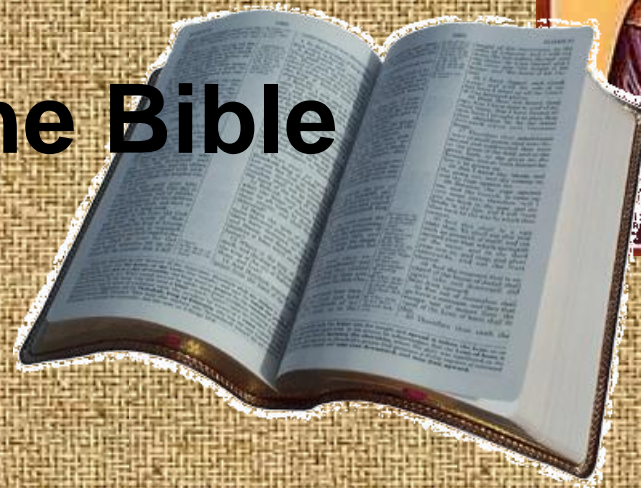


DIVINE REVELATION

“BY LETTER” (2 Thessalonians 2:15):

The Bible:
the *Written* Word of God

Part IIa:
The Canon of the Bible



The Canon of the Bible

All Christians realize that if God has revealed Himself by communicating His will to man, man must be able to know with assurance where that revelation lies. Hence **the need for a list (i.e., canon) of books of the Bible**. In other words, man needs to know without error (i.e., infallibly) what the books of the Bible are.

There must be **an authority** which will make that decision. The canon of the Bible refers to the definitive list of the books which are considered to be divine revelation and included therein.

A canon distinguishes what is revealed and divine from what is not revealed and human.

Because God did not explicitly reveal what books are the inspired books of the Bible, title by title, to anyone, one must look to His guidance in discovering the canon of the Bible.

No book of the Bible says that it is part of the Bible.

To begin: Jesus has told us that He has not revealed all truths to us.

John 16:12-13

I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will **guide you to all truth.**



Jesus then told us how he was planning to assist us in knowing other truths.

John 14:16-17

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, **the Spirit of truth**, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it **remains with you, and will be in you.**

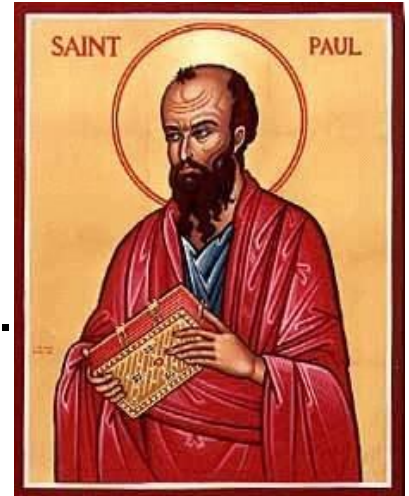
John 15:26

When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth** that proceeds from the Father, he **will testify to me.**

The New Testament writers sensed how they handled truth-bearing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

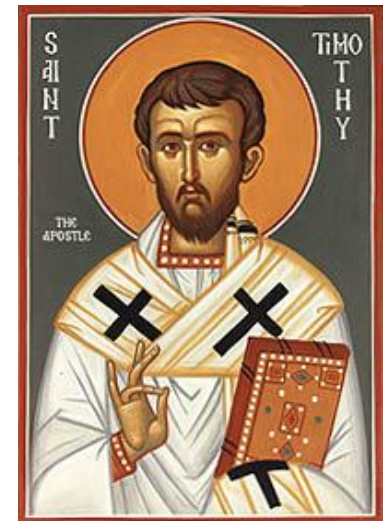
1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For **I handed on** (*paredoka*) to you as of first importance **what I also received** ..



2 Timothy 2:2

And **what you heard from me** through many witnesses **entrust** (*parathou*) to **faithful people** who will have the ability to teach others as well.



There was a constant history of faithful people from Paul's time through the Apostolic and Post Apostolic Church.

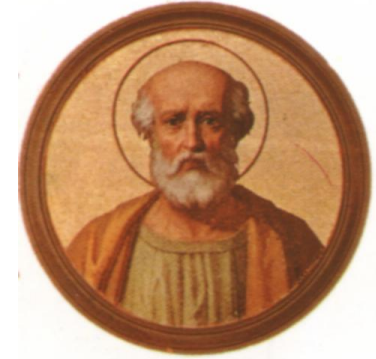
Melito, bishop of Sardis, an ancient city of Asia Minor c. 170 produced the first known Christian attempt at an Old Testament canon. His list maintains the Septuagint order of books but contains only the Old Testament protocanonicals minus the Book of Esther.

