

# TEXT AND BIBLE CANONIZATION: Discussion of the Confession of the Bible Canon and Its Implications for the Church

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Submitted: 7 Desember 2021 Revision: 18 June 2022 Accepted: 30 June 2022

## Abstract

*God uses the Bible as a means of introducing himself in a special way (a special revelation to people who want to believe). The writers of this Bible are human beings who at the time of writing have been or are being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Even though they did the writing for a specific purpose, these writings were history for the next generation, giving advice, making poetry but in the end the canon team found that the writing was authoritative as the word of God.*

*The importance of textual alignment and canonization of the Bible is due to the many interpretations of various theological circles. The purpose of this study is to discuss the text (books) and the canonization of the Bible and how it implies for Christians. The method in this research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study in the field of systematic theology.*

*The result is that the determination of the canon is very important, because in this way the church states frankly, that the future of God's revelation begins in the Old Testament and ends in the New Testament. The canon of the Bible is central to the life of a Christian, because it is related to the scriptures.*

**Keywords:** text, bible canonization, old testament, new testament, church

## Abstrak

Tuhan memakai Alkitab Sebagai sarana dalam memperkenalkan diri secara khusus (penyataan khusus kepada manusia yang mau percaya). Para penulis dari Alkitab ini adalah manusia yang saat melakukan penulisan telah atau sedang dikuasai oleh Roh Kudus. Walaupun mereka melakukan penulisan tersebut untuk tujuan tertentu, tetapi tulisan-tulisan tersebut mensejarahkan kepada generasi berikut, memberikan nasehat, membuat syair tetapi pada akhirnya tim kanon menemukan bahwa ternyata tulisan tersebut berwibawa sebagai firman Tuhan. Pentingnya pelurusan terhadap teks dan kanonisasi Alkitab disebabkan oleh banyaknya interpretasi berbagai kalangan teologi. Tujuan

Penelitian ini adalah mendiskusikan teks (kitab-kitab) dan kanonisasi Alkitab dan bagaimana implikasinya bagi umat Kristen. Metode dalam penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi literatur bidang teologi sistematika. Hasilnya adalah penetapan kanon tersebut sangat penting, sebab dengan demikian gereja menyatakan dengan berterus terang, bahwa masa depan penyataan Tuhan diawali dalam Perjanjian Lama dan telah diakhiri dengan Perjanjian Baru. Kanon Alkitab adalah hal yang penting

dan utama dalam kehidupan umat Kristen, dimana kanon Alkitab dan kehidupan umat Kristen berkaitan erat dengan kitab suci.

**Kata Kunci:** teks, kanonisasi alkitab, perjanjian lama, perjanjian baru, gereja



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## INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the only best-selling book of all times and ages. This can be seen from various things, for example, it is always read, researched, studied and discussed from time to time. By scientists, scholars, clergy and the laity want and long to meet the Truth. The appeal of the Bible is very influential and so strong in the lives of various elements of society. The Bible is also the most criticized book of the many books written and published. The admiration for the Bible has prompted many theologians by both Conservative Evangelicals, Modernists, Liberals and others to study it seriously. As the best-selling book in the universe, with various soft copies that have been distributed to various tribes, nations, peoples and languages, it does not necessarily make the Bible free from various attempts at weakening, refutation and criticism launched by various groups.

According to some modern theologians, God uses the Bible but the Bible is not the word of God but the result of human efforts which contains so many mistakes and errors<sup>1</sup> without clear affirmations by ignoring the various facts described in the Bible itself. Many of these errors and omissions are due to the fact that the Bible Canon is the result of the church's judgment. Barton<sup>2</sup> revealed that Jesus and His disciples did not yet have a strong and sharp view of what books should be considered holy books. This does not yet have a strong view, so mistakes and errors

<sup>1</sup> Evan A. Luebbehusen, "The Divine Inspiration of Scripture," *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* 8, no. 5 (2021): 15, [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol8/iss1/5?utm\\_source=digitalcommons.liberty.edu%2Fdjrc%2Fv018%2Fiss1%2F5&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol8/iss1/5?utm_source=digitalcommons.liberty.edu%2Fdjrc%2Fv018%2Fiss1%2F5&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2009), 78.

