

The Extent and Limitation of the Canon

- What are the ways in which God could communicate to us?
 - God to us directly: aural/visual (Jeremiah, Belshazzar); inspiration (Joseph).
 - God to us indirectly: via other people; via creation.
- Why might God choose these ways?
- How would you choose to have your ideas kept indefinitely?
- How do you think God has done it/ should have done it/ could have done it?
- Given God's overall plan for humanity, discuss the concept of Scripture as we have it in the Old and New Testament.
- God clearly spoke to persons in times past. However "God spoke to me" could be a common claim. How do we verify this claim?
 - Fruit of their lives.
 - Testimony of the Holy Spirit.
- Canon means rule or standard. Canon is the exhaustive list of books that comprise the Scriptures. Which books should be included as Scripture?
 - Which books should comprise the Old Testament canon
 - Which books should comprise the New Testament canon
 - How was the canon arrived upon?
 - Is the canon closed?
- Propositions for what should be included as Scripture include the writings of Prophets, Apostles, or those who wrote for these people (eg. Luke, Mark)—I am not necessarily including scribes, they are a mechanism.

The Old Testament Canon

- Consists of three parts: the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiographa (writings).
- *Luke 24:44*. Then he [Jesus] 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."
- The question of the Old Testament canon is easier in some ways. It had been finalised by the Jews prior to Christ, and Jesus affirmed the canon.

New Testament Canon

- *John 14:25-26*. "I have spoken these things while staying with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you."
- Is this a promise concerning future Scripture?
- *1 Timothy 5:18*. For the scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and, "The worker deserves his pay."
 - A quotation from Deut 25:4
 - A quotation from Luke 10:7.
- *2 Peter 3:15-16*. And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our dear brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, speaking of these things in all his letters. Some things in these letters are hard to understand, things the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they also do to the rest of the scriptures.
- Is this apostolic authorisation of (parts of) the New Testament?
- 20 of the 27 New Testament books were accepted easily. 7 books had a more difficult time (Revelation, James, Jude, Hebrews, 2 Peter, 2 John, and 3 John) (Metzger).

General Principles

Authority (Inspiration)

- Does the book come with the power of God?
- “Does [the book] have a self-vindicating authority that commands attention as it communicates?” Many books were either rejected or doubted because the voice of God was not heard clearly in the book. (Sawyer).
- In Scripture we find prophets of God whose message is ratified by miracles or prophecy that comes true (Isaiah 37:21-38).

Authorship

- A book was judged as to whether or not it was genuinely written by the stated author who was a spokesman in the mainstream of redemptive revelation, either a prophet (whether in Old or New Testament times) or an apostle. (Holding).

Authenticity (Doctrine, Rule of Faith)

- [A] test for canonicity which Geisler and Nix contend was operational in the early church was that of authenticity. (By authenticity they mean authenticity of doctrine). This test would compare the teachings of any book vying for entrance into the canon with the doctrine of the already accepted books. Since truth cannot contradict truth, if the book under consideration was found to be at variance with the rest of the canon it would automatically be rejected as non-canonical. (Sawyer).

Acceptance (Church usage)

- Was a particular book generally accepted by the (orthodox) church?
- It is Christ who causes His church to accept the canon and to recognize it by means of the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion

- Does this argument show how the canon come to be, or is it an attempt after the fact to explain why?
- What place did refutation of heresies play in the canon? Did it affect the choice of Scriptures or just enforce the necessity of a canon?
- Why does the Roman Catholic church include and the Protestant church exclude the Apocrypha?
- If the centrality of all things is Christ, how does that affect of view of what should comprise the canon?
 - Jesus is the central figure.
 - Jesus is the arbitrator of what the canon consists of.

Another System for Canon Determination (Briggs)

- The testimony of the church (lowest).
- The character of the Scriptures themselves.
- The witness of the Spirit (highest).

References

http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=689 (Sawyer)

<http://www.tektonics.org/lp/ntcanon.html> (Holding)