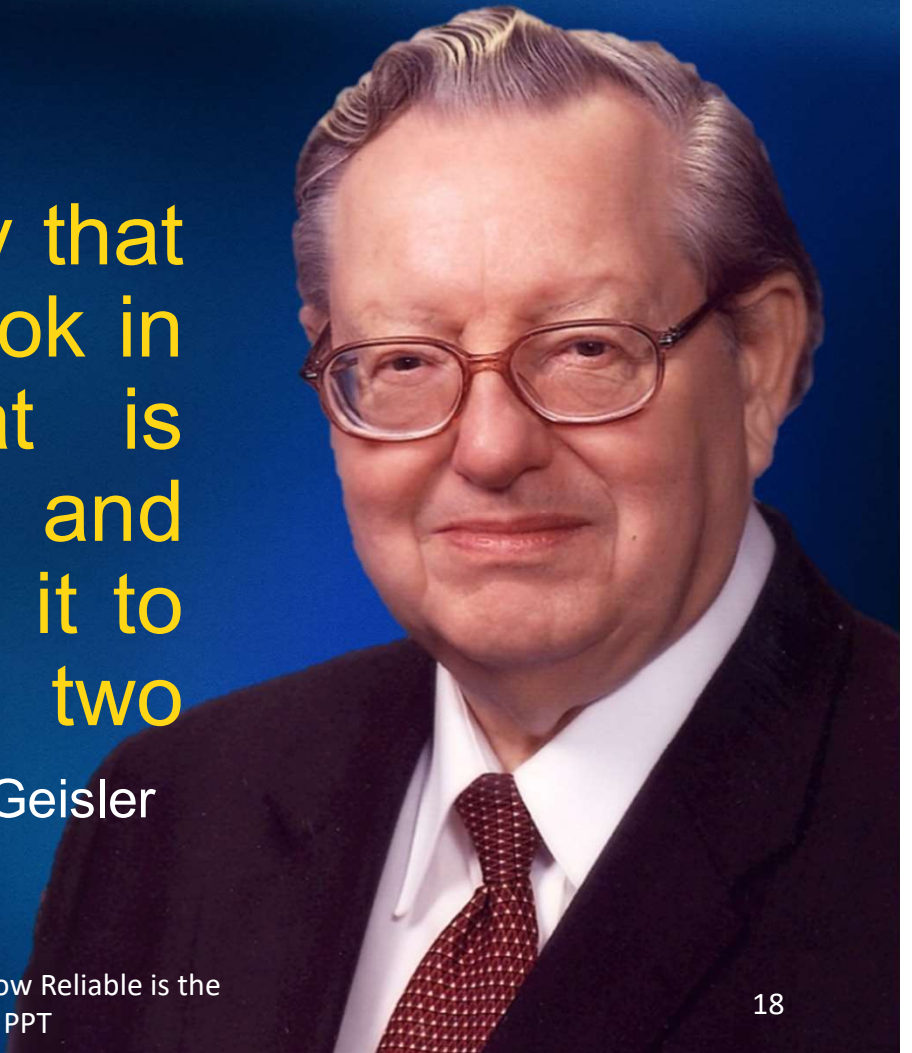
“The Spirit did not reveal a list of inspired books, but left their recognition to a historical process in which He was active, God's people learned to distinguish wheat from chaff, and gold from gravel, as He worked in their hearts.” *Biblical Revelation*, p. 104



Clark Pinnock

Theologian, apologist, & author

“It seems highly unlikely that God would inspire a book in the first century that is necessary for faith and practice and then allow it to be lost for nearly two thousand years.” Norman Geisler



How the books included in the Old Testament 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,

1. The 39 books that make up our present Old Testament were carefully examined before they were included in the canon.

Homologoumena: 34 O.T. books never questioned

Antilegomena: 5 questioned but eventually included

- **Song of Solomon** – seemed sensual to some
- **Ecclesiastes** – it seemed skeptical
- **Esther** – the name of God is not used
- **Ezekiel** – some claimed it was anti-Mosaic
- **Proverbs** – accused of contradicting itself (26:4-5)

Why does the Catholic Old Testament have more books than the evangelical one?

2. **Apocrypha** – comes from root word meaning *secret, hidden*. It means *not authentic* and refers to the books that did not make it into the Old and New Testament canon.

3. **Pseudepigrapha**: spurious books unauthentic in their content/authorship written between 200 B.C. – 200 A.D.

