

The Canon of the OT

I. What do we mean by Canon?

A. Definition

“The list of books that belong to the Holy Scriptures and are reckoned as supremely authoritative for faith and conduct.” (Ewert, p.65)

B. Implications

1. Reckoned / Recognized

2. List – There is a line in the sand.

3. Supremely Authoritative – Other books do not share this authority.

Law	Prophets	Writings
Genesis	<i>Early:</i> Joshua	<i>Book of Truth:</i> Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Job
Leviticus	Samuel	Proverbs
Numbers	Kings	<i>The 5 Scrolls:</i> Ruth
Deuteronomy	<i>Later:</i> Isaiah	Song of Songs
	Jeremiah	Ecclesiastes
	Ezekiel	Lamentations
	The Twelve	Esther
		Daniel
		Ezra-Nehemiah
		Chronicles

II. The Development of the Hebrew Scriptures

A. Torah

Movement toward a written form of revelation

(Exodus 24:4; 34:28; Deuteronomy 31:9; Joshua 1)

Evidence of continuity

Deuteronomy 34:5-12; Joshua 24:26; I Samuel 10:25

B. Prophets

Daniel 9:1-2

C. The Writings

All the books appear to be collected prior to 200 B.C.

While Jewish leaders focus their question to Jesus on the Torah, the scribes knew the Prophets (Matthew 2), and Jesus repeatedly quotes the Prophets and Writings to them.

D. Josephus

Seeing that with us *it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written*; seeing that, on the contrary, *the prophets alone had this privilege*, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred — it follows, I say, that *we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other*. Our books, those which are justly accredited, *are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time*. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persian, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of life. From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but *has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets*. We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages

have now passed, *no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them.* Josephus *Against Apion* 1:38-41.

1. No Contradictions

“We do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other.”

2. From a Prophet

Deuteronomy 18:2-22; 13:1-5

C. Bore the marks of inspiration

“Our reverence for our own Scriptures”

“To regard them as the decrees of God ...”

D. Recognized by God’s People Everywhere

“It is an instinct with every Jew ...”

Jesus and the OT

I. Jesus’ canon was the existing Hebrew Bible.

Matthew 23:34-35; Luke 24:44

While not every book of the Hebrew OT is quoted, each section is quoted multiple times. But none of the non-Hebrew books in the LXX (i.e. Apocrypha or Deuterocanonicals) are quoted.

II. Jesus assumes the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Matthew 11:7-10; 13:11-15; 15:1-9; 19:3-9; Mark 4:10-13; 7:5-8; 10:17-18; 14:61-62; Luke 4:3-12, 17-27; 6:1-5; 10:25-29; 11:27-28; John 3:14-15; 7:37-38; 10:33-36. (Not a complete list by any means, merely a sample)

III. God says = Scripture says

Compare Matthew 19:3-6 with Genesis 2:24-25

IV. Jesus assumes the historical accuracy of the Hebrew Scriptures.

“He consistently treats the historical narratives as straight-forward records of fact. We have references to: Abel (Luke 11:51), Noah (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26,27), Abraham (John 8:56), the institution of circumcision (John 7:22; cf. Gen. 17:10-12; Lev. 10:12), Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt 10:15; 11:23,24; Luke 10:12), Lot (Luke 17:28-32), Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28), the manna (John 6:31, 49, 58), the wilderness serpent (John 3:14), David eating the shewbread (Matt. 12:3,4; Mark 2:25,26; Luke 6:3,4) and as a psalm writer (Matt. 22:42; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42), Solomon (Matt. 6:29; 12:42; Luke 11:31; 12:27), Elijah (Luke 4:25,26), Elisha (Luke 4:27), Jonah (Matt. 12:39-41; Luke 11:29,30,31), Zechariah (Luke 11:51). This last passage brings out his sense of the unity of history and his grasp of its wide sweep. His eye surveys the whole course of history from ‘the foundation of the world’ to ‘this generation.’ There are repeated references to Moses as the giver of the law (Matt. 8:4; 19:8; Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; John 5:46; 7:19); the sufferings of the prophets are also mentioned frequently (Matt. 5:12; 13:57; 21:34-36; 23:29-37; Mark 6:4 (cf. Luke 4:24; John 4:44); 12:2-5; Luke 6:23; 11:47-51; 13:34; 20:10-12) and there is a reference to the popularity of the false prophets (Luke 6:26). He sets the stamp of his approval on passages in Genesis 1 and 2 (Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-8). [John Wenham: Christ and the Bible, p.17-18]”

V. Jesus had an equally high view of His own teachings.

“You have heard it said ... But I say.”

Matthew 24:25

Jesus essentially sums up OT teaching on itself, such as Psalm 119:89 and Isaiah 40:6-8, and He then applies the same to His own teaching. This will open the door for the NT.

The Canon of the New Testament

I. Did Jesus point forward to the New Testament?

Matthew 24:25; John 14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:12-13

II. The Role of the Apostles.

Acts 1:21-26

Three years with Jesus

Eyewitness of the risen Jesus

Paul's perspective in Galatians 1

An Apostle had to have received the gospel directly from Jesus.

III. The New Testament canon is already being recognized.

I Timothy 5:18 (Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 10:7)

II Peter 3:14-16

IV. Help from Heretics

Marcion and Montanus

Lewis Sperry Chafer: "All heresy is either the Bible plus, or the Bible minus."

Lists begin to appear. Seven books are disputed.

Hebrews

James

II Peter

II John

III John

Jude

Revelation

The Reformation and the Council of Trent

- I. Trent (1545-46) was clearly a reaction to the reformation. This doesn't make it wrong (much theological work involves responding to other ideas), but it must be kept in mind.
- II. Trent ruled that the "ancient and vulgate edition" was the authoritative text of Scripture. This essentially added the apocryphal books to the biblical canon.

Problem: It creates the Latin text, not the Greek and Hebrew, as the final text of Scripture. Even some R.C. scholars would like Trent to be amended on this subject.

Problem: Jerome himself called such books apocryphal.

Problem: 3 & 4 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh were translated with the Vulgate, but are not in the Roman Catholic Deuterocanonals (the Apocrypha).

Problem: The apocryphal books do not measure up to the standards we see in Josephus and others. They contradict the canonical books, they were not universally recognized, etc. ...

Problem: 1,500 years seems a very long way from Jesus.

Big Problem: The Apocrypha is an addition to the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. Which means that their argument is not with us or the early church. Their argument is with Jesus and His OT.