

Canonicity

Do We Have the Right Books in the Bible?

By Dave DeWitt

Four categories have been suggested as having writings that should be in the Bible.

- The **Old Testament** - the 39 books written between c. 1500 and 400 B.C.
- The **Apocrypha** - the 14 books written in the intertestamental period (c. 300-100 B.C.)
- The **New Testament** - the 27 books written between c. A.D. 49 and 95
- The **Pseudepigrapha** - various writings between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300, and some modern ones

Thesis: We shall show that the historical record demonstrates clearly that the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha do not belong in the Bible, and the 39 books known as the Old Testament plus the 27 books known as the New Testament, alone should be considered The Bible.

Defining The Bible

First, we should determine what we mean when we call a collection of writings “The Bible.” The New Testament referred to the Old Testament, and Peter referred to Paul’s letters, using the word *Scripture* [γραφή (*graphie*), 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16], so we should define the word *Scripture*. Paul said, *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness*. Peter told us the way this was done, *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*. Paul’s word *inspired* is [θεόπνευστος (*theopneustos*)], literally, “God-breathed.” So, Scripture came directly from God and was written down by a human author.

With this in mind, I would like to suggest the following definition of The Bible:

The Bible is the collection of manuscripts of what was originally written by human authors who, using their own style and composition, were guided by God to record in writing His revelation without error.

When I buy a “Bible” from a bookstore, or download one on my computer, pad, or phone, I have a translation of a manuscript (a copy) of an original writing. But for canonicity, only the original writings composed by certain authors is under consideration, not the copy or the translation, not even the authors themselves, only what was written in the inspired text. I admit inerrancy is also a subjective criteria for determining canonicity. I just think it is a better one.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament Came from Prophets and Scribes. First of all, there was always one original author, a prophet of God, like Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, or Daniel, who received revelation from God. Sometimes the prophet wrote it down himself, but often he used a scribe or recorder to write it down, as Peter (1 Peter 5:12) and Paul (Romans 16:22) also sometimes did in the New Testament. For example, we know that recorders and scribes were part of David’s staff (2 Samuel 20:24-25), as well as other kings and prophets (2 Kings 18:18; 22:3; Jeremiah 36:1-32). In Jeremiah 36:4, we read,

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him.

Here we can see that the revelation of God, given to a prophet, was written down by a scribe, and not just the revelation to the prophet, but what the scribe wrote, was the inerrant Word of God.

Sometimes the Revelation to the Prophet Was Written Down by a Chronicler. For example, 1 Chronicles 29:29 says, *Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer.* But we do

not have those books. We have their revelation in 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. We have the revelation of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, through a historical chronicler.

Also, most of the Old Testament was written in the third person. For example, Exodus 3:1 reads, *Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian*. Since we know Moses wrote the Pentateuch (there are 22 references to it being the *Law of Moses*, plus five where it is called *the book of Moses*), why does it not read, “Now I was pasturing the flock of Jethro my father-in-law”? The most likely answer is because Moses’ revelation is being recorded by a chronicler.

There Is One Other Key Person Involved in Presenting Us with the Old Testament – Ezra the Scribe who came back to Jerusalem with the Jewish captives in the 400s B.C. (Ezra 7:6, 10-11).

Ezra initially collected the books of the Old Testament. But Ezra was also a *scribe, learned in the words of the commandments of the LORD and His statutes to Israel and the hand of the LORD his God was upon him* (Ezra 7:6, 11; Nehemiah 12:26). Ezra’s work included not just collecting the Old Testament Scripture but *translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading* (Nehemiah 8:8). Here are several probable cases of this:

- In Genesis 14:14, we read, *When Abram heard that his relative [his nephew Lot] had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan*. Abraham lived c. 2000 B.C. and Moses wrote about it in the 1400s B.C., but Dan was not called Dan until the Danites migrated there sometime after the 1300s B.C. Originally, the city was called Laish (Judges 18:29), but in Ezra’s day, it was known only as Dan. So, apparently, *translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading*, Ezra called the city Dan.
- The same is true of Jerusalem. We read that Adoni-zedek, the king of Jerusalem, went to war against Joshua (Joshua 10:1, 3, 5, etc.). But at that time, Jerusalem was called Jebus (Judges 19:10).
- The same is true of Bethel. When Abraham first went there (Genesis 12:8), it was originally called Luz and later named Bethel by Jacob (Genesis 28:19).
- It was also probably true of the Egyptian city of Ramses, where the Israelites lived and built storage facilities for grain (Genesis 47:11; Exodus 1:11). The name “Ramses” was likely given to the city after a later Pharaoh by that name. It is likely that Ezra simply used the later name.

