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Question 30 - What process was involved in determining whether a book belonged in the sacred canon?

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

30. What process was involved in determining whether a book belonged in the sacred canon?

The books were subjected to various tests. These included:

- A. Authorship – Who wrote the book or the epistle?
- B. Local church acceptance – Had it been read by the various churches? What was their opinion?
- A. Church fathers' recognition – Had the pupils of the disciples quoted from the book? As an example, a man named Polycarp was a disciple of John the apostle. Therefore one test of a book might be, What did Polycarp think of it?
- B. Book subject matter (content) – What did the book teach? Did it contradict other recognized books?
- C. Personal edification – Did the book have the ability to inspire, convict, and edify local congregations and individual believers?

In closing this section it should be stated it was a combination of these five steps, and not just one alone, which helped determine whether a book was inspired or not. Contrary to what may have seemed vital, canonicity was *not* determined at all by either the age or the language of a given book. For example, there were many ancient books mentioned in the Old Testament (see Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:3) that were not in the Old Testament canon. Also, some of the apocryphal books (such as Tobit) were written in Hebrew but were not included in the Old Testament, while some books (like portions of Daniel) written in Aramaic were included in the canon.