<sup>2</sup> John Barton, "The Scriptures and the LORD: Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 28, no. 2 (2007): 34.

can occur in the Bible which today is considered to have authority over various life problems.

Modern theologian James Barr, who explicitly said that the Bible could be wrong because of the process of canonizing the Bible without special divine intervention using ordinary humans, even though the independent persons involved in the canonization of the Bible were believers did not necessarily escape the Bible from errors and innocence.<sup>1</sup> For Barr, the Bible does contain several errors, both from a scientific and historical perspective. Thus Barr rejects the Conservative Evangelical view which accepts the Bible as the only absolute truth that is infallible.

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* became famous or famous for suggesting a romantic relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus.<sup>3</sup> However, a lesser known charge of this work is the frequent assertion that the biblical canon was arbitrarily imposed by church authorities in the IV century AD and had little or no inherent authority. Brown also

suggests that there are other scriptures with equal, or even greater, validity than the Bible.<sup>4</sup> It is widely acknowledged that Brown's fictional historical retelling includes glaring inaccuracies at nearly every turn. While a brief survey of history would easily discredit Brown's fanciful and fictitious hypotheses, the question of canonicity deserves careful study. In fact, the essential roots of this question are even now under heavy discussion in the scientific field. This central problem related to the biblical canon can be summarized in two closely related questions and the aim of this research is to discuss the relation of texts (books) and the canonization of the Bible and what its implications are for the Church. The method in this study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study in the field of systematic theology. How do Christians respond to it? The answers to these questions underlie conceptions of the nature and authority of the Bible.

The research method used is a qualitative study with a literature study in the field of systematic theology. The study of literature plays an important role in science because science is permanent, first and foremost, a cumulative endeavor. As in

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<sup>3</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2006); John C. Peckham, "The Biblical Canon: Do We Have the Right Bible?," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, 2008, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2008/06/the-biblical-canon-do-we-have-the-right-bible.html>.

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<sup>4</sup> Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*; Peckham, "The Biblical Canon: Do We Have the Right Bible?"

any academic discipline, a rigorous synthesis of knowledge has become indispensable in keeping up with the exponentially growing theological literature.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, this study aims to provide a clear picture of the finalization of the canonization of the Bible, as well as issues that arise regarding the canon and Christian faith based on the scriptures. In addition, to describe a process related to the process until who has the right and competence to determine the canonization of the Bible. The description of the canon uses references from several figures who have established knowledge in their fields.

## DISCUSSION

Conflicting and competing definitions and interpretations of the canon exist within the theologians. What is the

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<sup>5</sup> Zachary Munn et al., “Systematic Review or Scoping Review? Guidance for Authors When Choosing between a Systematic or Scoping Review Approach,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 18, no. 1 (December 19, 2018): 143, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0611-x>; Guy Paré and Spyros Kitsiou, “Methods for Literature Reviews,” in *Handbook of EHealth Evaluation: An Evidence-Based Approach*, ed. Francis Lau and Craig Kuziemsky (Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria, 2016), 157–80, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/>; Louis Hébert, *Introduction to Literary Analysis: A Complete Methodology* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2022); Daniel Lucas Lukito, *Pengantar Teologia Kristen 1* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 2002).

reason for such varied interpretations? Prejudice can be identified as the main factor. In historical matters, it is important to realize that statements presented as facts contain not only the transmission of objective data, but also the interpretation of those data. Indeed, it is impossible to communicate history without including interpretation. Such an interpretation, however, may or may not be accurate. This becomes a particular problem when conclusions communicated by historians or scholars are accepted uncritically as true, without acknowledging that the presentation includes interpretations influenced by the author's presuppositions.