Some of these books are quoted in the Bible but this does not mean that they are or ever were considered inspired:

- *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* referred to in Num 21:14
- *The Book of Jasher* referred to in Josh 10:13
- Jude 14-15 quotes from the Book of Enoch and The Assumption of Moses
- Paul quotes from heathen poets – Aratus (Acts 17:28), Menander (1 Cor 15:33), Epimenides (Titus 1:12)

Originally, the Catholic Bible contained:

Tobit

Judith

Wisdom

Wisdom of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus

Baruch

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

Additional content in Esther (10:4-16:24)

Additional content in Daniel (3:24-90,13-14 – *History of Susanna, Prayer of Azariah, Song of the Three Holy Children, Bel & the Dragon*)

1 Esdras

2 Esdras

The Prayer of Manasses/Manasseh

Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans

Reasons the Apocrypha was not included in the evangelical Bible:

1. Some of the books have unbiblical or heretical teaching.
 - Prayers for the dead – 2 Macc 12:45-46
 - Salvation by works – Tobit 12:9
2. Some of the stories are extrabiblical and fanciful.
3. Much of its teaching is sub-biblical & even immoral.
4. Mainly written during Judaism's inter-testamental period.
5. Were not accepted by the people of God as inspired.

New Testament

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The major motivations for collecting the N.T. canon were:

- The books were considered prophetic
- The demands of the early church
- Heretical teachings that started to surface
- The “missional” nature of the church demanded the Scriptures be translated into numerous languages
- The persecution & politics of the first few centuries



The church fathers from the time of Irenaeus in the 2nd century A.D. referred to the Kanon of the Truth, Church, or Faith, but it was not until 350 A.D. in the time of Athanasius that the Bible was accepted as the completed, established canon of Scripture.



Why did it take so long to canonize the New Testament?

- Persecution in the early centuries
- The inspired writings were commonly known and accepted
- Serious challenges to the Scriptures did not begin until the 2nd & 3rd centuries

“One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect.



F.F. Bruce

Bible scholar/author



F.F. Bruce

Bible scholar/author

The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa at Hippo Regius in 393 A.D. and at Carthage in 397 A.D. – but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of these communities.”

The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? p. 27

Homologoumena: 20 of the 27 books were undisputed

Antilegomena: 7 of the 27 books disputed but eventually canonized

- Hebrews
- James
- 2 Peter
- 2 & 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

Pseudepigrapha: over 280 books were rejected by all (there were over 50 pseudepigraphal gospels)

Lost Epistle to the Corinthians – 1 Cor 5:9 “I wrote to you in my (previous) letter ...”

Third Letter to the Corinthians – not written by Paul

Apocalypse of Peter – not written by Peter

The Epistle of Barnabas – not written by the Barnabas in Scripture

Infancy Gospel of James – not written by James

The Gospel of Judas – not written by Judas & we wouldn't care anyway

1 Clement – written by Pope Clement

Gospel of Thomas – not written by Thomas and biblically inconsistent

The Book of Thomas:

“Let Mary go away from us, because women are not worthy of life. Lo, I shall lead her in order to make her a male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Gospel of Thomas, 94.197

Tests books had to pass to be included in the New Testament:

1. **The apostolicity test** – it had to be written by an apostle or under the direct supervision of an apostle
2. **The historicity test** – it had to conform historical facts
3. **The truth test** – it had to remain faithful to previously accepted canonical writings and convey truth attested to by the Holy Spirit

4. **The confirmation test** – it had to be confirmed by Christ or an apostle

5. **The transformational test** – it had to have life-transforming power

6. **The acceptance/usage test** – it had to have universal recognition by the church as inspired and experience widespread usage among churches

New Testament written by apostles or under the close scrutiny of an apostle:

1. **Matthew**, an apostle, wrote the book of Matthew
2. **Mark** was an associate of Peter – 1 Pet 5:13, Acts 12:25, 2 Tim 4:11
3. **Luke** was an associate of Paul – Col 4:14, Phile 24
4. **John**, an apostle, wrote John, John 1, 2, & 3, & The Revelation
5. **Acts** was written by Luke – Acts 1:1
6. **Paul**, an apostle, wrote Romans – Philemon
7. **Hebrews** was written by revelation from God (1:1) & was confirmed by the apostles (2:3-4) – Paul is generally believed to be the author
8. **James** wrote the book of James – he was the half brother of Jesus (Js 1:1, Gal 1:19) & was the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13, Gal 2:9)
9. **Peter**, an apostle, wrote 1 & 2 Peter
10. **Jude** was written by Jesus' half brother – Jude 1:1, Mt 13:55