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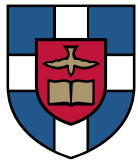

Biblical Authority and Textual Criticism

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Biblical Authority and Textual Criticism

Editorial: Defending Biblical Authority on the Textual Front

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Throughout the ages, historic Christianity has affirmed that Scripture *is* God's Word written, the product of God's mighty action whereby human authors freely wrote exactly what God intended to be written and without error (2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Why has the church confessed such a view? For the reason that Scripture itself teaches it or attests to it. The affirmation of Scripture's self-attestation is vitally important for at least two reasons.

First, the Church does not claim for Scripture something foreign to it. In other words, the Church does *not* confer authority on the Bible and make it something it is not. Instead, precisely because Scripture *is* God's Word written, it comes to us bearing witness to itself. Of course, one is free to accept or reject such a claim, but if one does, then one must state the basis for such a rejection. One cannot simply dismiss the Bible "as any other book"

or simply place the Bible into the same category as other "religious" books as if they are all in the same category, making the same claims, which they do not. If we take the biblical claim seriously, it is simply not a legitimate option for one to do so.

Second, as with any doctrine of the Christian faith, including our doctrine of Scripture, we must substantiate it by an appeal to Scripture. No doubt, this leads to a kind of "circularity" but this should not surprise us. When it comes to ultimate criterions and highest authorities in any worldview (Christian, Islamic, naturalistic, etc.), an argument of this sort is unavoidable. All worldviews go back to their ultimate starting points, or presuppositions, and the Christian worldview is no different. The difference lies in our ultimate starting points, and whether our starting points can provide the preconditions for knowledge, truth, morality, and so on. Christian theology is like a seamless robe or an organic whole, rooted and grounded in our view of God. Since the God of the Bible, the triune Creator-Covenant Lord, is the self-existent, self-attesting, and self-justifying God of the universe, he alone is the final court of appeal (cf. Heb 6:16-18). As such, his Word, by its very nature, is self-attesting. God's Word of necessity is our *ultimate* criterion and authority for justifying any theological doctrine, including our doctrine of Scripture.

One crucial implication that follows is biblical authority and specifically, biblical inerrancy. For how can Scripture serve as its own authority by which we evaluate all doctrine, if Scripture is not fully authoritative and inerrant? How is it possible to affirm any doctrine on the Bible's own say so unless Scripture is fully trustworthy and reliable? Unless Scripture is inerrant, it cannot serve as the Church's necessary and sufficient condition, indeed our transcendental precondition, to warrant our theological beliefs, at least in any normative way. For these reasons, Scripture is central to the entire theological enterprise. Without the living God who discloses himself to us in an authoritative, true, and reliable Word-revelation, theology loses its *identity* and *integrity* as an objective discipline and it is set adrift, forever to be confused with philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and the like.

But how do we defend such a strong claim today? Much could be said in response to this question, which is the entire study of apologetics. Ultimately, the defense of Scripture as God's Word is done on a number of fronts—theological, philosophical, and historical. In the end, it involves an evaluation of entire worldviews as we set the Christian view over against its

rivals. However, another significant front in the defense of biblical authority is the *textual front*, which sadly is often neglected, but which is under huge discussion today.

What is the textual front? It is the work of what many in the past have called the study of "lower criticism." In calling it "lower" criticism, it is important to distinguish it from "higher criticism." The latter is a *critical* study of Scripture, which, more often than not, assumes some kind of *methodological* naturalism. Methodological naturalism is the view that our study of all intellectual disciplines, including Scripture and theology, must presupposes that the world is a closed system, thus eliminating any notion of divine, effectual, extraordinary agency in the world, or what we call more commonly, miracles. If such a view is adopted, from the outset, it rejects the very possibility of an authoritative Bible since it rejects the theology and worldview of Scripture. Such "higher" critical views need to be rejected and critiqued as an entire worldviews that stand opposed to historic Christianity.

On the other hand, "lower" criticism is a legitimate and necessary study. It is legitimate because of the fact that God has given us his Word through human authors and in written texts. But since written texts are open to the vicissitudes of history, it is vital that we know that our present Bibles are the same as what God original gave. Yet, how do we know that what was originally written has been preserved for us today? How do we know that the Bible in our hands is what God first gave by inspiration through human authors, and that we have a reliable transmission of the text? In fact, how do we know which books are inspired Scripture and belong to the canon of Scripture versus other false gospels and books? All of these questions are the study of "lower criticism," seeking to demonstrate that: the Bible we presently have is what God originally gave; our Bibles have not changed over the years; and that the Greek and Hebrew texts that undergird our translations are based on accurate manuscripts and true to what the biblical authors wrote.

This issue of *SBJT* is devoted to defending authority and reliability of Scripture on this often neglected front. This is especially important today given a number of prominent voices like Bart Ehrman and others, who seek to undermine the Church's confidence in the Bible and the texts that underlie our present translations. To help in this task, we are publishing papers that were originally given at the "Sacred Words" conference, sponsored by the Text and Canon Institute of Phoenix Seminary. This conference convened

in February, 2020, began to address some of the crucial issues at debate over the text of our present Bible. Not every conference paper is in this issue of *SBJT* but many of the papers are. All of the papers will help us begin to know something more about the history of the Bible, and to give us confidence in God's most holy Word. As current issues are addressed such as: when and how the OT canon was formed; how the OT text was copied in a reliable fashion; how we should think about the relationship between the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and the *autographs* (original text that was written by the human authors); the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls to understanding the reliability of our present OT; and the formation of the NT "catholic" epistles, our goal is to help the church defend biblical authority today. My prayer is that we will be better equipped "to give a reason for the hope that is in us" (1 Pet 3:15), and to learn to know and trust God's Word in our daily lives, for the glory of our triune God who sovereignly and graciously gave us his Word, and for the life and health of the church.

Discipleship and the History of the Bible

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On February 21-22, 2020, the Phoenix Seminary Text and Canon Institute (TCI) hosted its first church conference on the history of the Bible in Phoenix, Arizona.[1] The scriptures are the foundation to Christian discipleship, and early Christian bishops taught on them accordingly. In his fourth catechetical lecture "On Ten Points of Doctrine," Cyril of Jerusalem included an entire section on the divine scriptures, instructing new converts on the identity of the canonical books of the Old and New Testament and warning them about other, apocryphal books. The great Augustine in his *On Christian Teaching* (2.8.12.24) also included a section on the identity of the canonical books as well as principles for the receiving of the scriptures as canon. There was a day when Christians did not know what books were in their canon and the bishops sought to teach them.[2] After exhausting research into the Bible's manuscripts, early theologians like Origen explained that the church had her scriptures because divine Providence had preserved them for her. Though we might disagree with Origen's conclusion that the scriptures in Greek

copies are what God preserved for the church, he leaves a sound example of a Christian scholar who leveraged his abilities to give an explanation for why Christians had received their spiritual books and the particular words contained in those books.

We live in a different day but with no fewer, difficult questions. Questions about the origins of the canon have multiplied as we learn more about the early history of the Hebrew canon and the reception of the Old and New Testament by different branches of Christianity (e.g., Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church). Contemporary analysis of the great manuscript and archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century like the Dead Sea Scrolls for the OT or the Nag Hammadi Library for the NT continue to scrutinize the Bible's history and authenticity. From the university lecture hall to the many popular news outlets like *Newsweek* and informational websites like *History*, the history of the Book—not its teachings per se—has become the chief issue. To be blunt: the main question is not whether the Bible is true but whether we even have the Bible in the first place. That is, do we have the correct books and correct wording in our scholarly editions? Are our translations of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek based on the most accurate manuscripts? And are the translations themselves accurate? Questions that used to be tied only to university life and scholarship have now spilled over into popular culture and the churches have not been insulated from the information swirling around.

Many pastors went to seminary years ago, before many of their professors even saw the first published editions of the Dead Sea Scrolls. How can they become informed when one of their sheep asks about the earliest Hebrew manuscripts? What can they do? The Text and Canon Institute was established partly in 2019 for this very need. In addition to advancing scholarship into these questions and guiding students through the maze, the TCI also aims to educate the church on the history of the Bible. The TCI plans to launch its new website with accessible and engaging articles on these questions by the end of 2021. But already in 2020, it had its first church conference, "Sacred Words."

Of course, many excellent conferences on the Bible have convened to teach God's people about the Bible's inspiration, authority, sufficiency, inerrancy, and related theological issues. There have also been good apologetic conferences featuring apologists who have answered questions on the Bible's

history and reliability. Sometimes, however, apologists and pastors have been the source of misinformation on these important questions.[3] But the evidence and arguments have become increasingly sophisticated, requiring more specialized analysis and treatment on the part of Christian scholars. Last year, the Text and Canon Institute hosted its "Sacred Words" conference and invited Christian scholars and churchmen in these specialized areas to speak to lay people about the history of the Bible. We assembled three plenary speakers: Daniel Wallace on how the wording of the NT text was transmitted, Peter Gentry on how the text of the OT was copied, and Stephen Dempster on how the Hebrew canon was formed. In addition to these three talks, we also organized four breakout presentations on different issues: (1) Darian Lockett presented on the Catholic Epistles, (2) Jeff Cate on textual variants in NT manuscripts and what they tell us, (3) Anthony Ferguson on what the Dead Sea Scrolls tell us about the history of the text, and (4) Tim Mitchell on relationship of inspiration to the autograph. Many of these talks have become articles in this current issue of *SBJT* and some of them were recorded and posted to the TCI's YouTube channel.[4] Of course, a conference is a helpful, though limited, way to teach on these issues because there is much more to say. The TCI plans to have a sustained flow of informed content on these questions posted to its website soon.

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1 Directed by John Meade and Peter Gurry, the TCI exists to further academic research into the history of the Bible, mentor the next Christian scholars, and resource and teach the church about these matters. You can learn more about the TCI at www.textandcanon.org.

2. One can read these texts and the rest of the early Christian canon lists in Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

3. For a description of past missteps and more informed ways forward on the New Testament side of the discussion, see the work edited by Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

4. See https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNsbNGwVPAR6ciaiiuUNVxGLt-RiNyTCn.

Some Missteps in Narrating the Bible's History

John D. Meade and Peter J. Gurry

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The following article briefly describes some missteps in narrating the Bible's history. Biblical scholars have expended great energy in researching the Bible's textual and canonical histories.[1] Popular accounts have also multiplied (see

literature in notes below). These works attempt to answer questions like: How has the Bible's wording come down to the present day? How did Jews, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants arrive at different books for the Bible? We intend to show some unhelpful and even misleading ways in which these questions have been engaged and then offer brief suggestions of ways forward. If there is a common thread, it is the temptation to exaggerate the evidence or put it in a context that leads to exaggerated conclusions. The antidote is an increased commitment to methodical, careful research into all of the evidence. This should be complemented with clarity about the level of certainty the evidence allows.

Briefly, we will address issues concerning the Old Testament (OT) text, the New Testament (NT) text, and the biblical canon before proposing some ways forward.

The OT Text

We cannot retrace the full history of the Hebrew text here.[2] We only need to examine how some authors have reported and evaluated the manuscript evidence relevant to the history of the Hebrew text.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has gradually changed the way scholars view the textual transmission of the OT. At first, the discoveries from Cave 1, such as the Great Isaiah Scroll, were thought only to confirm the textual authenticity of the later Masoretic Text. In 1955, Millar Burrows commented on the Great Isaiah Scroll, "It is a matter for wonder that through something like a thousand years the text underwent so little alteration. As I said in my first article on the scroll, 'Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition.'"[3] And indeed this early fact made its way into Bible handbooks. After quoting Burrows approvingly (in both their 1986 revised edition and their original 1968 publication), Norman Geisler and William Nix conclude their discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls as follows:

> This [differences from MT] should by no means be construed as a uniform picture, since there are not many deviants in the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Masoretic Text to begin with, and in some cases the variants do not consistently agree with the LXX, whereas in a few cases they do not agree at all.[4]

Geisler and Nix concluded that the Scrolls had very few variants from the MT. This conclusion is understandable since many of the *editiones principes* of the Scrolls would not be published till the 1990s and early 2000s. But the manner with which they present the evidence gives the false impression that the Scrolls have very few variants from MT (only 6 examples were given) and they do not note the large-scale variants between these manuscripts.

As more editions of the Scrolls were published, commentators continued to emphasize their similarity to the MT, while mentioning some disagreements. In 1999, Paul Wegner commented on the Scrolls:

> Careful study of these manuscripts has helped to confirm that the Hebrew text we possess is very accurate; differences are minimal between a good number of the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts and manuscripts from about A.D. 800 to 1000. However, even the Dead Sea Scrolls reveal a certain amount of diversity in the text of the Old Testament in the centuries right before Christ. Some texts found near Qumran appear to follow more closely the Samaritan Pentateuch (4QpaleoExod^{m}; 4QNum^{b}), others tend toward the Septuagint (4QJer^{b}), and still others reflect the Masoretic Text.[5]

From this passage, one receives the impression that the Scrolls basically confirm the MT and in a few places agree with the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) and Septuagint (LXX). The problem here is not in what Wegner writes but in what he omits. Earlier in his book, he noted the debate over the origin of the scribes' text and cited a number of works which would contradict this description of the Scrolls.[6] By this time, textual critics and Scrolls' scholars had identified texts that did not neatly agree with the MT, SP, or LXX, and had not clearly derived from them.[7] Based on the new evidence, that conclusion was clear, even though debate persisted then and today over the interpretation of what the Scrolls tell us about the textual history.

When Neil Lightfoot turns to the Text of the OT, he first presents the scribal activity of the Masoretes, rightly detailing the careful copying of the manuscripts that occurred around 500-1000 AD.[8] His description of the Scrolls includes a brief history of their discovery, some numbers of the fragments for each book, and then a brief summary of some prominent examples. The first two examples constitute evidence of the closeness of the

Scrolls to the MT, while the latter three show agreements with other sources (e.g., SP) and at times provide better readings than those of the MT. The Scrolls that do not agree with MT provide a positive outcome since they can be used to clarify or supplement occasional obscurities in the MT. In the end, Lightfoot concludes that although not all the Scrolls agree with the MT, "The vast majority of the manuscripts found near the Dead Sea are closely akin to or virtually identical with the Masoretic Text."[9] He closes the chapter with two (dated) quotes from Roberts (1969) and Weingreen (1982) on the remarkable textual history and transmission of the Hebrew Bible. Although Lightfoot does highlight some significant disagreements between the Scrolls and MT, most of the description overstates the matter. This does not serve Christians well because there are in fact very different reckonings of the evidence which we possess.

In more recent examples of the how-we-got-the-Bible genre, we see the same elements: description of the very careful copying of the MT, the history of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls including the number of their remains, and a concluding evaluation. In 2018, Ryan Reeves and Charles Hill say, "There are slight differences in the texts of Qumran—not unlike when scholars find slight differences between copies of the NT—but those differences amount to roughly one percent discrepancy between the Masoretic text and these ancient texts."[10] The authors do not explain how they arrived at this number, but the present authors have not encountered it in the scholarly literature on the subject. The authors conclude, "In the end, the best way to understand the Qumran texts is to realize how remarkably well the Old Testament has been preserved over the centuries."[11]

These presentations of the evidence share a common tendency to exaggerate when it comes to the state of the history of the OT text. All of them note the strong continuities between the Scrolls and the MT noting the very conservative way scribes copied the MT. But patterns of variants observed across whole books (e.g., 4QJer^{b}-LXX and 4QJer^{a}-MT Jeremiah) or large sections within books (e.g., LXX and MT-4QSam^{a} 1 Sam 17–18[12]) do exist between the witnesses which resulted in variant literary editions. Among the works surveyed for this article, Greg Lanier's treatment of the matter is exemplary, for he notes several of the large-scale differences in textual form (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 1 Sam 16–18, Job and Proverbs, Psalms, Judges, Daniel), and rightly acknowledges the real difficulties presented by the evidence

and confesses that "the best course is to continue doing the hard work" of textual criticism.[13]

But the problem also ails descriptions of textual pluriformity. Timothy Michael Law says:

> From the perspective of an ancient Jewish or Christian reader there was no certainty about which of the traditions would eventually become the dominant scriptural tradition. It was simply not a question that would have entered their minds. We have seen repeatedly that the Septuagint and especially the Dead Sea Scrolls offer proof that *the Hebrew Bible was not fixed* before the second century CE and, perhaps more surprisingly, that many readers and users of scriptural texts before then were not bothered about it.[14]

Elsewhere in the book, Law emphasizes the textual pluriformity from the Second Temple Period—a reality to be sure—but we cannot find a discussion of the other scribal tendency to copy the text conservatively, letter by letter, long before the second century AD. Furthermore, Law also paints the picture that pluriformity did not bother ancient readers and copiers, who might have been indifferent to the situation. But evidence shows that Qumran scribes did correct their manuscripts and were most probably aware of the textual pluriformity they produced. It is worth citing David Andrew Teeter at length:

> Just as it is highly questionable to assume that the Jewish tradents of this period were oblivious to textual difference, so also it is dubious to assume that the main difference the cognoscenti likely observed would have been that between the "new" and "old" version (in Ulrich's diachronic terms), or that between the proto-Masoretic texts and everything else (in Tov's synchronic terms). It is highly implausible to posit that a society capable of cultivating and sustaining *both* types of manuscript production, with relatively limited cross-contamination; and communities capable of producing and processing literature of such interpretive sophistication, and with such minute textual awareness as is attested throughout this period—that such a society of interpreters could have been simply *unaware* of, or *indifferent* to, the profound (interpretive!) pluriformity of the scriptural text … So much is often declared on the basis of, e.g., a lack of explicit justification for selecting between one textual reading and another. This argument from silence cannot explain the evidence we do have.[15]

In concluding this section, Christians should avoid the triumphalist tone, present a clear account of the evidence, and offer an interpretation. There should not be contradictory accounts of the evidence, while good and sound debate over the interpretation of that evidence should be welcomed and even considered to push us to better and more true conclusions.

The NT Text

In moving to the NT text, we encounter the same temptation. One difference is that the issues have trickled down farther and spread wider in popular media than is the case with the text of the OT. To our knowledge, no book on the text of the OT has cracked the bestseller lists like Bart Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*.[16] Ehrman's work hits a sweet spot for many in our secularizing society. He is an experienced scholar with a long track record of academic output; his deconversion from evangelicalism appeals to a section of American society that increasingly finds Christian beliefs and ethics incredulous; and, finally, he is an excellent communicator. This combination has given him a wide hearing in national media.

One of his key claims is that the degree and type of variation in our manuscripts makes the evangelical belief in the Bible's inspiration untenable. As he puts it, "As I realized already in graduate school, even if God had inspired the original words, we don't have the original words. So the doctrine of inspiration was in a sense irrelevant to the Bible as we have it, since the words God reputedly inspired had been changed and, in some cases, lost."[17] With this, Ehrman struck a nerve, and evangelicals have been eager to respond.[18] Unfortunately, our response has sometimes lacked needed context, been ill-informed, or been presented with its own exaggeration.

Among the mistakes that could be cited, one that is especially common is the use of outdated data. The problem has become most acute in the so-called comparative argument. Christian apologists have long compared the number of manuscripts of the NT to the number for other ancient works like Herodotus's *Histories*, or Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, to prove the comparative excellence of the NT documents. Too often, however, evangelicals cite the latest (and largest) number on the NT side while continuing to cite F. F. Bruce's long outdated numbers on the classical side.[19] In the case of Stanley Porter and Andrew Pitts, the problem is exacerbated by an inexplicable

inflation on the NT side of 7,227 manuscripts when the number is closer to 5,000.[20] For classical works, they explicitly cite F. F. Bruce who tells us that there are only a few papyrus fragments of Herodotus's *Histories*, dating nearly 400 years after he wrote, and a further eight complete copies from nearly 1,400 hundred years after he wrote. Indeed, compared to the NT, with about 5,000 Greek manuscripts and some dating occurring within a century or two of composition, the contrast is stark. But Bruce's numbers are outdated and have been for decades. The online Leuven Database of Ancient Books (LDAB) catalogs over forty manuscripts for Herodotus, one of which dates as early as the second century BC. In the case of Homer, apologists frequently cite 643 manuscripts for the *Iliad* even though the number of known manuscripts now swells into the thousands, the majority of which are papyri.[21]

More fundamentally, there is the question of the comparison's real value. I suspect that no apologist would conclude that because Matthew's Gospel is attested by about 1,800 Greek manuscripts and Revelation by just over 300 that Matthew is therefore six times more reliable than Revelation.[22] Nor would we conclude that because the *Gospel of Thomas* is attested by more early papyri than Mark's Gospel that it is therefore more reliable. To be sure, the comparative argument can be used to expose an unfair double standard on the skeptics' part, but this is only the case when the comparison is fair and accurate.[23] When it's not, the double standard is ours. Most importantly, we need to avoid giving the impression that having more (or even earlier) copies necessarily results in greater reliability.

Other such mistakes are encountered when dealing with the number of variants, the dates for manuscripts, the number of versional manuscripts, and more. Textual criticism is a complicated field and keeping up can be hard enough for NT scholars generally and even more so for apologists working at the popular level.[24] But we must do better if we are to give a credible witness to our confidence in the Scriptures. As with our evangelism, so here: integrity needs to be the hallmark of our witness.

The Canon

Scholars continue to debate the biblical canon, especially whether it should be defined as a norm or a list of books or some hybrid concept.[25] Furthermore,

the question about various historical communities' role in forming the Jewish canon or the OT (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) remains a lively one. Putting scholarly questions aside for a moment, one also faces popular level sensationalism (e.g., *The Da Vinci Code* or Twitter) that has taken place on this question such as whether the creation of the biblical canon occurred at the Council of Nicaea or not. There is no evidence that Nicaea decided the biblical canon, but this is one of the most common answers to "How we Got the Bible" that we have encountered among the public.

But our popular books on the topic do not help. In his chapter on the Canon of the Scriptures, Neil Lightfoot rightly says, "No church council by its decrees can make the books of the Bible authoritative. The books of the Bible possess their own authority and, indeed, had this authority long before there were any councils of the church."[26] In trying to avoid the conclusion that a council created the OT, Lightfoot then engages in an extremely select presentation of the evidence, avoiding any of the messiness that history has actually left behind.[27] For the OT canon, Lightfoot concludes that it had been fixed by the time of Jesus, presenting (1) references to ambiguous NT passages putatively demonstrating the canon in the Jewish tripartite structure was closed (e.g., Luke 24:44; 11:51), (2) Josephus had only 22 books, (3) and later Christians like Origen and Jerome confirmed this basic twenty-two book OT canon. The clear implication is that the OT canon was formed in three clean steps. But not all early Christians agreed on the boundaries of the OT canon and that is where the matter becomes messier.

Commenting on the adoption of the Apocrypha, Reeves and Hill say, "In terms of when Christians began to adopt the Apocrypha, there is no smoking gun. No single individual foisted the Apocrypha on others. What seems more likely is that the church over time lost touch with the early approach [adhering to the Hebrew canon]."[28] But we can actually document when some Christians began to list the Apocrypha among the canonical books (see below). We need to widen the cast of characters for the story and include the material that does not neatly conform to the narrative we want to tell.

The situation is more complicated than the above authors present, since the fact is that many early Christians included the books what would be later called apocryphal and deuterocanonical (Augustine *On Christian Teaching* 2.8.12; *Breviarum Hipponense*; Pope Innocent I; some earlier lists that include many of these books are the Mommsen Catalogue and the list in

Codex Claromontanus). Important, early Greek MSS (e.g., Codex Vaticanus) included many of these books alongside the other canonical books, a point Reeves and Hill mention. Some Christian Fathers and the Jewish Talmud cited some of these books as scripture, though they probably did not intend to make them equal to the canonical books.[29] Scholars and teachers would do better to acknowledge more of the facts and evidence when narrating the history of the Bible so that their readers and hearers are not shocked when they do learn about them. Cataloguing the evidence and giving the simplest explanation for it strengthens the case. The different Christian Old Testaments have roots in the church's early history. Researchers and teachers will continue to argue for which canon is more legitimate, but Christians and seekers are helped by at least having knowledge of the historical facts in the first place. Some of our introductions do not provide an adequate entre into the discussion.

Similar missteps have been made in the case of the NT canon into which we cannot delve in this brief space.[30]

Ways Forward and Concluding Reflections

There is no doubt that we live in the post-*Da Vinci Code* world in which many people breathe misinformed ideas about the Bible's history without even knowing it. Furthermore, scholars and professors need to be careful that our presentations of the evidence are balanced and fair, being careful to avoid undue triumphalism. How should we pursue this task? We suggest a few paths.

First, Christian scholars and authors need to make sure their research is above reproach. By this we mean that descriptions and narratives of the Bible's history need to present the evidence and sound interpretations of that evidence. We do not serve the church and wider culture in these areas if they find us ignoring evidence or skewing unfairly it in our own favor. Our scholarship must be responsible. In the Internet Age, not only are people finding their answers on Google, but they are also viewing a massive amount of video content on channels like YouTube.[31] People will get "answers" to their questions one way or another. We would prefer they get their answers from trusted scholars.

Second, pastors need access to good, accessible resources on these

questions so they can help their sheep navigate the media morass. Seminaries can help by offering good courses on these subjects, but it is an unrealistic expectation for each and every seminary to have experts on these issues.

Third, laypeople need not only to read good material on these questions, but they need to see experts who have looked at the evidence and still affirm the reliability and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. The "Text & Canon Institute" at Phoenix Seminary strives to hit at each of these levels with academic publications, student scholarships, and conferences and resources aimed directly at laypeople. The papers in this issue of *SBTJ* are the result of that effort, specifically; they are the output from our "Sacred Words" conference held in Phoenix in 2020.[32] In the near future, we also hope to host an academic conference on the role of Origen in the Bible's history and to launch a new website at textandcanon.org to provide informed, accessible answers for laypeople. The Bible's history is incredible, and Christians have good reason for trusting it. We hope these essays go some way to show why we believe that is the case.

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1 For the Hebrew Bible and OT Text and Canon, see now the massive publication project and all the literature cited therein (vols. 3 and 4 forthcoming): Armin Lange, ed., *The Textual History of the Bible Vols. 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C* (Leiden: Brill, 2016–). For the text of NT, the standard compendium is Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the* Status *Quaestionis*, 2nd ed. (NTTSD 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013) and for the NT canon, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

2. See Peter J. Gentry, "The Text of the Old Testament," *JETS* 52/1 (2009): 19-45.

3. Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: With Translations by the Author* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 304.

4. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968; rev. ed. 1986), 366-8.

5. Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 187–8; Wegner appears to base this comment on the work of a scholar like Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 210–212, and his earlier articles cited in the footnotes.

6. Ibid., 170.

7. Emanuel Tov, "A Modern Textual Outlook on the Qumran Scrolls," *HUCA* 53 (1982): 11–27; But see the response in Bruno Chiesa, "Textual History and Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Old Testament," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18-21 March, 1991* (ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; 2 volumes; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1:257–72.

8. Neil R. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 129–33.

9. Ibid., 139.

10. Ryan M. Reeves and Charles E. Hill, *Know How We Got Our Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 32.

11. Ibid.

12. Though the problem between the LXX and the MT has been long recognized, see now Benjamin J. M. Johnson, "Reconsidering 4QSam[a] and the Textual Support for the Long and Short Versions of the David and Goliath Story," *VT* 62 (2012): 534–49, who shows that the Scroll supports the longer version of MT.

13. Greg Lanier, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to How We Got the Bible* (Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus), 66–7.
14. Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 79 (emphasis added).
15. David Andrew Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 239. On p. 267, Teeter concludes, "And yet this [textual plurality] quite apparently was not understood as standing in *opposition* to a rigid conservatism in text handling, but, at least so it appears, in *complementarity* with it."
16. Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperOne, 2005).
17. Ibid., 211.
18. For a sample, see Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's "Misquoting Jesus"* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007); Nicholas Perrin, *Lost in Transmission? What We Can Know about the Words of Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007); Andreas Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010); Dillon Burroughs, *Misquotes in Misquoting Jesus: Why You Can Still Believe* (Ann Arbor, MI: Nimble, 2006); Edward D. Andrews, *Misrepresenting Jesus: Debunking Bart D. Ehrman's "Misquoting Jesus"* (Christian Publishing House, 2019).
19. See, for examples, Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 33, 50–51 and John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 82. Both books depend on F. F. Bruce's, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (6th ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), for the classical data which date to the 1940s.
20. For the number of NT manuscripts, see Jacob W. Peterson, "Math Myths: How Many Manuscripts We Have and Why More Isn't Always Better," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 43–69.
21. Joachim Latacz and Frank Pressler, "Homerus," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World; Antiquity* (ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 6:462.
22. These numbers are from Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Klaus Wachtel, eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments: IV. Die synoptischen Evangelien: 2. Das Matthausevangelium: 2.1 Handschriftenliste und vergleichende Beschreibung* (ANTF 28; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), vi, and Markus Lembke, Darius Müller, and Ulrich B. Schmid, eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments: VI. Die Apokalypse: Teststellenkollation und Auswertungen* (ANTF 49; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), xiv.
23. For an excellent explanation of how to use the argument well, see James B. Prothro, "Myths about Classical Literature: Responsibly Comparing the New Testament to Ancient Works," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, 70–89.
24. For an attempt to help, see Hixson and Gurry, eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Each chapter offers a constructive corrective for those who teach or write on the subject.
25. Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 21–35; Stephen B. Chapman, "The Canon Debate: What It Is and Why It Matters," *JTI* 4.2 (2010): 273–94; Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xii–xviii.
26. Lightfoot, *How We Got the Bible*, 153.
27. Ibid., 153–6.
28. Reeves and Hill, *Know How We Got Our Bible*, 70.
29. For example, Athanasius introduces citations from Prov 19:5 and Wisdom 1:11 with one introductory formula "what is written in the holy scriptures" (*Apol. sec.* 3.4). Since Athanasius does not list Wisdom among the canonical books in his canon list (*Ep. fest.* 39), he does not recognize Wisdom as canon but he has high esteem for the book. Furthermore, some Jewish sources cite Ben Sira/Sirach as scripture, for example, b. Ḥag. 13a "as it is written in the book of Ben Sira" (שֶׁכֵּן כָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר בֶּן סִירָא); Yebam. 63b "it is written in the book of Ben Sira" (כתוב בספר בן סירא), but the book does not appear in Jewish canon lists.
30. John D. Meade, "Myths about Canon: What the Codex Can and Can't Tell Us," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*, 253–77, has documented the mistaken idea that the contents of a codex equal or somehow influence early canon formation.
31. At the time of writing this article, Bart Ehrman had over 74,000 YouTube subscribers. A massive Christian organization like "The Gospel Coalition" had 115,000 subscribers, showing the popularity and reach of Ehrman's channel.
32. One can find the videos for the talks given in the main auditorium here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNsbNGwVPAR6ciaiiuUNVxGLt-RiNyTCn.

From a Smoking Canon to Burning Hearts: The Making of the Hebrew Bible[1]

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I begin with three quotes which reflect a crying need for a colloquium on the Bible like this one.[2] The first is from a biblical scholar who wrote a text for students of the Bible, published at the end of the last millennium. After four chapters of setting the stage for her book she concludes this major section as follows:

> … we have proposed that that there is no such thing as a "Bible," in terms of there being one coherent book; no such thing as a "biblical theology" in any uniform sense; no such thing as a "biblical canon" in the sense of one universally acknowledged collection of biblical books, and finally no such thing as one standard "biblical text."[3]

Then she writes what is perhaps the understatement of the millennium: "It may be that the conclusions of these first four chapters appear to be unduly pessimistic about the nature of the Bible."[4]

The next quote is the conclusion of a study on Scripture by two biblical scholars:

> … The discipline of biblical studies lives and thrives today as never before. That is so even though "the Bible" does not exist, if by that we mean a canonically and textually defined entity held in common by all interpreters throughout the ages. There are only Bibles, and they all include texts which exhibit a great deal of diversity in their family history.[5]

Now it is important to note that rarefied studies in the academy have a way of filtering down to the popular culture. The comedian David Cross makes a point rather humorously but nonetheless insidiously. I know because I dared to criticize his quote on Facebook and received considerable "pushback."

> Back when the Bible was written, then edited, then rewritten, then rewritten, then re-edited, then translated from dead languages, then re-translated, then edited, then re-written, then given to kings for them to take their favourite parts, then re-written, then rewritten, then translated again to give to the pope for him to approve, then rewritten, then translated, then rerererere written again … all based on stories that were told 30-90 years AFTER they happened, to people who didn't know how to write … so.[6]

Well these quotes stretch credulity, given the fact that millions of people down through the centuries to the present time have ordered their lives by something that is non-existent. One should not expect complete and utter unanimity about anything never mind the contents of the Bible. But for that reason one does not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Roger Beckwith has warned about expecting a Bible agreed upon by everyone:

> If it means a situation where such unanimity about the identity of the books has been achieved that no individual ever again questions the right of any of them to its place in the Bible, the canon of neither Testament has never been closed, either among Jews or Christians.[7]

If it is true that the original manuscripts of the Bible no longer exist, what does exist is better than a "smoking gun." This phrase derives from police investigations and it refers to incontrovertible evidence for a crime despite the absence of direct eye-witness support. Recently a United States senator changed the metaphor to a "smoking saw" after being informed of evidence of the murder of an Arab journalist working for the Washington Post. Everybody knew what he meant.[8]

As Peter Gentry and others have shown, the transmission of the text of the Old Testament (OT) does not necessarily have to result in distortion as it is clear that there has been one important text type that has been preserved for all intents and purposes from pre-Christian times.[9] He argues cogently that the apparent diversity does not mean a lack of consensus or lack of fidelity. There was a concern for both repetition and resignification and it is important to distinguish between the two. It is extremely telling that resignification concerned mainly the texts that were being repeated. The texts that were being repeated were viewed as unique.