Thus, the definition of canonicity is greatly influenced at the level of presupposition, whether this presupposition is express or implied. An important presupposition has to do with the origin of the Biblical Scriptures. In particular, the main driving force of the variety of canonical definitions is prejudice about the possibility or impossibility of divine revelation. Is the canon established by man or God? If the possibility of God communicating about Himself to man is ruled out, so is divine designation of the canon. On the other hand, faith in divine self-revelation would allow a definition that

views the canon as a divinely ordained standard.

For the sake of this discussion, let us consider the two main definitions of canonicity that flow from this position. The first, the community canon, views the canon as “something officially or authoritatively imposed on a particular literature.”<sup>6</sup> Here the canon is defined as the set of writings chosen by the community as the standard. Therefore, canonicity is seen as something that is imposed on writings that do not necessarily have canonicity. Thus, the content of the canon was probably flexible, and the authority was in the community to choose the writings in the canon to be used for theology.

The second definition, the intrinsic canon, states that God determines the canon, which humans recognize (rather than determine).<sup>7</sup> Because of their divine origin, the books of the Bible are intrinsically canonical in this context. Apart from human

recognition of its inherent authority, divine authority confers this inherent canonical authority. Only divine origin gave the books their authority; the acknowledgment that a divine origin leads to the proper functioning of the canon in the lives of individuals and believers.

Thus, the factors that shape the possibility of divine revelation frequently result in a disparity between the position of the community that determines the canon and the position of God who determines the canon, as well as the community that recognizes the canon. In the first, the books are given their place in the canon by humans, while in the second, God gives them a place in the canon. This distinction is very important for the nature of the canon. If the community is claimed to have made such a decision, the emphasis will be on the history of that determination as well as any recent changes within the scope of that canon. If, on the other hand, one believes that the canon was determined by God, the central issue is how the community should define the scope of that canon.

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<sup>6</sup> James A. Sanders, “The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 252.

<sup>7</sup> “Based on their inspiration, and the resulting internal self-authentication and self-validation, the biblical books were 'recognized' as canonical.” Gerhard F. Hasel, “Inspirasi Ilahi Dan Kanon Alkitab,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5, no. 1 (1994): 69, [http://archive.atsjats.org/Hasel\\_DivineInspirationJATS 5-1 Spring 1994.PDF](http://archive.atsjats.org/Hasel_DivineInspirationJATS 5-1 Spring 1994.PDF).

## Finalization of the Bible Canon

The Bible has historically been the authoritative law for faith and conduct in the church. In the Bible dictionary it means

"ruler" or "measurement" and is applied to the books of the Bible that are considered authoritative in both the Old and New Testaments. The process of finalizing the canon was gradual and controversial.<sup>8</sup> Referring to Bauer's opinion,<sup>9</sup> several meanings of the canon are rules, rules, rules, standards, standards, norms, standards (Phil. 3:16; Gal. 6:16); Scope of action or influence, province, region, area, authority, boundary (2 Cor. 10:13, 15, 16). In the second century, in the Christian Church, the word canon meant to come and stand to reveal or reveal the truth of the faith.

Canon has the meaning of a measuring stick, a carpenter's measuring tool, norms, standards or rules and regulations that have been used and accepted by the church in the second century to reveal the truths of the Christian faith contained in the canonization of the Bible. In the use of ecclesiastical terms, it becomes a technical term for the Bible, with particular emphasis on the final whole. The term "Holy Scriptures" qualifies the Bible, but the word Canon makes the Bible delimited. The word canon has a special meaning, this word

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<sup>8</sup> W.R.F. Browning, *Kamus Alkitab*, ed. Liem Khiem Yang and Bambang Subandrijo (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 170.

<sup>9</sup> W.R.F. Browning, *Kamus Alkitab*, ed. Liem Khiem Yang and Bambang Subandrijo (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 170.

emphasizes the recognition that only these writings and all the texts make up the Bible, namely the holy books that have authority. In fact, the term canon can be called a "security force" for the word Bible.<sup>10</sup>

This canonization process is carried out by dozens of scripture and language experts who carefully and seriously sort through many writings like those who are taking gold from a gold mine which of course is being mixed with other elements, which are considered sacred to find the correct books. truly holy and revealed by Allah to be then made one. Signs of canonization include: the book was written or authenticated by prophets or apostles. The book was recognized for its authority among the early church. The book teaches things that are in harmony with other books that are clearly included in the canon.

