

Authoritative Authors

There are 66 “books” of the Bible divided into two parts: Old Testament and New Testament. Who wrote these “books”? Why are these included in the Bible and not others?

The 39 books of the Old Testament were recognized by the early church as a part of God’s Word, in part, because these were the writings accepted as God’s Word by the Jewish people of the time. But why did the Jews accept these writings as being from God?

One important reason is authorship. In many cases, the writings were ascribed to a prophet of God. The first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) were attributed to Moses who was described as a prophet (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). Other Old Testament books attributed to prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; all considered written by prophets of God.

In some cases, the writer is said to have had a special relationship with God, as did David (a man after God’s own heart; Acts 13:22). Thus, we have many of the writings in the Book of Psalms.

In some Old Testament cases, we don’t know who the writer was but the writings have some spiritual significance by detailing God’s dealings with the Jewish people.

While over time there has been some debate about the authorship of various portions of the Old Testament, the witness of generations past is that each of the 39 Old Testament books was and is spiritually significant with most written by a man identified as a prophet of God. Since the time of Christ, the Christian church has accepted these same writings. (A more detailed discussion of these writings may be found in the section Complete Canon – Old Testament.)

Now, just because someone claims to be a prophet does not make it so. And just because someone says that so-and-so is/was a prophet does not make it so.

The point here is not whether any of the individuals identified as writers of portions of the Old Testament actually were prophets. (Evidence that at least some of the writers of the Old Testament were true prophets of God is in the section on Fulfilled Prophecy.) The point here is simply that Old Testament writings were adopted as spiritually significant because the people at the time of the writing recognized the writers as a prophets of God.

Just as authorship was an important aspect of the acceptance of Old Testament writings, the acceptance of each of the 27 books of the New Testament is based, in part, on the authorship of the book. In the case of the New Testament books, the writer was either one of the apostles, an associate of one of the apostles, or had some other significant relationship to Jesus. The people of the time recognized the importance of the writer, accepted the writing as spiritually significant, and then passed the writing on to the next generation.

In some cases, ancient writings have NOT been accepted when the writing was suspected of being falsely attributed to an apostle, there were known inaccuracies, or it contained teachings contrary to that given by prophets or apostles.

For more information on the authorship and acceptance of Old and New Testament writings, see:

- The Canon of Scripture. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/canon.cfm>
- The 35 Authors Who Wrote the Bible. <https://overviewbible.com/authors-who-wrote-bible/>
- The Canon of Scripture – What is It? <https://www.compellingtruth.org/canon-of-Scripture.html>
- The Canon of Scripture. <https://www.biblesprout.com/articles/bible/canon-books/>
- The Real Issue is Canonicity. <https://baptistbulletin.org/the-baptist-bulletin-magazine/jul-06-issue/the-real-issue-is-canonicity/>