The Nature of Canon/Bible

What is the nature of the Bible, or as theologians often call these books, the "canon"? This term points to a body of literature that was regarded as uniquely important, indispensable for living and learning, because it had divine authority. This is in fact what the word "Bible" comes to mean and it is frequently used today to describe secular books. People speak of the Bible for Chefs, the Bible for Sports Enthusiasts, the Bible for Educators, a Birdwatcher's Bible, etc. This shows the pervasive influence of the term, and it clearly means here the Authoritative Guide for a particular subject. This usage has stemmed from the original use of the term to describe a collection of divinely inspired documents.

The word "Bible" is simply derived from the word *Biblia* in Greek, which means books, and it was first applied as a title to the books of the Torah, the Pentateuch, which were translated from Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria in the third century BC. These were called *the books* in a letter which described the translation of the Septuagint, about a century after the translation.

> When they entered with the gifts which had been sent with them and the valuable parchments, on which the law was inscribed in gold in Jewish characters, for the

> parchment was wonderfully prepared and the connexion between the pages had been so effected as to be invisible, the king as soon as he saw them began to ask them about *the books*. And when they had taken the rolls out of their coverings and unfolded the pages, the king stood still for a long time and then making obeisance about seven times, he said: "I thank you, my friends, and I thank him that sent you still more, and most of all God, *whose oracles these are*."[10]

These books became known as the first edition of the Septuagint,[11] the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, or our OT. These were not just books, they were *the books*. It was the Christian preacher John Chrysostom who first used the term to describe the combination of the OT and New Testament (NT) together in his Homilies on Matthew around 388 AD.[12] Shortly thereafter in medieval times the Latin word *biblia* which can be both plural and singular was used. By that time all the books of the Bible could be contained in one volume, a so-called Pandect, and it became logical to view the word as a singular.

But there should be no mistake; this literature was unique. It was regarded as divine revelation. But it was not dropped from the sky and written by the finger of God—that happened only in the first instance[13]—but it was first proclaimed by people who had divine inspiration and who faithfully transferred that oral proclamation into writing. Most of these people at a later time could be called prophets. God inspired them so that they could see or hear what he revealed and their inspiration extended also to the communication of their message to others. God gave them the revelation and they presented it faithfully in their words. They did not always understand it but they faithfully communicated it. Later their words were recorded *and* the literature was regarded as inspired. It was not made any different by some council or group of powerbrokers who decided for themselves what books were in and what books were out of the collection, "granting the imprimatur of canonicity in a single shining moment of beatitude."[14] The term designating this divinely inspired literature was "canon." The word was first used in 367 AD in a famous letter of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in which he describes books that are canonical as divinely inspired:

> … Inasmuch as some have taken in hand to draw up for themselves an arrangement of the so-called apocryphal books, and to intersperse them with divinely

> inspired scripture … it has seemed good to me also to set forth in order the books which are included in the *canon* and have been delivered to us with accreditation that they are divine.[15]

Many scholars think that because the label is not used until this period, the concept of an authoritative collection of such documents must also be late.[16] But this is hardly the case. For example, there was no word for "religion" in the ancient world, but it would be foolhardy to argue that the concept was also absent. It is similarly the case with the term canon.

The Fact of Canon and its Extent

That there was an authoritative collection of literature from pre-Christian times can be shown by considering a number of strands of evidence in addition to the textual witnesses to these authoritative documents.[17] Moreover, the idea of an absolutely authoritative written communication from God demands a community to which it is addressed, and this further demands an infrastructure that supports it, that is, a center that is devoted to storing, producing, and copying texts.[18] Canon implies the importance of faithful textual transmission.

The first strand of evidence to be considered is the Mishna, a compilation of rabbinical tradition about how to apply these documents to the daily life of Jews. It is a collection of the oral traditions of the rabbis from the first century AD to around 200 AD and it was written down shortly thereafter by the famous Rabbi Judah. It largely consists of rabbinical oral tradition, what is called in the NT "the traditions of the elders."[19] Its entire reason for existence is to seek to apply a collection of authoritative writings to faithful Jews living in much later times. It is sometimes called the Oral Torah, and for Jews it was viewed as equal to the written Torah, but having said that, it bears witness just the same to a body of authoritative literature that was so holy that paradoxically it defiled the hands, which probably was a backhanded way of imparting sanctity to these books. If people had to wash their hands every time they touched this body of literature they would definitely not treat the documents casually.[20] The simple formula in the Mishna for indicating this authoritative literature which defiled the hands was "As it is said." When the Rabbis wanted to support their words with absolute authority, they would

use this formula and then cite a text from a distinct collection of ancient texts. As Peter Pettit has remarked—and he did his doctoral thesis on the use of such quotations in the Mishna—such a statement is a lightning rod for "explicitly alerting the reader to their [the rabbis] reliance on a prior discourse to advance their own."[21] That prior discourse is a collection of authoritative texts, and it remarkably squares with what later comes to be known as the Hebrew Bible. *There are no citations of any other literature under this formula.* The book of Daniel is not cited with this formula but it is clear that it is regarded as canonical. The statistics are as follows:

Scriptures	Torah	Prophets	Writings
Number of Citations	381	85	90
Percentage	68.5	15.2	16.3

There is even a citation from Mishnaic times that was not found in the Mishnah but was preserved in the Talmud. This is called a *baraita,* and it means "that which is external." This particular *baraita* is thus dated to the time of the Mishna from sometime in the first or second century AD. It even provides not only the number of the books but also an order for these authoritative books. It assumes the Torah, the first five books, and then adds: Our Rabbis taught:

> The order of the Prophets (Nevi'im) is—Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets … The order of the Writings (Ketuvim) is—Ruth and the Book of Psalms, and Job, and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations, Daniel, and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles.[22]

Here the "canon" is tripartite and the number is twenty-four.

One could say that the evidence from the Mishnaic period supplies not only a smoking gun but a smoking canon!

The New Testament

The second strand of evidence for the existence of an authoritative collection of literature viewed as divinely inspired is the writings of Jews from the first

century AD, the first one being the NT. It is impossible to understand the early Christian Church without an understanding of a body of literature to which it ascribed absolute authority. This is why it is so difficult to understand ancient as well as modern forms of Christianity that seek "to unhitch" themselves from the OT.[23] Of course this is not just foolhardy; it is impossible.

As Jack Miles has said about the relation of the NT to the OT, it is not just that the NT relies on the OT to ground its authority but that the NT itself is:

> … like a skin upon which every square inch of the Old Testament is tattooed. The Gospel writers particularly cannot move a muscle without bringing some portion of the Hebrew Scriptures into view.[24]

The assumption everywhere is that there is a settled collection of literature to which the Messiah, Jesus, supplies the key for interpretation. His whole life from beginning to end is saturated with OT scripture. His Messianic birth is verified by him being born in Bethlehem, which was predicted by the prophet Micah.[25] His name is called Immanuel based on the word of the prophet Isaiah.[26] When he is baptized at the Jordan, he gets his identity card from the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.[27] "Beloved" comes from Genesis 22 when Abraham was called to sacrifice his beloved son,[28] and "This is my son" derives from Psalm 2:7 where God speaks to the Davidic king: "You are my son, Today I have begotten you." And Isaiah 42:1 identifies the Servant of God who will bring his Torah to the nations this way: You are my chosen one in whom I am well pleased. And then Jesus is driven to the desert for forty days where he succeeds against the Tempter by citing to him the words of holy scripture repeatedly. The only extra-biblical words he uses in his defense is the canonical formula, "It is written."[29] To Satan who tells him to use miraculous powers to feed himself he says, "It is written, 'Human beings don't live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from God's mouth.'"[30] When Satan urges him to test God's willingness to save him by jumping down from the temple mount, he says, "It is written, 'You shall not test the Lord your God.'"[31] Finally, when Satan offers him all the kingdoms of the world, he says to him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only you shall serve.'"[32]

Then when he begins his mission and announces his mission statement in his hometown at Nazareth, he reads from Isaiah 61 and states, "Today this

scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."[33] Throughout his ministry there is a conscious usage of Scripture repeatedly. He is either fulfilling it, teaching it or arguing from it. In debates with opponents Jesus and the early Christian missionaries cite this literature usually with the formula, "It is written" or its equivalent,[34] and it settles the matter. There is nothing more to say. Debates with opponents are never about the extent of the canon but the interpretation of its content. Early Christianity was born with a Bible in its hands, and like the Mishna here are some of the statistics:

Scriptures	Torah	Prophets	Writings
Number of Citations	98	81	74
Percentage	38.7 %	32%	29.3%

The only books not cited are respectively from the Former Prophets, Joshua and Judges, and from the Writings, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Song of Songs, Esther, and Ezra-Nehemiah. Moreover the only books in the NT that do not cite the Tanakh are Philemon, 2-3 John and Revelation, but in the latter's defense it contains allusions to the OT in virtually every paragraph.

Having said this, it is important to point out, that the NT in one case does appear to cite authoritatively a book not included in Israel's Scriptures. The book of Jude seems to cite the apocryphal book of Enoch in this way. Jude refers to the wicked about whom Enoch prophesied,

> …They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.
>
> Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones [15]to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."[35]

The question needs to be asked whether Jude is citing the book as authoritative, a book which never was accepted as canonical in any ancient collection of writings, or was he citing a source in this book who spoke prophetically—Enoch?[36] In my judgment if one wishes to see this as an exception, it proves the rule. It is also the case that sometimes the quotation formula is used for

a text and there is uncertainty where the text is found in the OT. But these are isolated and very marginal cases.[37]

The third and fourth strands of evidence can be grouped together as they are two traditions dealing with the enumerations of the books of the Scriptures and thus the extent of the canon and they both derive from the end of the first century AD. The book of 4 Ezra contains a statement that Ezra the scribe dictated ninety-four books to scribes by divine inspiration, of which seventy were to be read in private and twenty-four were to be read in public.[38] The author makes it clear that the venerable Ezra is responsible for all ninety-four books. This shows that an argument is being made for a wider and more inclusive collection of authoritative books. However, the argument shows what the author is up against during his time: a default, exclusionary canon of twenty-four volumes.[39]

In the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, there is a similar statement about the extent of this authoritative collection. In his defense of Judaism to the Greeks, he states that unlike the Greeks the Jews do not have myriads of books but only twenty-two which have been given for all time because they have been given by God. He further remarks that the time of divine revelation has ceased since the Persian period up to his present (about 400 BC-90 AD) because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. Josephus even arranges the books in a unique order according to generic categories.

Before dealing with the question of the number of books in Josephus' canon, it is important to stop and reflect on what Josephus does say about this group of texts. The texts have divine authority and none can be added to them because the period of canonical, prophetic activity has come to an end. The age of divine revelation is over.[40] In Josephus's full statement there are a number of factors at work stressing this closed collection of divinely authoritative books: a specific listing of books, a clear organization, a specific text form, a particular epoch (now over) and a clear consensus among Jews. This is what one noted scholar has called "a clear and coherent theological doctrine of canon."[41]

But what about the number twenty-two? This seems an obvious contradiction with the previously mentioned number of twenty-four mentioned, but the following points should be taken into consideration: (1) Both Origen (184-253 AD), Epiphanius (315-403 AD) and Jerome (347-420 AD) mention that there was a tradition among the Jews of a twenty-two book canon by combining Judges with Ruth and Lamentations with Jeremiah.[42] (2)

Probably the order is artificial, as the number is obtained by having the number of the books tally with the Hebrew alphabet which has twenty-two letters.[43] Also it is telling that there has never been found these particular books combined on one ancient Hebrew scroll (Judges with Ruth, Jeremiah with Lamentations).

Another strand of evidence for the smoking canon is the plethora of pseudonymous literature during the so-called intertestamental period (400 BC-100 AD). There was a vast variety of literature written during this period which was not included in this authoritative collection. "A myriad of books were written under pseudonyms: Apocalypse of Adam, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Elijah, Testament of Moses, 4 Ezra, Joseph and Asenath, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, etc. While there may be many reasons for the use of pseudonyms, the most reasonable explanation is to secure canonical authority for the literature by dating it to a period during the exact succession of the prophets."[44] This obviously demonstrates that the "canonical" collection had to have been established earlier. Many of the authors of these books were using the names of people who lived during the period of divine revelation when prophecy was alive and well. This was their way of trying to gain canonical prestige, since such people would have been inspired. It is telling that the only book that fooled everyone was Daniel![45]

A final strand of evidence dates to the early second century BC where there is a passage in a book which is a profound meditation on the Hebrew Scriptures through a rehearsal of many of the heroes in biblical times. What is striking though in Ben Sira's "In Praise of the Fathers" is a list of spiritual forbears starting with Adam and proceeding to the end of the biblical period before it returns to Adam again.[46] He cites figures associated with the biblical books *as if they were household names*, and he describes the twelve Minor Prophets not as individuals but as a booked entity: The Twelve Prophets.[47] Any reasonable conclusion of this evidence is that Ben Sira is someone for whom there is a defined collection of writings that are absolutely authoritative for him and his readers. In fact two generations later his grandson translated his book into Greek and described his grandfather's treatise three times as a fruitful meditation on the biblical revelation subdivided into three parts: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.[48]

The Reason for Canon and Criteria for Inclusion

If it has been demonstrated that there is a clear body of literature which is defined as inspired by God and it is evident that it had to derive from a certain epoch, when God inspired people with his words, it is not unreasonable to describe this text in the later terminology coined by Athanasius—canon. What is the reason for canon—what is the rationale for divine revelation written down in permanent form?

It is obvious that communication does not require writing and written texts. The primary way to communicate is with speech—oral forms of discourse, but there are other ways to communicate such as non-verbal signs, etc. and in the biblical text prophets often used non-verbal signs to communicate. One only has to think of Jeremiah smashing pots,[49] or Ezekiel burrowing a hole through a wall.[50] But one important distinctive of both Judaism and Christianity is that God is a speaking God. Thus it is fitting that the Bible which is the record of God's communication begins with a speaking God. God speaks and the chaos and darkness are banished.[51] Researchers on narrative style in Hebrew literature show the importance of speech and dialogue, and when characters first enter a story, their first speech is revelatory of their character.[52] Thus it is no accident that God's first word creates light![53] And as the Bible continues it is clear that God's speech is absolutely central to the flourishing of human life.[54] His speech is found in non-verbal ways through the surrounding creation but it is absolutely necessary to have a verbal revelation to make sense of it all. The failure to live by this interpretation results in humanity living in death and darkness. But the God of grace continues to speak, calling out in auditions, dreams, visions to special people in order to bring light again into human lives and to teach them that humanity does not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.[55]

Throughout Genesis this happens. There is no concern for revelation in written form at this point.[56] God does not communicate to Abraham or the patriarchs in clay tablets, or on papyrus but in other forms: auditions[57] or visions[58] or through angelic visitants.[59]

But as the family of Israel, with whom God has made a covenant, grows into a nation, significant changes occur. There is a clear development. For the first time God actually begins to live with his people in a tabernacle, and this visible structure of his divine presence is accompanied by a document

which inscribes his will and is a sign of the covenant. This, of course, is the "marriage certificate" of the Sinai covenant when God addresses the people from the top of the mountain in direct speech. But with the building of the tabernacle, a home for the deity, and the recording of his speech on two documents carved in stone, there is a copy for each of the covenant partners. These documents are deposited in a receptacle which serves as the footstool of the invisible throne of God in the inner sanctum of the tabernacle.[60] Here God takes up residence in Israel as their divine king. Thus, the tabernacle complete with the documents is a portable Mount Sinai. God's presence was marked by God's word written in permanent form.

Why was the divine will written down by the very finger of God? Why could it not be just given orally? This was to ensure for all time the permanence of covenant, a record of the covenant, and the accuracy of God's will for future generations. In addition, Moses presented the people with a book, comprised of a number of additional stipulations, which was called the Book of the Covenant.[61] It is significant that the Ten Words were placed in a receptacle representing the visible footstool of the invisible throne of Yahweh, in the innermost sanctum of the Tabernacle. The Book of the Covenant was most surely placed nearby.[62] Here was Israel's first Bible, and it was written by God himself, and his divine messenger Moses. Its canonical stature is shown by its conspicuous presence at the heart of sacred space.

At the heart of covenant, then, is God's presence with his people in the tabernacle. At the heart of the tabernacle is the invisible divine throne resting above the visible footstool the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Words, and nearby the Book of the Covenant. Presence and Text go hand in hand and God rules through the obedience of his people to his divine will. It is a common view among scholarship that written texts become paramount after the destruction of the temple but both divine presence and divine word are important from the beginning.[63]

By God's word being written down for not only the present generation but for future ones, God would not need to "reinvent the wheel" of Sinai for every generation. It was there as a permanent record for Israel through time. Thus Exodus—Sinai—is the real Genesis of the Bible as a written document. Meredith Kline has aptly called this first written revelation a seminal or nuclear canon.[64]

The Canon, the Alphabet and Literacy

At this stage it is helpful to consider the context of ancient history in which this theological revolution is made possible. First of all, the later Hebrew Bible consists of written language, mostly in Hebrew. It is worth noting the importance of the invention of the alphabet without which the Bible would not be in the form it is in today. The invention of the alphabet which preceded this revelation resulted in an intellectual and social revolution of stupendous consequences.[65] Writing had been around since the end of the fourth millennium BC in Sumer, and shortly thereafter in Egypt. But it consisted of hundreds of symbols that only a small class of elites could memorize and utilize with proficiency. But with the invention of the alphabet over 1000 years later probably in the area of Sinai by Semitic slaves, all the sounds of speech could be reduced to a few dozen symbols.[66] This means a much greater access to literacy. While some scholars like William Foxwell Albright might exaggerate the proliferation of literacy and its ramifications with his statement that even a mere schoolboy can learn twenty-two letters in a few days, the point is to be made, that the invention of the alphabet makes the democratization of literacy at least possible.[67] And with the recent discovery of an abcedary—an alphabet written on a stone found *in situ* in a house in a small village in southwestern Israel dating to the 9th century BC in Tell Zayit suggests that people even in the countryside were learning to write and read.[68]

The alphabet and its dissemination means also that more written texts can be potentially be produced, which also means communication's transcendence of space and time. One does not have to be personally present in time or space for someone to receive a message. A text can be sent to a destination one thousand miles away without necessitating the presence of the communicator, and it can address someone a millennium later, long after the original author is dead. Oral messages can obviously be unreliable and subject to change and distortion which is minimized by written texts.

The genesis of the Bible then takes place in the midst of an epistemological and social revolution as well as a religious one—the God of the Universe begins to make himself known in texts. As one of my esteemed mentors once remarked, "The gods of all the other nations revealed themselves in images, but Israel found her God in the Text."[69] This surely provided an additional theological motivation for literacy in Israel.

The Deuteronomic Revolution

A generation after Sinai, Moses and the people are on the verge of entering the Promised Land so Moses gives Israel his "swan song," before they enter the land. This takes the form of a covenant renewal speech which he presents to them on the plains of Moab, and after which he commits it to writing, probably on a papyrus scroll. In this document, which is largely the core of the book of Deuteronomy, he summarizes the Sinai covenant, adapts it for life in Canaan, revises it and tries to capture its essence, which is to love God with all one's heart, soul and mind.[70] It is the equivalent of the OT Sermon on the Mount, or perhaps Jesus' Upper Room Discourse before his death.

Moses makes provision for the people so that they will not forget this document by urging them to have a public proclamation of its content to the entire nation every seven years, in order not to forget their identity and vocation. To that end, the document is entrusted to Levitical priests who will safeguard it near the ark in the sanctuary, along with other documents which would be there.[71]

Moreover, it is not just the people as a whole who are to listen to this document being read for a few hours every sabbatical year. It would be easy to forget the contents of a document if it was dusted off every seven years and read once; thus this ritual action must have been regarded as a covenant renewal ceremony, much like the renewing of wedding vows.[72] But it is also expected that each family and its members will so commit the contents of this document to memory so that by internalizing its content, they will externalize its ethic. Thus in the Shema' (Deut 6:4-9) there is the call for every Israelite to affirm God's uniqueness, devote their affection, will and heart to God's service, internalize the words of the Torah, repeat them to the next generation, throughout space and throughout time. The whole point is to take the words from the text and write them on the tablets of the heart.[73] Ritual measures must ensure that this happens. They must bind them as a sign on their hands in order to motivate action, and place them as a band between their eyes to inspire vision. But moreover, they are to keep their memory alive, by writing the words on the doorposts of their home and on their gates. This is probably no more than a functional literacy at this time, but it is meaningless, if people in the home cannot read and write in at least a rudimentary way,[74] and it is meaningless if there

is not some exemplar copy from which these words are taken. Such rudimentary literacy and rudimentary infrastructure are demanded because of the importance of the written word. It is not any word but the word of the Living God.

This all receives poignant embodiment in the striking example of the law for an Israelite king.[75] In addition to being restricted in a number of behaviors, he must take his orders from the real King of Israel, and go to the Levitical priests and in their presence write out for himself a copy of this Torah. Why? For general knowledge? No! Rather, as the nation's leader he must personally incarnate the Torah as a model for his people.

> The law is to permeate the king's behavior in every sphere, whether political, administrative, judicial, or military. He should be a model of what was required of every Israelite.[76]

Where each Israelite home must have some Torah written in their homes, the king must write out a complete copy of the Torah for his personal use so that he might read it daily in order to conform his life to its values, and thus rule his people wisely under the rule of Yahweh. The king must be more than functionally literate, and he writes his own copy from an exemplar of the Torah in the possession of the priests, who are probably responsible for safeguarding it, preserving it and transmitting it.[77]

These examples show that alongside a hearing, oral culture there is developing a writing culture, and it is not extrinsic to the faith of Israel but intrinsic to it.

Expanding the Canon

Before Moses dies, he establishes a prophetic institution that will carry on the proclamation of the divine will so that Sinai can be continued, as there will need to be a further revelation of the divine will for Israel.[78] Criteria for distinguishing true from false prophets are mainly twofold: the prophets' words must conform to the Covenant; their predictions must come true.[79] So here is a provision for future revelation from God through this institution, which therefore implies an expanded canon.

Indeed a generation after Moses, Joshua, a type of new Moses, renews the covenant with the people in the land. He writes the words of the Torah

on an altar,[80] and then records the renewal in the book of the Torah of God, which is placed in or near the sanctuary in Shechem.[81] The authoritative literature is expanding.

In the historical accounts which follow Joshua—Judges, Samuel and Kings—Israel is constantly forgetting the covenant. There are numerous accounts of prophets arising and seeking to steer Israel on a course correction because of its covenant amnesia. They are constantly calling Israel back to the covenant. There are about twenty-five predictions and fulfillments in this literature which show the importance and power of prophecy.[82] Later entire collections of prophetic speeches are gathered and recorded because these people were regarded as speaking a word of God in line with Moses. To each of these prophetic collections titles were added: "The words of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw."[83] "The Words of Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, two years before the earthquake."[84] "The vision of Nahum of Elqosh."[85]

Gene Tucker writes about these superscriptions which have been added to the prophetic speeches to confirm their divine authority:

> The specific intentions of the prophetic superscriptions are reflected above all in the particular vocabulary used to classify the books. The basic concern behind this language is the theological problem of authority and revelation. Thus the fundamental intention of the superscriptions is to identify the prophetic books as the word of God. What had originally been claimed by the prophets for their individual oral addresses is now claimed for words written down to be copied, read, and therefore to live for future generations.[86]

Thus we have another collection being added to the Mosaic Torah which has prophetic authority, four historical books which stress the importance of the prophetic word in the life of the nation emphasizing that this word changes "the gears of history"[87] with its predictive power, followed by four collections of oracles of prophets who spoke to Israel.[88]

But what about documents such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job? Some of these contain writings that are very early and even earlier than material in the Prophets. In Israelite epistemology it needs to be remembered that there was not only the idea of revelation through intuitive prophetic insight such as God speaking to a person through a dream or vision or audition; there was also the concept of God speaking through creation in a clear way so that one could

use reason to draw conclusions and consequently order one's life accordingly. This is the gift of wisdom. When Yahweh was choosing a king for Israel, he told Samuel to go to Jesse's house to anoint the next king.[89] How did the prophet know which of Jesse's sons was Yahweh's choice? He did not listen to the voice of reason, but instead listened to the voice of Yahweh speaking in his head indicating the choice of David, the youngest son. In a similar situation when Solomon was confronted with the choice of determining the correct mother of a child, he devised a test which enabled him to make the right selection. His decision was made with all the certainty of a prophet but he did not listen to the voice of God speaking in his head; he listened to his reason which heard the word of God reflected in the voice of the real mother.[90]

This is a different epistemology than that of the prophet but it is no less valid. Thus for example, the Torah reveals the command directly from the divine voice at Sinai: Do not commit adultery.[91] The Prophets would complement this with a direct word to an adulterer "Thus says Yahweh … because you have despised the word of Yahweh, the sword will never depart from your house."[92] The sages would simply reflect on life and offer examples that show the results of adultery in graphic ways.[93] As Derek Kidner observes,

> The blunt "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" of the Law and the urgent "Thus saith the LORD" of the Prophets are joined now by the cooler comments of the teacher and the often anguished questions of the learner. Where the bulk of the Old Testament tells us simply to obey and believe, this part of it summons us to think hard as well as humbly; to keep our eyes open, to use our conscience and common sense, and not to shirk the most disturbing questions.[94]

Thus there is provision for another collection of written texts which gives divine insight through the gift of extraordinary wisdom. This wisdom reinforces the Prophets and the Torah and sometime expands on their meaning. Thus Daniel in exile is reflecting on the prophetic books and wondering what has happened to Jeremiah's prediction that the exile will last seventy years.[95] He is given revelatory insight that the seventy years really means seventy weeks of years. Many of the Psalms are thus addressing God because of what he has said in the Torah and the Prophets. Psalm 119, in which there are eight different terms for the Word of God, urges a profound exercise in meditation on the Torah, in a "rosary" of 176 verses. Chronicles, one of the last books

written is nothing but an extended theological reflection on the books of the Torah and the Prophets, and the Chronicler has been called the Bible's first theologian.[96] In fact as Georg Steins has recently written, "the exposed position of Chronicles at the end of the Writings as well as the synthesizing and integrating character of the work … are appropriately explained as being due to the concluding character of Chronicles."[97]

Updating and Editing of Canon

There is not much information about the transmission of these texts, their editing and revision, as well as their preservation during the biblical period, and yet there must have been in place the necessary infrastructure for this process to occur: scribal activity, scribal training, and the ingredients necessary for textual production: ink, papyrus, desks, etc.[98]

Information can be gleaned through incidental means. For example, there are references here and there to scribal activity such as the following: "Here are some more of Solomon's proverbs, transcribed at the court of Hezekiah king of Judah:" (Prov 25:1). This is evidence of royal scribes during Hezekiah's time transcribing a collection of proverbs and adding them to a pre-existing collection. Thus one scholar can write: "It is just this type of *disinterested* statement that can be the key to historical research."[99] Unfortunately such evidence is meagre.[100]

It is known that texts were edited and supplemented for later audiences within the biblical period, and this shows their prestige and authority. It was important that the texts be understood if the faith they were communicating was to be transmitted to future generations! For example, when Abram enters the land of Canaan for the first time, an editor adds, "The Canaanites were then in the land."[101] If Moses was the author of Genesis, he would not have written this parenthetical statement because the land was teeming with Canaanites when he was alive. But from a later perspective there were no Canaanites left, thus the need for an editor to "update" the text for a later audience. Another good example is found in 1 Samuel 9. In this case a later editor clarifies a word in his source which is no longer understood by his audience. In the context Saul and his servant are searching for lost donkeys. They are about to give up when the servant reminds Saul that in a nearby town there is someone who has the gift of supernatural knowledge and can

tell them the location of the lost animals. They decide to go to find this person and get the information they need. In the source the individual is called a "seer" but a later audience no longer understands what this word means, so an editor "updates" his source with a more recognizable term:

> In Israel, in olden days, when anyone used to go to consult God, he would say, "Come on, let us go to the seer," for a man who is now called a "prophet" used to be called a "seer" in olden days.[102]

Two points need to be emphasized: (1) the fact that an editor is updating the source shows that the source has been written down and it is being read or heard, and this must mean that it is important. It needs to be updated because people need to know the meaning of its content. This is one of the important distinctives of canonical material. (2) The editor does not change the source but leaves it intact while updating it. The source is regarded as too important to change. But it needs explanation. Again, the respect of the editor to the source shows the importance of the text.

Such editing took place in other ways too. At the end of Ecclesiastes, an editor supplies a statement which helps explain the book while emphasizing the authority of the document:

> Furthermore, while being a sage, Qoheleth taught the people what he himself knew, having weighed, studied and emended many proverbs. [10]Qoheleth took pains to write in an attractive style and by it to convey truths. [11]The sayings of a sage are like goads, like pegs positioned by shepherds: the one shepherd finds a use for both. [12]Furthermore, my child, you must realise that there are many books to which there seems no end, and much study exhausts the body. [13]To sum up the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the duty of everyone. [14]For God will call all our deeds to judgement, all that is hidden, be it good or bad.[103]

Here the editor, clearly distinguished from the author (Qoheleth), is ensuring that the audience does not mistake the meaning of the author's words.[104] This can only be the case if there are other documents which contain control beliefs to which Qoheleth's words align, and another set of documents ("of many books to which there is no end") to which they do not. Thus the clarification of the editor is necessary.

In other examples editors organize books such as has already been seen with Proverbs. Proverbs consists of collections of Proverbs, mainly from Solomon 970-930 BC. But there existed at one time a number of separate collections of Proverbs. One of them was added to another collection during the time of Hezekiah (715-687 BC) as is evident from Proverbs 25 "These are more Proverbs of Solomon transcribed by the scribes of Hezekiah king of Judah." In this case the editor added another independent collection of Solomonic Proverbs to a first collection at least 200 years later. The same could be said for the book of Psalms which existed in different stages but is produced in a final form so that the worshipping community might have one book at their disposal as a source for worship. An editor organized the psalms into five separate collections and added "doxologies" at the end of each.[105]

Canonical Closure

According to Jewish tradition there came a time when the biblical books were completed because prophecy ceased.[106] For example the author of 1 Maccabees knew that revelation had ceased, as noted by Jonathan Goldstein:

> For our author [1 Maccabees], it was an article of faith that prophecy had ceased after Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and had not reappeared during the event covered by his history. The return of prophecy would come shortly before God's ultimate victory.[107]

When this happened no more books could be added nor could editing continue. This would be a prime opportunity for canonical editors to ensure the importance of all the texts, and draw attention to their importance as the Word of God. Thus it is not without accident that if we look at one of the oldest arrangements of the canon, there are signals of closure.[108] Thus at or near the beginning of each major section of these books there is an extraordinary importance assigned to the word of God. At the beginning of the Torah, in Genesis 1:1-5 God created the world by his Word and established the rhythm of the day and night with that word. At the beginning of the Prophets, in Joshua 1:8-9 the new leader of Israel is told to meditate on the Torah day and night in order to be successful in leading his people to inherit the Promised Land. Near the beginning of the Writings, in Psalm

1:2-3, the same instruction is given to every Israelite in order to be successful and prosperous. The Word of God is life-giving.

Also at the end of each of the major sections, there is an extraordinary emphasis on the Word. Thus at the end of the Torah in Deuteronomy 34:10-12 there is the reminder of the unique contribution of Moses' words. They are incomparable. Then at the end of the Prophets in Malachi 4:5-6,[109] Moses representing the Torah, and Elijah representing the second division of the collection, the Prophets, are combined: Remember the Torah of Moses … and prepare for the coming of Elijah. Finally, at the end of the Writings in 2 Chronicles 36:21-23, there are clear references to all three collections: The Torah, the Prophets and the Writings. The reason for Israel's exile of seventy years was to give the land a sabbatical for all the years that Israel had not kept the law of sabbatical years. Jeremiah in the Prophets had predicted seventy years of exile, and he was just referencing the Levitical curse in the Torah for an exile of seventy years for sabbatical violation.[110] This mention of seventy years directly connects with the Writings where Daniel in chapter 9 reinterprets the seventy years of exile prophesied in the Prophets to be seventy weeks of years before Israel's exile is finally over and the Messiah comes. Such an arrangement is hardly arbitrary but emphasizes the importance of the Word of God. Meditation on these Scriptures gives life until the Messiah comes.

The Closed Canon

In the meantime Israel was to study and wait for the new act of God. But this was not to be a passive waiting. It is interesting that when Moses described the importance of what happened on Sinai to the next generation, he took pains to emphasize that the people did not see an image in the fire on the mountain representing any creature but rather they heard a voice speaking![111] The words of this voice were then to be transcribed.

Repeatedly in the text Moses stresses that Israel should never stray from these words but keep them, and communicate them to their children: indeed the real point of the history lesson is to respond in love and make the invisible God visible by embodying his will, expressed in a text, in a community through time. Thus Moses tells them not to leave the words on the tablet or scroll:

> [6]Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." [7]What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? [8]And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?[112]

Thus in a sense the people of Israel would be in a sense the smoke from the fire of Sinai. When this failed, Yahweh made the promise that he would one day himself write the Words of the Torah into the hearts of his people and forgive their sins.[113] They would be the smoke of the fiery canon.

