

A Look at the Canon

How Do We Know that the 66 Books of the Bible Are from God?

Bodie Hodge, Answers in Genesis

Keywords

canon, Scripture, God, self-authentication, Bible, humanism, axiom, Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament, Apostles, Church

Introduction

If I were to write a letter to Bill, and Bill wanted to know if I really wrote it, then the first thing he should do is ask me! If Bill asked Joe, who didn't have first-hand knowledge of my letter, whether I had written the letter to Bill, is that satisfactory? No. The best person to ask is me.

This illustration applies to our question. If anyone knows what God wrote to the human race, it is God. There is no greater self-authenticating voice than that of the True One who created all things. Self-authentication is commonplace among all of us: if you want to know what I think about something, or dreamt about last night, there is only one person in the world you can ask for certainty.

Some people who believe God doesn't exist say that God's Word shouldn't be consulted to see if the Bible is from Him or not. But on what basis is such a claim valid? It is illogical to assume that the letter written by me to Bill is off limits for study. In such a situation, these people are trying to get you to trust their reasoning over God's.

But don't be led astray by such a fallacy: one should check God's Word regardless of such a claim. Nothing can fully authenticate God's Word other than God Himself; otherwise there is an authority greater than or equal to God, and if that were so, then God wouldn't be God—the supreme authority. So, when looking at the Bible, one should not lay it aside, but rather stand firm on it as their foundation for looking at the question: did the Bible come from God?

Can the canon of Scripture (what God has written to man) be placed in the judgment seat of fallible man to determine if it came from God or not? If so, then God is no longer the authority, nor is His Word, but, instead, fallible, autonomous human reasoning. Man, in essence, is sitting in judgment of God. This is called humanism, where man is seen as the greatest of all things and determiner of truth, as opposed to God.

By disregarding the Word of God, one is forced to accept the presupposition of humanistic thinking when looking at God and His Word. One should not give the Bible away and play by man-made humanistic rules. Sadly, many Christians fall for this line of reasoning, and in doing so they give up a biblical foundation for one based on humanism (man is the final authority).

Rather, we should start with the Word of God as the axiom (absolute beginning) and verify that God's Word will "self authenticate" itself (although, being truth, naturally it will not be proven wrong—even by outside sources). In other words, let God be the judge whether or not the Bible is His Word. This stance (a presuppositional perspective), starts with the Word of God and uses it as its own Words as a confirmation that the books are indeed from God. With this perspective, Jesus Christ, being God, will be used as the beginning of the analysis for both the Old and New Testament books of the canon.

What about the 39 Books of the Old Testament?

Regarding the 39 books of the Old Testament, God in the flesh—Jesus Christ—confirmed these books. He never indicated or suggested that any be removed or added. In fact, He used them. For example, when Satan tried tempting Jesus in Matthew 4, Jesus three times quoted from Moses' books.

The overall Hebrew breakdown of the Old Testament books is in three major categories:¹

1. **The Law (Torah):** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
2. **The Prophets (Nebhim):**
 1. Early prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings
 2. Later prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve (minor Prophets)
3. **The Psalms/Writings (Kethubhim):**
 1. Poetic books: Psalms, Proverbs, and Job
 2. Five Rolls: Songs of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes

Historical books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles

The Jewish canon includes exactly what was in the Protestant Bible and was what was used in the early churches. The number of books is different, but it is the same text. Where Protestants and early Catholics divided Kings, Samuel, and Chronicles into two books apiece, the Jews had them as one. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were also compiled as one book in the Jewish list. The twelve Minor Prophets were also accumulated into one book.

Jesus confirms all three divisions in the Old Testament in Luke 24:44, showing that they were authoritative.

Luke 24:44

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Jesus also gives further confirmation by mentioning the extent of prophets—from Abel to Zechariah:

Matthew 23:35

so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

This is from Genesis to Chronicles—the first and last books in the typical listing of the Hebrew Old Testament that Jesus used. Even other New Testament authors openly confirmed the Old Testament. For example, Paul affirms them as oracles of God (Romans 3:1–2).

What about the Apocrypha?

The Apocrypha (meaning “hidden” or “unknown”) are books written prior to the time of Christ, many during the 400 years of silence prior to Christ’s entrance into the world.² These books provide some history and insight of the times. These books were seen as valuable but not as Scripture.

However, some of these books have been “canonized” by the Roman and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church has some that are distinct from the Roman Catholic Church. So, the number of apocryphal books vary to some degree. In particular, the more popular ones are:

1. Tobit
2. Judith
3. 1 Maccabees
4. 2 Maccabees
5. Wisdom of Solomon
6. Ecclesiasticus (Book of Sirach)
7. 1 Esdras
8. 2 Esdras
9. Baruch
10. Letter of Jeremiah
11. Additions to Esther
12. Prayer of Azariah
13. Suzanna (often inserted as Daniel 13)
14. Bel and the Dragon
15. Prayer of Manasseh

The books of the Apocrypha were never classed as Scripture by Christ or the Jews, nor did the writers of the New Testament use them. However, they appear in the Latin Vulgate in the 5th century A.D. and the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures about 250 B.C. and denoted as the LXX). However, the earliest extant copies of the LXX are from the 5th century A.D. and that does not tell us whether or not the original LXX contained the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha were also at the end of a biblical manuscript called Codex Sinaiticus about the 4th century A.D., but the presence of the Apocrypha in any of these documents does not necessarily mean that they were regarded as Scripture). Regardless, modern Catholic Bibles now contain the Apocrypha—as did the King James Version in 1611 A.D. (first edition of the King James Version) and early editions of the Geneva Bible.

Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate in the 5th century made it abundantly clear that the Apocrypha were not Scripture, even though they were included with the Vulgate. But like many other ancient pieces of literature, Jerome felt it worthy to be translated into Latin, the common tongue of the day. Even many early Church Fathers such as Melito, Origin, Athanasius, Cyril, and others rejected the Apocrypha.

Jews, before and during the time of Christ, often used the Septuagint (whether it contained the Apocrypha or not) but never classed the Apocrypha as Scripture for various reasons.³ One such reason is that it never claimed to be Scripture, unlike other books of the Bible that claim such things. Even one of the apocryphal books affirms there was no one speaking on God’s behalf at that time (1 Maccabees 9:27) when it says: “There had not been such great distress in Israel since the time prophets ceased to appear among the people.”

Today, the Roman Church views 12 of the Apocryphal books as Scripture and has included them in their Bible translations (New American Bible, New Jerusalem Bible). The books that are excluded are 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. This happened in A.D. 1546 at the Council of Trent. Some have claimed that

apocryphal books were recognized as full scriptural canon by the Church as far back as the First Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393 with Augustine. There are no extant records of this Synod, so no one can say exactly what was decided, though the summary offered by the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 is assumed to be generally accurate. However, the Synod of Hippo was regional, as was the following Council at Carthage where this new canon was approved; hence, it didn't hold authority over the whole of the Roman Church.

It wasn't until A.D. 405 that Pope Innocent I endorsed the Apocrypha—after the Council of Carthage—even though Jerome (who translated the Bible and Apocrypha into Latin and was also Catholic) strictly opposed it as Scripture. Catholic Cardinal Cajetan around the time of the Reformation in the 16th century A.D. reveals that there were two different levels of canon in the Roman Church (a strict canon and non-official canon that was still useful for teaching in the church) in regards to this council he says in his commentary:

Here we close our commentaries on the historical books of the Old Testament. For the rest (that is, Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees) are counted by St Jerome out of the canonical books, and are placed amongst the Apocrypha, along with Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, as is plain from the Prologus Galeatus. Nor be thou disturbed, like a raw scholar, if thou shouldest find anywhere, either in the sacred councils or the sacred doctors, these books reckoned as canonical. For the words as well of councils as of doctors are to be reduced to the correction of Jerome. Now, according to his judgment, in the epistle to the bishops Chromatius and Heliodorus, these books (and any other like books in the canon of the bible) are not canonical, that is, not in the nature of a rule for confirming matters of faith. Yet, they may be called canonical, that is, in the nature of a rule for the edification of the faithful, as being received and authorised in the canon of the bible for that purpose. By the help of this distinction thou mayest see thy way clearly through that which Augustine says, and what is written in the provincial council of Carthage.⁴

This was presumably the real difference between the Deuterocanonical (“second canon,” or books that were useful but not fully canonical) and Protocanonical (fully inspired). Up to the Council of Trent in 1546, the view of Jerome dominated that Apocryphal books were not classed as fully inspired canon, but were “second canon,” and the Catholic Polyglot Bible even left the Apocrypha out after the Council of Florence in 1451.

This shows that the official fully inspired Old Testament canon accepted by the Roman Church was the same as the canon being used by the Protestants and Jews until the Council of Trent; at this point in time the second canon books were fully promoted to the position of inspired canon by the Roman Church.