Determination of the canon is very important, because by doing so the church states frankly, that the future of God's revelation has ended with the New Testament. Therefore, every new spiritual movement or sect must prove that its teachings and goals are in accordance with the books included in the official canon. The

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<sup>10</sup> W.R.F. Browning, *Kamus Alkitab*, ed. Liem Khiem Yang and Bambang Subandrijo (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2014), 170.

church is subject to a power higher and older than its own power, namely the power of God's Word found in the Bible.<sup>11</sup> The church at that time was seen as having succeeded in finding and sorting out various writings that were believed to be the Word of God, not giving power to become the word.

### **Suggested Criteria For Confession of the Divinely Ordained Canon**

The primary criteria for determining a divinely appointed canon are: (1) divinely mandated authorship, (2) consistency with other revelations, and (3) freedom of nature. authentic to divine purpose. Divinely assigned authorship meant that the author had divine authority to send revelation by divine commission as seen in the work of prophets throughout the OT. In the NT, this message is seen in the work of the apostles and first-generation Christians who were directly related to the apostles and thus had apostolic guidance available.<sup>12</sup> This of

<sup>11</sup> H. Berkhof and I.H. Enklaar, *Sejarah Gereja*, 35th ed. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2018), 27.

<sup>12</sup> In Against Apion 1.8, Josephus shows the clear succession of Moses to the prophets who testified by “the succession of the proper prophets.” He also suggested a closed OT canon of his time (ca. AD 70) because he stated “no one was so bold as to add anything to them [OT], to take anything from them, or to make any changes in them.” Examples the importance of authorship in the NT is Paul’s emphasis on his handwriting which marks the letter as truly

course requires that the books were written in the time of the prophets and apostles, respectively. The second criterion, consistency with other revelations, requires that the contents of the books should not contradict, but agree with all past revelations (Deut. 13:1–3; Mal. 3:6; Isa. 8:20; Matt. 5:17, 18; Matt 24:35).<sup>13</sup> The final criterion, self-validation of divine purpose, is perhaps the most important but also the most difficult to identify objectively. This means that the true canonical reward lies in God’s actions in the revelation, inspiration, and preservation of the books and can be identified in the content of the books.<sup>14</sup>

However, it should be noted that the presentation of these criteria and their application is oversimplified. I am not suggesting that the presentation of these criteria simply lays down the question of canonicity. However, it moves the question

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from him (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Phil. 19 ).

<sup>13</sup> An important historical example of this criterion is the case of Serapion at Rhossus, who initially permitted the use of the so-called Gospel of Peter but later rejected it altogether because it implied doceticism. Eusebius, 216. H.E. 6.12.3.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that inspiration alone is not the same as canonicity. It is true that in many places the Bible records prophetic books that are not part of the canon. Other books, such as the Shepherd of Hermas, are considered by some to be inspired but are not recognized as canonical because they do not meet other criteria, such as the apostolate. Such inspiration is necessary, but not the only indication of a canonical book.

from the history of the canon list to the question of its rightful and intrinsic place in the canon of the book itself. It would be naive to believe that the debate would be silenced based on this perspective. However, it seems quite legitimate to move from this definition of canon to an investigation of the books themselves to a decision based on their ability to be canonical. I have personally done such investigations and am satisfied that the 39 OT books and 27 NT books actually meet all the criteria of canonicity and thus deserve to be accepted as the divinely commissioned, authoritative word of God for all faith and practice.<sup>15</sup> Other than that, I couldn't find any other book that could meet these criteria.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, the main objection that may be raised against this claim is the question of dating and authorship which is popular in the historically critical approach to the Bible. I would argue that conclusions that contradict the internal testimony of the books are speculative, unconvincing, and disputed. There is a wealth of data to support the prophetic and apostolic writers of the OT and NT respectively. Some data supporting such a position are presented in studies such as Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998); Donald Arthur Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2005). Untuk penyelidikan sejarah, lihat F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018); Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> The OT apocrypha is ruled out by the Jewish self-witness about the cessation of prophecy after the time of Artaxerxes (ca. 450 BC). Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8, clearly establishes that the prophets were

Therefore, I have concluded that the 66-book canon is a properly acknowledged revelation of God.

