

Many of them were letters addressed either to one church, or to an individual. These books were written at various places and their spread from one church to another must have taken quite a long time.

In addition to the inspired books other good books were written by Christian leaders and were widely read, but were not considered to be inerrant and authoritative, like the books that the Holy Spirit inspired. Since Jesus did not state any way in which the books that were free from error could be distinguished from the others, it would be natural to expect that soon there would be great disagreement about this question. Those churches that knew the author of a particular book or group of books would be strongly inclined to accept his books, while other churches where he was less known might question whether his writings were inspired. It would be natural to expect that there would be different views in different places and even considerable difference of opinion within certain groups as to which were the books that God wanted 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