This is why 1546 is the official date of additions because it was then that the Apocrypha were officially classed as full canon by the Roman Church, even though the listing at Carthage (397) and Florence (1445) included the Apocrypha. Of course, there were Catholic leaders on both sides of the issue between Pope Innocent I and the Council of Trent. But at the Council of Trent, there was no longer a real distinction between Apocryphal books and the rest of Scripture in Catholicism.

Brief overview in history of the view of the Apocrypha (See table 1).

Protestants today would say that the Apocryphal books are useful for many reasons (historical and so on) but not attribute them as Scripture. This was the view of the Reformers and Puritans. The early editions of the Geneva Bible and King James Version (1611) contained the Apocrypha. It was dropped, presumably, when it was realized that some readers might not understand the distinction. This view is very similar to the dominant Catholic view up until the Council of Trent.

What about the 27 Books of the New Testament?

The 27 books of the New Testament require some deeper thinking because they were written after Christ ascended, and therefore some may think that we do not have His authority for them. Did Christ give any hints that there would be more books of the Bible or hints as to how and by whom they may arrive?

In John 14, Jesus is speaking with his disciples. He claimed that the Holy Spirit would remind them of things that had happened.

John 14:26

“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.”

Bringing “to your remembrance” implies that we should expect one or more complementary accounts of Jesus’ life—gospel accounts. Since the Holy Spirit helped them to remember, they had first-hand knowledge of Christ. In the following chapter, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus and that they (the disciples) will also testify.

John 15:26–27

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds

Table 1. Brief overview in history of the view of the Apocrypha.

Date	Event	Apocrypha considered fully inspired?
c. 400 B.C.	Malachi ends the Old Testament Scripture.	N/A
c. 100 B.C.—C. A.D. 100	The community who copied the Dead Sea Scrolls never referred to the Apocrypha as “It is Written” or “God Says” as they did with other canon books.	No
C. A.D. 30	Jesus never rejected the Jewish Canon (which was the same as the Protestant Old Testament); Jesus never quoted from the Apocrypha as Scripture.	No
A.D. 40	Philo, Jewish philosopher, refers to all but 5 Old Testament books and never quotes from the Apocrypha.	No
C. A.D. 40–90	The New Testament writers do not quote from the Apocrypha as Scripture.	No
A.D. 90	The Council of Jamnia drew up a list of canonical books for Judaism at the time—the Apocrypha are excluded.	No
A.D. 80–100	Josephus, Jewish Historian, never lists the Apocrypha as Scripture.	No
A.D. 170	The first verifiable canon listing from the Church Fathers was found in the writings of Melito of Sardis and the Apocrypha are missing.	No
A.D. 320s	Another listing by Athanasius lists canon books, but the Apocrypha are missing.	No
A.D. 382–405	Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, opposed the Apocrypha as Scripture, though he translated it.	No
C. A.D. 350–370	Rufinus lists the Canon books, and the Apocryphal books are not among them.	No
C. A.D. 350–370	Cyril of Jerusalem rejected the Apocrypha.	No
C. A.D. 343–381	Council of Laodicea rejects most of the Apocrypha except Baruch.	No (except 1)
A.D. 393	Regional Synod of Hippo, influenced by Augustine, is the first listing of the Apocrypha as Scripture and approved at the regional Council of Carthage (397). See the discussion above on Hippo.	Yes
A.D. 590–604	Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, in his writings denies Maccabees as canonical but still says it is useful according to Roman Catholic patristics scholar, William Jurgens.	Openly denies 1
A.D. 1445	Council of Florence declares the Apocryphal books are canonical.	Yes
c. early A.D. 1500	Catholic Cardinal Cajetan (who opposed Luther) points out that there are two levels of inspiration, and the Apocrypha, Judith, Tobit, books of Maccabees, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus were the lesser of inspiration and seen as non-canon books.	No (Secondary canon)
A.D. 1520	Polyglot Bible of Cardinal Ximenes (approved by Pope Leo X) published.	No
A.D. 1517–1520s	Protestant Reformation retains the Jewish canon and that of Jerome and many others with no Apocrypha.	No
A.D. 1546	The Council of Trent finalized the Roman Church additions of the Apocrypha as full canon.	Yes

from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

“You will testify also” shows that we should expect some teachings from the disciples for future generations, perhaps in the form of letters, books, sermons, and so on. This is significant, as Jesus points out that they will have the Spirit of truth, and Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). These disciples were also called apostles, which means “messengers” or “delegates” in Greek. Apostles are ones who have seen Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1) and are appointed by Christ as messengers. The apostles were also given special gifts such as working miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Luke 11:48–49

“So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’”

Because the Jews hadn’t listened to the prophets, Jesus says that God in His wisdom also conferred “apostles.” And in a like manner as the prophets, apostles would speak for God.

In other words, apostles were confirmed to be able to speak the very Word of God by the Spirit. In the past, no prophet was able to do things on their own but as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), so apostles were able to do things in the same fashion as prophets in the Old Testament. Unlike Apocryphal books, New Testament books have similar statements to those in the Old Testament claiming to be from God. For example, see the verses below:

1 Peter 1:12

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

1 Corinthians 2:12–13

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

1 Thessalonians 4:1–2

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Colossians 4:16–18

When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. Say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.” I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

John 16:7–15 speaks further on this subject confirming expected writings. However, there is no reason to assume they all wrote something. Many prophets of the Old Testament have no written documents. Also, there is no reason to assume that the eleven remaining disciples were the only ones able or gifted to do such things. God called other apostles, such as Paul, who saw the resurrected Christ and became His messenger specifically to the gentiles.

So, this brings up the question of who were the apostles listed in Scripture?

Who Were the Apostles?

This discussion is relevant to determine who had apostolic authority, and therefore, who would have authority to write or oversee the newly written Scripture of the New Testament.⁵ In a greater sense of the word, apostle means one who is sent and is derived from the Greek word *apostello*.

The 12 Disciples were listed as apostles (Matthew 10:2–4; Luke 6:13). They are as follows:

1. Simon Peter
2. Andrew, Peter's brother
3. James, the son of Zebedee
4. John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew, the tax collector
9. James, the son of Alphaeus
10. Lebbaeus Thaddaeus
11. Simon the Canaanite
12. Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ

Judas betrayal of Christ and subsequent death thereafter eliminated him from this eminent position of authority.

Scripture says: Matthias was an Apostle

After Judas death, the apostles cast lots to replace him, and it the lot fell on Matthias. He was now counted as the 12 and placed in the position of apostolic authority. The 12 apostles do have a special distinction as revealed in Revelation:

Revelation 21:14

The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

This special distinction, though, doesn't mean that other apostles listed in Scripture are not authoritative in their writings or oversight, as Paul made exceptionally clear in his defense of being an apostle in several places.

Scripture says: Paul is an Apostle

Paul was often declared as an apostle in Scripture (for example, Acts 14:14; Romans 1:1, 11:13; 1 Corinthians 1:1, etc.) Paul was not relegated as less than the 12 eminent apostles. Consider:

2 Corinthians 11:5

For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.

2 Corinthians 12:11

I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody.

Paul penned an extensive amount of the New Testament. When one is denoted in Scripture as an apostle, then there should be no question whether their writings can be classed as Scripture. Paul points out that he was the last to see Christ and hence the last of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 15:8. This seems to imply that there would be no apostles after him. Note that those in Scripture, other than Paul and the 12, who are called apostles would have been designated as such prior to Paul becoming an apostle.

Scripture says: Barnabas is an Apostle

Acts 14:14

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out.

Scripture says: James is an Apostle

Galatians 1:19

I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother.

A deeper discussion regarding James' apostleship will be dealt with later in this article.

Scripture says: Jesus is the Apostle

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.

Jesus is of course unique among the other apostles as indicated in John 13:16 where Jesus says "no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him." Being that the apostles are the messengers of Christ, they are not as great as Christ.

Though some try to argue that the 12 and Paul were elevated in authority, there is no biblical basis for this. Scripture calls James an apostle (Galatians 1:19), so who are we to say he wasn't? Just because one isn't listed among the 12, doesn't mean that they have no authority. By the sheer fact that they are listed by the Holy Spirit with this unique title is of significance.

Paul shared that there is no such thing as a tier of apostleship when some argued that he was in a lower tier (2 Corinthians 11:5, 12:11). This means that when Scripture calls someone an apostle, they are one—not in a caste-type system—and they have the same authority. Hence, Paul and James had the authority to write in the same way John and Peter did.

Apostolic Connection of New Testament Books

Apostle John: 5 of the 27 books of the New Testament

1. Gospel of John
2. 1 John
3. 2 John
4. 3 John
5. Revelation

Apostle Peter: 3 of the 27 books of the New Testament

1. 1 Peter
2. 2 Peter
3. Gospel of Mark

Two books were directly written by Peter (1 and 2 Peter). The Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark, who was under the guidance of Peter. Mark likely recorded much of Peter's teachings, and the Gospel of Mark follows similar outlines to Peter's sermons, such as Acts 10:34–43 from John the Baptist to the resurrection. Mark was acting as a scribe under Peter's guidance. For example, Papias who learned from John the apostle and wrote early in the 2nd century A.D. said:

For information on these points, we can merely refer our readers to the books themselves; but now, to the extracts already made, we shall add, as being a matter of primary importance, a tradition regarding Mark who wrote the Gospel, which he [Papias] has given in the following words]: And the presbyter said this. Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied

Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who accommodated his instructions to the necessities [of his hearers], but with no intention of giving a regular narrative of the Lord's sayings. Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements.⁶

Also Tertullian quotes at much the same time as Papias:

The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means, and according to their usage—I mean the Gospels of John and Matthew—whilst that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was.⁷

Other Church Fathers comment on this but these early Apostolic Fathers share the initial view on these teachings. Apologist and researcher Brian Edwards sums it up nicely:

Papias and Tertullian, both of whom lived early in the second century AD, claimed that Mark wrote his Gospel in partnership with the apostle Peter.⁸

Is the fact that Mark acted as a scribe acceptable? There is precedence in the Old Testament for someone else writing down things for a prophet, for example, Baruch the scribe for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:4–32). So, there should be no problem with apostles having such writers under their oversight.

Apostle Matthew: 1 of the 27 books of the New Testament

1. Gospel of Matthew

Only one book was attributed to Matthew. Matthew was one of Christ's disciples, so his gospel was also Scripture.

Apostle Paul: 15 of the 27 books of the New Testament

1. Romans
2. 1 Corinthians
3. 2 Corinthians
4. 1 Thessalonians
5. 2 Thessalonians
6. 1 Timothy
7. 2 Timothy
8. Ephesians
9. Galatians
10. Philemon
11. Titus
12. Philippians
13. Colossians
14. Gospel of Luke
15. Acts of the Apostles

It is worth noting that from the earliest records that few, if any, doubted that thirteen letters (fourteen if we count Hebrews, as many did), and no more, came from the hand of Paul. Why were Paul's writings classed as Scripture? There are two reasons. First, Jesus selected Paul to become his apostle (Acts 9), and so, Paul was in the position of honor like the other disciples. Paul defended his apostleship when people questioned it.

The second reason is that the apostle Peter claimed that Paul's writings were Scripture (2 Peter 3:14–16). So, this accounts for at least 13 books of the New Testament.

Turning attention to the two books penned by Luke, we find that Luke spent considerable time with the apostle Paul—even being called a co-laborer by Paul in Philemon 1:24. Why is this significant? Because Luke is recording what he is learning from Paul. In the same way that Mark was under Peter's guidance, Luke was under Paul's guidance as he extensively traveled with him and would no doubt be involved in the account.

In fact, Luke's gospel account follows after Paul's teachings, going back to the beginning with Adam and being directed toward Gentiles. Paul was the messenger from Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Romans 15: 15–16). So, Luke's writing was under the guidance of Paul, and early Church Fathers also speak of this. Irenaeus, who was a disciple of the apostle John, said:

After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him.⁹

So, not only did he confirm that Luke wrote as Paul instructed, but he also concurs with Mark writing what Peter instructed. Tertullian further builds on the Irenaeus comments:

For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul. And it may well seem that the works which disciples publish belong to their masters.¹⁰

This would account for both of Luke's books: the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Likely Apostle Paul/Perhaps another Apostle: 1 of the 27 books of the New Testament

There have been many authors suggested for the book of Hebrews. Many claim Paul for various reasons—even many early Church Fathers such as Eusebius when he refers to Clement writing in the 1st century:

... Clement in his epistle which is accepted by all, and which he wrote in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth. In this epistle he gives many thoughts drawn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and also quotes verbally some of its expressions, thus showing most plainly that it is not a recent production.

Wherefore it has seemed reasonable to reckon it with the other writings of the apostle. For as Paul had written to the Hebrews in his native tongue, some say that the evangelist Luke, others that this Clement himself, translated the epistle.¹¹

Eusebius continues:

He says that the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of Paul, and that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but that Luke translated it carefully and published it for the Greeks, and hence the same style of expression is found in this epistle and in the Acts. But he says that the words, Paul the apostle, were probably not prefixed, because, in sending it to the Hebrews, who were prejudiced and suspicious of him, he wisely did not wish to repel them at the very beginning by giving his name.¹²

Eusebius explains the deviation from the normal Pauline style of introduction. If this is the case, then this translation into Greek was overseen by the apostle Paul. One further biblical reason for Pauline authorship, or at least guidance, is that Peter mentioned that Paul wrote to the Hebrews/Jews (to whom Peter was also writing in 2 Peter 3:15–16).

