

The Canon of Scripture

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Our subject is the canon of Scripture. The term canon is derived from a Greek word, *kanon*. Originally meaning 'a reed' or 'staff', it came to mean a measuring rod, and later was used metaphorically of any rule, or standard, by which things were measured or determined. In this sense the word is used several times in the New Testament; as, for example, in Galatians 6:16: 'As many as walk according to this rule [*kanon*] peace be on them, and mercy.' Here, of course, the rule is the standard of faith by which Christians should frame their lives (See also Philippians 3:16).

In ecclesiastical usage, canon was early used to designate those inspired Scriptures which formed the infallible 'rule' of faith and practice. Irenaeus, in the second century, speaks of Scripture as 'the canon of truth'. Just a little later, Clement of Alexandria, who succeeded Pantaenus as head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, castigates those who follow authorities other than 'the true evangelical canon'. In the fourth century, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, refers to the recognised sacred books as 'canonical', and others as being 'ecclesiastical' or 'apocryphal'. Jerome, the eminent biblical scholar, actually mentions 'the list of Canonical Scriptures'. And the Council of Laodicea in AD 364 ordained 'that none but canonical books should be read in the church; that is, the books of the Old and

New Testaments.'

Thus the word canon was used by the church to denote the divinely authorised standard to which everything is subject and by which everything must be tested. The question immediately arises, 'What

testimony.

Thirdly, doubt on this matter will encourage unbelievers, not only to query one or two of biblical books, but also to question the entire Truth of God.

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were the criteria for determining whether a writing was canonical?' Or, to put it another way, 'Why do we accept the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments as God's written Word?'

Before attempting an answer to these questions, it must be emphasised that this subject is of the utmost importance, because, first of all, the Bible contains all the truth on divine subjects accessible to man. For example, it contains the will of God for the salvation of sinners, together with their responsibilities, their privileges and their hopes for eternity. If there is any uncertainty about the canon, there will be uncertainty about vital doctrines and beliefs.

Secondly, upon these divine books, the Church has been founded. Any tampering with the Church's foundation will undermine its stability and adversely affect its

Fourthly, since 1546, the apostate Church of Rome has added to the canon, recognizing twelve uninspired and unaccredited books commonly called 'apocryphal'. The word 'apokruphos' means 'hidden' and it describes those books which were never in open use in the church but which were sometimes read by individuals in private. At the other extreme, of course, theological liberals have tried to take away from the canon. Way back in the fifth century, Theodore of Mopsuestia, a Bishop in Antioch, created quite a stir by calling into question the canonicity of the Song of Solomon; while in our day, Emil Brunner, a notorious liberal, has rejected the canonicity of John's Gospel, Hebrews, and James. In the light of these attacks, it is of paramount importance that we understand why the 66 books of our Bible are regarded as divine and infallible - the authoritative standard for belief and prac-

tice.

Fifthly, unless there is certainty about their inspiration and authority, the Holy Scriptures will never be read with reverence and with profit.

Sixthly, once a critical opinion is allowed, believers will find themselves at the mercy of liberal scholars. Liberal scholars are far from being agreed about the canon and, if believers are not sure of the standards for canonicity, they will be under pressure to revise their orthodox and traditional views.

Seventhly, and lastly, the rejection of a part of revelation, or the acceptance of some spurious production, will greatly dishonour God because it will degrade His Word. It will also, of course, endanger immortal souls because literally everything will be in doubt, including the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For these reasons - if for no other - we must find out why the particular books which now comprise the Holy Scriptures are canonical. What are the rules by which their canonicity is determined? Historically, there have been two answers to that question, both unsatisfactory for various reasons.

The first answer is the authority of the church. This is the view advanced by the Roman Catholic Church. She asserts that whatever she declares to be Scripture is to be confidently received as such. In

other words, Rome claims the power to determine the canon. In the early sixteenth century, Albert Pighius wrote: 'The Church can give canonical authority to books which have no such authority from themselves or their Author.' And, according to the proponents of this Romanist view, the Church has exercised its God-given prerogative at such ecclesiastical councils as the one held at Carthage (AD 397) and at Trent (AD 1545-63).

