

6. Causes for Canonical Acceptance

The basic reason for canonical acceptance was divine origin. The works originated with divine intention and were so received. It was recognized that the Lord had spoken in the law and by the prophets. The authority was in the works, themselves, and not by some status conferred by public enactment. This is, naturally, somewhat self-authenticating, there being no external person who could watch God give the instruction. But the tests of the prophets are there and they are significant. That the works had the authority of some known prophet is also often suggested as part of this general picture.

Beyond this a number of concepts are offered as a basis for canonical acceptance. I mention them just in passing with no real elaboration on figures "a-d" and a bit of data on "e".

- a. Antiquity
- b. Hebrew language
- c. Law conformity
- d. Religious value
- e. Public acclaim

This last is the most common view suggested apart from the conservative opinion mentioned at the beginning of this discussion. It is the idea that the people of Israel, in the face of some national situation, rallied to a suggested basis of unity in some code or law as a means of consolidating public sentiment and forming ethnic solidarity. The literature that could give the people a binding foundation in such a case would be highly respected and would become "law" to them. Thus the canonical books were made by the historical situation and the acclaim of the masses. We think it unlikely that a lasting claim could be set up in this manner although it is not at all impossible a short term affair could have been achieved. Further discussion on this point is offered when we consider the higher critical view of the canon.