Final Thoughts

The Hebrew Scriptures are not just the *raison d'être* for Israel but also for Judaism and Christianity. Without the Hebrew Scriptures it is not just possible to understand Judaism or Christianity, and this is one of the most important points to be made about the importance of the OT for the Christian faith. Christianity without the OT is like the last quarter of a story without the first three quarters.[114] But it is most appropriate in the light of what has been said already that the story climaxes in the life of someone who was the living word of God—Jesus Christ and in a sense terminates in the complete embodiment of the Word of God—the Messiah of Israel, whose goal was to establish a new covenant in which the Torah would finally be written on human hearts. He is the *raison d'être* of Scripture, its goal and *telos*.

It is interesting that after his crucifixion, when the resurrected Messiah walked with his dejected disciples on the Emmaus Road and opened up the Scriptures to them, they felt something different.[115] Those Scriptures were clearly the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, the traditional three-fold division of the Jewish Tanak.[116] When Jesus departed and they finally recognized his identity, they exclaimed, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he walked with us on the road and opened unto us the Scriptures." It became the intent of these disciples not just to let the Scriptures remain on the page, but to be transcribed onto the lives of the followers of Jesus, so that they could be read and known by all.[117]

It does not seem like rocket science to figure out that these texts would

be written down precisely because they were so extremely important and would function as part of any core curriculum for Israelite education. These are not just any words. They are the words of the living God, which are to be translated into people's lives. Educational philosopher Ted Newell remarks perceptively about the revelation of the name Yahweh:

> The name Yahweh was itself revealed knowledge: God himself was thought to have given it to Moses, a founding prophet and leader. But it meant, "I am that I am." The personal God who called Israel into existence underpins the existence of the universe. In such a view of the world, education is supremely about passing on the secret that makes sense of all else … The descendants of Abraham thus believed themselves to bear the only reliable knowledge of the true God.[118]

The educational implications of this are staggering, but for these implications to become a reality there must be the development of a particular infrastructure: an alphabet, written texts, literacy both professional and functional, both oral and scribal, locations and materials for the production, transmission and preservation of texts, a class of individuals to meet this demand, as well as another class to interpret, instruct and explain the texts. These documents are not just any old texts. Israel had to get them right and it was the desire of the Living God that they be translated into human lives. These are the words of the only true God, the creator and sustainer of all reality, the words that bear the only reliable knowledge of the true God, "the words that make sense of all else."[119]

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1 I would like to thank Peter Gentry for his helpful comments on this essay.

2. "Sacred Words: History of the Bible Conference." Phoenix Seminary: February 21-22, 2020.
3. Susan E. Gillingham, *One Bible, Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 112.
4. Ibid.
5. John C. Reeves and James E. Bowley, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible:' Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* XXV (2003): 17. For similar sentiments in a recent book see John Barton, *A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019).
6. https://www.google.com/search?q=david+cross+bible&client=firefox-b-d&channel=trow2&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=g543zS8TYcr7iM%252CzJdVpUeRVD2LnM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kTr4ulxVmKqRCBR1GXGM-uvQPLSBA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPkNnr2P3tAhUCTN8KHczqAVoQ9QF6BAgQEAE&biw=1696&bih=757
7. Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: And Its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 275.

8. This refers to the means by which the body of Jamal Kashyoggi was dismembered after he was murdered in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-04/cia-evidence-tying-saudi-prince-to-murder-called-a-smoking-saw.
9. See his opening lecture for the conference, included in this issue of *SBJT*.
10. Letter of Aristeas, 177-178, 310, 317. Emphasis mine.
11. See e.g., Jennifer Mary Dines, *The Septuagint* (New York: A&C Black, 2004).2004 Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015). For an older study see Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993).
12. See e.g. Homily 16, and 72.
13. This is of course a reference to the Ten Words in Exodus 20, which were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18, cf. 24:12). Of course they were not literally dropped from the sky, as they were inscribed on rock from the earth.
14. The quote is from Andrew Plaks who specifically summarizes a conclusion of scholars studying the concept of canon in the ancient world that a late extrinsic imprimatur of canonicity being placed on a collection of books is a myth not only for biblical canons but for extra-biblical ones as well. "Afterword. Canonization in the Ancient World: The View from Farther East," in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (ed., M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 270. In the popular literature this view is pervasive. See, e.g. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).
15. Emphasis mine. For the Greek text, translation and commentary of Athanasius's 39th Festal Letter see Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 118–29.
16. So e.g., among many Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (ed., Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 21–30.
17. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2001); Armin Lange, "'They Confirmed the Reading' (y. Ta`an 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of the Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with Emanuel Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday* (ed., Armin Lange, Matthias Weigold, and Józef Zsengellér; Forschungen Zur Religion Und Literatur 230; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 29–80.
18. Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
19. E.g., Matt 15:2.
20. F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 34. "And why did the Rabbis impose uncleanness upon a Book? Said R. Mesharsheya: Because originally food of *terumah* was stored near the Scroll of the Law, with the argument, This is holy and that is holy [It was therefore appropriate since the food and the scriptures were holy]. But when it was seen that they [the Sacred Books] came to harm, [i.e. they would be eaten by rodents attracted by the food] the Rabbis imposed uncleanness upon them." *Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat* XIV a. For a contrasting view which sees the concept like the dangerous holiness of the ark of the covenant see Timothy H. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," *Journal of Theological Studies NS* 61 (2010): 501–15. Regardless, the phrase indicated the holy sanctity of the books. For further study see Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 278-283; McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 58-63. As McDonald points out, the expression was probably first used in a debate that Rabbi Johannan ben Zakkai (50 C.E.) had with the Sadducees about texts which defiled the hands. Evidently the Sadducees thought it was ironical to impute contamination to sacred texts. They wondered how it could be that the Scriptures defiled the hands while the writings of Homer did not. They were answered, "As is our love for them so is their uncleanness—that no man makes spoons from the bones of his father or mother" in contrast to the bones of an ass [because the bones of an ass are clean but the bones of a parent are unclean and thus in a completely different "untouchably reverent" category (*Mishna Yadaim* 4:6).
21. Peter Acker Pettit, *Shene'eamar: The Place of Scripture Citation in the Mishna* (Claremont Graduate School: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1993), 1.
22. *Baba Bathra* 14b.
23. See e.g., Iain Provan's response to Andy Stanley's contemporary counsel for the Christian Church. https://www.christianpost.com/voices/on-rightly-hitching-our-wagons-a-response-to-andy-stanley.html. But this was of course the counsel of the ancient heretic, Marcion of Sinope, in the middle of the second century AD but certainly in a much more drastic form.
24. Jack Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (London/New York: Vintage, 2002), 65.

25. Micah 5:2 (Heb 5:1); Matt 2:5.
26. Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23.
27. Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.
28. Gen 22:2.
29. E.g., Matt 4:4, 7, 10. It is true that he adds "again" in verse 7 and also "Depart Satan" and "for" in verse 10 but these words just add to the authority of the words of Deuteronomy, the book from which he is citing. In Luke's version no words are added to the citation formula, although the third time Jesus uses a variant of the citation formula. See Luke 4:4, 8, 12.
30. Deut 8:3.
31. Deut 6:16.
32. Deut 6:13.
33. Luke 4:17-21.
34. E.g., see Matt 1:22, 2:5, 9:13; Mark 2:25. See further the discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, "The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the NT and the Mishnah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 297–307.
35. Jude 13-15. Cf. 1 Enoch 1:9.
36. Peter J. Gentry and Andrew M. Fountain, "Reassessing Jude's Use of Enochic Traditions (With Notes on Their Later Reception History)," *Tyndale Bulletin* 68 (2017): 261–86. The authors point out that Jude uses canonical sources first in his literary structure, followed by non-canonical ones. Enochic traditions are used against those false teachers who are misusing them. In their judgment there is no concrete evidence for a book of Enoch at this point.
37. E.g., John 7:38; James 4:5. Also other authorities are cited but their words are not regarded as canonical. E.g. Paul cites other authors to make a point without giving them scriptural authority. See Acts 17:28 where a Greek poet is cited (Aratus).
38. 4 Ezra 14:19-48.
39. In this early context books read in public had much more authority than those consulted in private.
40. Against Apion 8:37-43. For further reflection on Josephus and the canon see Stephen G. Dempster, "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (ed., D. A Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2016), 321–61.
41. F. M. Cross, "The Text Behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible," in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed., H. Shanks; New York: Vintage, 1993), 139–55, esp. 152.
42. For the relevant texts and discussion see Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis:* Origen (pp. 83-98); Epiphanius (pp. 156-170); Jerome (pp. 197-215).
43. As is explicitly mentioned by church fathers.
44. Dempster, "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment," 344.
45. This is of course the view of John Van Seters and many scholars would have to accept his conclusions. See John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 373, cf. 79. For a discussion see Dempster, "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment," 345.
46. Ben Sira 44-50. For discussion see S. G. Dempster, "From Many Texts to One: The Formation of the Hebrew Bible," in *The World of the Aramaeans I: Biblical Studies in Honour of Paul-Eugene Dion* (ed., P. Michèle Daviau Daviau, John William Wevers, and Michael Weigl, vol. I; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 24–29.
47. 49:10.
48. The three divisions are actually called first, "The law, the prophets, and the other books that followed them," "the law, the prophets, and the other books of the fathers," and "the law, the prophecies, and the rest of the books." For further discussion see Dempster, "The World of the Aramaeans I," 29–30.
49. Jer 19.
50. Ezek 12.
51. Gen 1:1-3.
52. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 79–110.
53. Gen 1:3.
54. Gen 2:16-17, cf. 3:1-2, Deut 8:3, and Ps 119.
55. E.g. Gen 12:1-3, 7, 13:14-15, 15:4, 7, 22:1-2.
56. One exception may be the "book of Adam" in Gen 5:1.
57. Gen 12:1-3.
58. Gen 15:1-6.

59. Gen 18.
60. Ex 40:20.
61. Ex 24:1-8.
62. This can be gathered by the placement of later documents in close proximity: Cf. Deut 31:26; Josh 24:26.
63. After the destruction of the temple the Word becomes more important but it had a crucial status before the destruction as well. Cf. Donald Harman Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2001); Konrad Schmid, "The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 289–305.
64. Meredith Kline, "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (ed., J. Barton Payne; Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1970), 265–79.
65. Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982).
66. Albert Carl Sundberg et al., *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1964).
67. To be sure there are problems with assuming that literacy became widespread in ancient Israelite culture, and that literacy means the ability to both read and write at a high level. On some of the problems see Sean M. Warner, "The Alphabet: An Innovation and Its Diffusion," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 1 (January 1980): 81–90. If there was not a widespread literacy, there was probably a broader more functional literacy for non-elites (other than priests, officials, and sages). On the distinction see William M. Schniedewind, "Orality and Literacy in Israel," *Religious Studies Review* 26 (2000): 327–32.
68. And not just at government centers of administration. See Ron E. Tappy and P.Kyle McCarter Jr., eds., *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008).
69. Paul Dion (personal communication).
70. Deut 6:4-5.
71. Deut 31:26.
72. Peter J. Gentry, "The Relationship of Deuteronomy to the Covenant at Sinai," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18 (2014): 35–57.
73. See e.g., Prov 3:3. For an elaboration of this truth see David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David M Carr, "Torah on the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010): 17–39.
74. "…the commandment of Deut 6:9, 11:20 presumed that every head of a family could write": Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), Vol 1:49. But cf. Young who argues that it is correctly within the semantic range of the Hebrew verb (to write) to include "to have someone write for you." "These verses need imply nothing more that a scribe, priest or government official was expected to be within reach of every Israelite at need." Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 250. Even so the words were probably more than decoration or symbol. While Young is probably accurate to conclude that as Israelite society developed in the first millennium BC, it "was a literate society in that the use of writing was widespread and for many a day-to-day part of life, the majority probably had access to this world only through intermediaries," Deuteronomy would suggest that the ideal at least was a functional literacy. See Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 420.
75. Deut 17:14-20.
76. Christopher Wright cited in Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 209.
77. For the pervasive influence of this text on Israelite society see Grant, *The King as Exemplar*.
78. Deut 18:9-22.
79. Deut 13:1-6, 18:15-22.
80. Jos 8:31-35.
81. Jos 24:26.
82. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (trans. David Stalker, vol. 1; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 334–46.
83. Isa 1:1.
84. Amos 1:1.
85. Nahum 1:1.
86. Gene M. Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of the Canon," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 68.

87. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, 1:344.
88. Thus the Hebrew Bible terms the first four 'historical' books, Former Prophets, and the latter collections, Latter Prophets.
89. 1 Sam 16.
90. 1 Kgs 3:16-28.
91. Ex 20:14.
92. 2 Sam 12:7-10.
93. Prov 7.
94. Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 11.
95. Dan 9.
96. Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Theology of the Chronicler," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 8 (1973): 101–16.
97. Georg Steins, "Torah Binding and Canon Closure," in *The Shape of the Writings* (ed., Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone; Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 16; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 275. Steins, of course, dates Chronicles late, but his arguments for a later dating are unnecessary. This is also not to deny that there are other sequences of the Writings that conclude differently but Chronicles is unique in this regard. It is interesting that Jesus may have viewed Chronicles as the conclusion to the canon in Luke 11:50-51 in which he summarizes the sin of Israel calling down God's justice for the shedding of innocent blood from the first book (Abel in Genesis 4:8-10) to the last (Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:21-22). The entire canonical history necessitates judgment. For a different view which disagrees with this echo of the canon see H. G. L. Peels, "The Blood from Abel to Zechariah and the Canon of the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlicher Wissenschaft* 113 (2001): 583–601.
98. On the importance of infrastructure necessary for the production of texts see William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); see also Philip Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel: A Study of Biblical Hebrew Terms for Writing Materials and Implements* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2020). I am indebted to Peter Gentry for this last reference.
99. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 76.
100. But for the available evidence see texts like Jer 36, Isa 8, and Ps 45. For an assessment of all the evidence see Schneidewind.
101. Gen 12:6b.
102. 1 Sam 9:9.
103. Eccl 12:9-14.
104. "If there is any consensus among modern interpreters of Ecclesiastes, it is that the conclusion of the book does *not* comprise Qoheleth's own words … This epilogue serves to confirm the sapiential character of the putative author and to bring his message into the biblical mainstream:" William P. Brown, *Ecclesiastes* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2011), 116. Some scholars "resent" the heavy hand of the editor and argue that the editing represents a baptism of an essentially secular document into orthodoxy. But in my judgment the editor is ensuring a canonical reading, i.e. a reading in line with other documents.
105. Pss 41:14, 72:18-20, 89:53, 106:48, 145:21. Five concluding psalms each beginning and ending with praise conclude the entire book: 146-150.
106. See 1 Macc 4:45b-46, 9:27, 14:41.
107. Jonathan A. Goldstein, 1 *Maccabees* (Anchor Bible 41; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 12–13. For more evidence and discussion of different views of the implication of these texts see: Dempster, "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment," 342ff.
108. Baba Bathra 14b.
109. Mal 3:22-24 (Hebrew).
110. Lev 26:33-35. Note G. Steins comments, "That the end of Chronicles in 2 Chr 26:22-23 contains references to the Torah and the Prophets is easy to see." Steins, "Torah Binding and Canon Closure," 275.
111. Deut 4:6-8.
112. Deut 4:6-8.
113. Jer 31:31-34.
114. I have often made the point that reading the NT without the OT would be like reading *The Return of the King*, without reading *The Hobbit*, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers.*
115. Luke 24:13-31.
116. Luke 24:25, 27, 32, 44.
117. Matt 28: 20; Cor 3:1-3.

118. T. Newell, *Five Paradigms for Education: Foundational Views and Key Issues* (New York: Palgrave/ Macmillan, 2014), 36.
119. Ibid.

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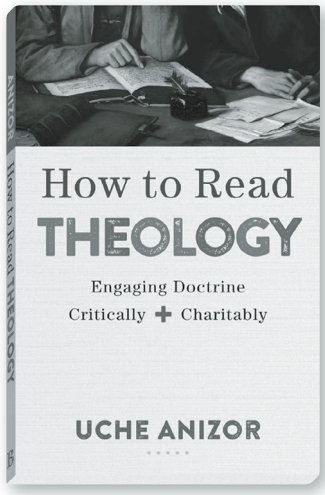

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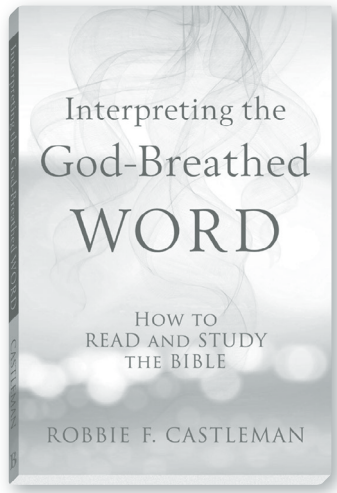

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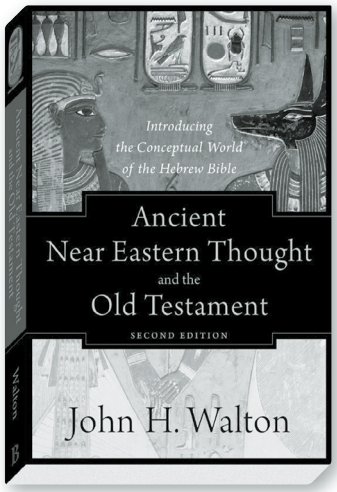

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Chaos Theory and the Text of the Old Testament[1]

Peter J. Gentry

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Introduction

Canon and Text are closely related. For those who believe in divine revelation mediated by authorized agents, the central questions are (1) which writings come from these agents authorized to speak for God and (2) have their writings been reliably transmitted to us? Although my inquiry is focused on the latter question, the former is logically prior. How one answers the first question will determine evaluation of evidence relating to the second.

What defines a canonical text according to Nahum Sarna, is "a fixed arrangement of content" and "the tendency to produce a standardized text."[2] Since the very first biblical text constituted a covenant, this automatically implies a fixed arrangement of content and a standard text. I am referring to the Covenant at Sinai, a marriage between Yahweh and Israel. A marriage contract does not have a long oral pre-history. Its content is fixed from the start. The current view today is that the content and text of the Old Testament (OT) was not standard until the second century AD. So Jesus could

not really know for sure what writings were inspired by God nor did he have a stabilized text. This is what I am calling, "chaos theory."

Analysis of the evidence has led me to conclude that the text of the OT in content, arrangement, and stability was fixed probably at the beginning of the fourth century BC by Ezra and Nehemiah.[3] It is the history of this text that I attempt to treat in what follows.

Understanding the History of the Text

The authors of the OT produced their work between the fifteenth and fourth centuries BC. How can we know that the final form of the text regarded as canonical by the second century BC has been transmitted to us in a reliable and trustworthy manner?

The answer to this question can be provided (1) by describing the sources that have survived, whether they are copies of originals in Hebrew/Aramaic or whether they are ancient translations or versions and (2) by understanding the history of the transmission of the text. The word *understanding* is all important because the data are not self-interpreting.

Brief Sketch of Stages in Hebrew Writing

Before the invention of the printing press in 1450 AD, all books were copied by hand. Producing books was painstaking and slow work. We call books created in this way manuscripts, a term derived from two Latin words: *scriptus* (written) and *manu* (by hand).

In 692, Monkwearmouth-Jarrow Abbey in England was granted additional land to raise 200 head of cattle to provide parchment (animal skin) for the ambitious project of producing three complete illustrated Bibles. Bede was undoubtedly involved in this task, which took more than two decades to complete.[4] The Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran required as many as seventeen sheepskins for just one book of the OT.[5]

In broad terms, three stages can be discerned in the history of writing the biblical text in Hebrew. First, only consonants were used to represent the language in the earliest stage of writing. This is a reliable way of writing since context determines readings that are uncertain. Israeli newspapers still use only consonants. Correct pronunciation of the biblical text, moreover, was

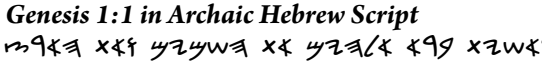
passed down orally from priest to priest, and from scribe to scribe.

Second, beginning sometime in the ninth century BC, the letters *hê, wāw* and *yôd* (and later also sometimes *'ālep*) were given a double function to represent long vowels as well as consonants. This system, however, was not consistent or systematic and, moreover, did not represent all the vowels.

Thirdly, during the period 600–1000 AD, Jewish scholars called Masoretes developed a system of dots and squiggles to go over and under the letters. The dots represented all the vowels and also the accents.

Early Hebrew writing employed a script similar to that used by the ancient Phoenicians. Later, under the influence of the Chaldean Kings of Babylon, scribes switched to using the Aramaic script.

Genesis 1:1 in Archaic Hebrew Script



Genesis 1:1 in Aramaic Square Script

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ

Genesis 1:1 With Masoretic Vowels / Accents

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

We will now describe the basis of our modern printed bibles and the major surviving sources and witnesses to the text.

Modern Printed Editions of the Hebrew OT

Biblia Hebraica, published in 1905–1906 and edited by Rudolf Kittel, was the first critical edition of the Hebrew Bible that included in systematic way evidence from ancient versions. It was based on the text of the Second Rabbinic Bible of 1524-1525 which in turn was derived from twelfth century masoretic manuscripts. The Third Edition of *Biblia Hebraica*, 1929–1937 was the first modern printed Bible to be based on MS (EPB. I) B 19A in the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg, 1008 AD. Also known as the Leningrad Codex (L), it is the oldest manuscript that contains the complete

OT. It was chosen because the text of Codex L is the closest to the famous Aleppo Codex in the parts of the Aleppo Codex that survive. The Aleppo Codex was produced by the famous Ben Asher family of Tiberian Masoretes around 930 AD and since 1948 is missing the Torah.[6] The Third Edition of *Biblia Hebraica* also included readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls beginning with the 1951 Print Run. The current edition is called *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1967–1977) or BHS and a fifth edition, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* is currently in preparation. The newer editions improve only the apparatus or footnotes.

The Masoretic Text

As already noted, the Masoretes devised a system of signs to represent the vowels and committed the reading tradition handed down orally to writing. At the beginning, only a few vowels were shown. Later, full vocalization was shown under the influence of Syriac and Arabic Literature. Secondly, they also developed a set of diacritical signs to mark the accents according to the chanting of the text in the synagogue.

The history of the Masoretes correlates with different groups of Jewish scholars. First, a large-scale emigration to Babylon occurred in the second century AD after the Third Jewish Revolt (132-136 AD). Later, conquest of Palestine by Islam in 638 AD made possible a return to Palestine of Jewish scholars and a revival of textual work in Tiberias (Galilee). As a result, there are different systems of vocalization:

Tiberian	sublinear
Palestinian	supralinear
Babylonian	supralinear
'expanded' Tiberian	Codex Reuchlin (AD 1105)

There are two famous families of Tiberian Masoretes: (1) ben Asher and (2) ben Naphtali. The text of the ben Asher family is universally accepted as the most faithful preservation of the text. Ben Uzziel has listed a total of 404 congruences and 860 differences between the Ben Naphtali and Ben Asher texts.[7] Only eight of these variants concern consonants. These medieval

Masoretic manuscripts are accurate witnesses to an ancient consonantal text of the highest quality.

Important Early Manuscripts of the Masoretic Text 800-1200

The following chart lists important early manuscripts:[8]

"Aleppo Codex"	A	c. 930	missing Torah	pointed by A. ben Asher
BL Or. 4445	B	925	most of Torah	not as close to ben Asher
Cairo Codex	C	895	Prophets	closer to ben Naphtali
Cairo Pent Codex	C3	10 C	Torah	
EPB I B 19a	L	1009	all of OT	close to ben Asher
EPB II B 10	L10	c. 950	frags. of Torah	
EPB II B 17	L17	929	frags. of Torah	
EPB II B 34	L34	975	frags. of Writings	
EPB II B 94	L94	1100	frags. Proph/Writ	
Madrid Comp. Lib.	M1	1280	all of OT	missing Ex 9:33b-24:7b
Codex New York	N	10/11	Latter Prophets	Adler 346 / JTS 232
EPB I B 3	P	916	Latter Prophets	Cod. Bab. Petropolitanus
Codex Reuchlin 3	R	1105/6		
Sassoon 507	S5	10 C	most of Torah	mixed text
Sassoon 1053	S1	10 C	most of OT	least carefully written
Vatican ebr. 448	V	1000?	Torah	
Washington Pent.	W	10/11	Torah	Museum of the Bible
Berlin Or. qu. 680	Ba	11C	Writings	Follows order in Talmud
Camb. Add. 1753	Y	14/15	Writings	

As many as 3,000 manuscripts are known from the middle ages.[9] All of them attest the same textual tradition with only minor variation.[10]

Evidence for the Text Before the Masoretes

Before 1900, we had no Hebrew manuscripts prior to the Masoretes around 1000 AD. Two discoveries changed all this, and we are *just beginning* to evaluate the new materials.

Texts from the Judaean Desert

Early attestation to the text changed considerably in the twentieth century with the discovery of what are commonly called the Dead Sea Scrolls. Texts were found at the following sites, listed from north to south: Wadi Daliyeh (beyond the Judean Desert, strictly speaking), Ketef Jericho, Khirbet Qumran and caves related to Qumran, Khirbet Mird, Wadi Murabba'at, Wadi Sdeir (=Naḥal David), Naḥal Ḥever, Naḥal Mishmar, Naḥal Se'elim, and Masada.[11] The discovery entails fragments of some 930 texts, of which approximately 200 are biblical books, all dated generally between 250 BC and 130 AD. Some texts were written in Greek and Aramaic, although the majority are in Hebrew. Most Hebrew texts are in the square script, although approximately twelve texts are in the paleo-Hebrew script, mostly scrolls of the Torah. The official publication is in the Oxford Series *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* published between 1955 and 2010. Some thirty-four of the forty-three volumes were published after 1990 and even fourteen after 2000. Additional fragments in private collections were published in 2016.[12] We can say with certainty, then, that scholars have only begun to assess adequately the textual value of these witnesses.

Cairo Genizah Fragments

Another cache of important witnesses was discovered at the end of the nineteenth century in the Geniza of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo, now preserved in the Taylor-Schechter Collection in the Cambridge University Library. Proper protocol for old worn out scrolls requires that they be stored away. The place of storage is called a *genizah*, from Hebrew *ganaz*, i.e., "to store away." Of some 200,000 documents, 24,700 fragments are biblical texts. Catalogues containing complete description of these texts appeared in four volumes by M. C. Davis and B. Outhwaite published between 1978 and 2003.[13] These are important proto-Masoretic texts. They have not been

analyzed fully, nor is their witness included systematically in *Biblia Hebraica*.

Here too can be mentioned some eight manuscripts from the third to seventh centuries:[14]

Eight Hebrew Manuscripts Known from III—VII Centuries AD

Torah	Ashkar-Gilson MS: Cambridge TS / Duke
Torah	Lost Severus Scroll (*Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*)
Genesis	Cambridge T-S NS 3.21 and 4.3
Exodus	Oxford Bodleian Lib. Ms. Heb. d. 89 (P) i
Leviticus	Burned Scroll from En Gedi Synagogue
Numbers	Berlin, Staatsliche Museum, P 10598
Kings	Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Ant. Pap. 47-48
Job	Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Ant. Pap. 49-50

None of these are mentioned by Tov in the first printing of his handbook, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, although the publication by Sirat preceded his own by several years.[15] Apparently their witness was overshadowed by that of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Moreover, a catalogue by M. Dukan of codices in Hebrew from the Orient and Sephardic Region before 1280 lists seventy-four codices.[16] In addition, she dates 158 of the fragments from the Cairo Genizah before this time. These witnesses cast enormous light on the early history of the Masoretic Text. Description of the manuscripts covers codicology as well as content.

In 2019, additional fragments of the Ashkar-Gilson manuscript have been identified mainly in the Cairo Genizah collection so that a total of ten fragments of this early manuscript of the Torah are now known:[17]

Gen. 10:28–13:9	Cambridge, T-S AS 36.30
Gen. 44:23–46:20	Cambridge, T-S AS 36.31 + T-S AS 37.26
Gen. 47:17–50:23	Cambridge, T-S AS 37.1 + T-S AS 37.22
Exod. 2:14–3:21	Cambridge, T-S AS 36.36
Exod. 9:18–13:2	London, Jews' College 31
Exod. 13:2–16:1	Cambridge, T-S AS 36.19 + T-S AS 37.8 + Duke, Ashkar Collect. 2

Exod. 17:5–18:14	Cambridge, T-S NS 282.88
Num. 10:16–35	Cambridge, T-S AS 36.10
Deut. 2:9–3:12	Duke University, Ashkar Collection 21
Deut. 32:50–End	Cambridge, T-S AS 37.10 + ENA 4117.13

Before discussing the Dead Sea scrolls, we will briefly mention ancient versions of the Old Testament.

Ancient Versions of the OT

Samaritan Pentateuch

When the Assyrians conquered the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC they deported the Israelites and imported other peoples who intermarried with the people of Israel and became the Samaritans. Good relations between Jews and Samaritans were up and down until 128 BC when John Hyrcanus attacked Shechem and the breach between Samaritans and Jews was final.

Only the Pentateuch is recognized among the Samaritans. The Samaritan Pentateuch, therefore, is a version of the Hebrew Text of the Torah transmitted among the Samaritans in isolation from the Jews from the second century BC onwards. It was later translated into Aramaic (whence the Samaritan Targum) and Arabic, and probably also Greek (τὸ Σαμαρειτικόν).

The pre-Samaritan text which was adapted to suit the theology of the Samaritans represents by comparison to what is later preserved in the Masoretic tradition an updated form of the text. It is characterized by replacing archaic forms, grammar, and vocabulary in Hebrew with those of a later linguistic tradition. Exegetical and historical difficulties have been removed and parallel texts are harmonized. Thus, comparison between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the later Masoretic Text shows that many differences between the two represent a modernizing of the former in terms of grammar and spelling.[18] The pre-SP is a modernization of the proto-MT. The Samaritan Pentateuch is thus a strong witness to the antiquity and purity of the tradition in the Masoretic Text since the proto-Masoretic text had to be modernized and popularized in the second century BC so that it could be understood.

Old Greek and Later Greek Versions

Old Greek or Septuagint refers to a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures

into Greek. The Pentateuch was translated early in the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-240 BC) in Alexandria, Egypt. The Prologue to Greek Ben Sira suggests that the rest of the books were translated by 130 BC. The name *septuaginta*, which means "Seventy," is adapted from a piece of propaganda that the Torah was translated by seventy-two scholars from Palestine (*Aristeas*).

Individual books vary in character and quality of translation and exhibit a full spectrum from extreme formal correspondence and literal translation to dynamic and functional translation and even radical paraphrase.[19] Sometimes the translation is an abbreviation of the source text and at other times there are additions, as for example in Daniel and Esther. The Septuagint is important because it witnesses to a Hebrew parent text older than our other witnesses, including the Dead Sea Scrolls and in large part it is identical to the later Masoretic Text.

To complicate matters, long before all the books had been translated, revisions were already being made of existing translations. The process of revising one text on the basis of another, called a recension, continued from possibly 200 BC through 200 AD. We know of the καίγε recension from the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Naḥal Ḥever and the later Jewish revisions of Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus. The precise line between original Greek translations and later revisions in this corpus of texts has, in fact, not yet been clearly established.[20] Scholars are still working to prepare editions of these translations based upon study of all available evidence in Greek manuscripts, daughter translations, and quotations by church fathers.

Latin Versions

Two Latin versions witness to the OT Text. The Old Latin originated in Italy and North Africa ca. 150 AD. It is a translation of the Septuagint and not of the Hebrew. Possibly it represents a plurality of versions. No complete manuscript survives. Scholars still seek to provide an adequate explanation for agreements with MT against the LXX, although most of them derive through Hebraizing recensions of the Old Greek.[21]

The Latin Vulgate is a translation made by Jerome between 391 and 405 AD and commissioned by Pope Damasus I. Jerome began learning Hebrew during a stay in the desert of Chalcis 375–377 and devoted further study during his stay in Rome 382–385.[22] He continued to consult Jewish teachers

when he lived in Bethlehem and worked on the Vulgate from 390 to 405.[23] The Vulgate is translated from the Hebrew with influence from the Septuagint and Jewish revisers, especially Symmachus. In general it is a clear witness to the proto-Masoretic text of that time.

Syriac Peshitta

Peshitta means "simple [translation]" and is the name given the standard translation of the Bible into Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic. The early history of the translation is unknown. It probably originated in Edessa and was almost certainly completed by the third century AD since it is quoted by fourth century writers.[24]

Translation technique varies from book to book, from literal to paraphrase. The parent text of the Peshitta is close to the proto-Masoretic Text. It offers less variants than the Septuagint, but more than the Targums or Vulgate. Agreements between the Peshitta and Septuagint or Peshitta and Targums can be explained for the most part by common approaches to translation and common access to the same interpretive traditions of Second Temple Judaism. In some books (Genesis, Joshua, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve, Psalms, Proverbs, Song, Qoheleth, Ruth and Daniel) clear cases of non-systematic dependence on the Septuagint can be found.[25]

Aramaic Targums

The word *targûm* means translation. It was customary in Talmudic times (third-fourth century AD) to translate biblical readings in synagogue simultaneously from Hebrew into Aramaic (*m. Meg.* 4:4, 6). Tradition traced this practice back to Ezra's public reading of the Law described in Nehemiah 8:8 (*y. Meg.* 74d).[26] The real reason, however, for the origin of the Targums must have been the fact that increasingly in the postexilic period Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of Palestinian Jews. Étan Levine argues that the Targums originated in an academic setting and asserts that at no stage can they be envisaged as spontaneous translations although doubtless they influenced synagogue worship.[27] The earliest evidence are the literal targums from Qumran and exegetical traditions in the NT (e.g., names of Jannes and Jambres, mentioned in 2 Tim 3:8).[28]

The Targums usually reflect the proto-Masoretic Text. Deviations are based mainly on exegetical traditions, not on deviating texts. Four approaches

to combining interpretation and text are used in targums: (1) some offer a literal translation with substitutions that explain the text; (2) some offer a literal translation with additions that can be bracketed without disturbing the flow of thought; (3) some offer a free translation and the additions actually replace parts of the original; and (4) some offer a midrashic rendering, i.e., a completely new story is created out of the original text.[29] All four approaches embellish using Jewish interpretative traditions, explain figurative language, and modernize geographical names.[30]

The Character of our Earliest Witnesses

Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has highlighted the fact that before the second century AD. differences are attested between our earliest preserved copies of the text as well as between the parent texts of the earliest translations. What are these differences like and what do they tell us about the history of the transmission of the text?

