

***Survey of the New Testament***  
“Formulation of the Bible and Canonicity”

I. Introduction.

A. Why these 27 books?

1. The New Testament is comprised of four gospel accounts of the life of Christ, one volume, Acts, which sketches the spread of the early church, twenty-one letters and one book of prophecy.

B. By the time of the first century, the Old Testament writings were codified and respected as the Holy Scripture. The process by which they became recognized is obscure and a point of debate. Yet there was no debate on their trustworthiness in the first century.

1. These Old Testament books became the “canon,” an authoritative collection of documents.

“A Jewish writing called 2 Maccabees tells of the torture of seven sons and the murder of their mother, resulting from their refusal to break the law of Moses during the tyrannical reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (ca. 170 B.C.) At the heart of their refusal to betray their faith was their belief that in Moses’ law God had made his eternal will known. Their brave trust in Scripture is emblematic of the high view of God’s written revelation that the Jewish people shared, even if they did not all interpret that Scripture in the same way.” – *Encountering the New Testament*, p. 26.

2. The community of the first century was founded upon the Jewish Old Testament Scripture.

## II. Inspiration.

A. Early in Jesus' ministry, He selected 12 men to be his pupils who, except for one, would carry on His legacy. They would have special instruction from Him, but also special insight from the Holy Spirit after Jesus had departed.

### 1. Note:

#### a. John 14:26

“<sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

#### b. John 15:26-27

“<sup>26</sup> When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, <sup>27</sup> and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

#### c. John 16:12-14

“<sup>12</sup> I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.”

2. These men would be reminded of what had been taught, as well as further insights to great an eyewitness written account of Christ's teaching, life, and interface with the Old Testament Scriptures.

3. Men would be inspired by the Holy Spirit to produce trustworthy recollections and writings. The combination of divine and human elements sometimes called

**CONCURSUS** (from “concur” to run together) which is the complementary interworking of God and Human writers in the composition of the Bible.

4. How did this revealing to the writer take place? Note two key words:

- a. Plenary – full, all. All Scripture is written by inspiration of the same Holy Spirit.
- b. Verbal – thoughts were divinely inspired, but the writers were free to choose the words to convey the thoughts. Yet, thoughts and written words were super-intended by the Holy Spirit.

1. Louis Berkof –

“The term ‘organic’ serves to stress the fact that God did not employ the writers mechanically, but acted on them in an organic way, in harmony with the laws of their own inner being. He used them just as they were, with their character and temperament, their gifts and talents, their education and culture, their vocabulary, diction, and style; illuminated their minds, prompted them to write, repressed the influence of sin on their literary activity, and guided them in the choice of their words and in the expression of their thoughts.”

B. What about the historical written record?

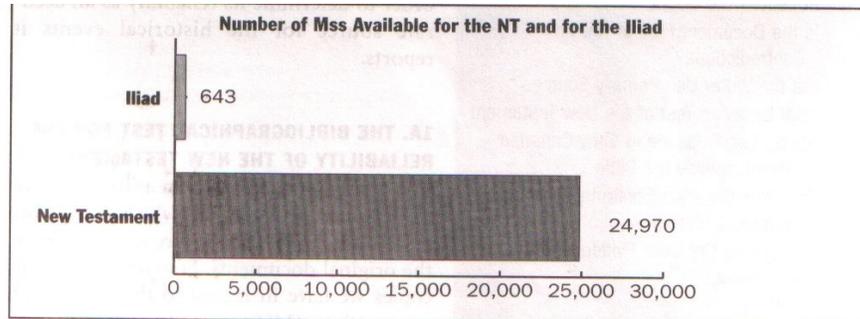
1. We do not have original manuscripts of any Biblical book.
  - a. The Old Testament was viewed as canonical and received by the time of Christ. We will focus largely on the New Testament. The Old Testament was essentially set by 300. B.C.
2. We do have very reliable copies of the New Testament.
  - a. There are now more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, over 10,000 in the Latin vulgate, at least 9,300 other early versions.

b. Homer's Iliad is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive.

1. The Iliad, a poetical work concerning the Trojan Wars, was dated by Herodotus four hundred years before his own time, circa 850 B.C.