For example, I live in a small town called Ferrysburg, Michigan. My grandfather also grew up in that town. If you visited me, I might explain that my grandfather grew up near Leppinks grocery store. Then you would immediately know where my grandfather grew up. But there was no Leppinks grocery store there when my grandfather grew up. In his day, it was actually Bramer’s farm, but nobody knows it by that name today. If I said my grandfather grew up near Bramer’s farm, you would have no idea what I was talking about. Both identifications would be correct, but only one could be understood.

We can conclude that we get the collection of books we call the 39 books of the Old Testament: (1) from a prophet of God, (2) sometimes recorded by a scribe, (3) sometimes written out in the third person by a chronicler, (4) with some translations from Ezra in the mid-400s B.C. (Nehemiah 8:2, 8, 13). We also know what Ezra put down, *so that they [the people] understood the reading*, was the same text that Christ said, *not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from...until all is accomplished* (Matthew 5:18), and it was the same text passed along from Ezra that the apostles called Scripture, which was *inspired by God* (2 Timothy 3:16), generated by *men moved by the Holy Spirit [who] spoke from God* (2 Peter 1:21).

Jesus taught the existence and unity of a complete, verbally inerrant, Jewish, Old Testament Scripture (Matthew 5:18; 21:42; 22:29; 26:54, 56; [Malachi 3:1 with Matthew 11:10]; Luke 11:50-51; John 5:39; 10:35).

The Apostle Paul also taught the existence, unity, and infallibility of a Jewish Old Testament Scripture (Acts 17:2; Romans 1:2; 4:3; 10:11; 11:2; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 3:8, 22; 2 Timothy 3:16).

The Apostle Peter wrote specifically about the existence, unity, and infallibility of the Old Testament Scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:16).

The word γραφή (*graphe*) for *Scripture*, occurs 50 times in the New Testament, and it always refers to the Old Testament, never to the apocrypha or any other writings. It seems that Christ and the apostles understood that there was an existing body of infallible Scriptures.

Flavius Josephus A.D. 33-100, who wrote Jewish history between A.D. 70 and 100 said this:

We have but twenty-two [writings or books—the Jewish grouping was one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but it was the same material as in our 39 books] containing the history of all time, books that are justly believed in...and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them or take anything from them, or to make any change in them. [Flavius Josephus, “Against Apion,” Vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960, pp. 8 and 609]

The Council of Jamnia solidified the Jewish Scripture as the 39 books we call the Old Testament. Between A.D. 90 and 100, a group of Jewish scholars met in Jamnia, Israel to examine the Jewish Scripture. Their purpose was not to determine which books were in the Canon but to examine and study those books. But the fact that they assumed the same collection as Josephus, affirms that they accepted the Hebrew Old Testament, and rejected the Greek Septuagint translation and the apocryphal books as Scripture.

The Masoretic Text is a collection of the Old Testament into 22 books in the A.D. 900s (as with Josephus, they had one book for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet but the same material as in our 39 books). The significance for canonicity is that one of the first things the Masorettes (Jewish scribes located in Tiberius and Jerusalem and a few other places) did was to separate out the apocryphal books from, as not part of, Hebrew Scripture. Their copying procedure included counting the middle letter of each page, section, and book, then destroying the old copy so its deterioration would not cause a scribe to misread a letter. The accuracy of the Masoretic Text has been verified by its being consistent with the Hebrew manuscript of the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered after 1947, which date back into the 200s B.C. The Dead Sea Scrolls include manuscripts from every Old Testament book except Nehemiah and Esther.

The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha is a set of 14 books written between 300 B.C. and 100 B.C. (except Esdras, which may have been written about A.D. 100). These are also known as deuterocanonical books. Apocrypha means “hidden,” and deuterocanonical means “second (or secondary) canon.” The books of the Apocrypha include: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah (with Baruch in the Vulgate), Prayer of Manasseh, The Rest of Esther (Vulgate Esther 10:4 – 16:24) 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees, as well as additions to Esther and Daniel. In general, the Jews did not consider the Apocrypha to be heretical, but they also did not accept them as part of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture.

The Septuagint is a work of 70 scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek in Alexandria, Egypt c. 250 B.C. Sometimes the title “Septuagint” only refers to the Old Testament. Sometimes it refers to the collection that included 8 of the Apocrypha books, apparently translated during the same time by the same 70 scholars. The Apocrypha books connected with the Septuagint are: Tobit, Judith, the Books of Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch, and the Prayer of Manasseh. They also included more chapters of Esther and Daniel. The Eastern Orthodox Church was a Greek-

speaking church which used this whole Greek text as the Old Testament. The Septuagint, including these Apocryphal books, is the Old Testament of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The Latin Vulgate is a translation of 76 books: 46 called the Old Testament (which included 7 to 10 Apocrypha books, depending on how they are divided), the 27 New Testament books, and 3 other books just called Apocrypha. It was translated by Jerome in the early A.D. 400s. Jerome, the leading Catholic scribe of his day, was commissioned by the pope to produce a Latin translation of the Bible. The Vulgate included some of the Apocrypha, but Jerome distinguished the canonical books from the Apocryphal books, thus giving the Apocrypha a secondary (deuterocanonical) status.

The Council of Trent included the Apocrypha in the Roman Catholic Bible. The early western church, and what became the early Roman Catholic Church, had Apocrypha books in its Bible but did not consider them equal to the Old and New Testament. The Protestant churches never accepted the Apocrypha as part of the Canon of Scripture. But after the Protestant Reformation, as part of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation, the Council of Trent incorporated the Apocrypha into the Bible in 1546. Remember, the Roman Catholic idea is that the Bible did not produce the church, the church produced the Bible. Since the Bible belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, they can add to it and interpret it as they so choose. This is, of course, historically inaccurate. Christ and the apostles produced both the church and the Bible. But adding the Apocrypha in 1546 allowed some passages to be used to support the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church. For example, 2 Maccabees 12:43-45 countered Luther's objection to paying the priests to pray for the dead. It reads, "And when he [Judas Maccabeus] had made a gathering throughout the company to the sum of two thousand drachms of silver, he sent it to Jerusalem to offer a sin offering...to pray for the dead." This gave the Roman Catholic Church a passage describing a gathering of money for the priests to pray for the dead and thus justified purgatory as a place where the dead are aided by prayer from the priests. Luther and the Protestants also objected to the idea that salvation included good works. But in the Apocrypha book of Tobit 12:9 we read, "For alms doth deliver from death and shall purge away all sin." This gave the Roman Catholic Church a passage describing a works' salvation.

Those supporting the idea that the Apocrypha is authoritative Scripture offer the following arguments:

- The writers of the New Testament usually use the Septuagint text when quoting the Old Testament. Since the Septuagint included the Apocrypha, they considered it authoritative.
- Jude 14-15 quotes from the Apocryphal book of Enoch.
- Some church fathers, such as Iraneaus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, accepted the Apocrypha as Scripture.
- The Greek Orthodox Church included the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament.
- The Syriac Church accepted the Apocrypha as Scripture in the A.D. 300s.
- Augustine of Hippo agreed that the books of the Apocrypha were inspired.
- Jerome included some of the Apocrypha when he translated the Latin Vulgate in the early 400s.
- Fragments of some Apocrypha books were among the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered at Qumran.

But the case for including the Apocrypha as inspired Scripture breaks down with close examination.

