

New Testament Canon Derived of Man or Driven by Spirit?

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Just to start us off

- **Is the NT Canon:**
 - **Open** – New writings *could* be added
 - **Closed** – **No chance** for new writings to be added
- **IF** the contents (**not the Message**) of the Bible changed, would that affect your faith in Christ?

What is a Canon?

- **Canon means “standard” or “normative”**
- **Where are canons used?**
 - Grammar
 - Mathematics
 - The US Supreme Court (and all courts)
- **Why did the church need a canon?**
 - Many teachings
 - Were any better than others or “more correct”?
 - How to keep out poor or false teachings?

What comprises the Canon?

- **The Protestant Bible has 66 books**
- **The Catholic Bible has 73 books**
- **The Eastern Orthodox Bible has 76 books**
- **All of the differences are in the OT**
- **All Bibles agree on the content of the NT**
- **There are 27 books in the NT**

Who started a list of books for the NT Canon?

- **Marcion is credited to have started the list**
 - ~140 AD
 - Partial listing
 - Excluded all references to Judaism
 - Excluded the entire Jewish sacred texts (OT)
 - Believed the “creator-God” was inferior
 - Later was accused as being a heretic

Why Four Gospels?

- **By the year 175 the four gospels were widely read:**
- **Irenaeus writing in about 180 A.D.**
 - “Four corners of the world”
 - “Four winds cover all the earth”
 - “Four gospels were both necessary and sufficient”

What about Paul and Luke?

- **Late in the second century**
 - Paul's letters were in wide circulation
 - There were 13 of them
 - They were considered a “package deal”
 - Hebrews was included and considered Pauline
- **Luke's second book was also widely read**
 - You couldn't take 'Luke' w/o taking 'Acts'
 - Same author
 - Author of a gospel
 - Acts was an obvious choice

So where are we to-date?

- **By the year 200 we had:**
 - Four Gospels
 - Thirteen Letters by Paul
 - One letter to the Hebrews
 - One history called Acts
 - 19 of the 27 books being used regularly

So what is left?

- ~225-250 A.D. churches are regularly reading
 - 1 Peter
 - 1 John
- **This leaves the “disputed books” of:**
 - James (So different from Paul – or is it?)
 - 2 Peter (Probably not written by Peter)
 - 2 John (Very short)
 - 3 John (Even shorter)
 - Jude (Brother of James, but which James?)
 - Revelation (Just plain weird!, Apostolic age)

What about other books?

- **While the canon was forming the churches read from other material regularly:**
 - The Didache
 - Teaching of the Twelve
 - The Shepherd of Hermas
 - Letters from Clement of Rome
 - Gospel of Barnabas
 - Gospel of the Hebrews
 - And many others added to or subtracted from these

So what happened next?

- **Athanasius**

- Famous from the Council of Nicaea
- Defended our Trinitarian beliefs at Nicaea
- Oversaw the bishopric of Alexandria from 328-373
- Well respected as a theologian
- 367 A.D. wrote the first canonical list of 27 books
- Claimed there should be No less and No more

Did anyone like that?

- **Within 30 years of Athanasius writing his list:**
 - Two councils of Church Bishops approved
 - 393 and 397 A.D.
 - All agreed on this list as normative – canonical
- **Why these specific books?**
 - Written by an Apostle or close associate
 - Long standing use in the church
 - A burning in the heart

So what's the punch line?

- **By end of 4th century, the NT Canonized!**
- The canon **came into being** over a ~250 year period
- Over the centuries, *The Church* decided
- The canon was **NOT** determined by a group of men
- Regarding the NT Canon, was *the church* **led by the Spirit?**

Is the Canon Open or Closed?

- **Why these specific books?**
 - Written by an Apostle or close associate
 - A burning in the heart
 - Long standing use in the church
- **Open theoretically (Could find more, feel right)**
- **Closed practically (Used in early church?)**
- **Do more harm than good to change???**

Questions?