

IS THE BIBLE ACCURATE? Part 2

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In the last *Cordova Connection* article, we noticed the aspect of inspiration as it relates to the Bible's accuracy. This week, we turn our attention to the canonization of the Bible and those proofs that support its accuracy.

CANONIZATION

The term "canonization," or simply "canon," means that the individual books which make up the Bible have been authorized to be a part of the whole. Inspiration speaks to the authority of the Bible, whereas canonization speaks to the Bible's acceptance by men and their recognition that it came from God. Unlike the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the Bible has the characteristics of authority. One of the greatest pieces of evidence for the Bible's canonicity is that it was written over a period of about 1,600 years by more than forty different writers and still has a flow of unity that no other book can claim.

There are at least five principles that have been employed to determine if a book belongs in the canon of the Bible. First, was the book written by a man or prophet of God? The Biblical writers identified themselves as prophets. Amos said "the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy" (Amos 3:8)? God said of the great Prophet, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18:18). Also, Paul and the other New Testament prophets often identified themselves as "a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle" (Rom. 1:1).

Second, was the writer confirmed to be a man of God by performing miracles? God used the miraculous, on occasion, to prove that a man was His spokesman when he delivered His message. When God, through Moses, commanded "let my people go" (Ex. 5:1), He gave the ability to Moses to perform the many miracles recorded concerning that event (Ex. 5-14). During the first recorded sermon after the church was established, the speakers spoke in previously unlearned languages to prove they were men of God (Acts 2:4).

Third, did the message delivered tell the truth about God? In order for the listener to always know if a man was a true prophet or not, God provided guidelines used to determine his authenticity. He warned, "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, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:22). The only way a reader, who did not witness the miracles, could confirm the message to be true was to determine whether it contradicted other writings that were known to be from God. Since it is not possible for God to tell a lie or to contradict Himself (Titus 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:17-18), if the message did not pass the "truth test," it was not His message!

Fourth, did the message edify the reader? The Bible does claim to have "given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness," (2 Pet. 1:3) therefore, it must have had a transforming force for edification and evangelism upon those that read or heard the message.

Fifth, was the manuscript accepted by the people of God? Throughout the Bible, later prophets recognized the writing of earlier prophets as Scripture. Daniel recognized the writings of Moses and other prophets (Dan. 9:2, 10-11), Paul recognized the Gospel of Luke as Scripture (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Lk. 10:7), and Peter recognized the writings of Paul (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

However, ultimately God is the authority behind the Canon of Scripture that has been providentially preserved for us, and the faithful of the first century accepted it as such based upon the evidence presented. The overwhelming evidence, found within the canonization of the Bible, definitely points to our being able to trust it as accurate. Next week, we will conclude with a look at the translation of the Bible.