This view must be rejected. To begin with, there is nothing in Scripture to suggest that such authority was ever given to the Church. Furthermore, the theory involves what is called circular reasoning; for the claims of the Church cannot be established except by the declarations of Scripture, and yet we are told that only the Church can tell us what the Scripture is. It also introduces the absurd idea that a fallible person or council can pronounce authoritatively on God's infallible and inerrant Word. This is, of course, arrant nonsense. How can the inviolable truth of God depend upon the arbitrary will of man? The fact is that the inspired books possessed authority long before popes, synods, or councils sanctioned them. According to the New Testament, the church is built upon 'the foundation of apostles and prophets' (Ephesians 2:20).

The second unacceptable answer is that the witness of the Spirit determines canonicity. Now at the time of the Reformation, some Protestants, reacting against

the Romanist view, fell into the other extreme of placing all the emphasis on the spiritual perception of believers. In the Reformed Gallican Confession of 1559, for instance, we read: 'We know these books to be canonical and the sure rule of our faith, not so much be the common accord and consent of the church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books, upon which, however, useful, we cannot found any articles of faith'.

Now while not for a moment denying the Spirit's work in illumination (that is, in making clear to us the great truths of the Gospel), we cannot accept this as the chief means of establishing canonicity, mainly because it exalts personal intuition above the Word of God, virtually making each believer the framer of his own canon.

Also, this view makes no allowance for varying degrees of grace. Regenerate people are not all enlightened to the same extent, and this, along with the interference of our fallen nature, will mean that believers may well arrive at different conclusions (See: Philippians 3:15).

At one point in his ministry, even the great Luther appears to have questioned the canonical authority of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation! Are we really suggesting that ordinary Christians, by some kind of Inner Light, are able to make a true and certain judge-

ment on such matters? 'For my part', wrote Richard Baxter, 'I confess I could never boast of any such testimony or light of the Spirit which, without human testimony, would have made me believe that the book of Canticles [Song of Solomon] is canonical, and written by Solomon, and the book of Wisdom apocryphal, and written by Philo.' One further and very strong objection to this theory is that if internal testimony is the criterion, it is pointless to press the claims of the Scripture upon the unregenerate. Destitute of grace, they will be unable to receive the Word as a divine revelation. And if they cannot credit the testimony, there is really no point in evangelising them.

So if we reject both views - that the church determines the canon and that the individual believer does, by the witness of the Spirit - then we must return to the question of how exactly canonicity was determined.

Here are some principles which will help in the formulation of an answer.

1. A book may be said to be canonical if it originated from the circle of men called prophets. The canonical writings are described in 2 Peter 1:20 as 'prophecy of the Scripture'. And this is a true description of both Old and New Testaments.

Our Lord taught that prophets were responsible for the Old Testament. He identified this collection of books as of 'the law and the prophets' (Matthew 5:17).

Moses, the greatest of all prophets (Deuteronomy 34:10), we know, wrote the law, so Christ taught that the entire corpus of Old Testament Scripture is prophetic, or written by men endued with the prophetic spirit. Again, in Matthew 26:56, he alludes to 'the scriptures of the prophets', because, as Dr James Morrison observes, 'All the Scriptures of the Old Testament were the Scriptures of the prophets.' Yet again, in His conversation with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, our Lord Jesus said, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; and beginning at Moses[himself a prophet] and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24:25-27).

We should take careful note of the fact that prophets were not just responsible for the so-called Prophetical Books. A series of writing prophets wrote the ancient histories, even as Moses had begun to do (Exodus 17:14). So we find that Samuel wrote 'the manner of the kingdom' (1 Samuel 10:25); and 'the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer' (1 Chronicles 29:29). Other accounts were written by Ahijah, Iddo, Shemaiah, and others (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22. See also: 2 Chronicles 20:34; 32:32; 33:19). The historical books, then, as we now have them, were

either written by prophets or were compiled from their writings.

