

**Canon:**

root word “reed” (English word ‘cane’). The ‘reed’ was used as a measuring rod and eventually meant ‘standard’, ‘list’, and ‘index’. Respecting scriptures, ‘canon’ means an officially accepted list of books”

The criteria used by the early church to choose the canonical books are unknown. According to Geisler and Nix, there were possibly five guiding principles used to determine if a New Testament book is canonical or Scripture:

- 1) **Authoritative** - did it come from the hand of God? Does the book come with a divine “thus saith the Lord?”
- 2) **Prophetic** - was it written by a man of God?
- 3) **Authentic** - the policy of the early church fathers was, “if in doubt through it out.”
- 4) **Dynamic** - did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
- 5) **Read & Used** - was it accepted by the people of God?

**Review:****Old Testament:**

Historical	17	Rise and Fall of the Nation
Poetical	5	Literature of the Nation’s Golden Era
Prophetic	17	Literature of the Nation’s dark days

**New Testament:**

Gospels	4	The MAN whom the Nation Produced (God’s only son; perished; eternal life - GOSPEL)
Historical	1	His reign among all nations begins
Epistles	21	His teachings and principles
Prophetic	1	Forecast of His Universal Dominion

**Old Testament as Part Of The Christian Canon:****Testified To By Christ:**

- 1) **Matthew 23:39:** “..for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’” [ref: Psalms 118: 26]
- 2) **Luke 11:51:** “..from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the alter and the temple” [ref: 2Chr 24:20,2 ]
- 3) **Luke 24:44:** “...all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”

**Taught By Christ:**

- 1) **Matthew 21:42:** “Did you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone, which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” [ref: Psalms 118:22, 23]
- 2) **Matthew 22:29-32:** “...you are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage . . . ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead but of the living.” [ref: Exodus 3:6, 15]
- 3) **Luke 24: 25.26:** “Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart, to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered the things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself”

**Other References:**

Acts 17:2, 11; 18:28; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1Corinthians 15:3,4; Galatians 3:8; 3:22; 4:30; 1Timiothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1: 20, 21; 3:16

Why NOT the Apocryphal: from the Greek word for hidden or concealed (*apokruphos*)

First applied by Jerome (340 – 420: Latin Vulgate) in the fourth century to a group of literature written between the time of Old and New Testaments.

**Unger's Bible Dictionary gives reasons for their exclusion:**

- 1) "They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms."
- 2) "They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with the inspired scripture."
- 3) "They resort to literary type and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture."
- 4) "They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling."

**Historical testimony of their exclusion (Geisler and Nix):**

- 1) Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all the canonical books as Scripture.
- 2) Josephus (A.D. 30 - 100), a Jewish historian, **explicitly** excludes the Apocrypha, numbering the books of the Old Testament as 22. Neither does he quote these books as Scripture.
- 3) No canon or council of the Christian church for the first four centuries recognized the Apocrypha as inspired.
- 4) Many of the great Fathers of the early church spoke out against the Apocrypha, for example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius.
- 5) Jerome, the great scholar, and translator of the Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha; he disputed with Augustine; after his death, they were added to his Latin Vulgate from the Old Latin Vulgate.
- 6) Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period rejected the Apocrypha.
- 7) Luther and the Reformers rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha.
- 8) Not until A.D. 1546, at the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent, did the Apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

**Historical Reliability:**

Establish historical reliability, not its inspiration. NT should be tested by the same criteria that all historical documents are tested.

**Basic principles of Historiography:**

- 1) ***Bibliographical test:*** an examination of the **textual** transmission by which documents reach us; i.e., since we do not have the original documents, how **reliable** are the copies we have regarding the **number** of manuscripts and the **time interval** between the original and extant copy?
- 2) ***Internal evidence test:*** Aristotle's dictum that "the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself." Therefore, "one must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself with contradictions and known factual inaccuracies."
- 3) ***External evidence test:*** "Do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?" What other documents and evidences are there apart from the literature under examination are there that validate and substantiate the accuracy, reliability, and authenticity?

**Bibliographical test:**

F. E. Peters points out that "on the basis of manuscript tradition alone, work that made up the Christians' New Testament were the most frequently copied and widely circulated books of antiquity."

**Manuscript evidence of the New Testament: Numbers > 24K?**

**Latin Vulgate: > 10,000**

**Greek: > 5,300**

**Other: > 9,300**

In comparison, *Iliad* by Homer is second with 643 manuscripts. The first preserved text of Homer dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

John Warwick Montgomery says, "...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."

***Time:***

Bible: 250 - 300 years (trifling scraps excepted)

Plays of Sophocles (seven plays): 1400 years after the poet's death.

Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, director and principal librarian of the British Museum says, "In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest extant manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament."

Greenlee writes in Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism, "the oldest known MSS of most of the Greek classical authors . . . a thousand years or more after the author's death . . . Latin authors . . . a minimum of three centuries . . . the New Testament, however, two of the most important MSS were written within 300 years . . . and some virtually complete NT books as well as extensive fragmentary MSS of many parts of the NT date back to one century from the oldest writings"

F. F. Bruce has stated, "The History of Thucydides (ca. 460 - 400 B.C.) is known to us from eight MSS, the earliest belonging to ca. A.D. 900, and a few papyrus scraps, belonging to about the beginning of the Christian era. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (B.C. 488-428). **Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals.**"

***Reliability:***

The NT has about 20,000 lines; only 40 lines (or 400 words) of the NT are in doubt, whereas, with the *Iliad*, with about 15,600 lines, 764 lines are questioned. 5% vs. 0.5%; the national epic of India, the *Mahabharata*, eight times the size of the *Iliad* (c. 250,000 lines), has some 26,000 lines of corruption (10%)

Ezra Abbot contends that about 19/20 (95%) of the various readings are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages where they occur.

Geisler and Nix note there is ambiguity in saying there are 200,000 variants in the existing manuscripts of the NT. These represent 10,000 places; if a word is misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts, this is counted as 3,000 variants.

Philip Schaff in *Comparison of the Greek Testament and the English Version* concluded that only 400 of the 150,000 variant readings caused doubt about the textual meaning, and only 50 of these were of great significance. Not one altered, "an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching."

Shakespeare's plays, which are around 275 years old, are far more uncertain and corrupt than the NT, 19 centuries old, during nearly 15 centuries it was only in manuscript - not a book format.

Of the NT there is only in dispute, between scholars, about 12 - 20 verses as relates to interpretations of words verses the words specifically. In the 37 plays of Shakespeare, there are around 100 of the readings still in dispute, with a large portion materially affecting the actual meaning of the passage.

Sir Frederic Kenyon, “No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading . . .”