

Calvary Chapel Bible College
Why Reject the Book of Enoch?
Bibliology
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Since the modern era, scholars and theologians have questioned the Bible. Unfortunately, this has caused great confusion as to which books should be included in the Bible. 2,000 years later scholars attempt to determine which books are included. The Book of Enoch is one those controversial books. Some scholars today want to add this book to the canon of scripture. Although, it is to some degree a mysterious book, there is little support from the early church to allow such a book in the Bible.

Briefly, the book of Enoch is one of three books written under the name Enoch. Because of the three other works, it is sometimes called 1 Enoch, while the others are 2 Enoch and 3 Enoch. However, due to its prominence above the others 1 Enoch is the book of Enoch. The only available copy of the work today is in Ethiopic. Early church fathers were familiar with the book of Enoch. This lends many scholars to believe that Greek was the original language.

Obviously, with a book with such few copies dating becomes less accurate. Most scholars estimate that it was written around 200 B.C. However, some scholars believe that multiple persons wrote the book. That idea follows that the earliest section was written before 170 B.C. and the later section before 60 B.C. In any case, a general rule would be that it was complete before the first century. This is why the early church Fathers can be familiar with such a book.

The book of Jude was under major debate during the early church period. This is because of a single quotation from the Book of Enoch. There is no doubt today that the book of Jude is included in the canon of Scripture. However, does the book of Jude support the canonization of the book of Enoch? Tertullian argued that this demonstrates the book of Enoch's inclusion into the canon. Tertullian has a considerable amount of

arguments for the inclusion of the book of Enoch. In the related one he writes, “To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the Apostle Jude.”¹

It may not be clear at this moment that every written work that is cited means that the whole work is Scripture. There is no doubt that Paul appeals to current philosophical writings of his day, to support his positions. In the New Testament, Paul appeals to two Greek philosophers. In Titus 1:12, Paul appeals to Epimenides Paradox, “Cretans are always liars.”² However, Paul could not have been appealing to all of Epimenides writings as scripture. In fact, Epimenides was a pagan who believed that Zeus was an eternal being. Paul was not supporting Epimenides writings, but rather supporting his position with Epimenides writings. Similarly in Acts 17:28, Paul quotes another Greek philosopher, “For we also are His children.” Paul uses this as an appeal to the Greek philosophers to demonstrate the fact the truth of Christianity. In the same manner, Jude quotes the book of Enoch to support his position that the wicked will be judged. However, this scriptural attestation is not the only reason scholars have held to the book of Enoch.

The New Testament canon is based upon the books that the Early Church Fathers discovered as Scripture. A quotation from one of the Early Church Fathers writings helps determine the canon. The Early Church Fathers quoted almost 100% of the New Testament in their writings. Now many Early Church Fathers quote the book of Enoch. This has given more evidence for the inclusion of the book of Enoch into the New Testament. The book of Enoch is quoted in the Epistle of Barnabas and by Clement of

¹ Alexander Roberts *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Tertullian – On the Apparel of Women* 4 vols. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers) 4:16

² Titus 1:12 NASB

Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Irenaeus and Justin Martyr. This seems to be great evidence to the inclusion of the book of Enoch into the canon of Scripture.

Origen's view of the book of Enoch is no greater than any work outside of the Scriptures. In fact, Origen appeals to the book of Enoch as support in the same manner Paul appeals to Epimenides. Origen appeals to the book of Enoch in Book I and Book IV of *De Principiis*. In the first reference, Origen writes, "And in the book of Enoch also we have similar descriptions."³ In the context of this, Origen is using this passage as support for a God who has created all things. This is in no way appealing to Enoch as Scripture. In the second passage, Origen discusses the idea of substance. He quotes, "For it is written in the same book of Enoch, 'I beheld the whole of matter;' which is so understood as if he had said: 'I have clearly seen all the division of matter which are broken up from one into each individual species either of men, or animals or of the world.'"⁴ Again, Origen makes no appeal to this as being authoritative or scriptural.

No Early Church Father presents a case for Enoch openly, except Tertullian. Tertullian's case is presented in his book *On the Apparel of Women*. He spends the complete third chapter of this book on Enoch. He writes, "I suppose they [the Jews] did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that world-wide calamity, the abolisher of all things."⁵ Upon the rejection of by the Jews he continues, "By the Jews it may now seem to have been rejected for that (very) reason, just like all the other (portions) nearly which tell of Christ. Nor of course, is this fact

³ Alexander Roberts *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Origen – De Principiis Book I* 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers) 4:252

⁴ Ibid. 4:380

⁵ Ibid. 4:15

wonderful, that they did not receive some Scriptures which spake of Him whom even in person, speaking in their presence, they were not to receive.”⁶

Obviously, Tertullian presents a strong case for this. However, the first and greatest piece of evidence against these remarks is the Septuagint. The translators of the Septuagint did not accept Enoch into their Bible. “It [the Septuagint] was undoubtedly translated during the third and/or second centuries B.C.; it is purported to have been written as early as the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus in a Letter of Aristeas to Philocarts.”⁷ This evidence presents two situations: the translators of the Septuagint did not have the book of Enoch or they not believe it to be on the same standard as the apocryphal writings, which they did translate. If the first situation is true, that Tertullian is false in the appeal that Enoch is the actual writer of the book. However, Tertullian appealed to the second option. This appeal is based on the idea that the Jews rejected Enoch because they rejected the Messiah. However, it seems from the Gospels that the disciples were expecting the Messiah. They were expecting a king to overturn the Roman government. The early Jewish scholars probably would have translated this book, if they felt it to be credible and it existed.

However, beyond just refuting Tertullian’s idea of the book of Enoch, there are other evidences that this book was not Scripture. The Council of Laodicea may have established a canon of scripture in 364 A.D. The Council of Laodicea definitely decreed, “No psalms composed by private individuals nor any uncanonical books may be read in the church, but only the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments.”⁸ There is a

⁶ Ibid 16

⁷ Norman Geisler & William Nix *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press 1968) 307

⁸ “Synod of Laodicea (4th Century)” ed. Philip Schaff & Henry Wace. 2004 *New Advent*
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3806.htm> (Accessed November 2, 2005)

great debate whether Canon 60 was established at this council, which appointed which books could be read. However, it would seem follow if there is a decree that only Scripture should be read in church, there must be a definition of what Scripture is. Whether the Bishops wrote this list at the council or later, Canon 60 is necessary based upon Canon 59. Though this was not an ecumenical council, the Council of Chalcedon accepted these canons in 451 A.D. Furthermore, there is no evidence among the early church canons of the book of Enoch.

As seen, there is no evidence that the book of Enoch should be included in our modern canon. Although, there are still many other issues to be resolve with the book of Enoch, canonization is not one of them. The Early Church Fathers attestation is obviously not the same as the attestation to the Bible today. There is a difference in the usage of Enoch compared to Scripture by the majority of the Early Church Fathers. However, it is clear that those people who feel the book of Enoch is God's latest revelation to man, need to reevaluate the basis for their beliefs.

Personal Application

In the researcher for this topic, I was confronted with so many topics. I have a much greater grasp on why Jude is accepted in the New Testament and why Enoch is not. In fact, there is a great confirmation knowing about the Canon of Scripture. Overall, this topic has created a good way of helping me distinguish what is truth. In looking at the way that Origen quoted sources and how Paul quoted sources helps me understand the principle that all truth is God's truth. God used heresy in the early church to refine the doctrines of his church. The early church was force to define their major doctrines based

upon these heresies. Today in my evaluation of the book of Enoch, I have gained a greatest understanding of our canon and the opinions of the Early Church Fathers.

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