David, as we know, possessed the prophetic spirit. As he himself said, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue' (2 Samuel 23:2). And in Acts 2:30, of course, he is actually called 'a prophet'. As for Solomon, we read that he was one to whom the Lord appeared twice (1 Kings 3:5; 9:2) and the Lord had said in Numbers 12:6 that He would reveal Himself to his servants, the prophets. Thus, David as author of the Psalms, and Solomon as author of Song of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, were all men who knew prophetic inspiration.

The same applies to the New Testament writers. They were prophets, eminent prophets. While the apostles themselves are never called by that name, they clearly spoke and wrote under inspiration. And there is a significant little verse in Acts 15:32. After mentioning Paul and Barnabas, the Book of Acts makes reference to 'Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves'. The implication is clear: Paul and Barnabas were certainly prophets. Paul, in fact, appears to lay claim to the gift of prophecy in Ephesians 3:3-5. He writes: 'By revelation he (God) made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto his

holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.' The apostle is aligning himself and other apostles with the prophets, the chosen recipients of revelation. There is one scripture which comes as near as any to calling the New Testament writers, prophets. It is Romans 16:25-27, where we read: 'The revelation of the mystery was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets according to the commandments of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.'

All these prophets experienced inspiration - and they knew it. David wrote of the Spirit of God speaking through him and of His word being in his tongue; Ezekiel testified to the fact that the hand of God came upon him; and Peter confirmed that all these holy men were moved, or compelled, by the Holy Spirit as they spoke and wrote (2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 3:14; 2 Peter 1:21). Naturally, it is very difficult to define their experience. No doubt there was an overwhelming inward impression, a reception of some communication, and an irrepressible desire to deliver that message. And whether the vehicle of communication was the spoken or written word, the result was always the same - Holy Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16).

Even their contemporaries could see that God was dealing with them in an extraordinary way. It is said of Samuel, for example, that the Lord was with him, and

did let none of his words fall to the ground', with the result that 'all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord' (1 Sam 3:19,20). If not recognised by their prophetic message, they were sometimes recognised by their prophetic actions (e.g. 1 Samuel 10:5,10,11; Isaiah 20:2-4).

In the days of Samuel, the circle of the prophets was clearly recognised: hence the references, for example to 'Samuel' and 'the prophets' (1 Samuel 19:20). And in the New Testament, too, there was a well-defined circle of prophets (Acts 11:27; 13:1; 1 Corinthians 14:29).

Scripture came from this group of men. And we must affirm this as a first principle in determining canonicity. Did the writing in question proceed from a prophet? Did it proceed from one who knew divine inspiration? If it did, then it is undoubtedly God's Word written.

2. Canonicity was confirmed by predictions and miraculous events. When predictions within these writings subsequently found fulfilment, it was proof that the writings were from God and should be received as such. God Himself laid down this as a ground of establishing the genuineness and authenticity any given production. In Deuteronomy 18:21-22, he said: 'If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the Word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the

name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass. that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken.' The same truth is contained in Jeremiah 28:9: 'The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.'

Now predictive prophecy pervades the entire Scripture. It is not a rare phenomenon restricted to just a few books. There are prophecies in the Law of Moses, the first being that great evangelical prophecy found in Genesis 3:15 (See also: Genesis 12 and 49). Then there are the numerous prophecies of the historical books, such as those concerning the house of Eli in 1 Samuel 2 and 3(cf 22:18,19) and 1 Kings 13:2 (cf 2 Kings 23:17-20). The Book of Psalms, too, is full of prophecies, especially those called Messianic (e.g. Psalms 22 and 69). Space will hardly allow us to refer to the Song of Solomon (Song 3:11; 8:8), Proverbs 1:20-33, and Ecclesiastes 9:14,15. The New Testament is just the same. There are prophecies in the Gospels, in passages like Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 17. And there are prophecies in the Epistles, as in 2 Thessalonians 2 and 1 Timothy 4. Who can deny that they occur also in Revelation, as in Revelation 12 and 17?