- The New Testament writers quoted the Septuagint because they wrote in Greek, and it was the Greek text everyone was familiar with. This did not mean they were sanctioning the Septuagint or Apocryphal books translated by the Septuagint translators. If these books were included in the Septuagint Old Testament, which is not a proven fact, Christ and the apostles ignored them.
- Although New Testament writers allude to the Apocrypha, they never quoted from it as part of Scripture, nor did they give the slightest hint that they considered these books to be Scripture. Referring to a book does not make that book Scripture. For example, Paul quotes a Cretan author

saying, *Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons* (Titus 1:12), but he is not suggesting the quote comes from Scripture.

- Appealing to church fathers as proof of including the Apocrypha is a poor argument. Many significant influential church fathers, such as Origen and Jerome, denied the inspiration of the Apocrypha. Also, many church fathers had real bad ideas, later denounced by church councils.
- The Syriac Church inclusion of the Apocrypha in the 300s was a change in position, since their earlier Syriac Bible of the 100s did not have those books.
- Although Augustine early on accepted the Apocrypha, he later rejected it as being outside the Canon and inferior to Hebrew Scriptures.
- The Jewish scholars that gathered at the Council of Jamnia (c. A.D. 90) excluded the Apocrypha as part of the Hebrew Scripture.
- The presence of Apocrypha fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls proves nothing, since many other documents, which no one considers to be canonical, were also found.
- The Roman Catholic Church did not officially declare the Apocrypha to be Holy Scripture until the Counter-Reformation of the Council of Trent (1545-1563).
- The Apocryphal books are not used by believers to receive the direction of the Holy Spirit. A believer in Jesus Christ only needs to sit down and read these books to see they are not inerrant material to be included as part of The Bible.
- Some of the Christian church accepted the Apocrypha as Scripture, but the Jews never did.

The New Testament

The Apostle John closed the Canon. To put it simply, the Apostle John recognized and announced the close of the Canon of Scripture in the mid-A.D. 90s. He said,

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 22:18-19).

Why does this recognize and close the New Testament Canon? Some ask, “Isn’t this command given elsewhere in Scripture?” and “Isn’t John just referring to additions to the future predictions in the book of Revelation?”

Answer: No. This command was never given before. The contexts of previous commands (as in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; and Proverbs 30:6) are against false teaching, adding a different theology or ignoring God’s directives. The Revelation 22:18-19 passage is about adding new inspired Scripture. And yes, John is referring to the book of Revelation. Specifically, he is saying there should never be any Scriptural additions to the book of Revelation. But no, he is not just referring to future predictions. The word for *prophecy*, here in Revelation 22, is *προφητεία* (*propheteia*), the word for the inspired special revelation of God. This is not just about future predictions. The word John used here is elsewhere used to describe Old Testament Scripture in general (2 Peter 1:20-21), the prophecy of Isaiah (Matthew 13:14), and the New Testament church gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 13:2). This is about the revelation of the book of Revelation, not just the future predictions made in the book of Revelation.

Although similar words are often used interchangeably, the word emphasizing future predictions is *αποκάλυψις* (*apokalupsis*). The title of Revelation is *Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (*Apokalupsis Iesou Christou*), “The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.” The book focuses on the apocalyptic events preceding and following the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But what John said no one should add to or take from is the general word [*προφητεία* (*propheteia*)] for revelation written down by men via the inspiration of God. John is saying no one should attempt to add Scripture to this Scripture. Since the next verse talks about the Second Coming of Christ, we can assume there might be new Scripture revealed at or after the Second Coming, but not before.

How does this eliminate the addition of other books? Suppose I line up a row of something, say, coffee cups. Then, as I add a cup to the row, I say, “No one should add any more cups to this cup which I am setting down.” That would mean the cup I just put down is to be the last cup in the row, and no one should add to the row of cups. Any cup added to the last cup would add to the row of cups. So the row of cups is closed. The cups already put down are all in the row, but no new ones can be added to the row, without violating my prohibition.

In this little illustration, the cups represent the books of the New Testament. We cannot say that John was making a case for all 27 books being in the New Testament, but we can say that John was declaring that no other books should be added to the one he had just written. There may be other more or less good Christian books to read, such as the letters of the Apostolic Fathers. But John prohibits adding anything considered to be Scripture [προφητεία (*propheteia*)]. Whichever divinely inspired books might have preceded this one, the book of Revelation is the close of the New Testament Canon. The Canon was closed, not theologically but chronologically. Nothing added after the writing of Revelation in the mid-90s was to be considered Scripture.