However, according to Hebrews 2:3, the writers (plural) speaking of salvation appear to not have had direct contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, as other apostles did, but it has been confirmed to them through others who did have contact with the Lord regarding salvation. This gives support to the view of Luke and others' involvement. It opens up the possibility of one or more of the following being involved: Apollos, Silas, Barnabas, Clement, or others; but it is not likely Timothy, since he is mentioned in Hebrews 13:23. Apollos, Clement, and Barnabas are the more likely candidates. Whoever it was, the recipients of the book of Hebrews knew who it was and were to be in prayer for the author(s) (Hebrews 13:18).

However, since the authors speak of direct contact with an apostle regarding salvation as it had been confirmed to them, then it was indeed under the supervision of an apostle (likely Paul). Regardless, if we ever find out with certainty which apostle, Hebrews would still be included as Scripture, since this book would have been under the guidance of an apostle.

As we've seen, the most likely candidate is Paul, and early Church Fathers seemed to believe this. There is also a hint that it may have come from Italy (Hebrews 13:24), where Paul was.

Apostle James: 2 of the 27 books of the New Testament

1. James
2. Jude

Of all the books of the New Testament, James and Jude do not have a direct connection with one of the 12 disciples or the apostle Paul. But recall that Jesus confirmed the 11 disciples (leaving out Judas Iscariot), but He didn't limit it to just them. As noted previously, Paul and Matthias were raised up as apostles later.

James and Jude are brothers of Jesus the Christ, sons of Mary and Joseph (Matthew 13:55). Some have claimed that the author of James was not the brother of Christ but John's brother. However, that James died early in A.D.44 (Acts 12:1–2), giving good reason that it was not him. Skeptics often attack James for other reasons, but they are beyond the scope of this paper.¹³

Of all people, though, James (and Jude) being Jesus' brothers, would have known Jesus better than many of the disciples, with the exception of his years of ministry where he was closer to the disciples (although with the help of the Holy Spirit, any apostle could relay first-person events). Their books do not try to give an account of Jesus' ministry but are more for instructing the church.

Paul considered seeing the risen Christ an important part of his defense of apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:1). And if one hadn't seen Christ, that person could not be an apostle. After Jesus' resurrection, these brothers of Jesus were among the disciples and in one mind (Acts 1:13–14). Thus, James and Jude had in mind to be messengers of the Good News also.

Jesus even visited James at another point (1 Corinthians 15:7) prior to the other apostles, showing the importance that Christ held for him. Scripture clearly reveals that James the brother of Jesus is classed as an apostle:

Galatians 1:19

But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Some have argued that the rendering of this verse could leave James excluded from apostleship. Commentaries

overwhelmingly view this particular James as an apostle in Galatians 1:19; for example, a few are John Gill,¹⁴ John Calvin,¹⁵ John Lightfoot,¹⁶ and even more recently Henry Morris.¹⁷ Church Fathers also acknowledged James as an apostle, such as Papias, but the better witness is the context in which Paul writes to the Galatians:

Galatians 2:7–9

But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

James, Cephas (Peter), and John are seen as pillars, and with James being equated with these other great apostles by Paul, there should be no doubt as to the reference by Paul in Galatians 1:19 about James being an apostle, for Paul saw James as greater than he in this passage (a pillar).

James mentioned in Galatians 1 and 2 was not one of the original disciples (James the son of Alphaeus or James the son of Zebedee) since Scripture reveals that during Christ's ministry, none of his brothers believed in Him (John 7:5). James' authority was further shown among the apostles when his comments held final sway regarding the gentile believers in Acts 15:13–21. With all this, James, the brother of Jesus, is an apostle, and his book should be classed as Scripture.

Jude, the author of the book of Jude, is short for Judas (not the betrayer of Christ), the brother of James (and Jesus), as we learn from Matthew 13:55. It makes sense after Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ that such a name probably wasn't a pleasant one in Christian circles, hence why he may have used the shortened version "Jude."

Two of Jesus disciples were named Judas—why wasn't this book written by one of them or some other "Judas"? Let's do a short analysis to see if any other Judases are even valid candidates.

Judas of Galilee is mentioned in Scripture, but just as quick as he is mentioned, he perished (Acts 5:37). So, the author could not have been this Judas (I'm aware of no one who would suggest it was this Judas anyway).

Another Judas is mentioned who is likely the son of Joseph Barsabbas, a candidate for discipleship by the other disciples (Acts 1:23). This particular Judas—as well as Silas—was classed as a prophet in Acts 15:22–32. Silas spent time with Paul, but there are no recorded books with him.

Acts 15:32

Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.

