

8.

said: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). These verses show, not only that further truth would be revealed to the disciples after Jesus' death, but also that what He had already told them would be made available to them in a form that would be free from error.

It is easy to see how necessary this was. The Gospels tell us that on several occasions Jesus predicted His death and resurrection (e.g. Matthew 16:21). Yet when the events took place the disciples had no expectation of this, and found it difficult to accept them (cf. Luke 24:19-26). Until the events actually took place, much of His teaching was incomprehensible to them, and hence easily forgotten. The only way that we today can know exactly what Jesus taught or can know the additional revelations that God gave after His departure, is through books free from error because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The verses quoted above show that Jesus, who authenticated the Old Testament as an inerrant presentation of God's earlier revelation, authenticated in advance a similar inerrant New Testament.

8. Since Jesus did not give any method by which these books could be infallibly recognized, there is an inevitable suggestion that a process similar to that which occurred in the case of the Old Testament might be used.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead the disciples to further truth, and would bring to their remembrance the precise words that He Himself had spoken. He did not say how they would be able to distinguish the particular books that would be kept from error by the Holy Spirit from other good books that were not inerrant.

It can be assumed that when a book was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the man who wrote it gave it to the people of God as the Word of God and they accepted it as such. Yet the Christians did not continue to be in one place. Persecution soon scattered them in various directions, and they went everywhere preaching the Gospel. Little groups of Christians sprang up here and there. Each of these groups would tend to be particularly interested in whatever they might hear from those who had first brought them the Gospel, and not quite so ready to accept teaching from other sources. We know from the Corinthian epistles that many disagreements arose in some of these bodies.

The writing of the books of the New Testament extended over many years. A few of them were written by men who were listed among the twelve apostles Jesus had named, but most of the books were written by men who were not included in this list. 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