

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE: CAN WE BE SURE WHICH BOOKS ARE INSPIRED OF GOD?

Many assert that the Bible is the production of their church and

that its hierarchy has the right by Allan A. MacRae, Ph.D. books should be accepted as

President, Faith Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., U.S.A.

They assert that there is no evidence in Scripture or elsewhere that the Lord

One of the cardinal principles of the Reformation was the right and duty of every believer to interpret the Scripture for himself up to the limit of his knowledge. Our doctrine is not determined according to human ideas and philosophies. Christian must determine his own attitude on religious matters by study of the Word of God. This position being taken, we are immediately faced with the question, how is the individual to know which books are to be accepted as part of

God's inspired Word? Must the individual believer study the evidence regarding

This right and duty of private judgment on the interpretation of Scripture has always been claimed by evangelical Protestants. Inevitably, however, another question arises. How do we know what is the Word of God? We have many evidences

of the marvelous uniqueness of the Scripture. The Holy Spirit testifies to our

Sometimes it is said that "apostolicity determines canonicity." According to this view, each believer must determine for himself which books were written in Old Testament times by prophets, and accept those books which He approves. Yet this does not immediately determine the question as to selection of the individual books. After all, the Bible was written by apostles or under apostolic direction, and accept such books as not written by one man, nor at one time. Its books were written by many different men over a period of many centuries. These men varied greatly in their characteristics of personal judgment in this matter also, and must base his judgment upon historical question. If he can find satisfactory evidence for the determining of this question, he can solve the problem.

Unfortunately, however, such evidence is not always available. There is great difficulty in determining with certainty the authorship of many of the books present book form came into general use, at some time between the second and fourth centuries A.D., such a unified volume was not known. Before that time the various books existed on separate scrolls. How are we to know whether the men who combined these books into our present Bible made a correct selection of the books to include?