

We Believe: The Bible, part 2

Various Texts

Article 2 (EFCA Statement of Faith)

- “We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.”

The Old Testament

- 39 books from Genesis to Malachi
 - Written between 2000 and 430 BC
- The Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy): The Story of Creation, The Fall, God’s choosing a Covenant people (Israel), and the giving of the Law
- The History (Joshua-Esther): The history of God’s dealing with the Israelites from the entrance into the Promised Land to the return from the Babylonian Exile
- Wisdom Literature (Job-Song of Songs): God’s wisdom given through proverbs, stories, and songs
- The Prophets (Isaiah-Malachi): The revelation of God’s plan both for the people of the time and for the coming salvation of humanity

The New Testament

- 27 books from Matthew to Revelation
 - Written between 50 and 90 AD
- The Gospels (Matthew-John): The story of the life & ministry of Jesus
- The Acts of the Apostles: The early history of how Jesus’ life was lived out in the Church
- The Epistles (Romans-Jude): Letters written by the Apostles (mostly Paul) giving instruction and correction to God’s people as they attempt to live out lives lead by the Holy Spirit
- Revelation: The prophetic vision of the culmination of God’s plan for human history

Why These Books?

- These are the books recognized as having divine authority by Jesus and the early Church
- The Old Testament was a closed canon from the 3rd century BC
 - 38 of the 39 OT books are quoted or alluded to in the NT
- By the end of the 2nd century AD, the Church recognized 27 books as having unique authority based upon strict criteria
 - Apostolic Authorship
 - Witness of the Spirit (see John 14:26)
 - Continuity

The Canon

“One thing must be emphatically stated. The New Testament books did not become authoritative for the Church because they were formally included in a canonical list; on the contrary, the Church included them in her canon because she already regarded them as divinely inspired, recognizing their innate worth and generally apostolic authority, direct or indirect. The first ecclesiastical councils to classify the canonical books were both held in North Africa-at Hippo Regius in 393 and at Carthage in 397-but what these councils did was not to impose something new upon the Christian communities but to codify what was already the general practice of these communities.”

-F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1960, p. 27

Our Final Authority

- Scripture is our final authority on Christian life and faith
- Every human thought and endeavor needs to be measured against the truth found in God’s given Word. (see Col. 2:8)

So What?

- God has spoken to us through His Word, the Bible.
- We need to not only trust it, but actually read, study, and meditate on it
- It is our source of truth against which we must judge every other truth claim

Meditation Verse: 1 John 4:1