We can classify our earliest witnesses to the text according to two types: (1) manuscripts or translations that represent a simple, straightforward copying and transmitting of the text exactly and precisely as received, and (2) manuscripts and translations that represent scribes revising and updating the text to make it relevant and understood to the current circumstances/generation. James A. Sanders labels the former the **repetition** factor and the latter the **resignification** factor.[31]

Such a classification is extremely helpful in evaluating the apparent chaos in the witnesses. Andrew Teeter uses the terms conservative and facilitating to describe the two types of approaches taken by copyists and translators. Allow me to quote his description of the evidence:

> The evidence from the period demonstrates a general distinction between two scribal models, defined by the effort either to produce an exact copy (the primary goal being fidelity to the letter), or to produce a copy which facilitates understanding (the primary goal being readability or comprehension of meaning, a goal which authorizes a certain latitude with regard to textual intervention, above all in matters of linguistic updating and interpretive expansion). A spectrum of manuscripts produced by both models coexisted in Palestine in the late Second Temple period. [Both were in widespread use, demonstrated on the one hand by

> the broad attestation of exact or conservative manuscripts among the discoveries at various sites in the Judean Desert, including Qumran; and, on the other hand, by the facilitating texts represented by 𝔖, 𝔊, other scriptural manuscripts and citations within the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls, by the *Vorlagen* of several "rewritten Bible" compositions (e.g., Chronicles, Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, the Genesis Apocryphon, 4QRP, 4Q252, etc.), by various NT attestations, as well as by a variety of echoes in rabbinic tradition (e. g., the Severus scroll or the "Three Scrolls in the Temple Court" stories; perhaps also certain *ʾal tiqrê* interpretations, targumic variants, etc.).[32]

Let us take time to grasp and illustrate both of these approaches or scribal models. First, an example of a conservative or repetition approach, which copies the parent text exactly and precisely in every way: the Masada Psalms Scroll from the last third of the first century BC.

The Masada Psalms Scroll has a precise format and layout.[33] As we all know, the book of Psalms is written in poetry, and Hebrew poetry is based on couplets of parallel lines. Each column of this scroll has approximately 29–30 lines and one couplet is placed on each line, with an appropriate space between the parallel lines of the couplet. Only about ten of the manuscripts from the Judaean Desert are carefully laid out in this way. The one manuscript at Qumran which most closely resembles MasPs^{a} is 4QPs^{b} although it has only half a couplet per line in the column of text and it has only 16–17 lines per column compared to 29–30 lines in MasPs^{a}. The format and text of 4QPs^{b} are also not as close to the later MT as MasPs^{a}. MasPs^{a} is a model scroll.

We can compare MasPs^{a} with both earlier and later traditions. First, the text of MasPs^{a} agrees almost completely with the Aleppo Codex, and the divisions marked by blank spaces and line breaks in MasPs^{a} agree very closely with the Masoretic terminal markers (accents and pausal forms). The Aleppo Codex also employs a system of division by blank spaces, but this does not correspond well with meaningful breaks or the pattern in MasPs^{a}. This suggests that the Masoretic tradition of the Psalter retained the visual concept of the line layout of earlier scribal praxis, but without necessarily preserving the ancient content divisions. The differences in layout between MasPs^{a} and the Aleppo Codex are largely due to changing the book format from scroll to codex and using additional symbols for accents and vowels to mark what was indicated earlier by spacing in the manuscripts. Otherwise the

text 1,000 years later is identical. There is a scroll of Ben Sira at Masada no more than 150 years later than the original text, but it already has mistakes and shows that the text of 1,000 years later was not copied as carefully as the OT.[34]

The stichometry or layout of parallel lines of poetry in MasPs^{a} agrees closely with the layout of lines evident in the Greek codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. This proves a common tradition going back much earlier than MasPs^{a} at least to the third century BC. Therefore, the textual tradition in MasPs^{a} is old.

Next are examples of the facilitating scribal model which is engaged in revising the text. These are changes made in the copying process to help a community, a next generation, or reader understand the text. Such changes might involve revising or updating the script. They might entail linguistic updating in terms of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. Geographical names can change over time and places are called by a new name. Aesthetic or stylistic improvements might be made. Expansions are frequently inserted or parallel passages are harmonized.

Many of these types of changes have been made to the King James Version since it was first published in 1611.

First, consider the change in script from 1611 to the script we use today. They use a symbol like an "f " for an "s." Some words are in smaller letters that look much more like what we use today. What does this mean? Spelling is also different.

Second, consider how Psalm 4:2 looks in the 1769 Edition often reprinted. We are familiar with this kind of type, but the language is archaic and old. No one says "ye" anymore. And what does it mean to seek after "leasing." It turns out that this is a word that meant "lying" in 1611. It has nothing to do with renting a car or house. See the New KJV of 1982 where this archaic language is modernized.

Let us consider one more example from English literature before looking at examples from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Consider *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer written between 1387 and 1400. The current text is based on eighty-four manuscripts and four incunabula (early books printed before c. 1540). Fifty-five of these manuscripts are thought to have been complete and twenty-eight are extremely fragmentary. Variants are due to copyists' errors in some cases, in others they are due to revisions by Chaucer himself. Here is a quote from "The Merchant's Prologue."

'Wepyng and waylyng, care and oother sorwe	'Weeping and wailing, care and other sorrow
I knowe ynogh, on even and a-morwe,'	I know enough, in the evening and in the morning,'
Quod the Marchant, 'and so doon oother mo	said the Merchant, 'and so do many others
That wedded been.'	who have been married.'

Here I have not shown what an early printed typeface would have looked like or what the original spelling might have been. Even using a modern typeface the language is almost unintelligible. It is easier to understand if one hears it read aloud according to the pronunciation of Chaucer's period and time as well as his particular dialect. Nonetheless, some kind of explanation and paraphrase is necessary.

Now if we have difficulty reading an English text from only 500 years ago, remember that parts of the Hebrew Scriptures were already a 1,000 years old by the second century BC. Many copies of the biblical text entail updating in script or spelling or changes in forms, syntax and vocabulary.

A minimal type of updating involved changing the script from the Phoenician style used in the time of Hezekiah to the Aramaic square script beginning to be used in the fifth century BC. At some point, a scribe said to himself, "If I don't change the Bible from the script I learned in school to the script my children are using in school, my children won't be able to read the Bible." About a dozen or so of the scrolls from the Judaean Desert are in the old-style script, most of them scrolls of the Torah.

While many differences are due either to copying mistakes or due to revision and updating involved in resignifying the text, some types of facilitating or resignifying were more radical.

Sidnie White Crawford in *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (2008) characterizes texts at Qumran on a continuous spectrum from biblical texts of the Pentateuch in the pre-Samaritan tradition, to a text that is called Reworked Pentateuch, to the Book of Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, the Genesis Apocryphon and finally to 4QCommentary on Genesis A.[35] This spectrum moves from conflation, harmonization, and modification, through new compositions closely related to the source text, to commentary involving citation plus comment.

She concludes that both canon and text were fluid and not standardized at this time. What is helpful is that her study shows the graduated continuum from biblical text to paraphrase to commentary. Her conclusions, however, do not follow from analysis of the evidence. The evidence from Qumran must be put within the larger picture of all the scrolls from the Judean Desert—the evidence of one sect within the widely variegated Judaism of the Second Temple. In the larger picture there is a central stream dominated by the proto-Masoretic texts.[36] The fact that most of the texts described by Crawford employ as a base a modernized text similar to that in the pre-Samaritan tradition is revealing: she is describing the path of resignification at this time, but this is only part of the larger picture. This is no different from a Christian or Jewish bookstore today and should not be interpreted to show that the text was fluid or non-standardized. Here is a list of Bibles in a modern bookstore (2008):

The New Student Bible
Life Application Bible (Take The Next Step)
Psalty's Kids' Bible
NIV Young Discoverer's Bible
The Adventure Bible
The Full Life Study Bible
Disciple's Study Bible
Women's Devotional Bible
The Family Worship Bible
The Dramatized Bible
Youth Bible
The Discovery Bible
The Daily Bible
The One Year Bible
The Spirit Filled Life Bible
The Orthodox Study Bible
Rainbow Bible
Precious Moments Bible for Expectant Mothers
Mother's Love NT and Psalms

The same categories used to classify texts at Qumran exist in Bible editions currently published: Bibles that offer a standard text unadorned and uninterpreted, and Bibles that adorn and decorate, paraphrase, interpret, and re-arrange the text for the audience and culture of our times. Do we conclude from this that both canon and text are fluid? Hardly.

The Function of Texts

Scholars studying the ancient scrolls have not paid sufficient attention to the function of these texts. There are many reasons why a person might resignify the biblical text.

An example is 4QDeut-n.[37] This is an excerpted and harmonized text. The term excerpted means that certain passages have been taken out of the biblical text and put together for another purpose. This manuscript has the text of the Ten Commandments. Now as you may know, the text of the Ten Commandments is slightly different in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. In particular, the reason for the Sabbath differs in these two texts. The reason in Exodus 20 is that God created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. The reason in Deuteronomy 5, however, is that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and God gave them rest from slavery so they should give rest to their slaves as well. In 4QDeut-n the person who extracted this text to teach the Ten Commandments harmonized both texts and then used Deuteronomy 8 as a Historical Introduction to his Bible Study Pamphlet. This clearly shows it was not a Bible.

Deuteronomy 5:12 – 15 MT

> [12] **Guard** the sabbath day **to sanctify it**, as the Lord your God commanded you.
> [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter and your male servant and your female servant and your ox and your donkey and any of your cattle and your resident alien who is in your gates, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest like you. [15] And you shall **remember** that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

Exodus 20:7 – 11 MT

> [8] **Remember** the sabbath day, **to sanctify it**. [9] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [10] but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and your cattle and your resident alien who is in your gates. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and **sanctified it**.

Text of 4QDeut-n

> [12] Guard the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD YOUR GOD COMMANDED YOU. [13] Six days you shall labor and do all your work, [14] but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD YOUR GOD; you shall not do in it any work, you, your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, your ox and your donkey and your cattle, your resident alien who is in your gates, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest like you. [15] And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to guard the sabbath day, **to sanctify it**. [Exod 20:11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day **to sanctify it**.

The scribe employed repeated words (in bold) to mark the edits.

With conservative copying on the one hand and facilitating texts on the other, it is possible that both types of texts preserve original readings.

The Great Isaiah Scroll

One example is the Isaiah Scroll from Qumran Cave 1. In comparison with MT, many of the variants represent linguistic modernizing and updating.[38] Although it does not lay out the text in parallel poetic lines in a precise manner as we saw in MasPs^{a}, in one place it uses special spaces to show this and here the lines of poetry match the later Masoretic text perfectly.[39] There are also places where it preserves the original reading and the later MT does not (e.g., Isa 53:8).[40]

Psalms Scroll–Qumran Cave 11

Another example is 11QPs-a. This scroll is best described as a compilation.[41] It is a selection of biblical psalms arranged with non-biblical hymns and songs, probably for use as a liturgy in synagogue worship. It is not a Bible. It does not lay out parallel lines in couplets with appropriate spaces. It runs everything together as in prose texts. Yet in Psalm 145 it contains a verse missing from the later Masoretic text. We know MT is missing a verse because Psalm 145 is an acrostic poem. Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. And in the MT, the verse beginning with the letter 'n' is missing. The Septuagint has this missing verse. But now, a manuscript from Qumran that is not particularly carefully written also has the missing verse.

Psalm 145 (144 LXX):13

cor add	נֶאֱמָן יְהוָה בִּדְבָרָיו / וְחָסִיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו The Lord is faithful in his words, and loyal in all his works.
11QPs[a]	נאמן אלוהים בדבריו וחסיד בכול מעשיו
Ken 142[mg]	נֶאֱמָן יְהוָה בְּכָל־בִּדְבָרָיו וְחָסִיד בְּכָל־מַעֲשָׂיו
LXX	πιστὸς κύριος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅσιος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ
Gall	fidelis Dominus in omnibus verbis suis et sanctus in omnibus operibus suis
Pesh	ܗܝܡܢ ܡܪܝܐ ܒܟܠ ܡܠܝܗܝ ܘܚܣܝܕ ܒܟܠ ܥܒܕܘܗܝ
MT	omit (cf. Talmud Babli *Berakhot* 4b, R. Yohanan, c. 250 A.D.)
ὁ ἑβραῖος	omit [42]

οἱ λοιποί	omit (i.e. Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion)
Jerome	omit (*Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos*)
Targum	omit

Psalm 145 (144 LXX):13 is a clear case where the Septuagint has a superior text to that of MT. The Psalm is an alphabetic acrostic. The *nun* strophe is lacking in MT, but extant in the Septuagint and Syriac (Peshitta) and now also attested by 11QPs^{a}. The evidence from Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus shows that the verse had already disappeared from the proto-Masoretic text at an early stage, doubtless due to mutilation of a scroll at the bottom or top of the text. Explanation based on copyist error due to parablepsis is not suitable.

Different Texts for Different Audiences and Different Functions

It is important to recognize, then, that different publications or texts have different functions within the community of faith.

In a forthcoming publication, Drew Longacre builds on his proposed model for stylistic analysis of the ancient Jewish Hebrew/Aramaic scripts.[43] He classifies the Dead Sea Psalms scrolls according to book size, script, and textual contents. Comparison shows correlations between these classifications, with more formal scripts typically being used for large copies of known versions of the Davidic psalter and less formal scripts frequently being used for smaller, textually divergent manuscripts. The data suggest three different functional registers for various types and levels of handwriting in the period: (1) formal, professional, calligraphic, and (in late stages) ornate literary book scripts in two levels (1a—the highest level—is rectilinear; 1b is elegant but curvilinear with wavy strokes); (2) common, everyday personal or scholarly hands; and (3) professional documentary scripts. Recognition of these conventional registers aids in the interpretation of the forms and functions of the Dead Sea Psalms scrolls and highlights exceptional cases worthy of further investigation.

Septuagint

We do not have space or time for a detailed treatment of the Septuagint, such as I gave in 2008 at the Evangelical Theological Society.[44] Since translation, by definition, is focused on explaining a text, it is natural to use a facilitating text as a Hebrew parent text for the Septuagint. This also explains why there are many agreements between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint.

Complementarity

Both conservative and facilitating scribal models coexisted in Palestine. In fact, recent research on the handwriting of the scribes has shown that the same scribe produced both types of manuscripts. Both types of texts came from the same scribe.[45] This demonstrates that the two models are complementary. The desire to transmit the ancient form of the text requires facilitating texts if the faithful are to understand and in turn, the facilitating texts presuppose a standard.[46]

Other explanations of the pluriformity in the late Second Temple period cannot be substantiated.

Lange and Tov classify manuscripts by comparing them to the MT, SP, and LXX.

	Pent (Lange)	Proph/ Writings (Lange)	Pent (Tov)	Proph/ Writings (Tov)
Non-aligned	52.5%	51%	39%	49%
Pre-SP	5%		11%	
Pre-LXX	5%	4%	2%	7%
= MT / SP	27.5%			
semi-MT	5%	35%	48%	44%
proto-MT	5%	10%		

Two reasons demonstrate that this analysis is misleading. First, Lange and Tov are basing analysis on comparison of DSS to MT, LXX, and SP. The central issue, however, is whether or not the text in MT, LXX, SP, or DSS represents a conservative approach or a facilitating approach or a mixture

of the two. If one of the DSS supports the LXX, this may indicate only that both are facilitating texts. In any case, both approaches are complementary and presuppose a standard text. Second, as Lange himself admits,[47] this comparison is only preliminary and will be replaced by analysis of all variants. The first thorough treatment of the variants is by Anthony Ferguson.[48] What does analysis of the variants show? Ferguson classified all variants into three categories. Variants in category 1 are variants that do not necessitate any change in meaning. These include synonymous constructions and vocabulary. Variants in category 2 are variants that can be reasonably explained as deriving from the MT although the readings are not synonymous with it.

These variants typically involve a slight change in meaning or perspective. They usually elaborate or simplify the meaning of the MT so that the text is more explicit or less explicit. Moreover, these differences can usually be explained as cases of harmonization to the surrounding context or to parallel passages. Variants in category 3 are variants that imply a meaning irreconcilable to the MT. These variants cannot be reasonably explained as deriving from the MT. The categorization of variants into these three categories illustrates that most of the differences between the non-aligned texts and the MT are insignificant variants that can reasonably be attributed to the scribal process (category 1 and 2 variants). Only a few differences belong to category 3: the most reliable category for identifying separate textual traditions. Thus, the high percentage of variants from category 1 and 2 and the low percentage of variants from category 3 prove that these texts can be reasonably ascribed to the Masoretic tradition.

Instead of comparing the DSS with MT, LXX, and SP, we should assess the extent to which any of the witnesses represents a conservative or a facilitating model of scribal copying. Using extremely rough percentages, this could be shown as follows:

	Conservative	Facilitating
MT	95%	05%
LXX (Septuagint)	70%	30%
Samaritan Texts	70%	30%
Dead Sea Scrolls	50%	50%

Ulrich explains variation in the manuscripts in terms of different editions in the literary development of biblical books.

Grouping of MSS according to Editions						
Edition						
n+1[49]	G-Exod	M-Num	4QJosh^{a}, Josephus	G-Jer	M-Dan	M-Pss
n+2	M-Exod	4QNum^{b}	[SamPent, OL]	M-Jer	G-Dan	11QPs^{a}
n+3	4QpaleoExod^{m}		G-Josh			
n+4	SamPent-Exod		M-Josh			

Recent research by Andrew Teeter has shown that a genealogical and linear relationship between these texts has not been demonstrated or established in spite of Ulrich claiming this as an explanation for over thirty years. Earlier we noted that the Hellenistic literary model of *imitatio* or *mimesis* is an adequate description for phenomena that are sometimes assigned to different literary stages or rewritten scripture.

The Evidence of the Targums

After the Fall of Jerusalem, in the Hebrew textual transmission there was only repetition and no longer any resignification. This gives the impression that the text was standardized at this time, but in fact, this is an incorrect conclusion. Let me be absolutely clear: the consensus view that the text was standardized in the first century AD is wrong. Rather, what was dominant before the Fall of Jerusalem in terms of repetition, was likewise dominant after the destruction of Jerusalem—the proto-Masoretic text. Since there was no longer any resignification, it only appears that the text is now standard and not before this time. Two important reasons support this reconstruction. First, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Judaism was no longer variegated but rather dominated by one sect, the Pharisees, the precursors of the rabbinic tradition. Their approach to the text restricted transmission to repetition. Second, the period from the first to fourth centuries AD is the period in which the Aramaic Targums

developed. Hebrew was no longer a living language by the second century AD Jewish people spoke Aramaic. They continued to provide facilitating texts, but they were in Aramaic and no longer in Hebrew. From the description of the Targums we can see that they exhibit exactly the same types of resignification that we saw earlier at Qumran. Thus, there was resignification after the Fall of Jerusalem, but it was in Aramaic and in the targumic tradition and therefore separate from the textual transmission of the Hebrew Text.[50]

Analysis of the surviving witnesses, then, shows complementary approaches to copying the text: conservative and facilitating. A conservative approach requires producing facilitating texts and in turn, facilitating texts presuppose a standard. The evidence of the Targums explains why no facilitating texts in Hebrew are found after the Fall of Jerusalem. There was a standard text all along.

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1. "Sacred words," February 21-22, 2020, Text and Canon Institute, Phoenix Seminary.
2. Nahum M. Sarna, "The Order of the Books," in *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev* (ed. Ch. Berlin; New York: KTAV, 1971), 407-13, esp. 411 and 413, n. 15.
3. According to 2 Maccabees 2:13-15, Judas collected the books *as a library* after the war, to be kept once more in the temple, but he was only following the example of Nehemiah before him.
4. See http://dcc.dickinson.edu/bede-historia-ecclesiastica/intro/life-and-work. Accessed January 4, 2020. The number 200 may not be correct. Codex Amiatinus required 1029 "large format" number parchment (animal skin) folios measuring c. 19.9 × 13.4 inches, i.e. approximately 515 calf skins. See Celia Chazaelle, *The Codex Amiatinus and its "Sister" Bibles: Scripture, Liturgy, and Art in the Milieu of the Venerable Bede* (Commentaria 10; Leiden: Brill, 2019), 6. Three bibles such as this would require perhaps 2000 rather than 200 head of cattle? The historical sources describe being given portions of land, see Bede, *Historia abbatum* 15.
5. Image of goatskin by Michal Mañas - Own work, CC BY 2.5, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3157961. Accessed 12 February, 2020.
6. Library Signature: Jerusalem, Makhon Ben-Zvi le-Heqer Qehillot Yisra'el ba-Mizrah MS No 1.
7. Armin Lange, "History of Research," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A (ed. Armin Lange and Emanual Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 88.
8. Armin Lange, "Ancient and Late Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish Texts," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A, 117-120. Cf. Malachi Beit-Arié, Colette Sirat and Mordechai Glatzer, eds., *Codices hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes* (Monumenta Paleographica Medii Aevi: Series Hebraica, 3 vols.; (Turnhout, Belgium, Brepols Publishers for the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, CNRS Paris; Jerusalem: Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997). Dated codices are listed up to 1020 A.D. in Volume 1, 1021-1079 in Volume 2, and 1085-1140 in Volume 3. The number of manuscripts containing biblical text in these three volumes is 11, 5, and 3 respectively, for a total of 19. For medieval manuscripts, see Francisco Javier del Barco del Barco et al., *Catálogo de Manuscritos Hebreos de la Comunidad de Madrid*, 3 vols. (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 2003-2006). The number of manuscripts comprising complete or incomplete bibles in these three volumes is 18, 23, and 3, respectively, for a total of 44. Also idem, *Catálogo de Manuscritos Hebreos de la Biblioteca de Montserrat* (Barcelona: C.S.I.C., 2008), which lists 36 biblical manuscripts. For further research on Hebrew manuscripts, see Benjamin Richler, *Guide to Hebrew Manuscript Collections*, 2nd rev. ed. (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2014) and Colette Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages* (ed. and trans. Nicholas de Lange; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

9. Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (ed. and trans. E. J. Revell; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1980), 29.
10. These manuscripts have not been consulted systematically since B. Kennicott (1776-1780) and G. B. de Rossi (1784-1788). Kennicott notes variants from more than six hundred manuscripts and fifty-two editions and de Rossi from 1,475 manuscripts plus editions. See Benjamin Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1776-1780) and Giovanni Bernardo de Rossi, *Variae Lectiones Veteris Testamenti, ex immensa MMS. Editorumq. Codicum Congerie haustae et ad Samar. Textum, ad vetustiss. versiones, ad accuratiores sacrae criticae fontes ac leges examinatae opera ac studio Johannis Bern. de Rossi*, 4 vols. (Parma: Regius 1784-1788. Reprinted with 1798 Supplement, 5 vols. in 2, Amsterdam: Philo, 1969-1970). Cf. also E. Würthwein, *The Text Of The Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 40.
11. Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3.
12. Torleif Elgvin, Kipp Davis, and Michael Langlois, *Gleanings from the Caves: Dead Sea Scrolls and Artefacts from the Schøyen Collection* (Library of Second Temple Studies 71; London: T&T Clark, 2016).
13. M. C. Davis, *Hebrew Bible Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Volume 1. Taylor-Schechter Old Series and other Genizah Collections in the Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1978), idem, *Hebrew Bible Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Volume 2. Taylor-Schechter New Series and Westminster College Collection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1980), M. C. Davis and Ben Outhwaite, *Hebrew Bible Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Volume 3. Taylor-Schechter Additional Series 1-31* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 2003), idem, *Hebrew Bible Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections. Volume 4. Taylor-Schechter Additional Series 32-255 with addenda to previous volumes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 2003).
14. Colette Sirat, *Les Papyrus en Caractères Hébraïques Trouvés en* Égypt (Paris: CNRS, 1985).
15. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Translation, revision and enlarged edition by the author of *Biqqoret Nusaḥ ha-Miqra'—Pirqê Mabo', The Textual Criticism of the Bible, An Introduction* (The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library IV; Mosad Bialik: Jerusalem, 1989).
16. Michèle Dukan, *La Bible Hébraïque: Les codices copiés en Orient et dans la zone séfarade avant 1280* (Bibliologia 22; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).
17. See Drew Longacre, OTTC: A Blog for Old Testament Textual Criticism, April 26, 2019, http://oldtestamenttextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2019/04/new-fragments-of-ms-london-ashkar.html. Accessed 27 January, 2020.
18. For this characterization, see Bruce K. Waltke, "Samaritan Pentateuch," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:932-40. See also Stefan Schorch, "The Septuagint and the Vocalization of the Hebrew Text of the Torah," in *XII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Leiden, 2004* (ed. Melvin K. H. Peters; SCS 54; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 41-54 and Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, *The Samaritan Pentateuch: An Introduction to Its Origin, History, and Significance for Biblical Studies* (SBL Resources for Biblical Study 72; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).
19. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, "The Reliability of the Old Testament Text," in *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. W. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1:51-67.
20. See Peter J. Gentry, "Old Greek And Later Revisors: Can We Always Distinguish Them?" in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo* (ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta; Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 126; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 301-327.
21. See N. Fernández Marcos, *Scribes and Translators: Septuagint & Old Latin in the Books of Kings* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 54; Leiden: Brill 1994), idem "The Old Latin of Chronicles between the Greek and the Hebrew," in *IX Congress of the IOSCS, Cambridge 1995* (SCS 45; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1997), 123-136, and M. Kraus, "Hebraisms of the Old Latin Version of the Bible," in *VT* 53 (2003): 487-513.
22. See especially Michael Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 30; Leiden: Brill, 2007). Note also Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997), 41.
23. Jerome, *Ep*. 84.3.
24. See Michael P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56; Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 2. Cf. Sebastian Brock, The Bible in the Syriac Tradition, 2nd rev. ed. (Gorgias Press Handbooks; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 23.
25. See Michael P. Weitzman, "Peshitta, Septuagint and Targum," in *VI Symposium Syriacum 1992: University of Cambridge, Faculty of Divinity, 30 August-2 September, 1992* (ed. René Lavenant; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1994), 51-84 and idem, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56; Cambridge: University Press, 1999).

26. y. Meg. 74d = Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions. IX. Yerushalmi Tractate Megillah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 123. For rabbinic law and lore on targum cf. *m. Meg.* 3:10; 4:4, 6, 9; *y. Ber.* 9c; *Bik.* 65d; *Meg.* 74d; 75a; Šabb. 15c; 16c; *b. B. Bat.* 134a; *Ber.* 27b; 45a; *Meg.* 3a; 8b, 9a; 17a, 21a; 23a, b; 25a, b; 32a; *Mo'ed Qat.* 3a; 21a; 28b; *Qidd.* 49a; Šabb. 115a b; 116a; *Sanh.* 84b; Soṭa 33a; 39a; 40a; 41a; *Sukk.* 28a; *Tem.* 14a, b; *Yebam.* 22a. See also *Sifre Deut* 161; *Tanhuma* II, 87f.; *Pesiq. R.* 14a-b; *Mek.* II 17:7; *Exod Rab.* 8:3; *'Abot R. Nat. B.*, XII; *Sop.* 5:15; 12:6; 15:2; 18:4.
27. Étan Levine, "The Targums: Their Interpretive Character and Their Place in Jewish Text Tradition," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* (ed. Magne Sæbøl; vol. I, Part 1, #8.5, 323-331: Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 324. Further, see Miguel Pérez Fernán-dez, "El Proceso Targúmico: La Sinagoga y la Academia," in *"Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning" (Prov 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday* (ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer; Studia Judaica Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 90; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 75-93.
28. See R. le Déaut, *La nuit pascale* (Rome, 1963) and M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Analecta Biblica 27; Rome 1966).
29. This characterization is from Harry Sysling, "Translation Techniques in the Ancient Bible Translations: Septuagint and Targum," in *A History of Bible Translation* (ed. Philip A. Noss; Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 279-305.
30. B. K. Waltke, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 1:209-228.
31. James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 22, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 11. This classification is not dissimilar from the description of B. K. Waltke who notes two tendencies at work in the early history of the transmission of the text, one to copy and preserve the text exactly and precisely as received and one to revise and update the text to make it understandable to the next generation. The *Tendenz* to revise and update may be limited to alterations to the form of the text such as switching from palaeo-Hebrew script to Aramaic square script and *plene* spelling, or may involve updating in geography, grammar, and lexicon, or may go as far as re-interpreting the text for a contemporary sub-community within Second Temple Judaism. Beyond the far end of the spectrum in resignification would be the so-called parabiblical texts found at Qumran (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, "Old Testament Textual Criticism," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* [eds. David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Mathews and Robert B. Sloan; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994]), 156-86.
32. David Andrew Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 254-255.
33. To compare the "deluxe" format of MasPs^{a} to other scrolls from the Judean Desert, see Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 88, 96, 101-102, 105, 107, 126-128, 133, 163-164. This analysis of MasPs^{a} is based on Peter J. Gentry and John Meade, "MasPs^{a} and the Early History of the Hebrew Psalter," in *From Scribal Error to Rewriting: How Ancient Texts Could and Could Not Be Changed* (ed. A. Aejmelaeus, Drew Longacre and Natia Mirotadze; DSI 12; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 113-145.
34. See Yigael Yadin, The Ben Sira Scroll from Masada, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1999), 161-169.
35. Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). The notion of "rewritten scripture" as employed by Sidnie White Crawford needs to be complemented by other processes. See for example, Natalio Fernández Marcos, "Rewritten Bible or Imitatio? The Vestments of the High-Priest," in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and the Septuagint Presented to Eugene Ulrich* (ed. Peter W. Flint, Emanuel Tov and James C. Vanderkam; Supplements to VT 101; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 321-336. Fernández Marcos shows that the Hellenistic literary model of *imitatio* or *mimesis* is an adequate description for phenomena that are sometimes assigned to different literary stages or rewritten scripture.
36. Armin Lange's perspective on canon and text is also skewed by failing to put the evidence from Qumran within the larger picture. See Armin Lange, "Pre-Maccabean Literature from the Qumran Library and the Hebrew Bible," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 13/3 (2006): 271-305, and idem, "From Literature to Scripture: The Unity and Plurality of the Hebrew Scriptures in Light of the Qumran Library," in *One Scripture or Many? Canon from Biblical, Theological, and Philosophical Perspectives* (ed. Christine Helmer and Christof Landmesser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 51-107.
37. For publication of images and text see E. Ulrich, F. M. Cross, S. White Crawford, J. A. Duncan, P. W.

Skehan, E. Tov, and J. Trebolle Barrera, eds. *Qumran Cave 4: IX. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings* (Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XIV; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 117-128 and Plates XXVIII and XXIX. See also https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/manuscript/4Q41-1; accessed Sept. 29, 2020.