At this point, the issue of closing the canon should be briefly discussed. Since The OT and NT revelations contain all necessary revelations about God's activity in salvation history, the canon is appropriately closed by the NT writings. The canonical books contain deliberately selected information that makes up God's full revelation in Jesus Christ. The NT teaches that Christ fulfilled the entire OT as God's complete revelation (Matt. 5:17). In addition, the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised, would guide the apostles into "all truth" (John 16:13). There is no need for further covenant revelation if we have authentic and divinely commissioned apostolic writings in addition to the OT. However, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit no longer bestows the gift of prophecy; however, it means that no post-apostolic prophet will become canonical.

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authoritative only "until the reign of Artaxerxes" (Compare 1 Macc. 9:27). Regarding the NT, The Shepherd of Hermas is probably the closest book but is ruled out because, according to the Muratorian Fragment, it was written in the middle of the second century and thus not by an apostle. It has recently been said that the so-called gnostic books, such as the Gospel of Thomas, do not meet all the criteria for pseudonymous authors, contradict previous revelations, and have absolutely no evidence of divine origin or designation.

## Texts and Canons: Implications for Christians

After the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, not yet a book was written about Himself and His teachings, because it was not deemed necessary by the main eyewitnesses to be alive. So the Bible is still in verbal form, orally; by word of mouth, by the apostles.<sup>17</sup> Over time, the number of eyewitnesses and apostles decreased and there were more and more threats of preaching heretical teachings. At that time, many writings of a spiritual nature were found, which were not the Word of God.

Therefore, the church feels the importance of determining which books can be recognized as authoritative as the Word of God. Then the apostles began to write their letters to the congregations, then slowly copies of the letters were made to various churches and the copies were read in church meetings (Col.

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<sup>17</sup> Philip Senter, "Christianity's Earliest Recorded Heresy and Its Relevance to Christian Acceptance of Scientific Findings," *Thinking About Religion* 12 (2016): 1–10, [http://organizations.uncfsu.edu/ncrsa/journal/v12/SenterP\\_Peritomes.htm](http://organizations.uncfsu.edu/ncrsa/journal/v12/SenterP_Peritomes.htm); Paul A. Hartog, ed., *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: The Lutterworth Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1cfgf14m>.

4:16; 1 Thess. 5:7; Revelation 1:3). These writings were written by the apostles or the first generation after the apostles and were inspired by God (2 Pet. 1:20-21; Revelation 22:18; Eph. 3:5).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, there were those who wrote books about Jesus and letters to churches, which were not part of the canon.<sup>19</sup> In its development, the churches began to be clear about which books were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

From the very beginning, the church had the Holy Scriptures which the Jews also recognized as the word of God. However, the theologically seen books as the "Old Testament" does not restrict the church from recognizing other books written later after Jesus' ascension. In other words, the Old Testament was gradually supplemented by writings from the "New Testament" era.<sup>20</sup> In principle, there was a radical change in the understanding of the early Christians

<sup>18</sup> Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*.

<sup>19</sup> George Eldon Ladd, "Pseudepigrapha," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Walter Brueggemann and Tod Linafelt, *Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 2012); Bruce Milne, *Mengenali Kebenaran* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011).

towards the sacred texts. As Paul expressed conviction, the “Old Testament” read by the Jews remained veiled, “for only Christ could reveal it” (2 Cor 3:14-16), it was Christ who gave new meaning to the sacred texts. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), for example, although the Old Testament texts are quoted repeatedly, Jesus' authoritative words determine the interpretation. Likewise, He revealed to the disciples the understanding of the Scriptures which testify about Him (Luke 24:45). Christ also promised the Holy Spirit who would teach them constantly and remind them of all that the Master had said (John 14:26). So their writings are recognized as authoritative testimonies of Christ and decisive for church teaching.<sup>21</sup>