The **Council of Laodicea, c. 360**, produced a list of books similar to today's canon. This was one of the Church's earliest decisions on a canon.

Pope Damasus, 366-384, in his Decree, listed the books of today's canon. The **Council of Rome, 382**, was the forum which prompted Pope Damasus' Decree.



Bishop Exuperius of Toulouse wrote to **Pope Innocent I** in **405** requesting a list of canonical books. Pope Innocent listed the present canon.



The **Council of Hippo**, a local north Africa council of bishops created the list of the Old and New Testament books in **393** which is the same as the Roman Catholic list today.

The **Council of Carthage**, a local north Africa council of bishops created the same list of canonical books in **397**. This is the council which many Protestant and Evangelical Christians take as the authority for the New Testament canon of books. The Old Testament canon from the same council is identical to Roman Catholic canon today.



Another **Council of Carthage** in **419** offered the same list of canonical books.

Because the Catholic Church does not define truths unless errors abound on the matter, Catholic Christians look to the **Council of Florence**, an ecumenical council in **1441** for the first definitive list of canonical books.

The final infallible definition of canonical books for Catholic Christians came from the **Council of Trent in 1556** in the face of the errors of the Reformers who rejected seven Old Testament books from the canon of scripture to that time.

There was no canon of scripture in the early Church; there was no Bible.

It was the Church--her leadership, faithful people--guided by the authority of the Spirit of Truth which discovered the books inspired by God in their writing. The Church did not create the canon.

Fixed canons of the Old and New Testaments, hence the Bible, were not known much before the end of the 2nd and early 3rd century.

Catholic Christians together with Protestant and Evangelical Christians hold the same *canon of the New Testament*, *27 books*, all having been originally written in the Greek language. Catholic Christians accept *the longer Old Testament canon*, *46 books*, from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Alexandrian Canon since 397 AD. Protestants accept *the shorter Old Testament* since the time of Luther. He threw out six books considered inspired by the Christian Church worldwide from 387 until 1534.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians, from the Reformers onward, accept *the shorter Old Testament canon, 39 books*, from the Hebrew Palestinian Canon. Jews have the same canon as Protestants.

Canonical books are those books which have been acknowledged as belonging to the list of books the Church considers to be inspired and to contain a rule of faith and morals.

Some criteria used to determine canonicity were
special relation to God, i.e., inspiration;
apostolic origin;
used in Church services, i.e., used by the community of
believers guided by the Holy Spirit.

Other **terms for canonical books** should be distinguished: the protocanonical books, deuterocanonical books, and the apocryphal books.

The **protocanonical** (from the Greek *proto* meaning first) books are those books of the Bible that were admitted into the canon of the Bible with little or no debate (e.g., the Pentateuch of the Old Testament and the Gospels)

The **deuterocanonical** (from the Greek *deutero* meaning second) books are those books of the Bible that were under discussion for a while until doubts about their canonicity were resolved (e.g., Sirach and Baruch of the Old Testament, and the Johannine epistles of the New Testament).

The **apocryphal** (from the Greek *apokryphos* meaning hidden) books have multiple meanings:

a complimentary meaning - that the sacred books were too exalted for the general public;

pejorative meaning - that the orthodoxy of the books were questioned;

heretical meaning - that the books were forbidden to be read; and lastly

neutral meaning - simply noncanonical books, the meaning the word has today.

Another word, **pseudepigrapha** (from the Greek meaning false writing) is used for works clearly considered to be false.

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Available at the End of the Fourth Century

**Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy;
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings,
1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith,
Esther, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees;
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs,
Wisdom, Sirach;
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel,
Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum,
Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi;
Enoch Literature; 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras; 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch;
Psalms of Solomon; Sibylline Oracles;
Letter of Aristeus to Philocrates; Assumption of Moses;
3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees; Prayer of Manasseh**

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PROTOCANONICAL BOOKS

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PROTOCANONICAL AND DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Available at the End of the Fourth Century

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1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith,
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PROTOCANONICAL AND DEUTEROCANONICAL WITH APOCRYPHAL

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

Acts of the Apostles, Colossians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Hebrews, James, John (Gospel), 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Luke, Mark, Matthew, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Philemon, Philippians, Revelation, Romans, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

Didache; Apocalypses of Peter, Paul, Thomas; 1 Clement, 2 Clement; Gospels of Thomas, Philip, Peter, Hebrews; Hermas; Acts of Pilate; Barnabas; Protoevangelium of James; To the Laodiceans; Various Papyruses; To Seneca; Epistola Apostolorum; Testaments of the Twelve Apostles, Acts of John, Paul, Andrew, Thomas.