38. Paulson Pulikottil, *Transmission of Biblical Texts in Qumran: The Case of the Large Isaiah Scroll 1QIsa^a* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 34; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). According to Jerome A. Lund, "misrepresentation of previous research and tendentiousness seriously flaw Pulikottil's work" (Unpublished review for RBL). Previously, cf. E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll* (1QIsa^a) (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah, VI.; Leiden: Brill, 1974; Hebrew Original, Jerusalem, 1959). Elisah Qimron, *Indices and Corrections* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).
39. See Isaiah 61:10-11, Plate L, in Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron, The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a): A New Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Cf. also http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah; accessed Sept. 29, 2020.
40. For details on Isaiah 53:8 see Peter J. Gentry, "The Text of the Old Testament," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52/1 (2009): 31-33.
41. Armin Lange, "Ancient and Late Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish Texts," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A, 129.
42. A scholion attributed to Eusebius in the Palestinian Catena tradition reads as follows: ὁ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα στίχος δι' οὗ εἴρηται· πιστὸς κύριος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λόγοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ὅσιος ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ, οὐ φέρεται οὔτε ἐν τῷ ἑβραικῷ, οὔτε παρὰ ποῖς λοιποῖς ἑρμηνευταῖς. διόπερ ὡς περιττὸς, ἀναγκαίως ὠβέλισται. For the text, see D. Barthélemy, *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament, 4, Psaumes. Rapport final du Comité pour l'analyse textuelle de l'Ancien Testament hébreu institué par l'Alliance Biblique Universelle, établi en coopération avec Alexander R. Hulst, Norbert Lohfink, William D. McHardy, H. Peter Rüger, co*éditeur, James A. Sanders, coéditeur (ed. Stephen D. Ryan and Adrian Schenker ; Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 50/4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 878. The manuscript sources are Milan, Bibl. Ambr. F 126 sup. fol. 382v and Patmos, St. Johannes 215 fol. 327v. See Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung, Band III, Untersuchungen zu den Psalmenkatenen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 276.
43. Drew Longacre, "Paleographic Style and the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls: A Hand Fitting for the Occasion?" Forthcoming.
44. See Peter J. Gentry, "The Text of the Old Testament," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52/1 (2009): 19-45. The fundamental points there concerning the textual value of the Septuagint are still valid. Further, see David J. Shepherd, Jan Joosten, and Michaël N. van der Meer, eds., *Septuagint, Targum and Beyond: Comparing Aramaic and Greek Versions from Jewish Antiquity* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 193; Leiden: Brill, 2019).
45. Armin Lange, "Ancient and Late Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish Texts," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A, 136-138.
46. Armin Lange believes that the manuscripts from the First and Second Jewish Revolts are proto-Masoretic because the text was standardized in the Herodian Period. This conclusion is unwarranted. All of these manuscripts simply represent the conservative or repetition model current all along and now no longer preserved **in** the Jerusalem Temple. See Armin Lange, "Ancient and Late Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish Texts," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A, 148-158.
47. Armin Lange, "Ancient and Late Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish Texts," in *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, 1A, 127 and n. 89.
48. Anthony M. Ferguson, "A Comparison of the Non-Aligned Texts of Qumran to the Masoretic Text," PhD Diss. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018.
49. Ulrich explains, "The '*n*+1' type of designation for successive editions of a text assumes that there has been a series of editions during the composition of the text which constitutes its growth leading up to the first extant witness to a given book." See Ulrich, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Biblical Text," 85, n. 21.
50. After presentation at the 2008 Plenary Session of the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society Stefan Schorch kindly pointed out that Abraham Tal had already propounded a similar view, see Abraham Tal, "Is There a Raison d'Être for an Ara¬maic Targum in a Hebrew-Speaking Society?" *Revue des Études Juives* 160 (2001): 357-78. Tal's argument may be summarized as follows: the trad¬itional view consider¬ing the Aramaic Targum as a social necessity aimed at the masses that no longer under¬stood Hebrew was in active use among the common people by the time the first Targum was conceived. Tal submits the thesis that the Onqelos type Targum was not destined to expose the igno¬rant masses to the Law, whose language was inaccessible to them. It was rather directed against the tendency to "modernize" the text of the holy writ in accordance with contemporary linguistic habits and ideological trends. As we learn from the Dead Sea scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch and even rabbinical testimonies, such harmonizing

exemplars of the Law existed in the first centuries C.E. The use of the Targum along with the original made possible the modernization, without altering the sacred text. Andrew Teeter further supports this view, see *Scribal Laws*, 260-264.

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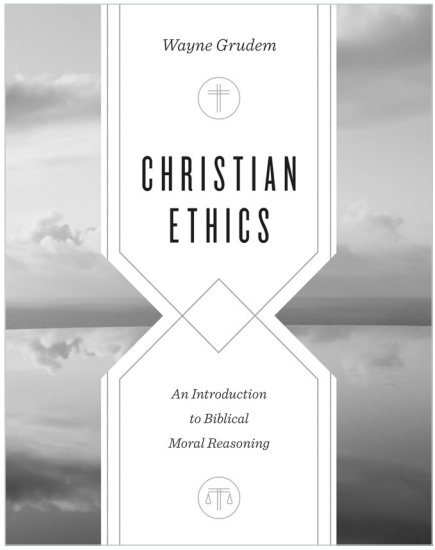

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JOHN M. FRAME, *Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy Emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary*

Where Inspiration is Found: Putting the New Testament Autographs in Context[1]

Timothy N. Mitchell

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Introduction

At the center of nearly every discussion over the inspiration of the New Testament (NT) are references to the "originals," or, to the "autographs" of the scriptures. Arguments against the inspiration or inerrancy of the NT often focus at the level of "autograph." In his bestselling work *Misquoting Jesus,* Bart Ehrman wrote that,

> [R]ather than actually having the inspired words of the autographs (i.e., the originals) of the Bible, what we have are the error-ridden copies of the autographs.[2]

As he explains in his book, Ehrman was addressing, head on, the Christian doctrines of inspiration as he understood them and his personal inability to reconcile these doctrines with the rich textual history of the Greek NT.[3] His criticism of divine inspiration focuses mainly on the "autographs" or "originals" because the commonly understood evangelical doctrine of scripture place God's act of inspiration upon the "autographs" of the NT (however one defines this) and not upon any one manuscript or manuscript tradition.[4] These multivalent terms used to describe inspiration or to formulate these doctrines often lead to a lack of clarity, or a misrepresentation concerning the divine origin of the scriptures. Bart Ehrman is a well-known example of how this misunderstanding can lead to the abandonment of a high view of scripture altogether.[5]

This article narrows in on a specific area of confusion as it pertains to the doctrines of inspiration and the preservation of the NT; the multivalent term "autograph" in doctrinal and faith statements and the reasons for using this nebulous descriptor. Next, the concept of an "autograph" is analyzed with regard to a few key scriptural passages that speak to inspiration. Then, the term "autograph" is defined within the context of composition and circulation practices at work in the Greco-Roman milieu. Finally, this definition of "autograph" is oriented with reference to the practice of NT textual criticism.

Statements of Faith

Though many books and articles have been written that clearly articulate the doctrines of the inspiration and the preservation of the scriptures, many evangelical Christians first encounter these teachings as they are encapsulated in the confessional statements of their Churches, schools, seminaries, and other Christian organizations.[6] Following are a few examples of typical evangelical doctrinal statements to illustrate the theme of focusing the inspiration event on the "autographs" of scripture.

Moody Bible Institute. Ehrman attended Moody in 1973 and some of his foundation in Evangelical doctrines may have originated from this time.[7] It is likely that he had Moody Bible Institute's understanding of inspiration in mind when he wrote *Misquoting Jesus*. It is appropriate, then, to examine their doctrinal statement concerning inspiration.

> Article II. The Bible, including both the Old and the New Testaments, is a divine revelation, *the original autographs of which were verbally inspired*.[8]

There is an accompanying clarifying note for Article II which dates to 1928.

> The Bible is without error in all it affirms in the *original autographs* and is the only authoritative guide for faith and practice and as such must not be supplanted by any other fields of human learning.[9]

For the term "original autographs," it appears that both a physical medium along with the wording or text is in view. In Moody's, and in the following doctrinal statements, the terms "autograph" or "original" (or a combination of the two) are often used synonymously in these formulations.

Phoenix Seminary. Because the *Sacred Words* conference was hosted by the Text and Canon Institute of Phoenix Seminary, it is fitting to look into their doctrinal stance on inspiration as well.

> We believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testament are the authoritative Word of God based on an inspired text without error in the autographs. "*Autograph" is a theological term referring to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek manuscripts of Scripture*.[10]

The phrasing might cause some confusion for readers as the choice of words seem to imply that any of the ancient manuscripts in existence today that contain the Old Testament (OT) in Hebrew or the NT in Greek are uniquely inspired and inerrant. Though this is most likely not the intended message, the ambiguity in the multivalent word "autograph" defined as a "theological term" describing a physical artefact might be misleading as to what doctrinal information the phrase is intending to convey.

Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. An internecine debate exploded in the American evangelical community in the 1970s over the inerrancy of the scriptures which resulted in a series of meetings held in Chicago in 1978 by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. These culminated in the formulation of *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (CSBI).[11] Though many saw the statement as killing inerrancy "with the death of a thousand qualifications," it can still be a useful tool in its detailed explanation

of inspiration and inerrancy.[12] The CSBI often serves as a standard for doctrinal statements on inspiration and inerrancy for Evangelical institutions.[13]

> Article X. *We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture*, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.[14]

The words "autographic text of scripture" are further explained later in the CSBI as the "autographic text of the original documents."[15] It appears that a physical object and its wording are being conveyed as embodying the inspired and inerrant words. Though it is not stated explicitly, it is implied that the preservation of the text or wording of the "autographs" is not dependent upon the preservation of these material artefacts.

Though many more doctrinal statements could be studied in detail, these few are broadly representative of evangelical institutions and Churches throughout North America. A unifying feature of these statements is that they focus the act of divine inspiration on the "autographs," a term which is often left undefined or only vaguely defined as a now lost physical medium and its wording.

Why the focus on the Autographs?

The reason for this doctrinal focus on the "autograph" becomes apparent in light of a few key scriptural passages that speak to inspiration. There are several types of revelatory and inspirational events testified in the NT writings which fall broadly under the following categories.

Direct revelation in which the author was divinely commanded to write down specific words either through a vision, dream, or theophany. Much of the book of Revelation falls into this category (Rev 1:9-11).[16]

Divine revelation that was given through the inspiration of the Spirit on the writers that set down historical events in the Gospels and Acts. These authors made selections concerning certain events, teachings, and miracles from a much larger story that occurred in the distant or more recent past (Luke 1:1-4, John 14:26, 20:30-31).[17]

Though the epistles were occasional compositions, writings that addressed a specific need, controversy, or other concern, these were divinely inspired words that are formative for the Christian faith.[18] Within these epistles, different methods of composition were employed such as scribes (Rom 16:22), or co-authors (1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Col 1:1).[19]

It is important, then, to revisit a few select scriptures that inform our doctrine of inspiration in order to better orient the term "autograph" within the context of these doctrinal statements.

2 Peter 1:12-15, 20-21:

> Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. (ESV)

> … knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

In these verses Peter, who was nearing the end of his life, was communicating his intent to set down the knowledge of Christ (discussed in vv. 1-11) so that this knowledge may be referenced and studied by his readers.[20] This is an obvious allusion to writing something down in order to give it permanence. A few verses later (vv. 20-21) Peter referred to men being carried along by the Holy Spirit to speak the words of God. This describes a process that occurred at a specific time and place in which unique words from God were spoken. Notice the process involved two agents; men who spoke, and God, through the Holy Spirit, who moved them. Spoken words are in view here, yet written words are not excluded, especially if Peter was including his earlier promise to set down his teaching in writing for them to recall (1:12-15). These verses occur directly after Peter mentions his eyewitness testimony to the transfiguration (1:16-18). This testimony he couples with the "firm word of prophecy" which appears to include his own experience

of observing the transfiguration (v. 19).[21] If so, then 1:20-21 also applies to the apostolic testimony of Peter concerning his eyewitness account of Jesus's ministry and not just to the Old Testament prophetic word.

2 Timothy 3:16-17:

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (ESV)

Paul uses language reminiscent of the creation account in Genesis, the scriptures are enlivened by God breathing them out.[22] This describes a process that occurred during the originating moment of the scriptures, an event limited to particular texts and words. Writings are clearly in view here because the reference is to writings (γραφη).[23] Because only certain writings were God breathed, this necessitates an event limited in scope and content with definitive contours. Paul doesn't explicitly declare which writings were scripture, the assumption is that Timothy will know. Though God is the only agent mentioned, human agency is implied. The men who wrote scripture and God who breathed life into these writings.

Luke 1:1-4:

> Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (ESV)

The preface to Luke's Gospel is a glimpse into the physician's composition practices. He tells us that some predecessors had already set down an account and Luke was continuing in this practice by giving his own ordered composition of the tradition handed down by the "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word."[24] This process that Luke describes necessitates editing at some level, ordering the eyewitness accounts, weaving in scriptural quotations,

and selecting from a larger corpus of Jesus's parables (Gospel of Thomas Saying 22; John 20:30-31) using the composition tools and practices of his Greco-Roman milieu.[25]

John 20:30-31:

> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (ESV)

When composing his Gospel, John made selections from a larger body of Jesus's teachings and miracles that he did not include in his crafting of events.[26] Certain parables, stories, and events in Jesus's life were selected and arranged by John so his readers might believe that Jesus was truly the Messiah. Not unlike what Luke describes, this clearly testifies to an editing process by John in formulating his Gospel account.[27]

Despite the testimony of scripture reviewed above, it seems that many Evangelicals have a concept of divine inspiration that conforms to a simplistic version of direct revelation that does not take into account the myriad ways God moved men to write his inspired words using the tools and methods available to them. For example, Bart Ehrman seems to have accepted this type of overly simplistic doctrine of inspiration in his evangelical youth that emphasized the divine aspects at the exclusion of the human elements. Because much later, his scholarship forced him to notice the human elements of NT authorship which then necessitated the exclusion of a divine origin for the scriptures. This then paved the way for his de-conversion.[28]

In order to avoid a similar one-dimensional view, our understanding of divine inspiration must incorporate both the testimony of scripture that speaks to its divine origins and the human elements of Greco-Roman composition and epistolary practices that are evident in the NT writings.

The scriptures testify to a superintending process of divine inspiration that is verbal (it is text based), plenary (it extends to all of the words), and confluent (divine inspiration through the personal agency of man).[29] Though the exact nature of this process remains a mystery, the scriptures that speak to divine inspiration point back to an originating moment of composition from which the succeeding manuscript tradition descended. Doctrinal statements

have often labelled this moment as the "autograph" or the "original" or some other similar designator.[30]

Another reason that doctrinal statements limit inspiration to an originating moment (i.e., "autograph") is because of the many textual additions, corruptions, and mistakes present within the manuscript tradition. Much of this was due to simple human error and the fact that there was no centralized ecclesiastical or state sanctioned authority with the power to safeguard or guarantee the transmission of the biblical text. Already, during the apostolic era, doctrinal corruptions and power-struggles are evident in the NT epistles. Outside of their teaching influence, the apostles were mostly powerless to stop these false teachers who twisted the apostolic witness. They would be similarly powerless against any textual corruptions as well. Following are select examples illustrating this phenomena.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2:

> Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Here Paul mentions that the Thessalonian Church had apparently already received a letter falsely attributed to himself.[31] This pseudo-epistle gave them a false theology regarding the day of the Lord. Paul was writing to the Church not a short time after he was forced to leave by a mob organized by non-believing Jewish leaders. In a short period of time he had to contend with those who would plant seeds of corrupt teaching in his name.[32] The only defense Paul had against this was to warn the Thessalonians.

2 Peter 3:15-16:

> And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Peter mentions in passing, not only a distinctive letter collection of Paul, but also that there were those who were twisting the teaching contained in them.[33] Peter's only defense against this was to warn his readers that this was occurring and to be wary of it.

Besides the doctrinal twisting of the apostolic message as reviewed above, there is early evidence that the New Testament writings were being textually altered and corrupted as well. This occurred both intentionally and unintentionally, though it is nearly impossible for the modern scholar to discern the initial source or motivation behind most variants. Following are a few examples of textual corruption from the period not long after the apostles.

Irenaeus 5.30.1, Revelation 13.18.

Near the end of the second century (ca. 180 AD) the Church leader Irenaeus of Lugdunum, Gaul, discussed a textual variation in the book of Revelation with regard to the mark of the Beast.[34] Irenaeus noted in his *Against Heresies* that some manuscripts read 616 rather than the more familiar 666 for the mark of the beast. He preferred the better known number of 666, however, for the "most approved and ancient manuscripts" as well as Johannine tradition, supported this as the authorial reading (*Haer.* 5.30.1).[35]

Irenaeus 3.10.5, Mark 16:19.

Irenaeus quoted from Mark 16:19 indicating that though some early sources did not contain the longer ending of Mark, the longer ending was present in at least some manuscripts at the end of the second century (*Haer.* 3.10.5).[36]

The mention of a variant reading in the manuscripts of Revelation reveals that within 100 years of Revelation being written there were already some corruptions of the textual tradition significant enough to affect meaning. In reference to the ending of Mark, Irenaeus evinced an early text with the longer ending (Mark 16:9-20). Yet by the fourth century, this longer ending was absent from our two earliest witnesses for the text of Mark, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, and Jerome mentions that the long ending was absent from all the Greek codices in his day.[37] Thus, the ending of Mark also demonstrates an element of fairly large scale variation in this gospel at an early date. Doctrinal statements, then, must account for this early textual corruption in the manuscript tradition and should not consider any physical manuscript or tradition as especially divinely inspired.[38]

What is an autograph?

Therefore, in light of composition practices and the errors introduced into the text early on during transmission, it is both historically and doctrinally appropriate to place the definitive accomplishment of divine inspiration on an originating moment: the period closest to the time of composition yet after the document had been completed by the author. Doctrinal statements refer to this document, at this moment, as the "autograph."[39] Because of its multivalent meaning, it is important that the term "autograph" be properly understood and its meaning unpacked.

According to Webster's Dictionary, the meaning of the term "autograph" is defined straightforwardly as "something written or made with one's own hand."[40] As Peter Williams has articulated, terms such as "original" or "autograph" have multivalent meanings that can include notes, draft copies, and un-sent letters and other written material as well as completed works and would even include post-publication authorial changes.[41] It can mean a physical object and the text it contains. "Autograph' can also simply mean the *wording* of the autograph.[42]

In order to illustrate that, at the level of "autograph," the text can be quite fluid, here are two examples of authorial copies of literary compositions. Paleographically dated to the third century AD, P.Oxy 7.1015 is a well preserved writing that praises a young local gymnasiarch.[43] It shows signs of authorial alterations with interlinear corrections and erasures.[44]

Also dated paleographically to the third century AD, P.Köln 6.245 is the remains of a larger book roll that retells the Homeric epic.[45] The fragment has interlinear corrections, and extensive rewritings.[46]

These papyri reveal that there was textual fluidity at the authorial level before a writings was completed. Thus, the term "autograph" is not very helpful in describing the multifaceted aspects of divine inspiration and the composition of the NT writings, because at every phase of the draft stages, the document(s) would technically be "autographs." Yet this is clearly not what is meant by "autograph" in doctrinal statements. Any definition of the original text, or "autograph," must take these aspects into consideration. In order to better understand the Greco-Roman milieu in which the NT writings emerged the discussion will now turn to a brief overview of ancient composition and publication practices.

Ancient Authorship and Publication

The composition process, whether of personal letters or a larger literary work, often involved scribes who wrote on behalf of an author. This is evident in both Greco-Roman and Christian sources. Romans 16:22 states that "I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you" (ESV). This is implied in Paul's statements at the end of many of his epistles, where he indicates that he is writing in his own hand (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; Col 4:18; Philemon 19).[47] Cicero, a first century BC Roman statesman, and his secretary Tiro, provide several examples of Tiro suggesting editorial changes in the writings of Cicero (*Fam.* 16.4; 16.17) along with simply copying dictation.[48] Though a secretary or scribe was used, this did not remove responsibility of authorship from the originator of the work.[49]

Of course, the composition process, especially of history, biography, and technical or scientific writing, involved significant research by the author, a selection process by which a body of knowledge or a larger story was edited down. Loveday Alexander considered that the preface to Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:1-4) finds its closest parallels in the prefaces of "scientific," that is, "technical" works.[50] Alexander notes that a common characteristic of these works is that they are "the distillation of the teaching of a school or a craft tradition as it was passed down from one generation to another."[51] Luke 1:1-4, along with John 20:30-31; 21:25, evinces this type of process for the Gospels. The integration of composite quotations of OT texts by the Gospel authors reveals a studied knowledge of the Prophets to produce a Midrash of messianic prophecies.[52] As Larry Hurtado has argued, religious "experiences," such as visions from the risen Jesus and other prophetic revelations, led to new insight into OT passages and "inspired exegesis."[53] During the stages of notation, study, and editing, these unfinished versions would fall into the realm of "autograph." Yet, because the work was in the draft phases of composition, the divine inspirational event would not yet be complete.

Publication

During the first century, books (whether the roll or the codex) were made entirely by hand, there was no printing press or the mass production, marketing and distribution of books.[54] No copyright existed and books could

be copied out in their entirety with no legal ramifications or remuneration to the author. The distribution or "publication" of a book occurred through both commercial and private social networks. This phenomena can be briefly illustrated by a few sparse references to contemporary figures.

Writing to the historian Suetonius in the beginning of the second century AD, Pliny the Younger urged him to publish his work, declaring that he wanted to hear that his friend's books were "being copied out, sold and read" (*Ep.* 5.10).[55] Pliny revealed here the three broad avenues of "publication" available to his contemporaries; through copying for personal use; through commercial book sellers; and through the reading out of a work in a public setting. Both the private and more commercial aspects of book production can be seen in the following letters from antiquity, P.Oxy 2192, and P.Petaus 30.

Paleographically dated to the second century AD, P.Oxy 18. 2192 is a letter in which the main body of text is no longer preserved but two postscripts are still readable.[56] The first postscript is written by the sender of the letter and requests the recipient to have copies made of a series of books (presumably from the collection of the recipient) and then to send these copies back to the sender of the letter. The second postscript appears to be written by the recipient and responds that "Demetrius the bookseller" has some of the desired volumes. The recipient also makes a request asking that, if the sender has any volumes of "Seleucus's work," to make copies and send them in return. The recipient also briefly makes reference to another community of readers, "Diodorus's circle," that also might have a few desirable books from which to make copies.[57]

P.Petaus 30 is a letter written on papyrus, dated paleographically to the second century AD, that a certain Julius Placidus sent to his father concerning a bookseller named Dius who traveled to Placidus's location.[58] Here he mentions being shown parchment codices, of which he did not purchase but did collate his manuscripts against, for the cost of 100 drachmas.[59]

Similar avenues of copying and distribution can be seen in the Christian community as well; Colossians 4:16 "And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea"; 1 Thessalonian 5:27, "have this letter read to all the brothers"; 1 Timothy 4:13, "devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture."[60] Much like the avenues mentioned by Pliny above, these passages indicate that Paul's letters were distributed through copying

and also through reading out in the Church worship gathering.

In the second century, this same process continued, as revealed by Polycarp (ca. 115 AD) in his letter to the Philippians 13.1-2, "We are sending to you the letters of Ignatius that were sent to us by him together with any others that we have in our possession."[61] Much like the letters of Paul in Colossian 4:16, Polycarp was copying and distributing the letters of Ignatius to the Philippian Church. Not long after the time of Polycarp, The Shepherd of Hermas, Vision 2.4, reveals that Christians disseminated their works by copying them and by reading them out to the congregations; "Therefore you will write two little books, and you will send one to Clement and one to Grapte. Then Clement will send it to the cities abroad."

Though later than the period under discussion, the following papyrus fragment illustrates that books were being requested and copied within Christian circles in a similar manner as evidenced by P.Oxy 18.2192. The fourth century AD letter preserved in P.Oxy 63.4365, reads, "To my dearest lady sister, greetings in the Lord. Lend the Ezra, since I lent you the little Genesis. Farewell in God from us."[62] Though a simple statement, it indicates that Christians were lending and borrowing books amongst themselves and presumably making copies for themselves from these borrowed books.

Accidental Publication

Authors attempted to maintain control over the writing process and only released their composition once the work was completed. Sometimes, however, books were circulated prematurely before the author completed the draft and re-writing stages. Pliny the Younger wrote to his friend Octavius warning him that some of his poems had been circulating without his knowledge or consent (Ep. 2.10). Cicero bitterly protested to his friend Atticus who had prematurely given away a book to a friend before Cicero was finished editing it (Att. 3.12). These authors complained about the untimely releasing of their work because once these writings began to circulate, the authors lost control of the composition process and could no longer edit or polish their writing.

Recently, Mathew Larsen has latched onto this phenomena of the "accidental publication" of a work and has argued that many texts, such as the Christian Gospels, were not meant to be finished or completed.[63] Working against this thesis, however, are the previously mentioned authors Cicero and Pliny the

Younger. They reveal that additions or deletions and plagiarisms of their prematurely released writings was not acceptable and these were considered textual corruptions and theft by the authors and the communities that circulated these writings. These authors reveal that, whether intentional or unintentional, once a writing began to circulate, the composition was, for all intents and purposes, finished. I have given a more thorough treatment of this issue elsewhere.[64]

Definition of Autograph in Doctrinal Statements

The autographic papyri mentioned above (P.Oxy 7.1015, P.Köln 6.245) reveal that, at the level of "autograph," the text can be quite fluid. The difficulty in the case of the examples given is that it is impossible to know for sure the completed form of these two compositions. This uncertainty would change if a copy of these writings were known to have been circulated. Even if a manuscript was inadvertently released before the author was satisfied with its form, the work would, in all practicality, be completed, for the author would lose any control over the fate of the document at that point. Working against the views of Larsen, the instant at which a manuscript was released beyond the immediate control of the author, whether accidentally or intentionally, effectively ended the composition stages of writing.

In light of this, the NT writings can be said to be "completed" once they were released by the authors and began to circulate as definitive works. These documents were no longer under the control of their authors and would have circulated as distinct writings. Therefore, in reference to the NT, the "autograph," as often discussed by apologists, theologians, and doctrinal statements, should be defined as *the text of the completed authorial work the moment in which it was released by the author for circulation and copying, not earlier draft versions or layers of composition*.[65] This working definition better accounts for the multifaceted process of divine inspiration, whether through direct revelation, "inspired exegesis," midrash, or the investigation of eyewitness and written sources, the composition process of which was superintended by the Holy Spirit. When the writing was released, and began to be copied and circulated, the inspiration event was effectively over.

It is necessary to briefly unpack these ideas further. Certainly, the physical properties of the autograph (whether papyrus, parchment, wax or wooden tablet, etc.) helped to shape the text, however, it is the text—the

wording—that was inspired, not the physical medium of the material autograph.[66] Passages in the scriptures, such as Colossians 4:16, 1 Thessalonian 5:27, and 1 Timothy 4:13, imply a copying and distributing process. For Paul, addressing these congregations, it was imperative that the recipients received the *text* of the epistle, not the original physical material autograph penned by the sender of the letter.

This same mentality can be said of the previously mentioned references as well. When Polycarp wrote to the Philippian church (13.1-2), he was concerned that they received *copies*, that is, the *text*, of Ignatius's letters, not the physical papyrus that Ignatius had sent to the various Churches. This can be clearly seen in The Shepherd of Hermes, Vision 2.4. Copies of the vision Hermas had received, and had written in "two little books," was considered the same work as the original physical autograph written down on papyrus or parchment.

Books and writings were requested, borrowed, lent, and transcribed. As long as these manuscripts were quality transcriptions then these same books were considered to be in the possession of the one who had these copies. Each of the above examples reveal that different physical copies of texts were considered the same text; it's the wording that the author wrote that mattered.[67]

Inspiration, the Autograph, and Textual Criticism

It would beneficial to examine the ways in which this new understanding of inspiration and the term "autograph" meshes with the practice and purpose of NT textual criticism. The science of textual criticism attempts to trace the history of textual transmission from author to the present day. David C. Parker defined the practice of NT textual criticism as "the analysis of variant readings in order to determine in what sequence they arose."[68] Of course, in order to understand "in what sequence [the variants] arose," one must also determine the originating text, that is, the text that gave rise to the tradition, the authorial text. In light of this, Michael W. Holmes wrote,

> "Something got sent" (in the case of a letter), or something was released for copying (in the case of other genres), and it is the wording of that "something," in the form(s) in which it was sent off or released, that is a reasonable and legitimate goal of text-critical research and investigation.[69]

As Holmes notes above, it is the wording of the text as it was released and circulated that gave rise to the succeeding manuscript tradition. As soon as these writings were copied, errors crept into the text (as we saw already with Irenaeus and Revelation) and, within the lifetime of the apostles, the teaching of these writings were being twisted and corrupted (note Peter's statement, in 2 Peter 3:15-16, that there are those who are twisting Paul's teaching contained in his letters). One of the goals for textual critics is to work through the extant manuscript tradition in order to recover or confirm the wording of the "authorial text" of the NT writings. Contrary to Ehrman's conclusions quoted at the beginning, though we may not always be able to discern between authorial text and scribal additions, we can be mostly certain that what we have today contains the inspired *text* of the autographs.[70]

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1. This paper began as an invited talk that was delivered at the "Sacred Words" conference at First Baptist Church, Tempe, Arizona, February 21, 2020. This was the inaugural conference of the newly formed Text and Canon Institute of Phoenix Seminary, directed and co-directed by Dr. John Meade and Dr. Peter Gurry perspectively.
2. Bart D. Erhman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 5.
3. Ibid., 10.
4. J. Gresham Machen provides such an example when he wrote, "Only the autographs of the Biblical books, in other words-the books as they came from the pen of the sacred writers, and not any one of the copies of those autographs which we now possess-were produced with that supernatural impulsion and guidance of the Holy Spirit which we, call inspiration" (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World* [1936, reprint; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978], 39).
5. Ehrman explains that it is due to the reality that none of the originals or autographs of the NT writings were preserved to the present day that led him to abandon the Evangelical view of inspiration; "my study of the Greek New Testament, and my investigations into the manuscripts that contain it, led to a radical rethinking of my understanding of what the bible is" (Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus,* 11).
6. It would be impossible to list out in full a bibliography of works dedicated to laying out the doctrine of inspiration and the intertwined topic of inerrancy. For a multi-author volume discussing many aspects of scriptural authority and inspiration with related bibliographies, see D. A. Carson, ed, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016). For an overview of the history of the Christian view of inspiration, inerrancy, and biblical authority, see John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/Kim Proposal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982). See also Ronald F. Satta, *The Sacred Text: Biblical Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2007). There are also several formative works in the Presbyterian tradition, Archibald A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1866), 67-77; Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration." *Presbyterian Review* 6 (1881): 226-60; Warfield, "The Inspiration of the Bible." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 51 (1894): 614-640.
7. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 4. Ehrman writes about his time at Moody, "I decided to major in Bible theology, which meant taking a lot of biblical study and systematic theology courses. Only one perspective was taught in these courses, subscribed to by all the professors (they had to sign a statement) and by all the students (we did as well): the Bible is the inerrant word of God" (4).
8. Italics added. Statement taken from www.moodybible.org/beliefs/.
9. Italics added for emphasis. Statement taken from www.moodybible.org/beliefs/.

10. https://ps.edu/about/statement-of-faith/.
11. Roger E. Olson, *The SCM Press A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 154-156.
12. Ibid., 155.
13. Brogan, "Can I Have Your Autograph?," 101-102.
14. Ronald Youngblood, ed., *Evangelicals and Inerrancy: Selections from the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 233.
15. Ibid., 238.
16. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck, eds, *Understanding Christian Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 30; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Prolegomena, Bibliology, Theology Proper* (Vol 1. *Systematic Theology*: Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), 56-57.
17. Carl F. H. Henry, "The Authority and Inspiration of the Bible" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Volume 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 26-28; Barry G. Webb, "Biblical Authority and Diverse Literary Genres," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (D. A. Carson, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 601-605; William Lane Craig, "Men Moved By The Holy Spirit Spoke From God' (2 Peter 1.21): A Middle Knowledge Perspective on Biblical Inspiration," in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology: Providence, Scripture, and Resurrection* (ed. Michael Rea; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 169.
18. E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 224-229; Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Revelation and God* (Vol 1. *Reformed Systematic Theology*: Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 441; Barry G. Webb, "Biblical Authority", 605.
19. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 33-36, 81-93.
20. Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 74.
21. Gene L. Green, *Jude and Second Peter* (Robert Yarbrough, ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 218-219.
22. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 705-706.
23. Paul is most assuredly including both the Jewish scriptures (referred to by Paul in 2 Tim 3:15) and the gospel message proclaimed by Paul and entrusted to Timothy (2 Tim 1:13-14), much of it contained in his own letters, many of them (such as Romans) were already written by this time. See the arguments of L. Timothy Swinson, *What is Scripture: Paul's Use of Graphe in the Letters to Timothy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 146-154.
24. Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 122-131.
25. Loveday Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1:-4 and Acts 1:1* (Margaret E. Thrall, ed. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
26. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 44-45.
27. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses. 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 362-365.
28. Erhman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 211-212.
29. For a chapter length treatment of the doctrine of double agency, or double authorship of the scriptures see, Henri A. G. Blocher "God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 497-541. For a brief overview see the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. Kevin Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 644-645.
30. Also note the qualifications made by James M. Gray in the widely influential *The Fundamentals* volumes ("Inspiration of the Bible—Definition, Extent and Proof," in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, eds. [Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917]; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 2:12-13.
31. Origen references 2 Thess 2.1-2 as an example of pseudepigraphy (*De adult. libr.* 7). For an example of a forged letter from Caesar to Cicero which was exposed by him, see Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 146.
32. G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 13-16.
33. Timothy Mitchell, "Exposing Textual Corruption: Community as a Stabilizing Aspect in the Circulation of the New Testament Writings during the Greco-Roman Era," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43.2 (December 2020): 285.
34. For an introduction to Irenaeus see Sara Purvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).
35. Amy M. Donaldson, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers. Vol 1* (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2009), 94-96.
36. Robert H. Stein, "The Ending of Mark," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18.1 (2008), 82; Bruce M. Metzger, *A*

Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (2nd Edition. German Bible Society: Stuttgart, 1994), 103.

