

other basis, and therefore have a solid foundation for belief in Paul's apostleship?

If we have some other basis on which to believe that these books are the inspired Word of God, then we are safe in drawing from them the teaching that Paul was an apostle. But if we accept them on the ground that he was an apostle, and then find our belief that he was an apostle to be based only upon statements contained in the books, it is dangerously near to arguing in a circle. Our faith must have a stronger basis than this!

Of the twelve apostles actually appointed by the Lord Jesus while He was here on earth, only three have left books that are contained in the New Testament. If apostolicity determined canonicity, it would be very strange that we should have nothing from any of the remaining apostles. It would also be strange that we have no explicit statement from the apostolic group, or from individual apostles, setting the seal of their approval upon those books that were not written by one of their number.

Even when we take up the Gospels and the book of Acts we find ourselves in difficulty. If we are to base our faith upon these books as infallibly inspired of God and entirely free from error, we must be absolutely sure that we are right. We must run no risk of being wrong. We cannot gamble on the issues of life and death. If the individual believer must make a decision for himself as to whether these books are apostolic or not, he must insist on absolute certainty. What does he find?

Of these five books only two have ever been considered to be actually written by apostles. The other three, Mark, Luke and Acts, were written by men who were not apostles, either by the original appointment of Christ, or by any subsequent appointment of the Holy Spirit, as far as any evidence goes. There is no claim in any one of these three books that the book was written under apostolic supervision, or with the specific approval of an apostle. There is a tradition that Mark was an associate of Peter, and the book of Acts tells us that Luke was closely associated with Paul. This, however, is very far from actual proof that these books were written under the supervision of the apostles, or received specific approval of apostles.

Roman Catholics claim to base their doctrine upon Holy Scripture plus tradition. Protestants reject tradition as a source of religious knowledge, and insist that God's Word be recognized as our ONLY rule of faith and practice. This being the case, they can hardly regard mere tradition as a safe basis for determining whether a book is apostolic and therefore inspired. Without real proof that Peter supervised Mark, no one who believes that apostolicity determines canonicity can safely accept the Gospel of Mark.

If each individual believer is required to base his belief that specific books are inspired upon an ability to prove that they come from apostles or were written under apostolic direction, he is in a very difficult situation indeed. There are very few books of the New Testament which he would be safe in quoting as the infallible Word of God. The area of individual interpretation would have been extended to the point where Christian life and conduct would become extremely difficult.

When the Old Testament is considered, we find an even more difficult situation. It has been the belief of the Christian church that the five books of the Pentateuch were written by Moses, and this belief is still held by evangelical Christians, despite the efforts of the higher critics to demolish it. When we come to the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings however, we have no way of knowing who wrote them. There is no claim whatever to specific authorship connected with the last three of them. It is thought likely that they were written by prophets, but there is no proof. We have no