This potential author of Jude was a prophet and that would theoretically qualify his book as Scripture if it were written by him. However, there is no hint that this person had a brother named James (Jude 1:1). James must have been someone of significance to be important enough for Jude to mention him in the first line of the book. So, this argues against this Judas as the author of the book.

Two more Judases are mentioned in one verse and were disciples of Jesus:

Luke 6:16

Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Jude, the author, was not the son of James, nor was he the betrayer who died prior to Christ's resurrection. The author of Jude was the brother of James.

Jude 1:1

Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ:

The only mention of Judas being a brother of James is in Matthew 13:35 and Mark 6:3, both being the brothers of Jesus. Why wouldn't James or Jude say they were brothers of Jesus when they introduced their books? Jesus is the Holy One of God, and it was likely simple humility that they wouldn't want people thinking they were equal to God, and so rightly stated that they were "bond servants" of Christ.

Having Jude mention that he is the brother of James implies that he was "lesser known" than James who was "well known" and was at the time the head of the Church at Jerusalem. This would explain why he puts this into the first line of his short book.

However, there may be more to this mention of James than merely to give us an idea of his heritage. At this point of the study, Jude seems to be the only author of a New Testament book that was not written by an apostle or under the guidance of an apostle. James was called an apostle in Galatians 1:19. And Jude seems to indicate that he was not among the apostles when he stated:

Jude 1:17

But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The more likely reason James, who was an apostle, was mentioned was to show the church that this letter by Jude was under the guidance and approval of James, hence it was authoritative. If we look back at many of Paul's letters, they were co-written, but the fact that Paul was giving them guidance and even penning much of it himself give little reason to doubt their authority. In like fashion, with James' oversight and approval, there is little reason to doubt the book's authority, and for clarification his name was added as an "acknowledgement" for its authority.

Therefore, the book of Jude also has apostolic guidance and is authoritative. Jude's letter was quickly seen by the early church as authoritative, and this may very well be the reason.

So, in conclusion, all 27 books of the New Testament are self-authenticated within Scripture by an apostle whom Christ (who is God) commissioned, along with the 39 books of the Old Testament which Christ confirmed. The unity of the 66 books, being without contradiction, is a further confirmation that each book indeed deserves its place, pointing to a God who cannot lie, hence cannot contradict Himself (Hebrews 6:18).

Recognition by the Early Church—Is That Significant?

Another aspect is that the New Testament books were commonly used. It was this widespread use that further indicated they were authoritative. This was common with Old Testament books with the Jews, so a similar extension should have been expected.

Many Church Fathers recognized and quoted from New Testament books as authoritative early on. In short some are:¹⁸

1. Polycarp (disciple of John)
2. Ignatius (before A.D. 150)
3. Tertullian (b. c. 155–d. 230)
4. Clement of Alexandria (b. c. 150–d. 215)
5. Justin Martyr (mid-second century)

Recognized lists of authoritative books appeared to reduce confusion with many other writings that were in circulation by Gnostics and others. There was the Muratorian Canon about A.D. 150 that was damaged but still listed all but about five books of the New Testament. Also, Eusebius in the 4th century lists all but about five, but doesn't outright reject any other New Testament book.¹⁹

Many lists have followed since then.²⁰ Such references reveal significant confirmation of the canon. One would expect that Christians, who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who is God (2 Timothy 1:14), would be able to recognize God's writings to man and use them—but at the same time recognize that man doesn't set the canon but merely discovers what God has done. Any time one is dealing with fallible man, caution should be exercised, which is why a presuppositional approach should be the deciding factor; lists are merely a good confirmation.

A Brief Introduction: Are More Books Ever Going to Come?

John 21:25

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

The point of the Bible was not to record all things but to record what was sufficient. It is sad that people are often looking to add books or materials at the level of Scripture (e.g., Book of Mormon, Watchtower publications, false gospels, hidden books, the Koran, and so on), and yet few have ever really read and understood what is already written in the 66 books of the Bible.

The *Book of Life*, mentioned in Scripture though, is from God, but other books mentioned or quoted in Scripture are not inerrant Scripture. Among these are the *Book of Jashar* (Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 10:18), *Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, *Book of Enoch* (quoted by Jude 1:15), and so on. If quoted, then that particular passage can be seen as Scripture but not the rest of the book.

