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Certainly it was assumed that a true apostle or prophet could be recognized by his fruit (John 15:8). One with a life consistent with godliness and one producing godly fruit, who demonstrated the signs and power of a true prophet or an apostle, was one in a position to be used by God to write His word.

Canonical Rule #2 – Was the book Authoritative?

What this means is did the book clearly come from God or with such things as "The Lord has spoken" or "thus saith the Lord." For example, Romans is a book written by the Apostle Paul which is specifically written to unlock the doctrine of the gospel. In fact, in verse 1 of the book, Paul specifically says that he was an apostle set apart by God for this very purpose. In Galatians 1:11-12, he clearly emphasizes that this gospel was revealed to him by direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Clearly these books have an authoritative ring to them in that they claim to come directly God.

Canonical Rule #3 - Was the book Authentic?

What this means is did the book tell the truth about God, the world and men in the same authentic way that was known previous revelations. God is a God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb.6: 18). What this practically means concerning His word is that it must always tell the truth about Him, about the world, about His program, about humanity, about angels, about heaven and hell.

If a writing appeared which squared with other true information already available from God, it could be considered as canonical. If, however, the information did not square with known true information, the writing was rejected because it did not have an authentic ring to it.

It is for this very reason that the Apocrypha was rejected, which we will study. Drs. Geisler & Nix observe: "Much of the Apocrypha was rejected because it was not authentic." (p.227) It did not tell the truth about God and man.

There can be no doubt that carefully determining authenticity is very Biblical (I John 4:1-6). The fact that every book of the Bible was examined to see whether it squared with the rest of known Truth was a solid method of determining canonicity.

It needs to be pointed out that some books even in the Bible were questioned very seriously in light of this principle. For example, the book of Esther was not quickly accepted because it **never** once mentioned the name of God in any of its verses. However, upon careful analysis, Esther was finally deemed canonical because it did certainly testify of God's providential care over His nation Israel. The book of James was called by the famed Reformer Martin Luther, "a book of straw" which he thought did not belong in the Bible because it did not seem to square with the rest of the N.T. and seemed to present a "works" salvation which was contrary to Romans and Galatians. Luther did not spend much time with the book and apparently overlooked James 1:17-18.

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The fact that every book was so carefully scrutinized and even questioned is another indication that God has in fact given us His inspired 66 books.

Canonical Rule #4 - Is the book Dynamic?

What this means is did the book have the dynamic power of God which is capable of changing and transforming a life? Did the book have the power of God to be able to profitably teach, reprove, correct and train (II Tim. 3:16)? Did the book have the power to convict, edify, exhort and pierce the soul of man (Heb.4: 12)?

It must be remembered that if it is a true book of God, it is "living and active" (Heb.4:12) and has the dynamic power to spiritually transform people's lives and develop them for the glory of God (II Tim.3:15).

As has already been observed, the message of God will **always** contain the might of God. Isaiah wrote that God's word would **always** accomplish what God desired, and would **always** succeed in its Divine objective (Is.55:11). If a book is truly an inspired book of God, it **will** contain the power of God which **will** enable it to accomplish its objectives in the lives of God's people.

This was a key rule for determining the canonicity of a book. Again, Geisler and Nix observed: "On that basis, much heretical literature and even some good non-canonical apostolical literature was rejected from the canon of Scripture. Even those books whose teaching was spiritual, but whose message was at best only devotional, were deemed not to be canonical. Such is the case for the vast amount of literature written in the apostolic and subapostolic period. As a result, those books were refused a place in the canon. When the transition is made the canonical books of the New Testament to the other religious writings of the apostolic period, "one is conscious of a tremendous change. There is not the same freshness and originality, depth and clearness. And this is no wonder, for it means the transition from truth given by infallible inspiration to truth produced by fallible pioneers." The non-canonical books lacked power; they were devoid of the dynamic aspects found in inspired Scripture. In short, they did not come with the power of God" (Ibid., p.228)

Many writings have the ability to stimulate thought and challenge, and perhaps even change views. However, **only** 66 books have the dynamic, power of God which can save and develop, edify and educate people so that their thoughts and lives ultimately glorify God.

Canonical Rule #5 - Was the book Accepted?

It was assumed that since God inspired His word for His people, His people would recognize and accept His inspired word. Whether or not the people of God accepted, collected and used a particular book became a critical factor of canonicity.

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God's people have God's Spirit and it is only logical to assume that God's Spirit would lead God's people to accept books that were in fact from God. There are many illustrations from Scripture which do substantiate this point:

(Illustration #1) - God's people immediately recognized that the words written by Moses were words from God and they took his books and placed them in the ark (Deut. 31:24-26).

(Illustration #2) - God's people clearly viewed the words written by Joshua as words coming from God (Josh. 24:26-27).

(Illustration #3) - God's people clearly accepted the words written by Samuel as belonging in God's word (I Sam. 10:25).

(Illustration #4) - Daniel accepted the words written by Jeremiah and Moses as being the words of God (Dan. 9:2, 10-11).

(Illustration #5) - Peter fully accepted Paul's writings as inspired Scripture (II Pet. 3:15-16).

(Illustration #6) - The Thessalonians fully accepted Paul's writings as being the Word of God (I Thess. 2:13). In fact, they were charged to read it to "all the brethren" (I Thess. 5:27).

Clearly from these illustrations it may be established that the issue of the writing being received and accepted by God's people was an important matter of canonicity. Dr. Chafer wrote: "In the case of the Old Testament, the congregation of Israel under the leadership of their elders, rulers, prophets, and priests, gave sanction to those writings which formed the first canon. In the case of the New Testament, the early church, including her officers and ministers, gave sanction to the second canon. Without consciousness on their part in either case that they were being used of God to accomplish a momentous objective, they did, nevertheless, under presidency of the Holy Spirit, determine what could not have been postponed to later generations nor surrendered to other peoples, namely, to decide the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the Bible canon." (p.95)

These five canonical rules were those used to determine the canon of Scripture. God saw to it that 66 books were discovered which measured up to the rules of canonization. These 66 books are the **only** books which have measured up to the rules of canonicity and inspiration.

There were a group of books written between the Old Testament period and the New Testament period, approximately 200 B.C.- A.D. 100, that were called Apocrypha, which means hidden. These books **were not** found in the Hebrew Old Testament, but were found in some manuscripts of the LXX, the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament made by seventy (LXX) translators in the third and second centuries B.C. in Alexandria.