Since many of these prophecies were fulfilled, or are presently finding fulfilment, we may rest assured that these books are entitled to be called the canonical Scrip-

tures.

In the same way, miracles provide evidence of canonicity. They establish the prophet's commission and they endorse his writings as the Word of God. Hence, in Psalm 74:9, 'signs' are associated with the ministry of a prophet. God gave to his servants supernatural signs in order to authenticate both them and their message. And upon the ground of this evidence, people have been willing to submit to their writings as authentic and genuine Scripture. This was certainly the case with Moses. When he complained to God - 'They will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee', the Lord said, 'Cast... (Thy rod) on the ground'. He did so, and 'it became a serpent' (Exodus 4:1-5). So that there would be no doubt about the purpose of these miracles, the Lord spoke further, and said they were performed 'that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee' (Exodus 4:5 cf Numbers 12:10. See also Exodus 16:31-33). The same kind of supernatural works accompanied the apostles' ministry. We read that, 'many wonders and signs were done by the apostles' (Acts 2:43; 5:12; 19:11; cf 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:4).

3. In establishing the canon, the testimony of contemporary witnesses is to be considered. The people of Israel were told to pay the utmost deference to a prophet

and the word of his prophecy, while at the same time they were solemnly warned about false prophets and their deceitful teachings. They were instructed to apply certain tests by means of which the spurious and counterfeit could be identified. Already reference has been made to Deuteronomy 18:19-22, but there are other relevant passages in Jeremiah 14, 14ff. and Ezekiel 13:6ff).

The early Christians were similarly taught. Our Lord told them to receive the Word of the Kingdom, but he warned of false prophets and made known how they could be identified (Matthew 7:15;24:11,24). The apostle Paul wrote advising his readers on the one hand, not to despise prophesying, but on the other, to prove all things, only holding fast to that which was good (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21). Elsewhere in his epistles he exposes such as assume the guise of apostles of Christ and he sets down the distinguishing marks of their heterodox teaching (Romans 16; 2 Corinthians 11; Colossians 2 etc). John, in his Revelation, commends one particular church because, as he says, 'thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars' (Revelation 2:2).

Old and New Testament believers, living in times of revelation, obviously needed to examine the credentials of all who laid claim to inspiration. All the evidence suggests that they required clear proof of a claimant's commission; and there is no

way they would have allowed spurious writings to be imposed upon them. As God-fearers, they were careful only to accept and endorse divine writings.

At this point, we do well to remember that some of these godly saints possessed miraculous and extraordinary gifts, enabling them to discriminate between the genuine and the counterfeit. A man like Zechariah (not the well-known prophet) is said to have had 'understanding in the visions of God' (2 Chronicles 26:5). Thomas Scott, the commentator, remarks on this, 'He was perhaps endued with a peculiar gift in distinguishing between those that were actually favoured with prophetic visions, and those who only pretended to be so.' So, at the very time when 'inspired' books were appearing, God gave to his people special gifts of perception.

He made the same provision in the New Testament times. One of the great gifts of the Spirit, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:10, is the 'discerning of spirits' (See also, 14:29,37). By this gift, some were able infallibly to know that a man was acting and speaking under the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit.

Thus a divine seal was placed on true revelation. These attestations of the truth have been recorded for the benefit of all the Lord's people. In Psalm 19:7,8, David (a gifted man of God) declares that 'the law of the Lord is perfect' and that 'the statutes of the Lord are right.' Then, in

the New Testament, we have Paul endorsing, not only an Old Testament book, but also the Gospel of Luke, describing both as 'the scripture'. Stressing the need to give financial support to the ministers of the Word, he says, 'For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his hire' (1 Timothy 5:18 cf Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 10:7). Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, affirms in his second letter the inspired character of Paul's letters and, again, makes them equal in status to 'the other scriptures' (2 Peter 3:16).