The fact remains that the Scriptures have been preserved just as the Scriptures said they would (Psalm 12:6–7). And the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). God cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), so His writings will not contradict themselves. Thus, any book that is in contradiction with the 66 books of the Bible is not from God. This quickly eliminates many alleged holy books right from the start, even if they claim inspiration from God.²¹

Some models of progressive creationism have tried adding to Scripture as well. Leading progressive creationist Dr Hugh Ross has made the claim in one of his books that nature is "likened unto the 67th book of the Bible."²² He has reiterated this more recently.²³

Since the creation is under a curse (Genesis 3; Romans 8) and a new heavens and new earth are needed (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:1) and the Curse has not been removed yet (Revelation 22:3), then it is appropriate to say that this alleged 67th book of the Bible (which, many times, is more the secular *interpretation* of it) is not valid Scripture. Besides, heaven and earth will pass away but God's Word will never pass away, giving further indication that it is not Scripture (Mark 13:31; Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33).

The book of Revelation apparently closes the seal of canon.

Revelation 22:18–19

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

Revelation was recognized by the early church to be the last of the Scriptures written. If one tries to add another book, they must deal with Revelation and what is said in the book.

Conclusion

By starting with the Bible, God self-authenticates His Word. God openly signed it (with many passages saying it was from Him) and confirmed it. So now, it is a matter of taking the time to read and trust what God says in His Word. In summary, one can rightly state:

The 66 books of the Bible are the written Word of God. The Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant throughout.

Its assertions are factually true in all the original autographs. It is the supreme authority in everything it teaches.²⁴

Definitions:

Canon: The word *canon* comes from the Hebrew word *kaneh*, which is a rod, and the Greek word *kanon*, which is a reed. Such a canon was used as a standard for measuring and judging whether or not a measurement was accurate.

Presupposition/Axiom: Absolute assumed starting point

Footnotes

1. McDowell, J., 1993. *A ready defence*, p. 35. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
2. Although some may view this discussion of the Apocrypha as an aggression on their particular church (which may have raised up some of the Apocrypha to a higher level), it is not meant to be. When dealing with canon, the Apocrypha must be addressed, and my hope is that it is done in a God honoring fashion.
3. For more on this subject, please see
Edwards, B., 2006. *Nothing but the truth*. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.
Edwards, B., 2007. *Why 27?* Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.
4. From:
Cardinal Caietan (Jacob Thomas de Vio), Commentary on all the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament, In ult. Cap., Esther; taken from
Whitaker, W., 1849. *A disputation on Holy Scripture*, p.48. Cambridge University.
See also
Westcott, B.F., 1889. *A general survey of the history of the canon of the New Testament*, p.475. Cambridge: MacMillan.
5. Apostles being referred to in this articles are specifically those who were called such in the Scriptures and not to be confused with those who are called apostles today.
6. Papias, *Ante-Nicene fathers*, vol. 1, pp. 154–155. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
7. Tertullian, *Ante-Nicene fathers*, vol. 3, p. 350. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
8. Edwards, B., 2006. *Nothing but the truth*, p. 210. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.
9. Irenaeus, *Ante-Nicene fathers*, vol. 1, p. 414. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
10. Tertullian, *Ante-Nicene fathers*, vol. 3, p. 350. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
11. Eusebius, The Epistle of Clement and the writings falsely ascribed to him, adapted from the *Online Bible*. Available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/PublicStore/product/Online-Bible-The-2008-edition,5801,234.aspx>
12. Eusebius, Church history, adapted from the *Online Bible*. Available at <http://www.answersingenesis.org/PublicStore/product/Online-Bible-The-2008-edition,5801,234.aspx>
13. Holding, J.P. *On the authorship of the book of James*. Tekton Apologetic Ministry. Retrieved from <http://www.tektonics.org/gk/jamesauth.html>
14. Gill, J. *Commentary on the whole Bible*. Notes on Galatians 1:19.
15. Gill, Ref. 14.
16. Calvin, J. *Commentary on the epistle of Paul to the Galatians*. Notes on Galatians 1:19, 2:9.
17. Lightfoot, J. *Bible commentary*. Notes on Galatians 1:19.
18. Morris, H., 1995. *The Defender's study Bible*, p. 1294, notes on Galatians 1:19. Iowa Falls, Iowa: World Bible Publishers.
19. Edwards, B., 2007. *Why 27?*, pp. 46–48. Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.
20. Edwards, Ref. 18, p. 47.
Davis, G. The Development of the Canon of the New Testament. Retrieved from, <http://www.ntcanon.org/Eusebius.shtml#disputed>

21. Hodge, B., 2007. Other religious writings. *Answers* 4:36–38.
22. Ross, H.N., 1994. *Creation and time*, p. 56. Colorado Springs: Navpress.
23. Butcher, A., 2003. He sees God in the stars. *Charisma*, June 2003, p. 40.
24. Answers in Genesis. Statement of faith. Basics (B) 1. Retrieved from, <http://www.answersingenesis.org/about/faith>