

LEVELS OF INSPIRATION OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

John

Mark, Matthew, Luke, Galatians

Romans, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Corinthians

Acts*, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 1 John, Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Barnabas, 1 Clement

Ignatius (8 Letters), 2 Clement, Polycarp, James, Revelation, 2 Peter, Jude, Apocalypse of Peter, Apostles' Creed

Shepherd of Hermas, Odes of Solomon, Apology of Tertullian, Isaiah II, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah I, Amos, Lamentations

Didache, 2 Esdras, Sibylline Oracles, Apoc. of Thomas, of Paul, of the Virgin, Gospel of Nicodemus, of Bartholomew, of Peter

Deuteronomy, Psalms, Job, Joel, Habakkuk, Zechariah, Malachi, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs

Exodus, Genesis, Ezekiel, Jonah, Daniel, Numbers*, Leviticus*, Joshua*, Judges*, Ruth, 1 & 2 Chron.*, 1 & 2 Kings*, 1 & 2 Sam.*, Ezra*, 1 Esdras*, Nehemiah*

Nicene Creed, Pilgrim's Progress, Imitation of Christ, Agrapha & Logia, Gospel of Thomas, Proverbs, Esther*, Judith*, Tobit, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Pirke Aboth

Protevangelion, Laodiceans, Wisdom, Baruch, Sirach, Jubilees, 1 & 2 Enoch, Song of Solomon, Additions to Daniel, Additions to Esther, Ecclesiastes, The Rubaiyat

History of Eusebius, Fourth Eclogue, Assumption of Moses, Psalms of Solomon, Book of Adam & Eve, Aristeas*, Ahikar*, 3 & 4 Maccabees, Jewish Talmud, Targums, Book of Martyrs

Preaching of Peter, Jesus & Abgarus, Paul & Seneca, History of Abdias, Epistle of the Apostles, Herod & Pilate, Acts of Paul, of Peter, of Andrew, of Thomas, of Philip, Church hymnody

Confessions of Augustine, Institutions of Calvin, Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Pensees, Summa Theologia, Westminster Confession, Luther's Theses, Book of Common Prayer, Dialogues of Plato

Meditations of Aurelius, Gnostic works, Essene works, Cabalist works, Manichean works, Rules of St. Francis & St. Benedict, Decl. of Independence, Gettysburg Address, UN Charter, US Constitution
 Vie de Jesus, Mabinogion, Song of Roland, Origin of Species, Zend Avesta, Quran, Kapital, Teachings of Buddha, Bhagavad Gita, Key to the Scriptures, Masonic ritual, Bahai works, Vedas, Bk. of Mormon

SELECTION CRITERIA:

1. Writings of the highest inspiration are toward the top of the chart and toward the left in each line.
2. Bible books with an asterisk (*) are generally non-doctrinal.
3. Criteria for determining levels of inspiration are:
 - Which works are most necessary to a full knowledge of God?
 - Which works contain recognized truth?
 - Which works could be most easily dropped and not be missed?
4. Note the bell-shaped curve of the group of writings. This shows that the inspiration of religious literature follows the scientific principle of the Normal Distribution in statistical mathematics. The lower line theoretically stretches to infinity, that is, more writings could be included in that line than are shown here.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. John 3:16 is the most inspired verse in the Bible. John's Gospel gives the clearest statements of essential doctrines: God's love, the Incarnate Word of God, the Trinity, Church unity, etc.
2. Ecclesiastes is the least inspired book in the Bible.
3. Several extra-canonical Christian works contain more truth than do the Old Testament scriptures.
4. Disputed books fall at the bottom of their respective Testamental groupings.
5. The inspiration of scriptural books generally follows the principle of Progressive Revelation. Outside the Bible, however, ancient writings are listed higher than recent ones because of centuries of influence on religious history. "Influence" is certainly one aspect of "inspiration."
6. The writings of non-religious groups or of other religions are not lacking in inspiration; in them can be found many truthful views of God.

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