



"Who chose the books of the Bible?"

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Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf - the Iraqi disinformation minister - was an incredible feature of the media and news circus that we were exposed to at the start of the Allied invasion of Iraq. We're getting quite used to the subtle spin of politicians and the PR managed releases from big corporations, but we had something new in Al-Sahaf. In his brief moment in the media spotlight Al-Sahaf didn't mumble a familiar sounding, carefully worded script that sounded like it has been drafted by a legal team.

And he didn't tell little white lies either, he told great big whoppers, 'I triple guarantee you, there are no American soldiers in Baghdad', 'We have retaken the airport. There are NO Americans there. I will take you there and show you. IN ONE HOUR!' To make matters worse was the fact that we could immediately distinguish between truth and lie as Al-Sahaf's press conferences were shown alongside live footage of Allied troops actually at the airport.

There are lots of ways to deceive people and Mohammed Al-Sahaf demonstrates the bare faced lie spectacularly, another approach is to select the information that agrees with your case and omit the evidence or information that doesn't agree. That way it seems like your point of view makes a lot more sense than it actually does if all the evidence is in.

So who decided what the Bible would be? How do we know that what was *chosen* to be included wouldn't just agree with the views of whoever held power at the time? To start to understand this subject means learning a bit about the 'canon.' The

canon refers to the books, which were inspired by God's Holy Spirit for inclusion in Holy Scripture. Contrary to what a lot of people think it isn't the antiquity, authenticity or religious community that makes a book or letter part of the canon.

A book is valuable because it is part of the canon, but it isn't part of the canon because it is or was considered valuable. Its authority and place in the canon is *established* by God and merely *discovered* by God's people. It's really important to distinguish between the *determination* and the *discovery* of the canon. God is solely responsible for determining; God's people are responsible for discovery.

That a book is part of the canon is due to divine inspiration. How it is known to be part of the canon is due to a process of human recognition. Was a book (1) written by a spokesperson for God, (2) who was confirmed by an act of God, (3) told the truth (4) in the power of God and (5) was accepted by the people of God? If a book clearly had the first mark then its canonicity was often assumed.