C. Data on early copies in contrast to the copied writings of Homer.

1.



– *Evidence that Demands a Verdict.*

D. More sources

1. Contemporary history with the New Testament.

a. Ignatius, 50-115 A.D. wrote: "I do not wish to command you as Peter and Paul; they were apostles."

b. Polycarp, 115 A.D., and Clement of Alexandria, 200 A.D., and other early church fathers refer to the Old and New Testament books with the phrase "As it is said in these Scriptures."

2. Value of manuscripts and their accuracy.

a. Note ruler illustration and Bureau of Weights and Measurers Building, Washington, D.C.

3. Note the number of copies in relation to other classical works of antiquity.

a. John Warwick Montgomery. "To be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into

obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”

b. Chart on classical literature and earliest copies.

Author	Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap (in years)	No. of Copies
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c.400 B.C.	c. 400	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480-425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460-400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c.1300	7
Demosthenes		300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400	200
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C. – A.D. 17	4 <sup>th</sup> cent. (partial), mostly 10 <sup>th</sup> cent.	c. 400 c. 1,000	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61-113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750	7
New Testament		A.D. 50-100	c. 114 (fragment) c. 200 (books) c. 250 (most of NT) c. 325 (comp. NT)	+50 100 150 225	5366

-- Evidence that Demands a Verdict.

#### 4. Books of Concern of the New Testament.

Hebrews – No author, but Clement of Rome believed it was inspired in 95

A.D.

Revelation – Accepted by Early Church Fathers as canonical in 95 A.D.

Doubts raised in third century.

James, I and II Peter, III John, and Jude – Last to be recognized.

In 387 A.D. Athanasius of Alexandria lists all 27 books.

#### D. Definition for inerrancy.

1. Inerrancy – Freedom from error or untruths.

a. Note the Summary Statement from the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy

## I. SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: It is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

There must be no hesitation to state again the [books] of the New Testament; for they are these: Four Gospels: according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John. Further, after these, also [The] Acts of [the] Apostles, and the seven so-called Catholic Epistles of the Apostles, as follows: One of James, but two of Peter, then, three of John, and after these, one of Jude. In addition to these there are fourteen Epistles of the Apostle Paul put down in the following order: The first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians, and after these, [the Epistles] to the Galatians, and then to the Ephesians; further, [the Epistle] to the Hebrews. And next two [letters] to Timothy, but one to Titus, and the last [being] the one to Philemon. Moreover, also the Apocalypse of John. . . .

-- Athanasius (ca. A.D. 296-373)  
from *Encountering the New Testament*, p. 27

## III. What about discrepancies?

### A. Examples.

1. Did Jesus send out seventy-two or seventy workers into the harvest?

a. Luke 10:1

“<sup>1</sup> Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.”

1. There is confusion among various manuscripts.
2. Did the original copy of Matthew contain 12:47?
  - a. Matthew 12:47:

“<sup>47</sup> Someone said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.’”

    1. Some ancient and important manuscripts omit it.
3. There is a concern over the woman caught in adultery.
  - a. John 7:53-8:11
    1. Modern translations place it in brackets or mark it off from the rest of John’s gospel by other means (see NASU side bar note.)
4. Mark is also disputed as modern Bibles indicated Mark 16:9-20 plus noted addition with no verses. (See NASU end of Mark, page 84.)

16:9-20: Scholars differ regarding whether these verses were originally part of this Gospel. Some important early Greek manuscripts lack these verses, other manuscripts have vv.9-20 (known as the “Longer Ending”) and still others have a “Shorter Ending” (roughly one verse long). A few manuscripts have both the “Shorter Ending” and the “Longer Ending.” Because of these differences, some scholars believe that vv.9-20 were added later and not written by Mark. On the other hand, the verses are cited by writers from the late second century and are found in the overwhelming majority of existing Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark. For other scholars, these facts establish the authenticity of the passage. – NG5B, p. 1597.

5. Yet, the certainty of our knowledge of the New Testament text invariably runs to nearly 100%. No points of dispute affect the gospel message or even a single Christian doctrine. (*Encountering the New Testament*, p. 29).
6. To make this determination, the scholarly purist or the textual Christian is utilized and will be referred to throughout this study.