The church as a community of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus from the word Ekklesia, who truly believe in Christ

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Aston, “A Culture of Text: The Canon and the Common Core,” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 32, no. 2 (2017): 39–52, <https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/585>; Steven Kepnes, “A Review of People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, Authority,” *Journal of Textual Reasoning*, 2019, <http://jtr.shanti.virginia.edu/a-review-of-people-of-the-book-canon-meaning-authority/>; Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*.

does not determine or create a canon, but the church only ratifies books that have the mark of canonicity and therefore these books have authority in the church. According to Thiessen,<sup>22</sup> in terms of the Old Testament canon, in the opinion of David Kimchi (1160-1232 AD) and Elias Levita (1465-1549 AD), two Jewish scholars who think that the last collection of the Old Testament canon was completed by Ezra and other members the great synagogue in the 5th century BC. The Jewish historian Josephus also supports this view of calling “the people of the Book” (Nehemiah 8:1; 12:36; Ezra 7:6,11).

The church already had the Old Testament as a standard for the beliefs and lives of its members. In addition, there are statements from the Lord's disciples, namely the Bible and the Epistles. The Gnostics circulated books written by a disciple of Jesus. It is not known what the Canon was based on in Old Testament times, so what is important for believers is that Jesus and His apostles accepted the

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<sup>22</sup> Henry C. Thiessen, *Teologi Sistematika* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2010), 90.

canon.<sup>23</sup> In Luke 11:51 it is implied that the canon used in the synagogue at the time of Jesus is the same as the Old Testament, today.<sup>24</sup>

So the Old Testament canon has now been summarized into 39 books written in the Bible. While the New Testament books emerged from the Apostles and the first generation after the Apostles were also under the control of the Holy Spirit so it was believed that they were spared from making mistakes, including in choosing words. The church fathers distinguished between the authority of their writings and the primary authority of the writings of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit leads believers to be able to collect books and collections into a canon.<sup>25</sup> Until the 4th century (367 AD), Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria was able to provide a list of books that constitute the Canon, as listed today, namely the

27 books of the New Testament.<sup>26</sup> It would be more correct to say that the canon of the New Testament was self-formed as a result of the pure nature of these books.

According to Martin Luther, "The book is canon when it declares Christ."<sup>27</sup> According to Tenney,<sup>28</sup> "The precision of his narrative, in the depth of his teaching and in his concentration on Christ, is a marked difference between canon and non-canonical books. That is, when compared with the books that are not Biblical. Thus the canon of the Bible was formed, in the sense of a valid list of books. Gnostic scriptures were not accepted, so the main lines of the Christian church and cults became clearer. The process of recognizing the New Testament canon; 1) Testimony from the apostolic or apostolic times; 2) Testimony from 70-170 AD; 3)

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<sup>23</sup> Senter, "Christianity's Earliest Recorded Heresy and Its Relevance to Christian Acceptance of Scientific Findings"; Hartog, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts*; Andreas Kostenberger and Michael Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy* (Nottingham, NG: Apollos Publishers, 2010), 249.

<sup>24</sup> Milne, *Mengenali Kebenaran*, 60.

<sup>25</sup> Kepnes, "A Review of People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, Authority."

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<sup>26</sup> R. Sudarmo, *Ikhtisar Dogmatika* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2013), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Dave Armstrong, "Luther's Radical Views on the Biblical Canon," Patheos, 2016, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davearmstrong/2016/04/luthers-radical-views-on-the-biblical-canon.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *Survey Perjanjian Baru* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2013).

