

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Bibliology – Study of the Bible – Part 3
Canonicity & Authority

Introduction

- Thus far we talked about:
 - Revelation – General and Special.
 - Reliability
 - Inspiration
 - Infallibility
 - Inerrancy
- Now we move on to Canonicity and Authority.
 - The canonicity of the OT and NT will be looked at separately.
 - Authority of the Bible will conclude all that was learned in Bibliology.

Canonicity

- Canon = reed or measuring stick.
 - Qaneh* = Reed
 - Kanon* = Guide or standard.
- Canonicity is NOT:
 - Human determination of what books are Scripture.
 - Based on votes or councils.
- Canonicity IS:
 - The standard to which books must conform in order to be recognized as Scripture.

Guidelines for Canonicity

- Prophetic:
 - Written by a prophet (or apostle).
- Authoritative:
 - Claims to be God's message (Thus says the Lord).
- Authentic:
 - Written by the person who claimed to write it.
- Life-Transforming:
 - Power to transform lives.
- Widely Recognized:
 - Church or Israel widely recognized it as the Word of God.
- Reliable:
 - Contents consistent with rest of Scripture
 - Data were accurate.
 - No inconsistencies.

Considerations for Canonicity
LANGUAGE: Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic?
AUTHORSHIP: Prophet or Apostle?
INSPIRATION: Divine, Human, Anthropological?
ACCEPTANCE: Cultured, Real, Practical & Relevant?
COMPLETION: Theological, Logical, Pastoral, Expository & Biblical?

Misconceptions of Canonicity

- The Church did not create the Bible.
 - Contrary to typical lies: councils, religio-politics, votes, etc.
- It is not a Catholic book written by Catholics for Catholics.
- OT completed by 400 B.C. (1,000 years before the Roman Catholic Church [RCC]).
- NT completed mostly by A.D. 70 ; John's letters by A.D. 95 (that is 500 years before the RCC).

Canonization Was Immediate

- It did not require votes.
- It was recognized immediately after it was written.
- We will see this with both the OT and the NT.
- The pattern is absolutely consistent among both Testaments.

A Couple Examples

- 1Timothy 5:17-18 – Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."
- 2 Peter 3:15-16 – And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Old Testament Canonization

- There are three questions that must be asked and answered to see the canonization process of the OT.
 1. First, when did the concept of canonization first arise in Israel?
 2. Second, when was the Old Testament canon fixed, or closed?
 3. Third, for the sake of our Catholic opponents, what about the Old Testament Apocryphal books



Canonization Appeared Immediately

- As soon as Moses (1st author) first spoke God's word (which was later written), it was recognized.
 - His writings were not compiled centuries later and voted on.
- Exodus 24:2-3 – Moses alone shall come near to the LORD, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him." Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "**All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.**"

Canonization Appeared Immediately

- Likewise, David realized his spoken words were inspired canon.
 - It is recognized when spoken. Afterward, it is written down thus preserving it.
- 2 Samuel 23:1-2 Now these are the last words of David: The oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel: "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.

Immediate Recognition of Moses (Law)

- Right after he spoke the word in Exodus 24:2-3, he must have then wrote it down. Notice its reception a few verses later.
 - Exodus 24:7 – Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."



Law's Continued Recognition

- Joshua 8:34-35 – And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.
 - This was the next generation.
- 2Kings 23:3 – And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.
 - This is 800 years later under King Josiah.

Law's Continued Recognition

- Nehemiah 8:8-9 They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law.
 - This is 200 years later, and after the Babylonian Captivity.
 - Over 400 years later, these books of Moses were still recognized by Jesus and the Apostles.
- All of these passages prove that the concept of canonization is as old as the first Scripture itself.
 - Not a man invented doctrine or concept, but it naturally accompanies special revelation.
 - When God reveals Himself, it is immediately recognized as authoritative and inerrant.