During the 100s and 200s, the question being considered by the church was not, “Did the New Testament Canon end with Revelation?” but “Were all the existing 27 Christian books written before that part of the Canon?” Early on, seven of the 27 were questioned by some Christians in some places.

- **Hebrews** was questioned by some because it was written anonymously.
- **James** was questioned by some because it is a practical book of works.
- **First Peter** was questioned by some because its style is very different from Second Peter. But that is answered in 1 Peter 5:12 where we learn First Peter was written *through Silvanus* as a scribe.
- **Second and Third John** were questioned by some because they were short personal letters.
- **Jude** was questioned by some because it is a brief letter, and it refers to the apocryphal Book of Enoch. But it seems that Jude was quoting Old Testament Enoch, not the book of Enoch.
- **Revelation** was questioned in Parthia (Iran) because of its apocalyptic nature. But everywhere else it received immediate recognition as revelation from God.

By the 300s, all 27 extant (existing) Christian writings of the first century, and only the 27 written during the first century, were considered inspired of God.

Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 293-373), confirmed that the statement by the Apostle John in Revelation 22 closed the Canon of New Testament Scripture. But he also recognized that all 27 Christian books in existence, written in the first century up to and including Revelation, were the only Canon to be added to the Old Testament. In his 39th Festal Letter of the year 367, Athanasius wrote:

I also, having been urged by true brethren and having investigated the matter from the beginning, have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine...”

Then he listed by name all of the 27 books we have in the New Testament, after which he concluded: These are the springs of salvation, in order that he who is thirsty may fully refresh himself with the words contained in them. In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them... But for the sake of greater accuracy I add, being constrained to write, that there are also other books besides these, which have not indeed been put in the canon, but have been appointed by the [Apostolic] Fathers as reading-matter...yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; rather they are a fabrication of the heretics [<http://www.ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>, underline emphasis mine].

The Council of Rome (A.D. 382) and the Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) affirmed the conclusion of Athanasius concerning all the 27 first-century Christian books, “Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them.” The question of what books were in the New Testament Canon was closed. We have searched the world for over 2000 years now. We have found over 5,800 manuscripts of

the New Testament in Greek, many of them very early, plus 10,000 in Latin, plus 9,300 in other languages. We have found no Christian writing from the first century other than these 27, and they are all in the New Testament. The common liberal progressive teaching, that the church chose some and rejected the ones they didn't like, is simply not true at all. Anything written after Revelation was not Scripture.

What About the lost letter to the Corinthians? From 2 Corinthians 2:4-11 and 7:5-14, we can conclude that Paul wrote a *sorrowful* letter to the Corinthians which has been lost. There is no extant (existing) manuscript of it. The contents can only be gleaned from the comments made in these passages of 2 Corinthians. After 2000+ years of searching, neither the letter, nor any copy of it, has ever been found. It seems reasonable that it was not intended by God to be part of inerrant Scripture.

Pseudepigrapha

The word "pseudepigrapha" means "false names" or "false writings." Most were written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 300, with some more modern ones. The writers attempted to get recognition by titling their works after known Biblical characters. This is one basic reason for rejecting the pseudepigrapha. They are presenting themselves as something they are not. If a book claims to be what is false, it negates its claim to be the truth. Many of the pseudepigrapha also contain glaring historical errors, and many state ideas which are just plain silly. For example, the book "The Acts of John" presents Jesus as a spirit being like a phantom who left no footprints as He walked, could not be touched, and did not die on the cross.

Even the Apostle Paul seems to deal with a pseudepigrapha author when he tells the Thessalonians to *not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or by a messenger or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come* (2 Thessalonians 2:2). It seems that others were writing and forging Paul's name on their letters.