Testimony from 170-350 AD; 4) Council of Carthage (397 AD).<sup>29</sup>

Determination of the canon is very important, because by doing so the church states frankly, that the future of God's revelation has ended with the New Testament. Therefore, every new spiritual movement or sect must prove that its teachings and goals are in accordance with the books included in the official canon. The church is subject to a power higher and older than its own power, namely the power of God's Word found in the Bible.<sup>30</sup>

It is no coincidence that this criterion led to the recognition of the 66-book canon. These books were preserved through the intercession of the church, and further evidence that God has assisted in the introduction of these books. However, without taking this as fact, one might still recognize this same collection of books by applying the criteria as suggested in this article. A person who does not yet believe that God has revealed

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*; Tenney, *Survey Perjanjian Baru*; Kostenberger and Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, 249.

<sup>30</sup> Berkhof and Enklaar, *Sejarah Gereja*, 27; Michael Kruger, *Canon Revisited* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2012).

revelation to mankind can postpone judgment and continue to use the Bible in his own way.<sup>31</sup> Awareness of such presuppositions, then, allows movement beyond the a priori denial of revelation about how one can recognize such revelation if it exists.<sup>32</sup>

The church, on the other hand, operates in the arena of faith and cannot operate within the framework of secular presuppositions. To be sure, there is room for patient dialogue, but the pressure to adopt common sense will have a drastic impact on the church. Frankly, believers have the same right to their presuppositions or

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<sup>31</sup> Timothy H. Lim, "How Was the Canon Formed?," *The Expository Times* 133, no. 9 (June 15, 2022): 357–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00145246221088365>; Michael Dormandy, "How the Books Became the Bible: The Evidence for Canon Formation from Work Combinations in Manuscripts," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 23 (2018): 1–39, <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:0ca6c5d7-e06a-4ee1-943b-b6b7f25a6a83>.

<sup>32</sup> Kirk J. Franklin, "How Can the Reformation's Focus on Faithfulness to Scripture Inspire Us for Mission?," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 74, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4817>; Jusak Pundiono Wonoadi and Ester Agustina Tandana, "THE TABERNACLE AS THE PLACE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE: A Tripartite Approach on Temple," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 3, no. 2 (January 2, 2022): 135–54, <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i2.75>.

worldviews as anyone else.<sup>33</sup> Believers who assert faith in the possibility or actuality of divine revelation will be able to use these standards in recognizing the divine merits of the canon without accepting that the canon is determined by community or tradition.<sup>34</sup> Such an approach can help believers to further strengthen their faith in the Bible and can also facilitate the ability of unbelievers to honestly engage in issues of canonical scope, filter interpretation, and potentially come to believe in the Bible as purported revelation. Lord.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the church can continue to testify to the life-changing

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<sup>33</sup> Alan R. How, “The Author, the Text and the Canon. 5-22.,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 7, no. 1 (2007): 5–22, <https://www.deepdyve.com/lp/sage/the-author-the-text-and-the-canon-mQYcJbzbo4?>; Earle M. Kelley, “The Principles, Process, and Purpose of the Canon of Scripture,” *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship* 5, no. a5 (2020): 1–27, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol5/iss1/4>.

<sup>34</sup> James C. VanderKam, “Uses of Earlier Literature in Some Second Temple Texts,” in *Scribal Practice, Text and Canon in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Ananda Geyser-Fouché (Leiden: BRILL, 2019), 135–52, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004410732\\_010](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004410732_010); Sanders, “The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process.”

<sup>35</sup> Kepnes, “A Review of People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, Authority”; Barton, “The Scriptures and the LORD: Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation.”

power of the Bible through the Holy Spirit and confidently use it as an authoritative rule of faith and practice.

## CONCLUSION

So, in summary, the canon of Scripture consists of the divinely revealed books appointed by God to serve as authoritative rules of faith and practice. These books, thereafter, were recognized by the community as divine commissions, whether prophetic or apostolic, of proper antiquity, consistent with previous revelation, and self-authentication. On the basis of its intrinsic canonicity, Scripture is accepted and used as God's revelation. I propose that all 66 books of the Protestant canon belong to the inspired, preserved, and intended canon of Scripture, to which no book should be removed or added. As such, the canon of Scripture is the only authoritative and trustworthy basis for theology and practice.

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