Immediate Writing of Revelation

- God's revelation needed to be written down to be preserved.
- As soon as it was written, the authority was immediately recognized. Deut 31:24-26 is a good example.
 - Deuteronomy 31:24-26 – When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, "Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you."



Immediate Writing Scripture

- The same emphasis is other OT works.
- Jeremiah is a good example.
 - It was immediately written. It was immediately recognized (by Daniel).
- Jeremiah 36:1-2 – In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today.
- Daniel 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

When Was the OT Canon Fixed?

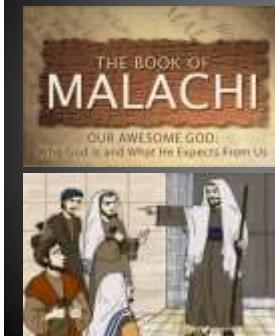
- Liberals say it was fixed at the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.
 - Part of motive is to weaken the Christian claim to early canonization.
- Blatant appeal of the NT to OT books as authoritative destroys the liberal argument.
 - So at a minimum, we can say it was fixed by the 1st Century A.D. But we can go back much further.

Consider the Three-Fold Division

- Jesus' use of this designation (Luke 24:44) shows it predates His incarnation.
- Divisions created to categorize inspired Scripture and show where its authority comes from.
 - Law comes from Moses.
 - Prophets (which includes the history) comes from called prophets.
 - Writings are inspired books not written by prophets (but by notable people) that were known to be authoritative.
- The fact that the three-fold division exists proves the Jews understood inspiration like we do, and began to categorize such books (contra to liberal scholars).

Tanakh	תְּנַחָּךְ
Torah	תּוֹרָה
Nevi'im	נְבִיאִים
Ketuvim	כְּתוּבִים

Malachi Was the Last.



- Last OT book written around 400 B.C.
- From 1450 – 400 B.C., constant creation of canon.
 - Then it stopped. That is a sign that it was fixed by God at that time.
 - Did the people see it that way?
- Yes. Thousands of intertestamental books written, but none gained recognition. Admitted by 150 B.C.
 - 2nd Century B.C. 1 Maccabees 9:23
 - God no longer spoke through prophets.
 - 2 Baruch 85:3 – Prophets have fallen asleep.
 - Baba Bathra 12a (Talmud) says same.

Ancient Sources Agree

- They list only the 39 books that are part of our O.T.
- Josephus (1st Century historian) acknowledged 22 books.
 - He combines the minor prophets into one book, Jeremiah with Lamentations, Judges with Ruth, and the Samuels, Kings, and Chronicles as single books. This makes his 22 = our 39.
- We find the same books in Philo and the Church Fathers.
- Prologue to Sirach mentions the Three-Fold division. This was written in 132 B.C. The division was probably standard much earlier than that.
 - This source also mentions the Greek O.T., the LXX (Septuagint). This pushes its date back to at least the 3rd century B.C.
- The existence of the LXX in the 3rd century pushes the existence of canonical Hebrew texts back to at least the prior century.
 - It would take time for all scribes to recognize the exact same books. So canon fixed by God at 400 B.C., but recognized by all Jews within 100 years.

Jesus' Use of Three-Fold Division

- Even though the Christian order is in the LXX (and it is probably older than the 3-fold div), Jesus preferred the Jewish division.
- Luke 24:44 – Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."
- Matthew 23:35 – so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.
- Why does this matter?
 - Three-fold division did not have Apocrypha. Jesus only recognized the 39 books we use, thus He saw the canon closed at 400 B.C.

Council of Jamnia?

- Rabbis did meet in A.D. 90 and discussed OT canon.
 - Beginning of Rabbinic Judaism. No Land, No Priests, No King. Survival in exile.
 - Polemic against Christians (contributed to more persecution).
 - Rabbinic Judaism is similar to RCC (agree with the canon, but then teach and believe the opposite).
- Nothing about this council damages the view that the canon was fixed in 400 B.C. and long recognized.

