Why the Book of Revelation?

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Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Have you ever thought about how the Book of Revelation came to be included into the New Testament canon? It may not seem like that big of a deal, but when we take a closer look throughout history we see that it gained entrance over numerous other apocalypses. This is especially critical for the type of book that it is, as it concerns the end of the world and the fate of humanity."
Why the Book of Revelation?

An Examination of the Reasons why the Book of Revelation Prevailed over other Apocalypses for Inclusion in the

New Testament Canon

Have you ever thought about how the Book of Revelation came to be included into the New Testament canon? It may not seem like that big of a deal, but when we take a closer look throughout history we see that it gained entrance over numerous other apocalypses. This is especially critical for the type of book that it is, as it concerns the end of the world and the fate of humanity.

An “apocalypse” is defined as a disclosure or revelation. Several books fall under this definition based on the given substance within the text, and only one of these was included in the canon, or the list of books that the Christians use in church. This type of text is unique in the fact that essentially only one of them can be included due to the nature of their message. For example, multiple letters, gospels, and other types of books can be used because they have multiple truths. However, the apocalyptic books cannot be given the same privileges as there cannot be different endings to the world. For this reason, strict sets of guidelines had to be created to determine canonicity for not only these types of books but for others as well to ensure credibility of the work.

My study takes a look at the possible criteria that allowed Revelation to gain entrance into the canon as well as the criteria that kept other apocalypses out. The origins and influences of Revelation are heavily scrutinized and analyzed alongside historical events during its time of composition to establish inclusionary criteria. These criteria set the stage for what the books that are included in the canon must contain. Exclusionary criteria are then derived from the inclusionary criteria and several historically popular apocalypses are analyzed to determine why
they did not gain entrance into the canon. The criteria themselves are then criticized to evaluate their authority and to perhaps point out any weak spots in their reasoning. This is all possible through examinations of historical events and relationships.

To me, apocalyptic texts are more interesting than any of the other religious works because of my natural human desire to understand the reasoning behind life here on earth. One would be hard pressed to find a person who did not find interest in the ultimate demise of the world and if there truly is an afterlife or not. That places a lot of weight on Revelation, as we are taught to believe it in whatever way our denomination or personal beliefs fit based on its inclusion in the canon. Therefore, the reasons as to why others were excluded must be carefully examined and criticized for the exclusion of possible truths that we may never know. Due to the large number of clashing “theories”, are there really any criteria broad yet exclusive enough to close out any consideration for other cases?

The leading research proposals and theories are used to create this study, along with ancient documents. Some of the leading critical minds of the past and the present have their work showcased in this study and, along with some personal input, they are used to formulate the conclusions that are presented at the end of this study. The criteria are all derived from the first proposed canons, and how they were shaped and changed into the twenty-seven-book version of the canon that is used today. It is my goal to make clear the ultimate reasons that brought the Book of Revelation to sideline other apocalypses and also challenge those same reasons by highlighting inherent contradictions. I hope that this study proves to be effective in what it is set out to do and that readers will enjoy the facts and ideas presented.