Surely this accounts for the fact that, from the first, our Scriptures were received, reverently consulted, and publicly read in the various solemn assemblies (Deuteronomy 31:10; Isaiah 8:20; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Pierre Daniel Huet, in the 17th century, said: 'Every book is genuine which was esteemed genuine by those who lived nearest to the time when it was written, and by the ages following in a continual series.' I have no doubt that those who lived in prophetic and apostolic times were the best qualified by far to determine the canonicity of books. Modern scholars are deficient both in knowledge and discernment.

4. The canonical status of books may also be judged by internal evidence. The Scrip-

tures are presented to us as a collection of books which are miraculous in nature. Therefore Acts 7:38 speaks of 'the lively oracles of God' and 1 Peter 1:23 of 'the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever'. Scripture does in fact come to us as the voice of God, clothed with divine power.

This is not the same as internal spiritual illumination. It is not something in the reader: it is something in the book itself. Jeremiah says (Jeremiah 23:28-29) - 'The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces?' His meaning is that the Word of God, unlike spurious productions, is pure, solid, and nourishing. It stands in marked contrast to the 'chaff' - the vain ramblings of uninspired men. Moreover, as 'fire', it impinges powerfully on the soul; it burns itself into the mind; and it makes tremendous spiritual impact. In this way, by its sheer power, Scripture commends itself to us as inspired and authoritative.

Comparable to this verse is one of Paul's in 2 Corinthians 4:2. He speaks of the 'manifestation of the truth' to 'every man's conscience in the sight of God.' The thought here is that inspired word stirs and compels the conscience. Coming as a divine declaration and confronting man

with absolute truth, it not only asserts the Will of God but also reveals the secrets, thoughts, and counsels of men's hearts. Thus, the written Word is able to assure us of its own canonicity. If you doubt that, just read the writings of the prophets and apostles along with the uninspired and apocryphal Esdras, Tobit, Judith, and Bel and the Dragon. There is simply no comparison. God's Word is by itself in a category all its own. It is unique in its nature and effect. No other writing can be placed alongside it.

5. While the canon was being formed, God was pleased to maintain superintendence of the process by means of His inspired servants who were able to communicate His mind on this matter. When a book or letter was written, it would naturally come under the inspection of inspired and recognised men who became authoritative 'critics'. If the work was genuine, it secured their approval; if spurious, it evoked their condemnation. Thus, we find Joshua confirming the inspiration of

Moses' books in Joshua 1:13. Isaiah bears witness to the writings of his predecessor Micah - or vice versa [we cannot be sure] (Isaiah 2 compared with Micah 4).

Jeremiah endorses both the writings of Hosea and those of Micah (Jeremiah 7:25 and 26:17-18). Both Daniel and Ezra assure us of the validity of Jeremiah's prophecy (Daniel 9:2; 2 Chronicles 36:21; cf Jer 25:11. And so we could continue.

Professor Moses Stuart wrote: 'If it be asked, who made the selection of books that are preserved? My answer would be Prophets, i.e. inspired men. If this be not a well-grounded answer, how comes it about that the reception of books as sacred ceased when the order of prophets ceased? So Josephus directly asserts; and the history of the Canon, so far as we can trace it, corresponds with this assertion.'

In the New Testament, we find our Lord and his inspired apostles recognising all the Scriptures of the Old Testament as the Jews then received them. Speaking of those holy writings, the Lord said 'Search the scriptures' (John 5:39). He knew what they received as 'the Scriptures', and He was fully prepared to endorse their view. Indeed, he put His seal of approval it. 'The Scripture,' he said, when referring these same writings, 'cannot be broken' (John 10:35. See also: Matthew 22:29).

When discoursing with the two disciples on the Emmaus road (in Luke 24:27; 24:44), the Lord referred to the Jewish threefold division of the inspired canon - 'the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms'. He did not query that division. He did not raise so much as a question about it. Instead, he endorsed this collection of writings as the canonical Scriptures.

