

The question of NT Canonization

In 397 A.D. a number of Christian leaders met together in the North African city of Carthage to give consideration to some of the very important doctrinal matters that were being debated among Bible believing people. One of their concerns at that council was to make a list of NT books that were appropriate to be read and studied in church services. When they concluded that council, they made a list that had our exact 27 books of the New Testament.

Four situations forced the early church to consider the NT canon

1. There was the situation of _____ (John 21:25; Luke 1:1-2) By the 9th Century when someone tried to write a list of those books that purported to be NT religion the list was something like 280 titles.
2. There were _____ – some attempted to draw up authoritative lists of which books belonged in the NT and they were leaving out certain books that the majority of Christian people certainly recognized to be Scripture. One famous example was a man named Marcion
3. The situation of _____ – There was a time in church history during the reign of Diocletian when the Roman government officially condemned all religious books known as “Christian books.” Christians needed to distinguish between books that were simply religious and books that were sacred and inspired by God.
4. There were some _____ – about 21 of our NT books never really faced any dispute as to their canonicity. There were 6 however that from a very early time were spoken against in some places. The disputed six were eventually accepted based on: Apostolicity, Universality, Spirituality, and Inspiration.

The basis upon which we should accept the 27 books of the NT

Consider the dating of the books – The apostles were alive. Consider the role of the apostles in NT canonicity. Jesus himself assigned a unique role to the apostles as it relates to the life of his church.

- Jesus chose Peter and entrusted him with the “_____” (Matt. 16:19)
- Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would have a _____ role in these men’s lives. (John 14:26; 16:13)
- The apostles were the ones who laid the _____ of the church. (Ephesians 2:20).
- The early church adhered steadfastly to the apostles _____. (Acts 2:42)
- God gave a stamp of approval on these men through _____. (Heb. 2:4)
- The apostles wanted their writings to be spread as “_____.” (Gal. 1:1-2; Col. 4:16; 2Pet. 1:15; Rev. 1:3-4)
- The apostles corrected _____ . (John 21:23; 2 Thess. 2:2-3a)
- The apostles _____ one another. (1Tim. 5:18; 2Pet 3:15-16; Jude 17)