37. Jerome *Ep.* 120 (ca. ca. AD 406-407) (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 322). See also the extensive treatment of the long ending of Mark in Donaldson, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings Among Greek and Latin Church Fathers. Vol 2* (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2009), 397-407.
38. For example, see Dewey M. Beegle's observations, "When it became clear to lovers of scripture that copies of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament contained some errors, it was quite natural to transfer the quality of accuracy or inerrancy to the original writings" (*Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 156).
39. George I. Mavrodes argued that limiting inspiration to the "autographs" (defined as a physical medium of writing from the author) and not to other manuscript copies introduces problems in the doctrine that inhibit a proper understanding of the inspiration event ("The Inspiration of Autographs," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 41.1 (1969): 19-29).
40. "Autograph." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed November 17, 2020. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autograph
41. Peter J. Williams engages with several multivalent terms used by Christian theologians and apologists and the problems these words inject into the discussion in "Ehrman's Equivocation and the Inerrancy of the Original Text," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 389-406. See also the conclusions drawn in Timothy N. Mitchell, "What are the NT Autographs? An Examination of Inspiration and Inerrancy in Light of Greco-Roman Publication," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59.2 (2016): 304.
42. Williams, "Ehrman's Equivocation," 399-400. Though Williams's observations are specifically in regard to the term "original" they equally apply to the term "autograph" as these words are often used interchangeably.
43. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton:
44. Princeton University Press, 2005), 242. For an image of P.Oxy. VII 1015, see E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World* (ed. P. J. Parson; 2nd ed.; Institute of Classical Studies, Bulletin Supplement 46; London: University of London Press, 1987), 91.
45. Arthur S. Hunt, ed., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part VII* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1910), 111–114.
46. Maryline G. Parca, *Ptocheia, or, Odysseus in Disguise at Troy (P. Köln VI 245)* (American Studies in Papyrology 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), ix. For an image of P. Köln VI 245, see http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/ifa/NRWakademie/papyrologie/PKoeln/PK5932r.jpg.
47. Parca, *Ptocheia,* 4-6
48. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, 175. See also Bahr, Gordon J. "The Subscriptions in the Pauline Letters," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87.1 (March 1968): 27-41.
49. Mitchell, "What are the NT Autographs?," 295.
50. Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* 81-84.
51. Loveday Alexander. "Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing." *Novum Testamentum* 28.1 (1986): 57.
52. Ibid., 69.
53. Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 129-156.
54. Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 73-74, 565-578, 588-594.
55. Timothy Mitchell, "Myths About Autographs: What They Were and How Long They May Have Survived," in *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 28-29.
56. English translation taken from Pliny, *Letters*, trans. William Melmoth and W. M. L. Hutchinson, 2 Vols.; (LCL; New York: Macmillan, 1915).
57. For English translations of the post scripts see Rosalia Hatzilambrou, "Appendix: P. Oxy. XVIII 2192 Revisited," in *Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts* (ed. A.K. Bowman, R.A. Coles, N. Gonis, Dirk Obbink and P.J. Parsons; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007): 282-86.
58. Colin H. Roberts, "2192. Letter About Books," in Edgar Lobel, Colin H. Roberts, and E. P. Wegner (eds.), GRM 26, The Oxyrhynchus Papyri XVIII (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1941), 150-152.
59. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 53.
60. For an image of P.Petaus 30 PK376r.jpg (850×670) (uni-koeln.de).
61. Translations are from the *English Standard Version*.
62. English translation of Polycarp's letter to the Philippians and The Shepherd of Hermas are taken from Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations, 3rd ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

63. English translation taken from Thomas J. Kraus, "The Lending of Books in the Fourth Century C.E. *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4365—A Letter on Papyrus and the Reciprocal Lending of Literature Having Become Apocryphal," in *Ad fontes: Original Manuscripts and Their Significance for Studying Early Christianity* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Wendy Porter; TENT 3; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 187.
64. Larsen, "Accidental Publication, Unfinished Texts and the Traditional Goals of New Testament Textual Criticism," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 39.4 (2017): 379–380. See also his book length treatment of the topic, *Gospels Before the Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
65. This topic has been addressed in full in Timothy Mitchell, "Exposing Textual Corruption: Community as a Stabilizing Aspect in the Circulation of the New Testament Writings during the Greco-Roman Era," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 43.2 (December 2020): 266-298.
66. Mitchell, "What are the NT Autographs?", 306.
67. Williams, "Ehrman's Equivocation," 399.
68. Ibid., 399.
69. David C. Parker, *An Introduction to The New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 159.
70. Michael W. Holmes, "From 'Original Text' to 'Initial Text': The Traditional Goal of NT Textual Criticism in Contemporary Discussion," in *The Text of the NT in Contemporary Research: Essays on the* Status Quaestionis, 2nd ed. (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; NTTSD 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 659.
71. Greg L. Bahnsen, "Autographs, Amanuenses and Restricted Inspiration," The Evangelical Quarterly 45.2 (April-June 1973), 101-102. Some scholars betray a lack of confidence in our ability to reconstruct the original wording using the tools of modern textual criticism. See the discussion in John J. Brogan, "Can I Have Your Autograph? Uses and Abuses of Textual Criticism in Formulating an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture," in Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics (ed. Vincent E. Bacote, Laura Miguelez Quay, and Dennis L. Okholm; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 93–111.

Listening to the Dead Sea Scrolls

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Introduction

In early 1947, Muhammad ed-Dib stumbled upon the most significant archeological find of the twentieth century.[1] A stray rock, likely thrown to guide the Bedouin herds, smashed a pot in a newly eroded cave. Frightened but intrigued, the Bedouin returned the following day to investigate the cave contents; and so, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls began. Over the next decade, Bedouin and scholars would discover roughly 1,000 manuscripts (most of which exist as fragments) in eleven caves from Qumran and at several other Judean Desert sites such as Masada.[2] Scholars classify approximately 225 of these manuscripts as biblical texts.[3] Four characteristics of these biblical texts make them especially important to our understanding of the OT's history during the Second Temple period (516 BC-AD 70).

First, these manuscripts are ancient (i.e., third century BC to the second century AD).[4] Second, most of these manuscripts are written in the OT's original languages (i.e., Hebrew and Aramaic). Third, collectively, these texts preserve thousands of differences compared to the Jewish canonical text known as the MT (Masoretic Text).[5] Fourth, despite the vast number

of textual variants, several of these texts preserve a high, and even very high, degree of similarity to the MT. These four points are facts. These are ancient Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Many differ much from the MT, and yet, many correspond closely to the MT.

Emanuel Tov's classification grid for categorizing the biblical manuscripts from Qumran illustrates point #3 well.[6]

Table #1. Tov's Classification of the Qumran Manuscripts

Category	Number of Manuscripts
MT-like Texts	56
Pre-Samaritan Texts	5
Texts close to LXX	7
Non-Aligned Texts	57

This classification demonstrates from a "bird's eye view" a certain level of textual plurality from Qumran since Tov identifies nearly half of these manuscripts as "non-aligned" or "independent." Tov describes these manuscripts as inconsistent in agreement with MT, SP, and LXX while preserving unique readings.[7] This group of manuscripts depicts, according to Tov, "an almost endless number of individual sources."[8] The center of this group of manuscripts is not an internal unity (agreed readings) but a disunity (readings that disagree with MT, SP, and LXX). Although this label is a bit ambiguous, this categorization grid depicts a level of textual plurality (point 3).

The evidence from half of the Qumran texts, especially the other biblical manuscripts discovered at other Judean Desert sites, illustrates point 4 well. For example, a Leviticus manuscript (MasLev^{b}) found at Masada dates from 10 BC to AD 30 and agrees overwhelmingly with the MT. It even agrees with the peculiar spelling of הִוא by reading הוא instead of היא at Leviticus 10:17 and 11:6. Correspondence on this level indicates a remarkable degree of unity between these manuscripts. Moreover, this agreement demonstrates that the texts of MT tradition were copied conservatively since both the scribe of MasLev^{b} and the MT did not correct their manuscript. The consonants הוא were left in both of these manuscripts even though the consonants היא were grammatically correct. MasLev^{b}, therefore, illustrates an incredible degree of unity between the manuscripts discovered at the other Judean Desert sites and the MT.[9]

Table #2. אוה of Leviticus 10:17

Excerpt of Codex Leningrad of Lev 10:17: "for it (is) most holy"[10]

Excerpt of MasLev[b] of Lev 10:1 "for[it] (is) mo]st holy"[11]

The presence of manuscripts representing textual plurality and textual unity raises a critical question: Did the OT text move from textual plurality to unity or did an authoritative text exist alongside a diversity of texts? Although many scholars argue that the OT text moved from diversity to unity, an abundance of evidence from the Second Temple period suggests that a standard text existed alongside a diversity of texts. I will discuss two pieces of evidence that support this conclusion. First, the non-aligned texts can reasonably be understood as re-signified texts. Second, there is both direct and circumstantial evidence from other Second Temple literature that attests to a standard OT text during this time.

Non-aligned Texts as Re-Signified Manuscripts

Space prohibits a thorough discussion of all 57 manuscripts that Tov identifies as non-aligned: instead, I will discuss a sampling of these texts.[12]

4QGen[k]: A Normalized Manuscript

4QGen[k] (4Q10) is a poorly preserved manuscript that dates on paleographic ground to ca. 1-30 AD.[13] Tov labels this manuscript as "non-aligned."[14] Besides differences of plene/defective spelling, this text preserves three variants when compared to the MT. Interestingly, there is a common denominator underlying each of these: 4QGen[k] replaces uncommon forms in the MT with more common forms.

Table #3. Variants of 4QGen[k]

Fragment, Line, and Verse	4QGen[k]		MT	
F1:L1 (Gen 1:9)	ותרא	And let it appear	וְתֵרָאֶה	And let it appear
F2:L3 (Gen 1:14)	ולש[נים.]	and *for* y[ears]	וְשָׁנִים	and years
F5:L2 (Gen 3:1)	האף	*Did*…really	אַף	Really…

The differences preserved at Genesis 1:14 concerns a preposition. Genesis 1:14 of Leningrad reads וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים "and they will be for signs and for seasons and for days and years." The preposition "for" is omitted before "years" in the MT, while 4QGen[k] adds it. Both forms are grammatically correct in biblical Hebrew, although the form of 4QGen[k] is more common.[15]

The addition of 4QGen[k] at F5:L2 (Gen 3:1) is similar. Here, 4QGen[k] adds an interrogative particle heh. Interrogative statements can be expressed in Hebrew using a particle or by intonation.[16] The same is true in English. An auxiliary verb can mark an interrogative statement: "Do you like avocados?" Or intonation can indicate an interrogative: "You like avocados?" The only difference between the statements, "Do you like avocados?" and "You like avocados?" when spoken is intonation. Genesis 3:1 of Leningrad does not have a particle heh. The interrogative nature of the statement is evident, nonetheless, based on context, and readers would undoubtedly communicate this idea by intonation. 4QGen[k] marks the sentence's interrogative nature by adding the particle heh, which is the more common way to indicate an interrogative statement.[17] Mitchell claims that there are only thirty-nine times in the OT were an interrogative particle does not mark an interrogative statement.[18] Unsurprisingly, many of our English translations seem to take the same liberties found in 4QGen[k]. The ESV, NIV, CSB all read "Did God really say…" and yet they are all translating from the MT here, not 4QGen[k].[19]

Finally, the fragmentary nature of this manuscript complicates our understanding of the last difference. What is certain at F1:L1 (Gen 1:9) is that 4QGen[k] reads ותרא while Leningrad reads וְתֵרָאֶה. 4QGen[k] has omitted the final heh of the verb ראה. Verbs that end with the consonant heh are considered weak verbs in Hebrew, and, at times, the final heh is apocopated (i.e., this letter is lost). The form of the MT is a jussive (a tense of volition), but it is not the common form. The typical jussive form for

a third yod/vav verb like ראה "to see" is the apocopated form: the final heh is lost. It is not surprising given the other two variants that this is the form of 4QGen^{k}. Again, the scribe appears to transcribe the more common form for the less common form preserved in the MT.

The differences preserved in this manuscript suggest that the scribe has taken the liberty to substitute the MT's uncommon forms for more common forms. I believe, then, that it is best to label this manuscript as a "normalized manuscript."[20] When we consider point 3 above, we must consider that some textual plurality likely results from scribes normalizing their manuscripts.

4QDeutn: An Excerpted Manuscript

4QDeut^{n} (4Q41) dates on paleographic grounds to the early Herodian period ca. 30-1 BC.[21] It preserves text from Deuteronomy 5 and 8, but not in the order found in the MT. The scribe places Deuteronomy 8:5-10 before Deuteronomy 5:1-6:1. This manuscript also preserves both reasons for celebrating the Sabbath: (Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15).[22]

4QDeut^{n} is not an alternative form of Deuteronomy; instead, it is an excerpted text.[23] Excerpted texts existed in antiquity, and thus, their existence at Qumran is not alarming.[24] Scholars have identified several manuscripts from Qumran as excerpted.[25] At least three details about 4QDeut^{n} suggest this classification. First, the manuscript's column height is approximately 7.1 cm/2.8 inches; the average height of a Qumran scroll was app. 14-15 cm (5.5-5.9 inches).[26] Since a manuscript's length is directly related to its height,[27] it is improbable that this manuscript contained the entire book of Deuteronomy.[28] The column height, thus, indicates that the scribe designed this manuscript to preserve only a portion of Deuteronomy.[29] Second, Deuteronomy 5 is a text commonly found in excerpted manuscripts.[30] Third, excerpted texts by definition rearrange the biblical order.[31]

The main differences preserved in this manuscript suggest that this scribe has created an excerpted text. Although excerpted texts are not strictly biblical texts, scholars have categorized some as "biblical." Thus, again, as we evaluate point 3 above, we must consider that some textual plurality results from scribes creating excerpted texts.

4QPs^{x}: A Poorly Copied Manuscript

4QPs^{x} is preserved as one fragment and is possibly the earliest manuscript

preserving a psalm extant since some scholars date the text to ca. 175-125 BC on paleographical grounds.[32] The document preserves portions of Psalm 89, but the manuscript has a high degree of textual variety when compared to Psalm 89 of the MT. For example, ten Hebrew words preserve variants out of a total thirty-six preserved words. Moreover, the scribe rearranges the text into the following sequence of verses: 20-22, 26, 23, 27-28, and 31. Finally, three remaining words are different from the reading of the MT, although synonymous to it.[33] The text of 4QPs^{x} is not the text of Psalm 89 in our English Bibles. Some scholars claim that this manuscript represents an independent form of Psalm 89.[34] This conclusion is unlikely in my mind, given the scribal habits and given the manuscript's material nature.

The habits of this scribe suggest that the scribe was either unskilled or a beginner.[35] The following evidence supports this conclusion:[36]

1. Some letters are bigger than others. For example, some of the letters of line 1 are smaller than those of the rest of the text. Skehan suggests that these letters were added as an afterthought.[37]
2. The scribe seems to be subject to Aramaic influence.
3. The scribe reshapes a possible yod to a resh in line 2.
4. The scribe is inconsistent in the use of final letters. At times the scribe uses final mem like in line 4 but not at other times, such as in line 2 and 5.
5. Some words are written higher on the line than others. An example of this is the last word of line 3.
6. The scribe does not leave a space between the first two words preserved on line 3.
7. The scribe uses cancellation dots to "erase" a word mistakenly transcribed. This phenomenon is found in line 4.
8. Words are crowded together at the end of some (possibly most) lines because of the scribe's inability to space words properly. Examples of this include lines 1, 4, and 5, and perhaps even 6 and 7.
9. The scribe, at times, runs out of room at the end of the line. He writes the remaining letters above the line in lines 5, 6, and 7 or underneath the line (see line 1).[38]
10. The distance between the lines is not consistent. Comparing the space between lines 1 and 2 with the distance between lines 5 and 6 makes this point clear.[39]
11. The lines are not always straight. For example, lines 6 and 7 curve up and then trail downward.[40]

Table #4. Scribal and Material Features of 4QPs^{x} compared to 4QDeut^{n}

Image 1: 4QPs^{x}

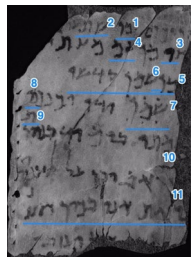
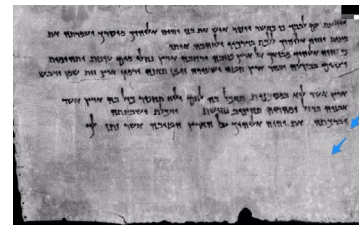


Image 2: 4QDeut^{n}



These details cast serious doubt on this scribe's ability and strongly suggest that the scribe was unskilled or a beginner. Moreover, several additional details about this manuscript further cast doubt on its value for understanding the textual history of Psalm 89. These details include the following:

1. The text was unruled, which is partially to blame for the writing's inconsistencies already noted. (4QDeut^{n} was ruled as indicated by the arrows above and is presented here for comparison with 4QPs^{x}). Tov points out that most Qumran texts had horizontal lines.[41]
2. Although the scribes of most of the texts from the Judean Desert used a writing block, the scribe of 4QPs^{x} did not. This manuscript has no left margin.[42]
3. The scribe writes around the stitching. Animal hide went through several steps before being inscribed. The hide would be soaked with agents to remove hair and fat, stretched, dried, smoothed, and treated with a tanning solution.[43] The hide would then be cut into rectangular shapes, ruled, and then inscribed. Last, the pieces of leather would be sewn together.[44] The critical point here is that leather sheets were inscribed with text before being stitched together. The text of 4QPs^{x}, however, was stitched to another piece of leather before being inscribed. This point is evident since the scribe wrote around the stitching holes.[45]

In light of these details, it is possible that this fragment once existed as the handle sheet of another manuscript, as suggested by Skehan.[46] A handle sheet was a piece of leather stitched either at the beginning or the end of a text. The handle sheet served to protect the text of the manuscript.[47] This explanation would account for why the stitching preceded the inscription and why this sheet lacked a writing block.[48]

Although 4QPs^{x} might be a very early manuscript, it is an unreliable guide to the state of Psalm 89 since the scribe was likely a beginner. We must keep this detail in mind as we evaluate the significance of point 3 above.

4QQoh[a]: A Modernized Manuscript

4Q109 (4QQoh[a]) is one of the earliest manuscripts from Qumran; it dates to 175-150 BC.[49] Although this manuscript is one of the earliest OT manuscripts, it preserves a later grammatical, linguistic, and orthographic profile when compared to MT Ecclesiastes.

Several details demonstrate this manuscript's later grammatical profile. For example, in post-biblical Hebrew, most infinitive constructs appear with a *lamed* preposition.[50] The non-biblical manuscripts from Qumran preserve 3026 infinitive constructs, and 1982 of these have a prefixed *lamed* preposition.[51] This tendency accounts for the addition at F6i:L8 (Col 2:19 [Eccl 7:5]). Here, 4Q109 adds a *lamed* preposition to the infinitive construct.

Furthermore, on two occasions, the scribe substitutes the relative particle אֲשֶׁר for the particle שְׁ.[52] Although both of these particles coexisted during the biblical era, the שׁ particle was reserved mostly for the vernacular. After the exile, שְׁ increased in usage in literary works and completely replaced אֲשֶׁר in the post-biblical period.[53] The two substitutions fit the scribe's contemporary usage.

Several other details demonstrate this manuscript's later linguistic profile. Aramaic influence clarifies the substitution of the conjunction כַּאֲשֶׁר for the conjunction כיא at Col 1:1 (Eccl 5:14) since Aramaic expresses comparative clauses using the כְּי particle, not כַּאֲשֶׁר.[54] Moreover, we should note that the reading כמה at Col 2:1 (Eccl 6:8), might be an example of hypercorrection since the particle כְּי shares considerable overlap with the preposition כְּ in post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.[55] Hypercorrection is found in other manuscripts whose scribe's were subject to Aramaic influence, such as 1QIsa[a][56] and 4QCant[b].[57] Another example of this is the substitution of בה for Leningrad בָּא at F1ii:L1 (Col 2:1 [Eccl 6:4]) Confusion of *he* and *aleph* is found in biblical Hebrew, but it is much more common in post-biblical literature and Aramaic.

A later spelling practice also influences the scribe of 4QQoh[a]. Tov labels the spelling practice of 4QQoh[a] as Qumran scribal practice (QSP), which is characterized by a high proportion of *matres lectionis* that function to facilitate the reading tradition.[58] Independent vowel signs were not added to the text of the OT until 500-700 AD, so until then, the vowels were marked by *matres*: consonant signs that marked vowel sounds.[59] The use of *matres* to

mark vowels evolved from non-use, to use in the final position, to use in the final and medial position.[60] Although MT Ecclesiastes preserves one of the fullest spelling profiles, 4QQoh[a] is fuller. For example, 4QQoh[a] consistently spells the adjective כֹּל "all" *plene* (full) as כול while Ecclesiastes of the MT never does. Similarly, 4QQoh[a] consistently spells the negative לֹא "no" *plene* as לוא while Ecclesiastes of the MT only does this once (Eccl 10:11).[61]

Table #5: Late Grammatical Profile

Fragment, Line, and Verse	4Q109	MT	Detailed Description of Variant
F6ii:L3 (Col 3:19 [Ecc 7:19])	ש[היו]	אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ	Substitution of Relative Particle
F6ii:L4 (Col 3:20 [Ecc 7:20])	שׁ[יע]שה	אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה	Substitution of Relative Particle

Table #6: Late Linguistic Profile

Fragment, Line, and Verse	4Q109	MT	Detailed Description of Variant
Col 1:1 (Ecc 5:14)	כיא	כַּאֲשֶׁר	Aramaic Influence
Col 2:1 (Eccl 6:4)	בה	בָּא	Aramaic Influence
Col 2:6 (Ecc 6:8)	כמה	כִּי מַה	Aramaic Influence

Table #7: Late Spelling Profile

MT	4QQoh[a]
כֹּל	כול
לֹא	לוא
כִּי	כיא

4QQoh[a] is marked by a late grammatical, linguistic, and orthographic profile despite being one of the earliest biblical manuscripts. This manuscript is not evidence that a standard form of Ecclesiastes was non-existent at this time. A modern analogy would be how most English translations are translated into *modern* English. Modernizing the language of Scripture is essential to comprehension and is not evidence that an authoritative text did not exist. This feature is another detail that contributes to the textual plurality of the Second Temple period (point 3 above).

Scholars must account for the textual plurality preserved amid biblical manuscripts when making conclusions about the state of the OT text. The

above analysis, however, shows that much of this difference derives from common scribal tendencies. These differences, then, do not call into question the presence of a standard text existing alongside this diversity of texts.

A Standard Text according to other Second Temple Literature: Direct Evidence

Some authors directly comment on the state of the OT text during the Second Temple period. First, Josephus claims that no one added or omitted a word from Judaism's twenty-two book canon (Ag. Ap. 8:38-42). This statement does not refer to the texts at Qumran but instead refers to the text preserved by the proper authorities in the appropriate place.[62] Josephus is referring to the text of the temple, not the manuscripts from Qumran.[63] The NT, too, alludes to the stability of the OT. For instance, Jesus refers to the stability of the Law when he says, "Not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:18).

A Standard Text according to other Second Temple Literature: Circumstantial Evidence

In addition to this direct evidence, several other circumstantial evidence suggests the existence of a standard OT text. Admittedly, the following evidence is circumstantial – that is, the conclusion that a standard OT text does not necessarily follow. Yet, the evidence is essential and, when taken together with the direct evidence and the manuscript evidence, provides valuable evidence for this discussion.[64]

The Need for New Greek Texts

The Torah was translated into Greek during the third century BC in Egypt, and the rest of the OT was translated by the first century BC. Jews, however, began to revise their Greek texts shortly after translating it, and these revisions function to move the Greek text into greater alignment with an MT-like text.[65] Such recessional activity demonstrates that these scribes understood an MT-like text to be the standard text of the Second Temple period.

The author of the Letter of Aristeas assumes a similar idea (written ca. 150-100 BC). The Letter of Aristeas is a letter detailing the origins of

an authoritative translation of the Torah into Greek. Many parts of this letter's historicity are questionable; yet the letter undoubtedly preserves accurate historical details about the Torah's state during the Second Temple period.[66] The goal of this letter is persuasion. The author hopes to convince his audience that the Greek translation of the Law he possesses is trustworthy and authoritative. Translations that differ are inaccurate according to the author. To convince his audience of these ideas, he must provide his audience with compelling evidence, or else his arguments would hold little persuasive power.

Thus, although some details of this letter might not be historical, the reasons that the author uses to justify his translation reveal his audiences' shared opinions about the state of the Torah at his time. The author presents several reasons about why his audience should trust his translation. One of the reasons is that his translation was copied from a deluxe edition guarded by the High Priest (*Let. Aris.* Par. 32-33). This detail reveals that the author and his audience recognize the existence of a standard text amid a diversity of texts. The standard text is preserved in the temple.

The Nature of Scribal Intervention in the Temple during the Second Temple Period

The temple texts were copied carefully, but scribes took some liberties while preserving them. These liberties, however, assume a standard text. First, inverted *nunin* are found in two places in the Masoretic text (before and after the "song of the ark" in Numbers 10:35-36 and again in Psalm 107:23-28).[67] These signs indicate either a misplaced text or that these verses represent a separate book.[68] What is important to note is that the scribes who added these signs (perhaps as early as the third century BC) and those that copied them did not change the text. The addition of these signs cued readers to important details about the text without altering it and future generations simply copied the signs without editing to the text. The addition and copying of these signs, thus, suggest that those who added and copied them perceived their text to be stable.

Second, another scribal liberty is known as the *kethiv/qere*. The *kethiv* is a written form, while the *qere* is the spoken form.[69] Often, the scribes of the MT would add the vowels of the *qere* form to the consonants of the *kethiv* form. This phenomenon again suggests the presence of a standard text since

the scribes refrained from editing the text. This practice is likely very early given the reading אוה (the *kethiv*) preserved in MasLevb discussed above.

Willingness to Die for the Torah

Another important detail for this discussion is that many Jews suffered death because they adhered to the Law in the Second Temple period. The Hellenization of the Jewish people under Antiochus Epiphanes was extensive. Jews were prohibited from celebrating the Sabbath, offering sacrifices to the Lord, practicing circumcision, and having copies of the book of the covenant (1 Macc 1:41-57; 2 Macc 6:1-11; Jewish War 1:34-35). Although many Jews embraced these Hellenizing efforts, others were willing to die (1 Macc 1:60-63; 2 Macc 6:18-7:42). The willingness to die for the Law of God suggests that Jews understood their Law as authoritative and stable, not fluid. When defending the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, Josephus makes the same point. He claims that Jews for a long period have been willing to die for the Scriptures (Ag. Ap., 8:43; 22.191).

Ability to Obey the Law Precisely

One should further note that Second Temple Jews believed that they could obey the Law's demands strictly. Josephus claimed that the Pharisees followed the Law exactly (Jewish War, 1.111). Those who belonged to the community of the *yahad* (those at Qumran were members of the *yahad*) believed similarly. For example, the members of the *yahad* were called to abide by the laws of God even in the smallest of details (1QS 1:13-16; 2:9-1; 3:11; 9:9), and punishment for deliberate disobedience of even one Law of Moses resulted in strict punishment: banishment from the community (1QS 8:21-23). This attitude assumes a stable text.

Second Temple Jewish Debates

Debates existed in Second Temple Judaism, but they do not seem to pertain to the words of the Law, but the proper interpretation of the Law. This concept is evident in a few texts. The Community Rule (1QS) and the Manuel of Discipline (CD) both allude to debates among mainstream Judaism and the members of the *yahad*. On a few occasions, members are warned not to discuss matters of the Law with Israelites not belonging to the community of the *yahad* (1QS 5:15-17; 9:16). The NT, too, alludes to

Jewish debates of this time.[70] For example, the Pharisees debate matters of the Law often with Jesus. Yet, the Pharisees never argue with Jesus about the words of the Law; what they discuss is the proper interpretation of the Law. Again, these debates assume a stable text.

Conclusion

The above evidence strongly suggests that a stable text existed alongside a diversity of texts during the Second Temple period. This conclusion is suggested because although several manuscripts from Qumran illustrate a level of textual diversity (point 3), this diversity is the result of common scribal activity. These manuscripts are likely re-signified texts. Moreover, several manuscripts discovered at Qumran, especially at the other Judean Desert sites, demonstrate that a traditional text was copied carefully and conservatively (point 4). In addition to this evidence, other documents indicate that a stable text existed at this time while a variety of other evidence assumes this reality. In conclusion, although there is a level of textual plurality during the Second Temple period, this textual plurality does not indicate the absence of a standard text. Instead, when one accounts for this plurality's nature while further accounting for other direct and circumstantial evidence, the best explanation is that a standard OT existed alongside a diversity of texts. It is my view that this text is an MT-like text.

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1. For an in-depth history to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the work done on these scrolls from 1947-1960, see Weston W. Fields, *Dead Sea Scrolls a Full History: Volume One* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). For a concise introduction to the scrolls, see Peter W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2013). This discovery, however, was not the first discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Origen possessed a Greek manuscript that was said to be found in a jar near Jericho in the second or third century AD. Likewise, several manuscripts preserving Psalms were found ca., 800 AD near Jericho.
2. Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, xx; see, however, Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.; rev. and ex.; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 94, who numbers the scrolls at 930. Although most of the scrolls exist in an extremely fragmentary state, some are well preserved (e.g., 1QIsa^a preserves the entire book of Isaiah with few gaps).
3. The biblical status of several of these manuscripts, however, is questionable. Many of them are likely excerpted manuscripts.
4. The Qumran manuscripts date to 250 BC to 68 AD. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 99.
5. The MT is the Jewish canonical text. It has also been the canonical text for Christians since Jerome's translation of the *Vulgate* from the Hebrew text of his time.
6. For the statistics provided in this list, see Lange, "The Textual Plurality of Jewish Scriptures in the second Temple Period in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *Qumran and the Bible: Studying the Jewish and Christian Scriptures in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Nóra Dávid and Armin Lange; Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 57; Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2010), 49-50.

7. Emanuel Tov, "Groups of Biblical Texts Found at Qumran," in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls* (ed. Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H Schiffman; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 98.
8. Ibid., 159.
9. The biblical manuscripts found at Masada date to 50 BC to AD 30 while the biblical manuscripts from Wadi Murabba'at, Wadi Sdeir, Naḥal Ḥever, and Naḥal Ṣe'elim date to 20 BC to 115 AD. See ibid., 99.
10. See https://archive.org/details/Leningrad_Codex/page/n128/mode/2up for a digitized facsimile of Codex Leningrad, accessed on February 19, 2020.
11. See https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-299503, accessed on February 19, 2020.
12. For a detailed discussion of 55 of these manuscripts, see Anthony Ferguson "A Comparison of the Non-aligned Texts of Qumran to the Masoretic Text" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).
13. For a discussion of this text and for statistics about the overarching relationship between this manuscript and Leningrad, see ibid., 41-44.
14. For a list of how Tov classifies the texts from the Judean Desert, see Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (ed. Florentino García Martínez, Peter W. Flint, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 54; Boston: Brill, 2004), 332-35.
15. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 3rd English edition; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §119hh. Notice that Gesenius indicates that the governing power of a preposition is *sometimes* extended in *poetic parallelism*. According to Gesenius, the rule is when a preposition governs multiple nouns, the preposition is repeated. See ibid.
16. Ibid., §150a.
17. Ibid, §150c.
18. H. G. Mitchell, "The Omission of the Interrogative Particle" in *Old Testament and Semantic Studies in Memory of W. R. Harper*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Harper, 1907), 117. See https://archive.org/details/oldtestamentsemi01harp/page/116/mode/2up.
19. Notice the literal translation of the NASB. "Indeed, has God said." The translations do not add the auxiliary verb "do" here.
20. I discussed this manuscript on Evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com on July 29, 2020. See http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2020/07/4qgenk-normalized-manuscript.html.
21. Sidnie White Crawford, "4QDeutn," in Ulrich and Cross, *Qumran Cave 4: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings*, 117.
22. See also Sidnie White Crawford, "4QDeutn," in Ulrich and Cross, *Qumran Cave 4: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings*, 117. See ibid., 117-18, for a discussion of the relationship between column 1 and the remaining columns.
23. Eshel and Weinfeld suggest that 4Q41 was a prayer book excerpted. See Esther Eshel, "4QDeut[n]—A Text That Has Undergone Harmonistic Editing," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 62 (1991): 148-52; M. Weinfeld, "Grace after Meals in Qumran," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 3 (1992): 427-428. Crawford understands that this text was excerpted for studying in Sidnie Crawford, "The Pentateuch as Found in the Pre-Samaritan Texts and 4QReworked Pentateuch," in *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period* (ed. Hanne von Weissenberg, Juha Pakkala, and Marko Marttila; Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 419; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 128. Elizabeth Owen is uncertain if this text is excerpted for liturgical or pedagogical purposes. Moreover, she discusses the possibility that 4Q41 could have originally contained the entire book of Deuteronomy. Elizabeth Owen, "4QDeutn: A Pre-Samaritan Text?" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 4, no. 2 (1997): 164n11.
24. Emanuel Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 16, no. 4 (December 1995): 581 n1.
25. For a list of these manuscripts, see Emanuel Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 16, no. 4 (December 1995): 593-594.
26. See Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts from the Judean Desert*, 85.
27. See ibid., 74.
28. See Tov's comments in Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts from the Judean Desert*, 98; Julie A Duncan, "4QDeutj," in *Qumran Cave 4: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Kings* (ed. Ulrich and Cross; Discoveries in the Judaean Deserts 14; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 78.
29. This criteria, according to Tov, is the most important characteristic when identifying an excerpted text. See Emanuel Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 16, no. 4 (December 1995): 584.
30. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 112, who lists Deut 5 as a text commonly found in *mezuzot*

and *tefillin.*

31. Emanuel Tov, "Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran," *Revue de Qumran* 16, no. 4 (December 1995): 599.
32. See Jozef Tadeusz Milik, "Fragment d'une Source Du Psautier (4Q Ps 89) et Fragments Des Jubilés, Du Document de Damas," *Revue Biblique* 73, no. 1 (January 1966): 95, 102. Contrary to Milik's proposal, see J. P. M. van der Ploeg, "Le Sens et Un Probleme Textuel Du Ps LXXXIX," in *Mélanges Bibliques El Orientaux En l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles* (ed. André Caquot and Mathias Delcor; Alter Orient Und Altes Testament 212; Kevelaer, Germany: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), 475 who dates the text to the second half of the first century BC.
33. See Ferguson, "A Comparison of the Non-aligned Texts from Qumran to the Masoretic Text, 345-353 for a discussion of this manuscript.
34. See Ulrich, Skehan, and Flint, "4QPsx," 163-67; Milik, "Fragment d'une Source Du Psautier (4Q Ps 89)," 104. Other scholars classify this manuscript as a non-biblical text. Proponents of this view include Skehan. See Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran," 439-52. Van der Ploeg classified this text as a libretto of messianic testimonia in Ploeg, "Le Sens et Un Probleme Textuel Du Ps LXXXIX," 475, 481. Tov categorizes 4Q98g as a non-biblical text also. See Tov, "The Biblical Texts from the Judaean Desert," 156. Other scholars have concluded that this manuscript is unbiblical because of its inelegant and irregular handwriting. See Tov's discussion in Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches*, 14.
35. See Patrick William Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran," in Caquot and Delcor, *Melanges Bibliques*, 441-442; see also Pajunen, who labels the scribe a beginner in Mika S. Pajunen, "4QPs[x]: A Collective Interpretation of Psalm 89:20-38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 3 (2014): 484; Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Tests Found in the Judean Desert*, 14.
36. Skehan makes the following observations about the scribe's habits in Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran," 440-442.
37. Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran," 440.
38. This is the opinion of Ulrich, Skehan, and Flint, "4QPsx," 166, concerning the infralinear correction of line 1.
39. See Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts of the Judean Desert*, 58, for a discussion of ruled texts.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 57, 104.
42. Ibid., 82.
43. See ibid., 34.
44. Ibid., 35, 37.
45. The detail that the scribe avoided the stitching is made by Eugene Ulrich, Patrick W. Skehan, and Peter W. Flint, "4QPsx," in *Qumran Cave 4. XI, Psalms to Chronicles*, 166-167; Skehan, Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran, 441. See also Pajunen, who labels the scribe a beginner in Mika S. Pajunen, "4QPs[x]: A Collective Interpretation of Psalm 89:20-38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 3 (2014): 482.
46. See Patrick William Skehan, "Gleanings from Psalm Texts from Qumran," in Caquot and Delcor, *Melanges Bibliques*, 441.
47. See Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts from the Judean Desert*, 114.
48. First, ruling a handle sheet would be unnecessary because the sheet was not intended to be inscribed. Second, 4QBarkhi Nafshi^{b} (4Q435)" is the only manuscript that has an attached initial handle sheet, and the sheet does not appear to be ruled (See Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts from the Judean Desert*, 114). See also https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-474081, accessed on February 14, 2020). Third, final handle sheets are preserved on several manuscripts, and most of these sheets are unruled (see *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts from the Judean Desert*, 110).
49. Ibid., 221.
50. Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Harvard Semitic Studies 29; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986), §310.14.
51. These searches were completed in the DSS non-biblical texts modular in Accordance. I ignored reconstructed words for these searches. See Martin G. Abegg, *Dead Sea Scrolls Non-Biblical Texts* (Accordance Bible Software; Langley, BC, Canada: Oak Tree Software, n.d.).
52. See for example Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), §420-427.
53. Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Subsidia Biblica 14/1-14/2; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2003), §38.
54. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature:* ל–ת, vol. 2 (New York: Pardes, 1950), s.v. "בִּי."
55. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the* Targumim, s.v. "כִּי", "בָּ".

56. Edward Yechezkel Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa[a])* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 28.
57. Emanuel Tov, ed., "4QCantb," in *Qumran Cave 4. XI, Psalms to Chronicles*, 216.
58. See Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 101.
59. See ibid., 42.
60. See ibid., 209.
61. In fact, this is the only time that the negative is spelled *plene* in the MT (Eccl 10:11).
62. See Arie van der Kooij's discussion of this topic in Arie van der Kooij "Preservation and Promulgation: The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible" in *The Hebrew Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. Nóra Dávif, Armin Lange, Kristin De Troyer, and Shani Tzoref; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 29-40.
63. Ibid., 36.
64. Space prohibits a thorough examination of this evidence. What follows is simply a portion of the circumstantial evidence.
65. This recessional activity occurs, for example, in the Greek Minor Prophets scroll from Nahal Ḥever. This text demonstrates that the corrective tendencies of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian had precursors that began before the new era. See Jobes and Silva's brief discussion of this in Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), 28-29.
66. For a discussion of these details, see Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship: A Study in Origins* (2nd ed.; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013) and Henry G Meecham, *The Letter of Aristeas; a Linguistic Study with Special Reference to the Greek Bible* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935).
67. For a discussion of inverted *nunin* see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 51; Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 38-46.
68. The rabbis discuss Num 10:35-36 and explain that it is marked off by brackets either because this text is not in its correct location (Rabbi Simeon b. Gamaliel who lived in the second century AD) or because these verses constitute an individual book (Rabbi Judah the Prince who also lived during the second century AD [b. Shab. 115b-116a]). For the identification of these rabbis, see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 40. Scholars associate these scribal marks with the ἀντίσιγμα used by Alexandrian scribes, Alexandrian scribes used ἀντίσιγμα to mark transposition of verses, but Lieberman also notes that similar signs can be used to indicate a new book. See ibid., 41-43.
69. See Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar,* §17.
70. Russell Fuller made this point more than once in PhD seminars at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

What Do James, Peter, John, and Jude Have in Common? Arguing for the Canonical Collection of the Catholic Epistles

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The historical development of the New Testament (NT) canon was characterized by the formation of sub-collections such that Harry Gamble argues

we should understand the NT canon as "a collection of collections."[1] In other words, it is not the case that individual books came into the NT canon on their own (Revelation, perhaps, is the exception). Jens Schröter notes that whereas the "two most important collections, which stand at the beginning of the emergence of the NT [are] the four gospels and the Letters of Paul," and at a later time "Acts and the Catholic Letters," eventually developed as a third collection.[2] Though perhaps the least recognized canonical sub-collection of the NT, there is a growing body of literature arguing for James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude as a coherent letter collection which formed toward the latter part of the canonical process.[3]

Evidence from patristic citation and the manuscript tradition indicate that the four Gospels and the Pauline Corpus were received and recognized as distinct collections early in the canonical process.[4] Larry Hurtado noted that it is "remarkable how early these collections of writings appear."[5] With respect to the fourfold Gospels, he notes that "recent studies agree in pushing back [their] likely origin … to the earliest years of the second century,"[6] and suggests a range from 100 to 150 AD. With respect to the Pauline Corpus, "the evidence points back at least as early."[7] He argued that "Marcion's exclusivist claims for his ten-letter Pauline collection sometime around 140 AD probably presupposes a widespread circulation of Pauline letter-collections already by that point."[8] In addition, Hurtado suggested that by 200 AD "there was an '*apostolikon*' category of Christian scriptures, comprising a Pauline collection plus letters attributed to other apostolic figures (esp. 1-2 John, 1 Peter, James)."[9] The letters from these "other apostolic figures" is the focus of the present article.

By posing the question: What do James, Peter, John, and Jude have in common? This article explores the textual formation of a sub-collection of the NT canon, namely, the Catholic Epistles (James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude). The evidence presented here suggests that we should view the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection alongside of the Gospels and Pauline Corpus.

1. NT Canon: Collection and Association

Before turning to the canonical sub-collection of the Catholic Epistles, we will start at the broader NT level in order to identify some working assumptions

regarding text and canon. Here a thought experiment will be helpful. Imagine two different NT canons, a "scholar's canon" and the "church's canon," and, along with these two canons, the different logic shaping each collection.[10] Each "canon" comes complete with a separate ordering logic or rubric for *collection* and *association*.

First, there is a different rubric at work in the *collection* of the "scholar's canon" over against the "church's canon." What books should be collected in the NT canon according to the scholar's historical-critical reconstruction? This is a question way too large to cover with any kind of adequacy here, but, for the sake of the illustration, the "scholar's canon" asks, why include the Gospel of John and not the Gospel of Thomas? Perhaps some of the sayings of Jesus recorded in Thomas are more historically accurate than those in John. Based on a particular historical reconstruction of the sayings of Jesus, perhaps Thomas would be in and John would be out. Or, why include the Apocalypse of John and not the *Apocalypse of Peter*? Or, perhaps we should follow the example of Codex Sinaiticus and include the *Letter of Barnabas* and *The Shepherd of Hermas* or follow Codex Alexandrinus and include *1* and *2 Clement* after Revelation. The point here is that when guided by historical-critical concerns alone, the NT collection would look quite different. In this case, there is an underlying logic of collection that is not concerned with authoritative, canonical texts, but rather with the historical reconstruction of textual production.

The historical-critical perspective sees the canonical collection as influenced by the church and therefore as hermeneutically suspect. Adolf von Harnack argued that, "Canonization works like whitewash; it hides the original colors and obliterates all the contours," hiding "the true origin and significance of the works."[11] For Harnack, one must keep historical-critical reading distinct from whatever later canonical meaning the church added to the NT texts. However, when the "church's canon" is stripped away, another default collection emerges—the "scholar's canon."

Second, the "scholar's canon" suggests a different set of *associations* between NT texts, largely focused upon historical reconstruction of authorship and composition, rather than the logic of canonical association. Take the Gospels as an example. Though Matthew is usually listed as the first Gospel in the "church's canon," the "scholar's canon" argues for the priority of Mark based on literary dependence and historical composition. The logic that guides

this ordering is a historical reconstruction of literary borrowing, rather than canonical association between Matthew and the Old Testament (OT). The history of the "scholar's canon" tells us something about the history of composition, but the canonical arrangement of the "church's canon" tells us something about the potential connections between the opening of Matthew's gospel, including Jesus's genealogy, and the end of the OT.

Another example from the Gospels is that of Luke-Acts. Whereas in traditional historical-critical reconstruction it is common to read Luke and Acts as a two-part history of early Christianity, Luke was collected by the early church into the fourfold Gospel. In the manuscript evidence, virtually all of the fragments indicate that Luke was collected and circulated with the other Gospels and not with Acts.[12] In an attempt to justify the historical-critical reconstruction noted above, some scholars have argued that the early church broke the unity of Luke-Acts apart in order to create a fourfold Gospel collection;[13] however, there are no manuscripts containing just Luke and Acts that would suggest that the early church ever made such a binding association that would need to be broken in the first place. It is a historical reconstruction that realigns Luke with Acts with the result that the canonical association of Luke with the other Gospels is eclipsed by its historical, authorial association with Acts. This demonstrates a different associational logic at work. Interestingly enough, the early church recognized Luke as the author of both Luke and Acts, yet authorship was not the controlling logic for associating Luke with the other Gospels to form the fourfold Gospel collection.

A final example is the case of 2 Peter and Jude. Scholars treat 2 Peter as if it were rather 2 Jude because of the literary borrowing between the two letters. Historical reconstruction understands that the author of 2 Peter borrowed heavily Jude's letter and this fact of literary barrowing outweighs the traditional association between 1 and 2 Peter. As evidence of the influence of the "scholar's canon" on this point, almost every major commentary series treats 2 Peter and Jude in the same volume whereas 1 Peter is treated separately. Even when all three texts appear in the same volume, 2 Peter and Jude are interpreted together at the expense of the connection between 1 and 2 Peter. It is interesting to note that, whereas the author of 2 Peter makes no attempt to hide his dependence upon Jude, he likewise makes no effort whatsoever to highlight the connection with Jude. Whereas there is no clear

attempt to connect his letter to Jude, the author of 2 Peter works hard to associate his letter with 1 Peter. He states his purpose: "Dear friends, this is now the second letter I have written to you; in both letters, I want to stir up your sincere understanding by way of reminder" (2 Pet 3:1 CSB). One could argue, therefore, that the "scholarly" association of 2 Peter with Jude actually ignores a plain sense reading of 2 Peter. The interpreter actually has to argue against a clear association in the text in order to break the connection between 1 and 2 Peter. The "scholar's canon" is deeply suspicious of 2 Peter's attempted association with 1 Peter and resists seeing them as developing a common set of coherent theological concerns.

Now, this thought experiment contrasting the "scholar's canon" and the "church's canon" highlights intertwined historical and theological issues. Historically, the illustration surfaces questions about how the NT canon came to its final form and content—answering the question: How did the church's canon come to be? A theological/hermeneutical question is also thrown into sharp relief: Which collection and which set of associations should we attend to when interpreting the NT? It seems that the underlying logic of the church's canon, especially the associations between books, should more clearly and consistently guide how we read and interpret the NT.

In the end, the historical and theological concerns come together. The process of transmission, collection, and copying of the original texts, led to the final canonization of the NT as we know and receive it. This historical process of canonization influences the theological/hermeneutical issue of how we interpret the meaning of these texts.

In what follows we will first describe the Catholic Epistles, what they are and what we should call them (section 2), and will then consider the evidence suggesting not only that the Catholic Epistles constitute a canonical collection, but also that these letters should be read together. This investigation will include both the external evidence, including manuscript and paratextual evidence (section 3.1), and internal evidence, namely, thematic and structural connections among the Catholic Epistles (section 3.2). Finally, we will consider what difference reading the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection makes for interpretation (section 4). The external and internal evidence suggest that the seven letters of James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude were intentionally collected together as the Catholic Epistles collection, were included into the NT canon as a group, and were read and interpreted together as Scripture.

2. The Catholic Epistles Collection as a Sub-collection of the NT Canon

As noted in the introduction, whereas there is a wealth of evidence for the canonization of the Fourfold Gospel and the Pauline Corpus, the story of how the Catholic Epistles formed as a specific collection and then were included into the NT canon is less clear. The manuscript evidence indicates that the Catholic Epistles eventually entered the NT canon as a collection after circulating individually and in smaller groups (e.g., Letters of John and the collection of 1-2 Peter, Jude in P^{72}). Harry Gamble notes:

> The history of the Catholic Epistles holds significance for larger conceptions of the history of the canon. Since they found inclusion in the canon not individually but precisely as a group, since that collection did not take shape until late in the third century at the earliest, and since that collection came to constitute, along with the Gospels and the Pauline Letters, one of the three major sub-units of the canon, it is very difficult to speak of a New Testament canon…prior to the fourth century.[14]

Whereas Gamble is right to note the importance of the Catholic Epistles in our understanding of the formation of the NT canon, I take exception with two of his claims. First, I believe it is historically plausible that the Catholic Epistle collection took shape in the early third century, perhaps 225 (or earlier), with 1 Peter, 1-2 John, and Jude circulating among the churches from the early second century. Second, the only reason to push off speaking about a NT canon until the fourth century is if the definition of canon is unnecessarily restricted to a fixed list of texts. There is reason to argue that long before a final list of twenty-seven books was fixed that canonical sub-collections were circulating as authoritative Scripture—that is, as canon. However, Gamble is correct to argue that the Catholic Epistles came into the NT canon as a collection and that they constitute one of the three major sub-units of the NT canon.

Traditionally, the Catholic Epistles are made up of the letters of James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude. Such a conclusion is based upon evidence from the early church. For example, Eusebius, when discussing the death of James, the Lord's brother, notes:

> Such is the story of James, whose is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic [*onomazomenōn katholikōn epistolōn*]. It is to be observed that its authenticity is denied, since few of the ancients quote it, as is also the case with the Epistle called Jude's, which is itself one of the seven called Catholic; nevertheless we know that these letters have been used publicly with the rest in most churches. (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.24–25)

Eusebius clearly notes that James and Jude are considered as members of a larger collection of letters, "the Epistles called Catholic." That James and Jude were used in "most churches" indicates, to some degree, Eusebius's reception of tradition about these letters. Eusebius indicates that James and Jude were used publicly along "with the remaining [letters]." The passage suggests that Eusebius not only received a tradition of using these letters, "as in most churches," but that tradition also included referring to these seven letters including James and Jude with the label "Catholic Epistles."

The make-up of the Catholic Epistles becomes even clearer just after the time of Eusebius. In several writings after Eusebius, the Catholic Epistles are limited to seven in number and always ordered James, Peter, John, and Jude. About fifty years after Eusebius, Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 350) records a canon list which states, "Receive ... these the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude" (*Catechesis* 4.36).[15] In canon 60 of the Synod of Laodicea (363), the seven Catholic Epistles are counted by name after the four Gospels and Acts and before the Pauline letters. Athanasius's Easter Letter (367) lists the "Acts of the Apostles and seven letters, called Catholic ... one by James, two by Peter, then three by John, and after these, one by Jude" (*Festal Letters* 39.5).[16] Though at times the traditional ordering of the seven letters varies, it is only ever the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude that are called Catholic Epistles.

The Catholic Epistles include the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude, but why are they called Catholic Epistles? It should be said that these are Catholic letters not because they are somehow especially connected to the Roman Catholic Church, but rather because the term "catholic" means universal. Traditionally, Catholic Epistles and General Letters have been used as interchangeable titles for these NT books. In this sense, the term "catholic" or "general" is a genre distinction. That is, a catholic or general letter is a letter written to non-specific, or general audience. For example,

James is written "To the twelve tribes dispersed abroad" (Jas 1:1), or 2 Peter is written "To those who have received a faith equal to ours" (2 Pet 1:1), or again, Jude writes "To those who are called, loved by God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ" (Jude 1).

Though some of the Catholic Epistles address general audiences, not all of them do so. Both 2 and 3 John are personal letters sent from "the elder" to specific audiences: to the "elect lady" (2 John 1) or to "Gaius" (3 John 1). Furthermore, both Jude and 1 John address specific situations where either the intruders have infiltrated a specific church (Jude) or a group of schismatics have left a specific church (1 John). Thus, technically neither should be called a general letter. These observations should caution against overgeneralizing these letters as uniformly written to general audiences.

Therefore, rather than primarily noting a genre distinction—marking a specific kind of letter—the label "Catholic Epistles" should be understood as a title given to a specific group of early Christian letters. This specific title was not given by the early church as a way to differentiate specific kinds of letters, but rather as a way to identify a specific collection or group of letters (not unlike Paul's Letters). In other words, the term "Catholic" is not an adjective (describing a kind of letter), but a proper noun—it is a title given to a specific collection of NT letters.[17]

3. Are there indications that the Catholic Epistles should be read together as a collection?

The following is a preliminary sketch of the evidence, especially the manuscript and paratextual remains, which suggest the Catholic Epistles were intentionally collected and associated with each other.

3.1 External Clues for Collection: Manuscript and Paratextual Evidence

The Groupings of Texts in the Early Codices

The major majuscule codices of the fourth and fifth century regularly combine Acts and the Catholic Epistles into the *Praxapostolos* and place it either before (Vaticanus and Alexandrinus) or after (Sinaiticus) the Pauline corpus. The order of the Catholic Epistles in all three follows the canonical order (James, Peter, John, and Jude), a rather fixed tradition in the East since

Athanasius.[18] The oldest copy of a manuscript containing only Acts and the Catholic Epistles is the seventh century (P^{74} contains fragments from all eight texts).[19] Parker notes that before that time one sees "quite a variation in practice. In the third century P^{45} contains Acts with the Gospels. In the late third or early fourth century P^{72} contains three of the Catholic letters in what seems to be a miscellany."[20]

The Association of the Catholic Epistles with Acts of the Apostles

The major majuscule codices of the fourth and fifth century regularly combine Acts and the Catholic Epistles into the *Praxapostolos*[21] and place it either before (Vaticanus and Alexandrinus) or after (Sinaiticus) the Pauline corpus. The order of the Catholic Epistles in all three follows the canonical order (James, Peter, John, and Jude), a rather fixed tradition in the East since Athanasius. In the Western tradition, the four gospels and Acts are immediately followed by the Pauline corpus so that Acts and the Catholic Epistles are separated. This order is evidenced by, among others, the Vulgate and as well as by the majority of Byzantine manuscripts, and was preserved up to the Council of Trent. In addition to this, sometimes in the Western tradition, 1-2 Peter precedes James (Augustine, Rufinus, but not in the Vulgate).

The witness of Alexandrinus is interesting on two accounts. First, in the subscripted titles only James and Jude are described as an "epistle." The omission of "epistle" for the other texts might be accidental, however, it does seem to highlight the first and last of the sequence. Second, the colophon following Jude is unique among the manuscripts here under discussion. After the subscripted title, "Epistle of Jude [*iouda epistole*]," the entire *Praxapostolos* is drawn to a close: "the acts of the holy apostles and catholics [*praxeis tōn agiōn apostolōn kai katholikai*]." Trobisch notes that this is evidence of the connection between Acts and the seven Catholic Epistles. In his estimation the phrase is a kind of summary of the *Praxapostolos* unit of the NT. Furthermore, though much more frequent in the ninth-century manuscripts, Alexandrinus seems to be aware of the collective title of "Catholic." Both *praxeis* and *katholikai* appear in the nominative which is likely because they refer to the Book of Acts and the "Catholics" (the Catholic Epistles as a group) respectively.[22] These two "texts" are thus linked together by this colophon. This, along with Eusebius, would then constitute another fourth-century

witness to the seven letters as a collection and that the collection was known by the name "Catholic."

The sequence of—James, Peter, John and Galatians 2:9

Whereas Paul's letters were grouped into letters to churches (Romans-2 Thessalonians) and letters to individuals (1 Timothy-Philemon), and from there their arrangement were by length, the Catholic Epistles are not arranged by length. First John contains more words than both James and 1 Peter; thus, the organizing rubric for the arrangement of the Catholic Epistles is not that of length. Rather, many have observed that the sequence of James-Peter-John is due to Paul's account of meeting the leadership in the Jerusalem church: "when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars" (Gal 2:9). Thus, the Catholic Epistle collection might likely be patterned (at least in sequence) after the "pillar" apostles.

Strikingly, the bilingual Greek-Latin codex Claromontanus (D 06), preserves a table of contents in Latin between the text of Philemon and Hebrews.[23] In the table of contents, Philemon is followed by the seven Catholic Epistles in the order: 1-2 Peter, James, 1-3 John, and Jude. Suggestively, this order corresponds to the distinct ordering of the "pillar apostles" to the *varia lectio* of Galatians 2:9 in the Greek part of the codex.[24] In Paul's list of the "pillar apostles" we find Peter (rather than Cephas) mentioned first followed by James and John.[25] This is evidence that the arrangement of the Catholic Epistles, at least in some segments of the early church, was influenced by Galatians 2:9.

Super and Sub-Scripted Titles

The titles to the NT texts were affixed during the early reception of these texts as a collection—that is, these texts were uniformly demarcated with titles at a time when sub-collections of the NT canon were forming. Thus, the existence of such paratextual features as titles offer significant insight into the collection process.

First, it seems that the need for titles likely arose when these texts—both Paul's letters and the Catholic Epistles—began to circulate along with other texts. With regard to the Pauline collection, Metzger notes that titles were

not needed "until the apostle's correspondence had been collected into one corpus." One assumes that the title of a text becomes more and more necessary especially when transmitted or published within a collection. Early readers would need a way to differentiate the texts being read and the use of super- and subscripted titles along with running headers served this purpose.

Second, the basic consistency within the variations of titles observed in the Catholic Epistles (and in the Pauline Corpus) suggests that it is unlikely that the titles of these texts developed individually over time. Trobisch argues that the uniform structure of the titles points beyond the individual writing to the overall editorial concept and was not imposed by the authors of the individual writings. The titles are redactional. In most cases the genre designations, the alleged authorship, and the structure of the titles cannot be derived from the text with certainty. This strongly suggests that the present form of the titles was not created by independently working editors but that they are the result of a single, specific redaction.

Use of Nomina Sacra*, and Other Reading Aids*

A unique feature of early Christian manuscripts is the presence of *nomina sacra*—a collection of up to fifteen words that were written in a special abbreviated form (either in contracted or suspended form).[26] The various *nomina sacra* can be divided into frequency groups, starting with terms appearing 99% to 100% of the time: *Theos*, *Christos*, *Iēsous*, and *Kyrios*. Surveying second and third-century biblical manuscripts the presence of *nomina sacra*—especially *Theos*, *Christos*, *Iēsous*, and *Kyrios*—are near universal. Bokedal observes, "all our extant Greek and Latin manuscripts of the OT and NT contains the *nomina sacra*, papyri as well as manuscripts, uncial as well as minuscule manuscripts, OT Scriptures as well as gospels, acts, letters, apocalypses, but also apologetic and other literary writings produced within the Christian religious sphere."[27]

Most significant is the connection between the *nomina sacra* and the canonical process. First, many have argued for the necessary connection between the presence of the *nomina sacra* in a manuscript and that artifact's origin within the Christian community. Larry Hurtado argues that "These abbreviated words are distinctive in form, subject matter, and function from other scribal phenomena, so much so that it is widely (but not universally)

accepted that the presence of any of them in a manuscript is itself a good indication of its Christian provenance."[28] This has been supported especially with the connection between the use of *nomina sacra* and the divine name given to Jesus (Heb 1:4 and especially Phil 2:9). Thus, the *nomina sacra* may in fact "give some graphical support to a high-christological reading" of Scripture.[29] Furthermore, the *nomina sacra* and the Christian canon are likely connected because the convention of the *nomina sacra* was rather distinct from other, more typical, scribal phenomena, and thus Christian texts containing them were set apart, "arguably convey[ing] to the lector or teacher something like a textual code."[30] Such a code was indicative of early Christian confession of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Bokedal suggests that this "strongly suggests a doctrine of the unity of the Christian Scriptures, placing the emergent NT writings side by side with the Scriptures of Judaism (the OT)."[31] He concludes, the

> theological pattern provided by the *nomina sacra*…suggests that these markers are key elements in the early canonization of the Christian Bible. The *nomina sacra* appear to have prepared the way for placing the OT texts on a par with the new 'apostolic' (NT) writings; and it seems rather difficult to envisage a Christian scriptural canon formation without them.[32]

Therefore, there seems to be a clear connection between the scribal convention of using *nomina sacra* and the development of the Christian canon.

Another scribal convention that aided readers and is associated with the formation of canon is the practice of dividing the text into chapters and paragraphs with the addition of section summaries. Generally, text delimitation appears as chapter divisions for larger sections and *kephalaia*, which are often similar in length to a chapter and are accompanied by titles.[33] "Each of the [*kephalaia*] of the system found in codex Alexandrinus and in most other later manuscripts is provided with a [*titlos*]. This is a summary-heading placed in the margin [and at times in the running head] and describing the contexts of the chapter."[34]

P^{72} was noted above for its information regarding the titles of Jude, 1 and 2 Peter.[35] Several marginal titles appear in the text of 1 and 2 Peter, but not in Jude or anywhere else in the miscellaneous texts included in this manuscript. The relationship between these particular marginal titles and the

more common *kephalaia* divisions found in the Catholic Epistles (appearing in the major codices) is not entirely clear.[36] David Horrell suggests that the presence of these marginal notes for 1 and 2 Peter constitute "an indication of the particular value placed upon these writings, compared with others in the collection."[37] In Horrell's estimation, the "marginal summaries indicate for us, as for the early readers of the codex, something of what were taken to be the main topics of the two letters", and thus, suggest the hermeneutical significance of both the divisions and summary statements.[38]

These summaries offer an indication of how the scribe or editor of P^{72} understood the texts and their meaning for the Christian life. Such summaries shape the reader's perception of the logical flow and substance of the text. Editorial activity in producing paratextual aids for reading and interpretation suggest the intention of helping the reader understand the essence of the text correctly, and in this case, to understand 1 and 2 Peter together. Beyond appreciating the connection between 1 and 2 Peter, we recall Horrell's observation: "It is interesting to note … that the linking of 1-2 Peter with Jude [in P^{72}] … hint as to the early stages in the clustering of 'catholic epistles.'"[39]

Therefore, the presence of both *nomina sacra* and textual delimitation signal the work of collection and interpretation. Such paratextual elements suggest that the Catholic Epistles were intentionally collected together as a collection.

3.2 Internal Clues for Collection

Knowledge of Pauline Letter Collection: 2 Peter 3:15b–16

Peter notes: "Also, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:15–16).

Already at the time 2 Peter was written, a collection of Paul's letters was circulating among early Christian communities. It is important to note that these letters were being read by communities who were not the original recipients, that is, the collected letters of Paul were being circulated, copied, and read by people who were not Paul's original audience. It seems

that Paul's letters were being used as Scripture. This seems likely because, first, the fact that churches and individuals beyond Paul's original audience were reading these letters indicates a conviction that these letters were able to speak beyond their original contexts to the needs of later readers. This is how Scripture functions. And, second, Peter mentions that the "untaught and unstable … twist them … as they do with the rest of the Scriptures."

The creation of a Pauline letter corpus as noted here in 2 Peter 3:16 likely served as a precedent for the collection of other apostolic letters and thus was a kind of catalyst for collecting the Catholic Epistles.[40]

James and Jude, Brothers of Jesus bracketing the Catholic Epistles

Jude opens by saying: "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James" (Jude 1), which at once both draws attention to the family relationship between Jude and James as brothers of Jesus and effectively cues readers to think back to the letter of James. As just mentioned, Eusebius records: "Such is the story of James, whose is said to be the first of the Epistles called Catholic … as is also the case with the Epistle called Jude's, which is itself one of the seven called Catholic" (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.24–25). John Painter notes that, "James and Jude, the brothers of Jesus, form an inclusion around the [Catholic Epistle] collection," that is, the two brothers of Jesus "form […] the bookends of this collection."[41]

Furthermore, there is an intriguing connection between the ending of James and the ending of Jude. The final exhortation of James, situated just after a discussion of prayer, brings the letter to an abrupt end (almost a non–ending): "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19–20). Likewise, the final exhortation of Jude (and the Catholic Epistles as a whole) echoes James call for redeeming an erring brother. "And have mercy on those who doubt [dispute]; save others [them] by snatching them out of the fire; to others [them] show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh" (Jude 22-23). Though the textual and exegetical issues are legion, this final passage just before Jude's benediction could likely be taken as an exhortation to show mercy to the intruders who have been upsetting the faith of the community.[42] Notice how

mercy is to be offered with "fear" (referential respect) for how the "garment" might be stained by the "flesh."

Link-word Connections between 2 Peter and 1 John

Though it is very common to consider the Letters of John together with the Gospel of John (and Revelation), from early on 1-3 John were collected and associated within the Catholic Epistles rather than with other Johannine writings. Within their context in the Catholic Epistles, there are key connections associating 2 Peter with 1 John. Both letters emphasize the idea of "knowledge" or the understanding gained at conversion: 2 Peter insists a godly life comes "through the knowledge of him who called" (1:3) and the "knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8, see also 1:3; 2:20). Likewise, 1 John emphasizes the assurance of knowing: "This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commands" (2:3), "I have written these things to you who believe … so that you may know that you have eternal life" (5:13, see also 3:19; 4:7, 13).

Another connection between 2 Peter and 1 John is that in 2 Peter's warning against scoffers the author notes the heretical claim will include an appeal that all things have continued as they were "from the beginning [*ap' archēs*] of creation" (3:4).[43] Soon after these words 1 John opens by "declaring" (*apangellomen*) "that which was from the beginning" [*ap' archēs*] "concerning the word of life" (1:1). In addition to a shared concern for knowing that comes from conversion, both 2 Peter and 1 John contend against those who threaten the integrity of the apostolic faith, with both authors calling these dangerous people "false prophets." The word *pseudoprophētēs* only appears in 2 Peter and 1 John and that in both letters the "false prophets are identified as teachers (2 Pet 2:1; 1 Jn 2:27) who 'deny' (*arneomai*) a key Christological claim (2 Pet 2:1; 1 Jn 2:22–23)."[44] Finally, supporting both the content of such conversion "knowledge" and opposition of false teaching stands the apostolic faith. The authors of both 2 Peter and 1 John ground the authority of their message in their status as eyewitnesses of Jesus's life and ministry (2 Pet 1:16, 18; 1 John 1:1–4).[45] Though seldom considered together, these significant connections are consistent with how the early church collected the Catholic Epistles together where 2 Peter is followed by 1 John. The two letters read in close canonical succession would highlight these links.

Jude's Doxology as Conclusion to the Catholic Epistles

Jude's closing doxology could function as a benediction drawing the entire Catholic Epistles collection to a close. Robert Wall has argued that:

> It should be noted…the memorable benediction that concludes Jude (Jude 24–25)…is also a suitable ending to the entire collection, not because of its doxological argot but because of its practical interest in safeguarding those who might "stumble" into false teaching or immoral lifestyle (cf. Jude 4). …Jude's benediction, when reconsidered in the context of the final redaction of the CE, is apropos to the collection's motive and role within the biblical canon.[46]

The two-fold benediction that God would "keep you from stumbling" and "to make you stand in his presence without blemish with joy" in a general way summarizes themes running throughout the Catholic Epistles. Jörg Frey similarly concludes: "Jude offers a conclusion to the corpus … The solemn doxology then re-directs one's gaze toward the goal of communion for those who blamelessly come before his face, thus providing the canonical transition to the last book of the NT canon."[47]

If Jude functions as the conclusion to the Catholic Epistles, James, listed first by Eusebius, functions as the collection's opening. Perhaps James's opening function is especially marked by its terse and introductory first chapter.[48] Here, rather like a table of contents or an epitome, James lists a variety of topics to be unpacked not only in the rest of James (chs. 2-5), but also developed in the rest of the Catholic Epistles.