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PROTOCANONICAL BOOKS

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PROTOCANONICAL AND APOCRAPHAL BOOKS

Inspiration of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

A primary criterion for the canonicity of a book of the Bible was the belief that it was **a work inspired by God**. By definition, to inspire literally means to breathe into, upon, or in. Inspiration means any and all promptings of God's grace in and on the human psyche and specifically of the divine promptings at the origin of the books of the Bible. The divine inspiration of Sacred Scripture denotes **the special influence of God upon the human writers** of the Bible, an influence of such a nature that God is said to be the author of the biblical books.

The internal testimony of the Bible itself attests to the fact of its divine inspiration.

Exodus 17:14

Then the Lord said to Moses, “**Write this down** in a document as something to be remembered.”

Exodus 34:27

Then the Lord said to Moses, “**Write down these words**, for in accordance with them I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

Isaiah 8:1

The Lord said to me: “Take a large cylinder-seal, and **inscribe on it in ordinary letters** ... “

Isaiah 30:8

Now come, **write it** on a tablet they can keep, **inscribe it in a record**; that it may be in future days an eternal witness.

Isaiah 34:16

Look in the book of the Lord and read: No one of these shall be lacking, for the mouth of the Lord has ordered it ...

Jeremiah 36:1

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord:
Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you ...

Matthew 5:18

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, **not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law**, until all things have taken place.

Luke 24:44

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 in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.**”

John 5:39

You **search the scriptures**, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf.

John 10:35-36

If it calls them gods to whom the word of God came, and **scripture cannot be set aside**, can you say that the one whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world blasphemes because I said, “I am the Son of God?”

Matthew 4:4

He said in reply, “It is written: ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by **every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.**’”

Acts 15:15-16

The **words of the prophets agree with this, as is written**: “After this I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of David; from its ruins I shall rebuild it and raise it up again ...”

Romans 1:17

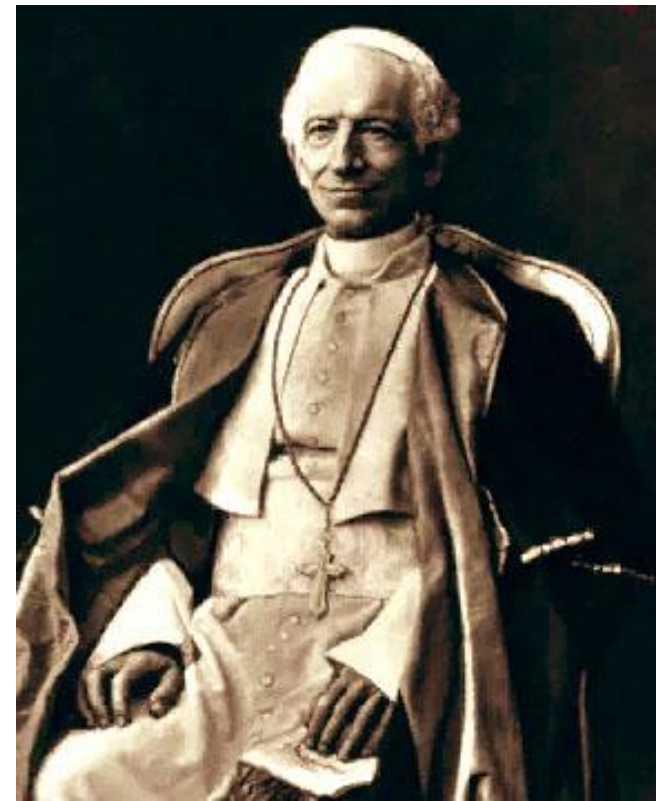
For **in it is revealed the righteousness of God** from faith to faith; as **it is written**, “The one who is righteous by faith will live.”



The Catholic Church officially defined her meaning of inspiration.

The Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, in 1893.

By supernatural power God so moved and impelled the human authors to write - he so assisted them when writing – that the things he ordered and those only they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth.



End of

Divine Revelation, The Canon of the Bible, Part IIa

Go to

Divine Revelation, Hermeneutics, Part IIb