The New Testament Scriptures were similarly endorsed, prospectively by our Lord

(John 14:26;16:13) and retrospectively by the apostles (1 Timothy 5:18 compare Luke 10:7; Jude 17,18compare 2 Peter 3:2; and 2 Peter 3:16). So it is that inspired men living at the time (not necessarily writing prophets) endorsed every true canonical production.

'It is easy then to perceive', writes Professor Gaussen, 'that during such a ministry, which, in the case of some of the apostles, was extended to periods of 50, 60, and almost 70 years, it was impossible that any spurious book could be introduced into the Church; and that the churches should unanimously ratify a book that had not been acknowledged by these men of God'.

6. The canon grew naturally as a recognised succession of inspired men added to it until it was complete. Moses, the first to write, clearly expected others to follow him. In Deuteronomy 18:18-22, he anticipates the rise of prophets like himself. And in time others did arise, beginning with Joshua who augmented the writings of Moses (Joshua 24:26). It appears that he actually completed Moses' books, perhaps with the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34. In the same way, the author of Judges (probably Samuel) appends to Joshua's book the record of his death (Joshua 24:29:33) and then continues to write the record of sacred history (Judges 2:7-9) Samuel, the author of part of that book which bears his name, almost certainly concluded the books of Judges

and Ruth, adding the genealogy concerning David at the end of the Book of Ruth (Ruth 4:14-17). Further evidence for this can be found on examining the end of 2 Chronicles and the beginning of Ezra.

There was an impressive continuity and development in the revelation of God's Word and the result was a collection of writings which made up 'the book of the Lord' (Isaiah 34:16).

We find the same in the New Testament. Luke's Gospel is concluded, and the Book of Acts follows, which actually refers back to the 'former treatise' and then follows on historically (Acts 1:1). The epistles, too, followed on naturally from one another (1 and 2 Corinthians; 1 and 2 Thesalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy etc) and the Book of Revelation evidently concludes the collection (as a comparison with Genesis will show). And so it was that the Scriptures grew, not in a disjointed way, as if individual, unconnected, and scattered books were accidentally thrown together, but in a most orderly way, as one inspired writer succeeded another. There was obvious design and development. There was a consistent unfolding of doctrine and experience. The canon grew naturally and was completed when the Holy Spirit ceased to continue his revelation.

7. When inspired books were written, they were entrusted to the believing people of God who received them and treated them

with the profoundest respect. Moses was established as a prophet and, on the basis of criteria which we have considered, he delivered his writings to the priestly officers and leaders of the nation, saying, 'Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 31:24-26). He was followed, as has already been noted, by Joshua, who continued to write in the very same record; and, then, this too was laid up by the ark of the covenant (Joshua 24:26). Samuel, when he came to write his history, 'wrote it in a book [or 'the book', as it can read in the Hebrew], and laid it up before the Lord' (1 Samuel 10:25)

Josephus, the Jewish historian, asserts that all the inspired books were deposited in the Sanctuary - a fact confirmed by both Tertullian and Augustine. And so the Jews, in their succeeding generations, knew that the writings in the holy place were those upon which God had set his seal. They bore the hallmark of their divinity. The Jews knew they were sacred and acknowledged them (along with New Testament believers) as 'the oracles of God'. Paul wrote of the Jews in Romans 3:2, saying, 'the oracles of God were

committed to them.' We have every reason to believe that the Christian Church took like jealous care of the New Testament scriptures (Colossians 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:13).

As our Lord intimated (John 14:26; 15:26,27 - 'all truth'), and the apostles expected (Ephesians 2:20 - 'the foundation of the apostles and prophets'), the time came when the canon was closed; and that canon has been solemnly sealed by the words of Revelation 22:18: 'I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book'.

We believe that, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, God has given to us an inerrant and complete rule for our faith and practice. Our responsibility is to obey it, defend it, and publish it throughout the world, that God's kingdom may come and his will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.