

Pathfinders

How We Got the Bible (NT) James R. Edwards

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Factors that fostered a closed canon of the New Testament:

Passage of Time. The church identified and acknowledged witnesses that stood closest in time and in faithful correspondence with the salvation event in Jesus Christ.

Forgeries. Documents fraudulent in both name and content proliferated in early Christianity. The church needed to identify and endorse genuine witnesses to the gospel and exclude false witnesses.

Heresies. Corrupt representations of the gospel, especially as evidenced in Gnosticism, Montanism, and Ebionism, required the church to acknowledge *orthodoxy* (correct teaching) from heterodoxy and heresy.

Persecution. When imperial police (e.g., in reign of Diocletian, 284-305) burned Christian literature, believers needed to know which books could be surrendered, and which could not, without committing sacrilege.

Ecumenical Unity. As the geographical compass of the church expanded, a single canon of Scripture bore witness to the one, holy, catholic Faith. **Criteria of Canonicity**

Apostolicity attests to the *source* of a document. Witnesses in closest proximity to Jesus Christ were accorded authority over those removed by time and space. The circumference of apostolicity included *eyewitnesses* (e.g., Matthew and John) and *disciples of eyewitnesses* (e.g., Mark and Luke).

Regula Fidei (Rule of Faith) attests to the *content* of a document. *Regula fidei* certified that the contents of a document faithfully transmitted “the faith once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3).

Universality attests that the inspiration of a document was acknowledged throughout the geographical circumference of the church.

Memorable Quotation: “Truth is what the demons hate, what pagans reject, and what Christians suffer and die for” (Tertullian).