Some of the pseudepigrapha include the following:

The Testament of Hezekiah	The Vision of Isaiah	The Books of Enoch
The Secrets of Enoch	The Book of Noah	The Apocalypse of Baruch
Psalter of Solomon	The Odes of Solomon	The Testament of Adam
The Testament of Abraham	The Testament of Job	The Apocalypse of Ezra
The Prayer of Joseph	Elijah the Prophet	Zechariah the Prophet
The Epistles of Barnabas	The Itinerary of Paul	The Acts of Paul
The Apocalypse of Paul	The Itinerary of Peter	The Itinerary of Thomas
The Gospel According to Thomas	The History of James	The Apocalypse of Peter

The most popular example of the use of pseudepigrapha is in the 2006 film, based on the 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. In the book, Dan Brown claimed, "More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only relatively few were chosen for inclusion" [Dan Brown, "The Da Vinci Code," London: Bantam Press, 2003, p. 231]. Atheist professor of popular science Richard Dawkins, at Oxford, England, made similar claims [Richard Dawkins, "The God Delusion," London: Bantam Press, 2006, p. 237]. This is, of course, a complete lie. I have no idea where he gets the number "eighty gospels," and the church (Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant) never considered any of the pseudepigrapha to be "gospels" because of their content and because they were all written after the first century, after the Apostle John closed the New Testament Canon in Revelation 22. I shall briefly comment on two pseudepigrapha "gospels," one ancient and one modern.

The Gospel of Thomas is probably the most prominent of the pseudepigrapha gospels. It was probably written by a man named Edessa of Syria around A.D. 140. It is basically a list of 114 sayings of Jesus. We can see the Gnostic emphasis in the introduction, which reads, "These are the secret words which the living Jesus spoke, and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote. And he said: Whosoever finds the explanation of these words shall not taste death."

However,

1. The author was not the Biblical Thomas.
2. The author includes the word “Didymus” in the name, whereas it just means “twin.” Edessa was apparently not aware of that.
3. The gospel of the apostles is not some hidden secret. It was proclaimed and explained openly by the apostles everywhere they went.
4. The Gospel of Thomas has Jesus saying some really weird stuff. For example, saying 114 reads, “Jesus said, ‘See, I shall lead her, so that I will make her male, that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ is a modern Pseudepigrapha gospel, written by Levi Dowling (1844-1911). Dowling based his “Gospel” upon a claim that he received a communication from the “Universal Mind.” The book attempts to fill in some of the years of Jesus’ youth, about which the New Testament is silent. It also explains Jesus’ wisdom as coming from contact with holy men of other religions. The book is a contradictory mixture of pagan thought and the “Christian Science” cult.

Conclusion

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and therefore indwelt by the Holy Spirit, possibly the best way to prove that only the Old and New Testament is the Canon of Scripture is to read some of the Apocrypha or pseudepigrapha. For example, go buy an Apocrypha and some rainy night when you do not have anything else to do, open it anywhere and begin reading. You might find it has you curious and interested, for a few pages. Then I suggest your mind will wander and you will have trouble staying awake. When that happens, put it down and go read something like Ephesians 3, or John 14, or Genesis 1, or even Leviticus 18. It will be like the words jump off the page compared to reading any passage from any book of the Apocrypha or pseudepigrapha. And that is how the Old and New Testaments became the Canon. Men like Athanasius had the advantage of seeing believers use various different Jewish and Christian books. Some, like “The Gospel of Thomas” were downright heresy. Others, like the Maccabees and the Apostolic Fathers, were good books but not being used by the Spirit of God to draw people closer to God (Romans 8:9-17) and convict people of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

There is an extant (existing) small postage-stamp-size piece of the Gospel of John (named P52), dating very early (possibly A.D. 125-150), which was discovered in Egypt. Someone went to a lot of trouble, and possibly risked their lives, to bring a copy of the Gospel of John to Egypt. The fragment is from a very early copy. But no one went through the trouble or risked their lives to bring the Egyptians a copy of Tobit, Judith, or Baruch. The reality is that the Holy Spirit canonized the Bible by using it in the lives of believers.



The Rylands Papyrus 52 at the [John Rylands Library](#) in Manchester, England

Text	John 18:31–33, 18:37–38
Date	125–175 ^{AD} (Recent research points to a date nearer to 200 AD) ^{AD}
Script	Greek
Found	Egypt
Now at	John Rylands University Library