

DEFENDING THE BIBLE'S CREDIBILITY
"Part I: Answering Liberal Theology's 'Higher Criticism':"
C. Answering Critics Of Canonicity: Which Books Belong In The Bible"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) While reading the current February 9, 1998 issue of the financial magazine, Forbes, I was fascinated in an article's quotation of what it called "the Bible". The quotation, found on page 20, reads: "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself."

Though the thought seems to be a valid one, I had never **heard** the phrase, and was amazed that it didn't ring a bell after years of Bible study. I quickly looked at the reference which I thought was Ecclesiastes 3:18, but found that Ecclesiastes 3: 18 read much differently from the magazine quote. Confused, I looked more closely at the Forbes reference and discovered that it came from **Ecclesiasticus**, **NOT** Ecclesiastes! The book of **Ecclesiasticus** is in the **Apocrypha**, a part of the Roman Catholic Bible but not a part of the Protestant Bible!

(2) Besides the Old Testament's Apocrypha, there are a number of books contemporaneous to New Testament books that are not included in the Bible. These include 1 Clement, the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, the supposed Revelation of Peter, The Acts of Paul, Apocryphal, the Apocryphal Gospels of Peter, Matthias, James and the Nativity. (Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, p. 180).

Well, WHY aren't THESE works in our Bible? Who decides what belongs in Scripture and what doesn't belong there? Is there a basis for having confidence in what we have in our 66-book canon of Scripture?!

(3) Rene Pache writes that Liberal Theology scholars, in doubting the divine inspiration of Scripture, came to doubt the right of all but the Corinthian epistles and Galatians to be in the Bible! (Ibid., p. 182) This doubt has become so great that **now**, some question if Jesus ever **existed** as a person. Episcopal Bishop of Newark, N.J., Bishop John Spong, wrote in Born of a Woman: "If Paul was going to create a person out of whole cloth, he never would have located him in this scrubby, dirty little Galilean town." (Life, Dec. 1994, p. 67, 68)

Well, IS the 66-book canon of our Bible CREDIBLY the product of GOD'S inspiration, and how do we KNOW for sure? After all, our FAITH is based upon accepting Scripture as the truth from GOD!

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: Since OTHER religious works existed at the same time as the Bible's books, how do we know which books belong in the Bible?!"

- I. **"Liberal" theologians allege that the Bible is not God-inspired, but needs more authoritative, "higher" scholars to explain its "errors".**
- II. **As they deny the Bible's credibility, they deny the right of its books to be viewed as God's books, Pache, Insp. & Auth. of Scr., p. 165ff.**
- III. **However, there is both SUBJECTIVE and OBJECTIVE evidence that God wants our Bible to contain the 66-book Bible we have:**
 - A. We have **subjective** evidences that **God** assembled the 66-book Bible:
 1. A "psychology of canonicity", man's **value** in **guarding a religious** text's **accuracy**, existed **widely well before** the Bible was **written**:
 - a. "The Conquest of Death" text, 2,400 B.C., found in 2 pyramids attests that Moses in Egypt was given a 900-year-old **heritage** of the **psychology** of canonicity (III,A in last sermon's notes)!
 - b. This implies that even **Job**, dated c. 2000 B.C. (Z.P.E.B., v. 3, p. 602) & passed on by Moses was **reverently** preserved!
 2. The Babylonian Captivity Jewish Talmud writers sorted O.T. books from the Apocrypha, saying the latter were **non-canonical** works (Class Notes, DTS by Prof. Waltke, Th. D., DTS; Ph. D., Harv.)
 3. Though Liberals say that as the Jews who fled Babylon into Egypt put the Apocrypha in their Septuagint, thus viewing it as canonical, Philo of Alexandria, 1st cent. A.D., quoting **often** from O.T. works, **never** quotes the Apocrypha, Archer, Surv. of O.T. Intr., p. 65-68.
 4. The Qumran writers (110 B.C.-A.D. 68) include all of our 39 O.T. books minus Esther, & **never** quote the Apocrypha as **canonical**. Their Book of Rules & Manual alludes to Esther! (Ibid., Waltke)
 5. Josephus, given the captured temple scroll (A.D. 70) by Titus, reported much of the O.T. was canonical while **denying** the Apocrypha, Ibid., Pache, p. 163-164 [Against Apion, I. 8. 861-62].
 6. Thus, the A.D. 90 rabbinical assembly at Jamnia only **discussed** the 39-book O.T. canon **minus** the Apocrypha, realizing **what** the Jews had **already universally** accepted as canonical, Ibid., Pache, p. 171.
 7. At the A.D. 325 **Church** Nicean Council, the 66-book canon of the O.T. & N.T. was so accepted by **grassroots** believers that the canon **wasn't** even **debated** at the council, Ibid., Pache, p. 175-179!
 8. Yet, to support its purgatory doctrine, the 1546 Council of Trent **with dissenters opposed** its **own** past **Catholic** stands to **dictate** the Apocrypha was canonical, Boettner, R. Cat., p. 83 (conclusion)
 9. Well, **resisting man's dictations** via 1 Pet. 5:3-4, we can note that **history** shows Christ led His Church to adopt the **66-book Bible**.

- B. We have **objective** evidences that **God** assembled the 66-book Bible:
1. John's complete Gospel was written no later than A.D. 90 acc. to the witness of the Rylands fragment (III,B,3 in last sermon's notes).
 2. Well, as Aramaic **expressions** appearing in this Gospel's Greek are **related** to those used by the 110 B.C.-A.D. 68 Dead Sea Qumran writers, the Gospel's **claim** that Jesus lived in Palestine in early A.D. is **reputable**. (Morris, John, p. 13; Ryrie St.B., KJV, p. 1492)
 3. This Gospel's claims that this Jesus is God & Messiah are verifiable: (a) the Qumran Isaiah scroll, 150 B.C. (see last message) predicts a **coming** Messiah will heal the blind (35:5) & preach the gospel to the poor (61:1); (b) well, Jn. 9:1-7; 4:1-42 report that this **Jesus** did so, & Jn. 21:15-19 reveals that a man named Peter died to testify to it, making **this Jesus** that Isaiah scroll's Messiah! (c) Thus, the Is. 9:6; Jn. 20:31 claims that this Messiah is **God** are verified via the same evidences of fulfilled prophecy and Peter's testimonial death.
 4. This God & Messiah claimed that His apostle's words, given by Him, were canonical in Jn. 17:14, 20. So, Peter, named as **God's** disciple in Jn. 1:40-42, has his two epistles certified to be canonical.
 5. Canonical Peter calls **all 13** of Paul's epistles **Scripture**, 2 P. 3:15f.
 6. Paul quotes Lk. 10:7 & Dt. 25:4 in **canonical** 1 Tim. 5:18, calling **both Scripture**. So, via Lk. 1:3; Acts 1:1, Luke & Acts = canonical
 7. Canonical Luke states Matthew & John are disciples, making their Gospels, John's three epistles and Revelation canonical, Lk. 6:13-15
 8. Canonical Mtt. 23:35 then quotes Jesus as naming all the prophets to be from Abel in Genesis to Zacharias in 2 Chron., the last book of the differently-**arranged** Hebrew text's 39-book O.T.! Thus, **God** said the 39 O.T. books **minus** the Apocrypha are canonical!
 9. Mark's Gospel, by Mark's close relation to Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13), was **very early** viewed as Scripture, Ryr. St.Bible, KJV, p. 1397.
 10. As we don't know **who** wrote Hebrews, **which** James wrote James, & as Jude's author was **not** one of the **12**, we lack material proof of **their** canonicity. **Yet**, in contrast to **all noncanonical** works, their **pure** content leads us via 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 2:27 to accept their authority!

Lesson Application: (1) *From the witness of archaeology, history and of the Bible itself, the 66-book canon is the Scripture GOD certifies!*
 (2) *We should believe its Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ, and submit to its authority, 2 Timothy 3:16-17!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon's lesson . . .)

(1) Lest we think that the Apocrypha's canonicity is merely a debatable "Protestant versus Catholic" issue, consider these facts:

(a) Pope Gregory the Great declared that First Maccabees in the Apocrypha was **NOT** canonical, Ibid., Boettner, p. 83

(b) Roman Catholic Cardinal Zomenes, in his Polyglot Bible put out just before the Council of Trent that made the Apocrypha canonical, was approved in this work by Pope Leo X. The Zomenes Polyglot Bible did **not** have the Apocrypha in it! (Ibid.)

(c) Jerome, writer of the Latin Vulgate, a famous Bible accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, included the Apocrypha from his Vulgate but called attention to the evident difference between the canonical works and the **non**-inspired Apocrypha. He even called one of its works, Bel and the Dragon, a **fable**! (Ibid., Pache, p. 172-173)

(d) Also, Cardinal Cajetan, **Luther's opponent** at Augsburg in 1518, in a book dedicated to pope Clement VII, approved the Hebrew canon that **excluded** the Apocrypha! (Ibid., Boettner)

(e) Within the Council of Trent itself, several of its bishops were **opposed** to including the Apocrypha as Scripture, Ibid.

(f) So when the majority of the 53 bishops at the 1546 Council of Trent made the Apocrypha canonical, saying that if anyone did not receive it as Scripture, "Let him be anathema!" they countered Jerome & popes Gregory the Great & Leo X! (Ibid., Boettner)

(g) Yet, later popes backed up this council's assertion!

Thus, Roman Catholic Church leadership has contradicted itself on the issue of whether the Apocrypha should be Scripture!

(2) Either my mother, a retired SIM International mission worker or an SIM Now article, I can't recall which, testifies that a secluded tribe in West Africa was found to have had a copy of the Islamic Koran and the Jewish Scriptures hundreds of years **before** coming into contact with Christianity! **Before** meeting the missionaries, this tribe had subjectively concluded that the **Hebrew Scriptures** were authoritative where the **Koran** was **not**!

This contemporary situation illustrates how the canon came to be accepted as Scripture -- by the influential power of Scripture with the Holy Spirit himself at work in the heart, Acts 17:26-27!