

accepted as part of His infallible Word. The attitude of Christ toward the Old Testament would naturally raise the suggestion that perhaps a similar unanimity might be reached in the case of the New Testament, but humanly speaking it would be quite unnatural to expect such a result. Since Jesus did not state any way in which the books that were free from error could be distinguished from others, it is hard to see how such a result would be attained, unless the Holy Spirit should providentially lead in a way similar to what had occurred in the case of the Old Testament.

9. Contrary to what would normally be expected, the same unanimity was attained in the case of the New Testament as in the case of the Old Testament.

The evidence is quite definite that the Christian church did not decide on its canon because of the attitude of any one influential human leader. Nor was a decision made by any Christian council to include a certain book in the New Testament or to drop out any book that some had considered to belong to it. Yet within a few centuries after the last New Testament book was written there was a unanimous attitude on the part of all portions of the professing Christian church, accepting exactly these books which are in our present New Testament. When we find Christian councils making statements as to the books that are to be accepted as part of God's Word, they are so expressed as to show that a new decision is not being stated, but that the council is merely affirming its adherence to what was already universally believed.

In the case of the New Testament we have more knowledge about the process by which this unanimity was attained than in that of the Old Testament, though even here our evidence is scanty. Within two centuries after the last book was written all groups of Christians agreed as to about twenty of the New Testament books. Many of the Christians in the eastern portion of the Roman empire accepted three or four additional books which some western Christians thought of as rather questionable. Similarly many Christians in the western portion of the empire accepted three or four books which some eastern Christians regarded as questionable. There was by this time no way in which any objective investigation of the authorship of these books could be made, nor is there any evidence that such an investigation was ever attempted, but soon all groups of orthodox Christians came to a complete agreement, accepting the twenty-seven books that are contained in our present New Testament and no others. The attainment of such a unanimity, within a few centuries after the writing of the last book, among people so widely scattered as the early Christians, is almost miraculous, particularly when we consider the great arguments and strong divisions of opinion that were found among them on various doctrinal questions. That the unanimous conclusion reached in such a way should be correct could hardly be assumed aside from the providential activity of the Holy Spirit.

10. The authority of Christ, which is our only basis for being sure that we have the correct books in the Old Testament, authenticates the same process in the case of the New Testament, since it also occurred there.

We have seen that our only warrant for being sure that we have the correct books in our Old Testament is the fact that Jesus Christ set the seal of His approval upon it. We have no other way of testing these books. A marvelous process took place. There was unanimity among the people of God within a few centuries after the last book was written. Jesus approved the conclusion and thereby gave recognition to the fact that this unanimity had been produced by