4. What Difference Does Reading the Catholic Epistles as a Collection Make?

4.1 James and Jude as Brackets for the Catholic Epistles

The letter opening of Jude includes this brief line about the author of the letter: "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (Jude 1). At once this opening both draws attention to the family relationship between Jude and James as brothers of Jesus and effectively cues readers to think back to the letter of James. Though it is unlikely that James and Jude exhibit literary dependence the two letters share several key textual connections that indicate the presence of a framing device that defines the opening and

closing boundaries of the canonical sub-collection of the Catholic Epistles. There are several connections that draw together the openings of both letters. Negatively, in what they both intentionally leave out, James and Jude do not reference their familial relation to Jesus and neither refers to himself as an apostle.

Furthermore, both letter openings are directly connected by means of their self-description as "a servant of Jesus Christ," both using the identical phrase *Iēsou Christou doulos* (Jas 1:1, Jude 1). The title itself is one of honour and authority most likely taken up from the OT. Furthermore, Jude 1 draws a line of familial connection to James. That the name "James" needs no further identification is likely due to the fact that, after the death of James the son of Zebedee, the only James widely known in the early church merely by name would have been James the brother of Jesus and leader of the church in Jerusalem. The reference back to James in Jude 1 was taken as a reference to the Letter of James in some streams of reception (see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.24–25). Though it is possible that Jude knew of the Letter of James, the argument here is that in the canonical process later recipients of these texts recognized textual phenomena that lead to their association. Later readers no doubt would have recognized the familial connection noted by Jude; however, the reference to James in Jude 1 would have suggested at a later time in the reception history of these texts a connection between the letters themselves.[49]

Furthermore, there is an intriguing connection between the ending of James and the ending of Jude. The final exhortation of James, situated just after a discussion of prayer, brings the letter to an abrupt end (almost a non–ending): "My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (Jas 5:19–20). Likewise, the final exhortation of Jude (and the Catholic Epistles as a whole) echoes James call for redeeming an erring brother. "And have mercy on those who doubt [dispute]; save others [them] by snatching them out of the fire; to others [them] show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh" (Jude 22-23). Though the textual and exegetical issues are legion, this final passage just before Jude's benediction could likely be taken as an exhortation to show mercy to the intruders who have been upsetting the faith of the community.[50] Notice how

mercy is to be offered with "fear" (referential respect) for how the "garment" might be stained by the "flesh."

It is possible that these textual links led to reading James and Jude as the opening and closing texts of the Catholic Epistles collection. One hermeneutical insight stemming from this canonical shaping is that Jude's closing benediction could be read not only as the ending of Jude, but also as the conclusion to the entire collection. The two-fold benediction that God would "keep you from stumbling" and "to make you stand in his presence without blemish with joy" in a general way summarizes themes running throughout the Catholic Epistles.

4.2 A Petrine Christology

As mentioned above, too often historical-critical judgments regarding the literary relationship between 2 Peter and Jude tend to obscure the canonical relationship between1 and 2 Peter. Joel Green argues for a narrative-theological approach to 1 and 2 Peter as the best way to appreciate how a coherent theological vision or narrative can shape the way readers make (theological) sense of the world around them.[51] Green argues for a narrative-theological approach to 1 and 2 Peter as the best way to appreciate how a coherent theological vision or narrative can shape the way readers make (theological) sense of the world around them.

Whereas reading the two letters independently leads to a somewhat limited Christology, reading them together as coherent narrative, readers come to appreciate a distinctive Petrine Christology that emphasizes the revelation of Jesus's eschatological glory at the Transfiguration and his second coming (2 Peter) alongside the atoning nature of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection (1 Peter). Reading and interpreting the Catholic Epistles within their canonical collection and association would aid such a narrative theological appreciation of Petrine Christology.

4.3 James and 1 Peter: The Eschatological People of God

As one example consider what difference reading James alongside 1 Peter might make for understanding both as Christian Scripture. Though clearly distinct in many ways, the readers of James and those of 1 Peter are both experiencing diaspora as God's people and the theology of the two letters, when read together, helps clarify the identity of God's eschatological people.

Bauckham notes,

> If we read the catholic epistles in the order which at an early date came to be the accepted canonical order…then we read first a letter addressed only to Jewish Christians as the twelve tribes in the Diaspora and then a letter apparently addressed only to Gentile Christians as 'exiles of the diaspora', to whom defining descriptions of Israel as God's people are applied.[52]

The theological result of reading James and 1 Peter in their canonical context is to announce the inclusion of Gentiles into the eschatological people of God—a people in continuity with Israel via its Jewish Christian members while at the same time open to including those who previously had not been God's people (1 Pet 2:10). Whereas James focuses on renewed Israel in his letter, he understands the messianic renewal of Israel as the necessary first stage in the messianic redemption of the world. This theological perspective is evidenced all the more powerfully when James and 1 Peter are read in their canonical association. Therefore,

> The inclusion of Gentiles in the eschatological people of God is thus portrayed in the catholic letters in their own way just as clearly as in the Pauline corpus, reminding us that this was not confined to the Pauline mission but also happened, for example, in the church of Rome…The sequence and relationship of James and 1 Peter portrays the priority of Israel (Rom. 1:16: 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek'), Gentile Christians' indebtedness to Jewish believers (cf. Rom. 15:27), and also the full inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God.[53]

The textual clues observed above suggest that as James and 1 Peter were received, collected, and arranged they were understood as belonging to the Catholic Epistles collection and when read together they witnessed to God's purposes to renew the eschatological people of God—now including both Jews and Gentiles.

Here Bauckham is reading the order of the Catholic Epistles as significant to their meaning. It is when the Catholic Epistles are read in canonical order and when James is read in conversation with Paul's letter to the Romans that the Letter of James might be read as Christian Scripture. Thus, rather than an approach secondary to grammatical-historical investigation, or a

reality anachronistic to the meaning of the NT texts, the canonical context is equally necessary to a right understanding of the Letter of James as Christian Scripture.[54]

Conclusion

Though only preliminary, the evidence presented here suggests that we should view the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection alongside of the Gospels and Pauline Corpus. Not only does the manuscript and paratextual evidence suggest intentional collection and association, this logic of canonization might plausibly be understood as coming from internal indications of association and connection among the seven letters. Thus, the external and internal evidence suggest that the seven letters of James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, and Jude were intentionally collected together as the Catholic Epistles collection, and eventually were included into the NT canon as a group.

If this is the case, the suggestion here is that we should read and interpret the Catholic Epistles together as a coherent canonical collection. The final section of the article explores a few of the ways one might understand the hermeneutical significance of reading the Catholic Epistles as a canonical collection. The example of the Catholic Epistles here illustrates ways in which text (manuscripts) and canon are historically and theologically interrelated.

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1. Harry Y. Gamble, "New Testament Canon: Recent Research and the *Status Quaestionis*," in *The Canon Debate* (ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2002), 275. Likewise, Larry Hurtado argues that the formation of the NT in the second century is "a collection of prior collections" (Larry W. Hurtado, "The New Testament in the Second Century: Text, Collections and Canon," in *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Textual-Critical and Exegetical Studies* [ed. J. W. Childres and D. C. Parker; Text and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature 4; Piscataway, NJ.: Gorgias Press, 2006], 3-27, 21). See also, David Trobisch's discussion of the various "collection units" of the NT and their canonical significance (*First Edition of the New Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000]).
2. Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon* (trans. Wayne Coppins, BMSSEC 1; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 273.
3. See especially, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, "Exegese im kanonischen Zusammenhang: Überlegungen zur theologischen Relevanz der Gestalt des neutestamentlichen Kanons," in *The Biblical Canons* (ed. J.-M. Auwers and H. J. de Jong; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 557–84; Jacques Schlosser, "Le Corpus Épîtres des Catholiques," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition* (ed. J. Schlosser; BETL 176; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 43–71; David R. Nienhuis, *Not by Paul Alone: The Formation of the Catholic Epistle Collection and the Christian Canon* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007); Enrico Norelli, "Sulle origini della raccolta delle Lettere Cattoliche," *Rivista Biblica* 4 (2011): 453–521; and Darian R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles: The Formation of the Catholic Epistles as a Canonical Collection* (Eugene, OR.: Pickwick, 2017).

4. See Trobisch's discussion of the various "collection units" of the NT and their canonical significance (*First Edition of the New Testament*).
5. Hurtado, "The New Testament in the Second Century," 20.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 21.
8. Ibid. Porter, following some of the evidence offered by Trobisch, suggests that Paul's letter collection could originate from the mid-second century (if not perhaps as early as the late first century) (see, Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013], 110; Stanley E. Porter, "When and How was the Pauline Canon Compiled? An Assessment of Theories," in *The Pauline Canon* (ed. Stanley Porter; Pauline Studies 1; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2009), 95–127).
9. Hurtado, "The New Testament in the Second Century," 21.
10. I am dependent upon David Nienhuis for this language and for the comparison.
11. Harnack, *The Origin of the New Testament and the Most Important Consequences of the New Testament Creation* (trans. J. R. Wilkinson; London: Williams & Norgate, 1925), 140–41.
12. See the chapter on Acts in Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to the New Testament*.
13. Surprisingly Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles in Canonical Context," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18 (1988): 16-24, 14.
14. Gamble, "New Testament Canon," 288.
15. E. L. Gallagher and J. D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and* Analysis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 115.
16. Ibid., 123.
17. For a full argument for this perspective see chapter 3 in Darian R. Lockett, *Letters from the Pillar Apostles*.
18. Parker notes that "the order of the seven Catholic letters is very uniform, especially among the Greek manuscripts" (D. C. Parker, *New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2008], 286). Furthermore, Nienhuis concludes "we see that the Acts + CE collection follows the gospels and precedes the Pauline epistles in all the [major codices] except for Sinaiticus. Metzger has pointed out that 'virtually all Greek manuscripts' for the NT follow this pattern, which has come to be recognized as the traditional Eastern canonical ordering" (*Not by Paul*, 77; citing Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987], 295–96).
19. However, 0166 (The Heidelberg Fragment, dating from the fifth century) contains on the verso the end of Acts (28:30–31) and the recto contains a text from James (1:11). Though only a fragment it is an even earlier witness that Acts and at least James (and likely the rest of the Catholic Epistles) circulated within the same codex. Parker (*New Testament Manuscripts*, 285) notes that 0166 could have contained Acts and all of the Catholic Epistles. Furthermore, 093 (sixth century) contains fragments from Acts and 1 Peter.
20. Parker, *New Testament Manuscripts*, 283.
21. David Trobisch makes an interesting observation from the manuscript evidence regarding the *Apostolos*. Noting that NA27 describes the contents of most manuscripts using only four letters (*e* = gospels, *a* = Praxapostolos, *p* = the Letters of Paul, *r* = Revelation of John), Trobisch note that, "The editors refer to Acts and the General Letters using a single notation (*a*). If a significant number of manuscripts containing the Book of Acts without the General Letters or the General Letters without the Book of Acts existed, this notation would not suffice" (*The First Edition of the New Testament*, 26).
22. Folio 84 verso can be seen at: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_1_d_viii_fs001r.
23. Greek/Latin diglot, with the Greek and Latin in stichometric lines on facing pages (the image can be viewed at: http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_06 CSNTM Image Id: 275955 and 275956). Contains the Pauline Epistles with slight lacunae: it lacks Rom 1:1–7 (though we can gain some information about the readings of D in these verses from D^{abs}). In addition, Rom 1:27–30 and 1 Cor 14:13–22 are supplements from a later hand.
24. Image can be viewed at: http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_06 (CSNTM Image Id: 275589).
25. The substitution of *Petros* for *Kēphas* along with moving *Petros* in front of *Iakōbos* is attested in D F G d f g Vg. *Syr.* [psh. harcl.] Tert. Hier. al. The papyrus manuscript P^{46} reads *Petros* for *Kēphas* but retains the order of James, Peter, John.
26. The contracted form is when the intervening letters of the term are omitted and suspended forms appear when only the first two letters of the term are used; at times both conventions were used.
27. Tomas Bokedal, *The Formation and Significance of the Christian Biblical Canon: A Study in Text, Ritual and Interpretation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 89.
28. Larry Hurtado, "The Origin of the Nomina Sacra: A Proposal," *JBL* 117 (1998): 655–73, 658.

29. Bokedal, *Formation and Significance*, 100.
30. Ibid., 107.
31. Ibid., 122.
32. Ibid.
33. Often *kephalaia* were given titles: taking the form of *peri* in the Gospels (for example, Mark 1:23 in Alexandrinus reads: *peri tou daimonizomenous*, "Concerning the demon-possessed man"), and *ta peri* plus accusative in Acts (for example, Acts 3:1 in Sinaiticus reads: *ta peri ton Petron kai Iōannēn kai tou ek koilias chōlos*, "The things concerning Peter and John and the man who was lame from birth"). For a complete list of *titloi* in the Gospels, see Hermann F. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments Zusammenhängend Untersuchungen Vol. 1.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1911), 402–12.
34. Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 23.
35. Images can be viewed at: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pap.Bodmer.VIII.
36. The marginal notes in P^{72} do not correspond with the *kephalaia* listed for the Catholic Epistles in von Soden (*Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, 456–61).
37. David G. Horrell, "The Themes of 1 Peter: Insights from the Earliest Manuscripts (the Crosby-Schøyen Codes ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex containing P72)," *NTS* 55 (2009): 502–22, 511.
38. Horrell, "Themes of 1 Peter," 511.
39. Ibid.
40. Hurtado notes: "As for a collection of Pauline epistles, the evidence points back at least as early [as the Gospels]. Indeed, David Trobisch has proposed that Paul himself may have compiled the first collection of his own epistles. The reference to 'all' Paul's epistles in 1 Pet 3:16 probably takes us back to sometime ca. 100 CE or earlier..." (Hurtado, "New Testament in the Second Century," 21).
41. John Painter, "The Johannine Epistles as Catholic Epistles," in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 248–9.
42. See, Lockett, "Objects of Mercy in Jude: The Prophetic Background of Jude 22–23," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 322–336.
43. David R. Nienhuis and Robert W. Wall, *Reading the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude as Scripture: The Shaping and Shape of a Canonical Collection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 256.
44. Ibid.
45. Nienhuis note: "Strikingly, the claim presented here is closely corroborated in the only place John gets a speaking role in Acts, when Peter and John respond to their persecutors in a unified voice, 'We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard' (Acts 4.19)" ("'From the Beginning': The Formation of an Apostolic Christian Identity in 2 Peter and 1–3 John," in *Muted Voices of the New Testament: Readings in the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* [ed. K. M. Hockey, M. N. Pierce and F. Watson; LNTS 565; London: T&T Clark, 2017], 70-85, 81).
46. Robert W. Wall, "A Unifying Theology of the Catholic Epistles," in *The Catholic Epistles and Apostolic Tradition* (ed. Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr and Robert W. Wall; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 18.
47. Jörg Frey, *Der Brief des Judas und der zweite Brief des Petrus* (THNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015) 46–47.
48. See Darian R. Lockett, *Purity and Worldview in the Epistle of James* (LNTS 366; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 87-105 and the bibliography cited there.
49. See, Darian R. Lockett, "James and Jude as Bookends to the Catholic Epistles Collection," in *The Identity of Israel's God in Christian Scripture* (ed. Donald Collett, Mark Elliott, Mark Gignilliat, and Ephraim Radner; Resources for Biblical Study 96; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 353–366.
50. See, Darian R. Lockett, "Objects of Mercy in Jude: The Prophetic Background of Jude 22–23," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 322–336.
51. Joel B. Green, "Narrating the Gospel in 1 and 2 Peter," *Interpretation* (2006): 262-277.
52. Bauckham, *James*, 156.
53. Ibid., 157.
54. Darian R. Lockett, "'Necessary but Not Sufficient': The Role of History in the Interpretation of James as Christian Scripture," in *Explorations in Interdisciplinary Reading: Theological, Exegetical, and Reception-Historical Perspectives* (ed. R. F. Castleman, D. R. Lockett, and S. O. Presley; Eugene, OR.: Pickwick, 2017), 85.

Book Reviews

Christian Worldview. By Herman Bavinck. Translated and Edited by Nathaniel Gray Sutanto, James Perman Eglinton, and Cory C. Brock. Wheaton: Crossway, 2019, 140 pp., $24.99.

Reviewing one of the great theologians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be a daunting task, especially as the questions raised in this work line up perfectly with our modern debates over philosophical and moral issues. Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) was one of the chief dogmaticians of the Dutch Reformed tradition of theology and philosophy. He succeeded Abraham Kuyper as professor of systematic theology at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1902. Bavinck's profile has risen in recent years due to the popularity of his monumental *Reformed Dogmatics* and the newly released *Reformed Ethics*.

Published in English for the first time in 2019, Bavinck's *Christian Worldview* is another monumental work in of itself as he provides a rich, theologically informed, and robust foundation for Christian philosophical and ethical thought in opposition of the popular philosophies of the day—a scientific materialism that dominated the nineteenth century, but is still very much alive and well in the twenty-first century. Bavinck divides this work into three parts with each section focusing on a certain aspect of philosophical inquiry, as he seeks to dismantle the scientific materialism of his day seen in the works of Ernest Renan. It should be noted that Bavinck prefers the term "world-and-life view", which emphasizes a key aspect of what he sees lacking in worldview discussions—namely the full orbed nature of our system of beliefs and how they encompass the entire objective domain outside ourselves as well as the entirety of the human subject.

Bavinck argues clearly that there are certain fundamental questions that every worldview must answer such as "What am I?", "What is this world?", and "What is my place and task in this world?" (29). He argues that "autonomous thinking finds no satisfactory answer to these questions ... but (that) Christianity serves the harmony and reveals to us a wisdom that reconciles the human being with God, and through this, with itself, with the world, and with

life" (29). Opposed to the materialism of the day and the prevailing notion of the separation of faith and reason, Bavinck seeks to show the reader how Christianity and the meaning of reality fit together like "lock and key" (28).

His argument is broken into three sections that follow the main sub-sections of philosophy: "Thinking and Being" in which he addresses the epistemological foundations of knowledge and truth, "Being and Becoming" in which focus on metaphysics and the nature of reality, and finally "Becoming and Acting", through which he highlights ethics and the actions of humanity.

Bavinck shows that the Christian world-and-life view is the only way that we as humans can truly know reality and truth. He argues that "all autonomy of the human mind falls away, as if it could produce truth out of its own reason and through its own means" (47). In the first section primarily dealing with epistemology, Bavinck rightly points out the Christian underpinnings to the pursuit of knowledge but argues this primarily from a special revelation perspective. It may have been more compelling to non-Christians, who he is also engaging in this world, if he focused on a natural law understanding of epistemology that is in itself grounded in the God of the universe. It is a debated point amongst scholars, such as John Bolt, David VanDrunen, and Nelson B. Kloosterman, if Bavinck holds to a proper natural law theory. Bavinck does allude to this in the second section of the work on metaphysics by saying there are, in reality, "only two worldviews, the theistic and the atheistic" (73). The slight addition of natural law theory to his section on epistemology would flesh out his concept of Nature that is referenced throughout the second section on "Being and Becoming."

In the latter part of the book as he addresses the ethics and morality, Bavinck rightly shows the vacuity of the naturalistic and materialistic worldviews on the study of ethics by saying that "autonomy becomes a principle that undermines every authority and all law" (102). He goes on to point out that human autonomy means that we are only bound to ourselves and thus the basis for morality is on unstable footing or even lost all together. Christianity is not hostile, as some argue even today, to the sciences though. As Bavinck states, "science can stand only if the theistic worldview, which lies at the foundations of Christianity, is correct" because science is based on certain unchanging laws of nature and reality, which must have a starting point (121). Again, here he makes a natural law type argument—without being explicit—for epistemology and ethics, yet seems to stray away at

times from that theory because he argues that it is by the Scriptures alone that all of this is known to us, not from an explicit natural law perspective. This is in line with Bavinck's understanding of Christ as the unifying of the entire human person.

On the whole, Bavinck provides a short, yet thorough and impressive work that engages many of the modern questions concerning philosophy that we still ask in today's world with the push for a materialistic understanding of the world in many of the science and technologies such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and other emerging fields. Bavinck's emphasis on the cogency of the Christian world-and-life view in the face of these modern arguments is laudable and sorely needed in today's context as well as his own. This is because humanity will continue to grapple with the reality of God's existence and creation. Bavinck helps to ground those facing these challenges to the faith once for all delivered to the saints by equipping readers to give a salient argument for the hope within us as followers of Christ and to bring clarity to the discord that all people feel as we try to navigate this life with wisdom and truth.

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God in Himself: Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology. By Steven J. Duby. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019, 352 pp., $40.00.

Steven J. Duby welcomes the renewed interest in the doctrine of God and the attendant issues of epistemology, metaphysics, biblical exegesis, and the incarnation. Indeed, if God is the one from whom and for whom all things exist, then contemplation of the triune God "remains paramount" (1). Yet, while many join Duby in this refrain, the impulse to posit a dissonant relationship between a doctrine of God predicated upon natural theology and metaphysics, on the one hand, and a theology proper grounded in the incarnation, on the other, remains. Duby, however, rejects this impulse, aiming to trot a *via media*. Self-consciously extending the work of Katherine Sonderegger and John Webster, Duby contends that natural theology, metaphysics, and the incarnation need not generate "conflicting agendas for

a Christian account of God" (5). Instead, governed by patient engagement with Scripture, Duby argues that these three elements can work in harmony to induce a "constructive account of the Christian practice of *theologia*"—which he defines as "discourse about the triune God in himself without primary reference to the economy" (6).

Duby's overall aim, therefore, is to set forth the "rationale and practice" of *theologia.* This aim raises two primary questions that guide Duby's defense of his overarching thesis: (1) Can we know God *in se*? (2) If so, how? Though Duby addresses both questions throughout, chapter 1 focuses on the former, chapters 2-4—on natural theology, the incarnation, and metaphysics, respectively—focus on the latter, and chapter 5 synthesizes the results through a case study on the doctrine of analogy.

In chapter 1, Duby avers that Scripture's presentation of the purpose and end of human knowledge of God—namely, communion with God *himself*—entails that we can, in fact, have knowledge of God *in se*. While we have fellowship with God through his works, our fellowship is not with God's works but with *God.* God reveals himself to us in the economy, but the content of his revelation "is not reducible to the economy," for Scripture claims that the God who reveals himself to us has life in himself apart from creation and redemption (16). Thus, though the economy is integral to our knowledge of God, and though we never transcend the economy in our knowledge of God, the economy presupposes and ultimately leads to theology. As he does throughout this work, Duby resources Thomas Aquinas and a plethora of Reformed Scholastic theologians to prosecute his case. But the Reformed play a particularly important role in chapter 1, since the conviction that theology is both a "theoretical" and a "practical" discipline undergirds several of Duby's claims in this chapter—the most important being, perhaps, that *theologia* neither amounts to undue speculation, on account of theology's "practical" character, nor is it terminated on the incarnation, revelation, or even the Christian life, on account of theology's "theoretical" character. Just so, the theoretical-practical paradigm provides the framework needed to articulate *how* we move towards our end of knowing God *in se*, a task that occupies Duby for the remainder of his work.

According to Duby, natural theology continues to exercise a positive role in *theologia post-lapsum* (chapter 2). Though he recognizes the controversial character of this claim, Duby suggests that the type of natural theology

he has in mind largely sidesteps contemporary concerns because natural theology—in Duby's account—is rooted in God's self-revelation (67). Innate capacitates and the order of creation depend upon God; since God wills to communicate himself through these aforementioned avenues, they reveal God himself. Nevertheless, while natural knowledge comprises positive knowledge of God, Duby maintains that it is not sufficient, for proper knowledge of God entails love and worship of the Creator—knowledge that comes only through Holy Scripture and the incarnate Christ, the knowledge to which natural knowledge is ordered. Consequently, natural knowledge "prepares" us for the light of grace, which indicates that it does not conflict with the light of grace. In this way, "[n]atural theology is thus caught up in the overarching purpose of God to lead us to everlasting communion with himself" (131). In other words, natural theology is integral to *theologia*.

Duby furthers his case in chapter 3 by rejecting two distinct—yet related—claims perpetuated in modern theology: (1) that the incarnation is the "starting point" of theology proper; and (2) that the incarnation "constitutes" God's being (132). In response, Duby develops his constructive account through two primary assertions that counteract the claims he repudiates. First, he argues that Scripture, not Christ, is the external cognitive principle of theology because our knowledge of Christ comes through Scripture and because the Son, who is the eternal mediator and source of our theological knowledge, sanctions Scripture as the primary principle in the knowledge of God. Second, he avers that the incarnation itself reveals God's aseity and transcendence of the economy. The Son assumes a human nature in the hypostatic union without threatening his divinity precisely because he is the God who is *a se*, for the hypostatic union indicates that the Son possesses the divine nature prior to the incarnation. Thus, Christ's divinity transcends his humanity, even as both natures subsist in Christ's person. Albeit implicitly, Barth errs, Duby suggests, by conceiving of "the two essences themselves (not just the *hypostasis*) to be the focal point of the union," a conception born out in Barth's rejection of the *extra Calvinisticum* (182). Focusing on Scripture and the *hypostatic* union, Duby exculpates the *extra* and claims Christology points beyond itself to God in himself—to *theologia*.

Turning to the vexed discussion of metaphysics and theology (chapter 4), Duby provides a rejoinder to those who fear a relativized Christology gives way to metaphysics. Crucially, Duby does not equate metaphysics and

theology, though critics of the so-called "metaphysical" doctrine of God often equate the two disciplines. Metaphysics studies created being; theology studies uncreated being. The latter can make use of the former only if this distinction is maintained. Duby, drawing on Scripture and the tradition, then offers several reasons for why and how theologians should utilize metaphysics (211-16), all of them stemming from Duby's conviction that such concepts—when "refracted" and applied to God analogically—help elucidate the distinction between God and creation to which Scripture testifies. Duby concludes the chapter by showing that it is precisely the Creator-creature distinction that secures the genuineness of God's economic condescension. God cannot be other than Godself in his condescension because God is "pure act," thus on a different order of being than creation. Consequently, God neither changes nor adds something to himself by coming near to us, for he is complete in his transcendence of the economy. *Theologia* accentuates these realties; metaphysical concepts help explicate these realities. Thus, Duby submits that "the work of *theologia* is precisely what is needed to ensure that the Christian understanding of God does not degenerate into mere metaphysics and lose sight of the Creator creature distinction" (231).

Having assumed the appropriateness of analogical language in his work thus far, Duby aims to defend and retrieve the doctrine of analogy in the final chapter of his work (chapter 5). Grounding his argument in Scripture, Duby asserts that the concepts of the *imago Dei* and "participation" indicate that God has willed to communicate his perfection to creatures (236-37). That creatures receive God's perfection in part thus implies a similarity to God, which in turn licenses the use of analogy in our speech about God. Thereafter, and in great detail, Duby surveys the medieval debates over theological language in order to highlight the various "types" of analogy and the main alternative to analogy—univocity. This section serves Duby's positive argument by clarifying what Duby does—and does not—commend for *theologia*. In tandem with Aquinas and the Reformed Scholastics, Duby suggests we employ the intrinsic analogy of attribution in its "one to another" form—that is, we compare creatures to God (one to another), not God and creatures to an *a priori* source (many to one). And this use of analogy works because the perfections God gives to creatures eminently exist in him (260-61). Those who quibble with analogy—Barth, Pannenberg, and the various contemporary authors Duby engages throughout the remainder of

the chapter—either conflate the various types of analogy or assume analogy itself governs *theologia*; in turn, these critics misunderstand the aim(s) and function of analogy in more traditional dogmatics. Maintaining the pertinent distinctions and reminding us that Scripture, not analogy, is the primary principle of theology, Duby exonerates the use of analogy and demonstrates how the doctrine gives us a humble confidence as we engage in *theologia*.

Neither succumbing to the assumptions of modern biblical scholars nor relegating Scripture to philosophy or the incarnation, Duby ably sets forth the "rational and practice" of *theologia*. And, in so doing, he accomplishes one of the primary goals of the Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture Series of which his work is a part—namely, to reconcile the disciplines of systematic theology and biblical studies. Indeed, Duby's argument is grounded in theological exegesis and informed by the catholic tradition. He therefore exemplifies how luminaries of the Christian tradition have sought to engage Scripture's teaching, and he provides a forcible argument with which theologians and biblical scholars must reckon. While some scholars will remain skeptical of Duby's theological vision—something Duby perhaps recognizes when he admits his study "has been mostly a tilling of the ground" (294)—dissenters will no longer be able to charge a more traditional approach with undue "speculation" in light of Duby's work. In this way, and in many more ways than can be mentioned herein, Duby exceeds expectations in this well-argued, informed, and insightful work.

However, in his endeavor to till the ground, I fear Duby may cover *too much* ground. Duby's work is dense: he engages several interlocutors and assumes his readers have a certain level of familiarity with scholastic distinctions and metaphysical terms. While this is an academic work, and while we should recognize and commend Duby's erudition, we should also acknowledge that he risks overwhelming and disorientating scholars who have not received training in these areas, often the very scholars he attempts to convince. Moreover, the breadth of Duby's engagement with figures and ideas occasionally compromises depth of engagement, the chapter on analogy excepted. Though Duby shows *that* certain thinkers utilized a given concept, he does not always tell us *how* and *why* such concepts are valuable, true, or applied differently throughout the tradition. Accordingly, some readers will finish portions of Duby's work yearning for a more robust defense of the particular concept Duby aims to retrieve.

Notwithstanding this concern, Duby's work deserves careful and patient engagement from scholars across the theological disciplines and denominations. By setting forth the implications that follow from a traditional understanding of God and his revelation to humanity, Duby fills a notable lacuna in contemporary evangelical theology and demonstrates that natural theology, metaphysics, and the incarnation are not mutually exclusive. With competence and congeniality, Duby keeps the end in mind—namely, God himself—and thus models how to move forward in the midst of fierce debate.

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Christobiography: Memory, History, and the Reliability of the Gospels. By Craig S. Keener. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019, 743 pp., $54.99.

Craig Keener makes his contribution to the study and implications of the genre of the Gospels in *Christobiography*. This review will summarize his argument and conclude with a brief evaluation.

Keener positions his work as prolegomena to historical Jesus studies. *Christobiography* does not make a case for the reliability or unreliability of any particular passage or Gospel. Rather, he lays the foundation for proper, historically grounded expectations before a scholar begins to determine the reliability of any saying or passage. While many secondary claims will be made throughout the work Keener's primary conclusion is that "the sort of substance and variation we see in the Gospels is well within the bounds expected in ancient narratives about actual persons and events" (21). He establishes this basic claim in five steps.

Keener begins by making a case that the Gospels are, in fact, ancient biographies. Though different iterations of biographies exist and the genre develops over time, the Gospels fit more closely with biography than they do other ancient genres like novels. Keener tracks the development of ancient biography in regard to historical reliability, ultimately concluding that biographies from the period of the early Empire – roughly from 1st century BCE to the 3rd century CE – brought the highest expectations of historically reliable content (103).

Moving specifically to the question of whether or not ancient biographies present accurate historical information, Keener answers in the affirmative. Though some nuance is required – like when the biography was written in relation to its subjects' life, purpose, and length – ancient biographers strove to provide a narrative that was historically accurate. This does not mean, however, that ancient standards of history are the same as modern standards. Ancient readers expected a complete and rhetorically pleasing narrative. This means authors would often fill in details, particularly in regard to dialogue and speeches. Keener consistently notes, however, that this does not entail the invention of events. Unlike authors of historical novels, biographers were constrained to report events that actually happened. The expectations were higher still for biographies written within living memory of their subject.

Thirdly, Keener tests the Gospels against their ancient counterparts in regard to the range of similarity and difference among accounts of the same subject. This study reveals that the Gospels fall well within the range of expected variance. In fact, the Gospels seem to have used their sources much more conservatively than was common in this period. This still allowed the Evangelists to take poetic liberty to tell a good story and accomplish their own goals in writing, while still telling a historically reliable story. In sum, they wrote in similar fashion to their fellow ancient biographers.

Keener next takes up two common objections to a default expectation of historical reliability in the Gospels. First, the Gospels report miracles and supernatural activity. Keener acknowledges that we do not have full length biographic works of miracle workers, but helpfully notes, "We lack biographies of figures like Jesus not because the genre is different but because Jesus himself is different" (334). Apart from an *a priori* assumption of miracle accounts being unreliable, there are few historical reasons to doubt these accounts. Second, John's Gospel is significantly different than the Synoptics, and many believe that this entails issues in regard to historical veracity and genre classification. Keener answers that a high degree of accuracy should still be expected of John, while still acknowledging the apparent differences between the synoptics and the fourth Gospel. John embraces the flexibility of the genre more so than the other evangelists, but should not be discounted as a source of historical information.

Finally, Keener turns to memory study and its implications for the reliability in the Gospel accounts. Memory studies cannot provide certainty in either direction

about the historicity of particular passages. Keener presents a balanced view of human memory, acknowledging that it includes both "fixity and fluidity" (370). Jesus' teaching occupation, however, does lend evidence to the notion that Jesus' disciples *as disciples* would have been expected to remember and pass on their master's teaching. Oral tradition, like memory, contains elements of both "stability and flexibility" (465). Keener argues, among many others, that the length of the oral tradition behind the Gospels is much shorter than the form critics would have had us believe, and given the proximity to the events and the presence of authoritative interpreters/presenters in the Apostles, readers can expect a high degree of reliability and stability in the Gospel traditions.

Christobiography should prove to be an excellent resource and starting point for scholars doing historical Jesus studies. Two factors contribute to this being an excellent work with potentially long staying power: first, the claims are modest, and second, the research is prodigious. Keener never tries to claim more than the evidence will allow. His simple claim that the genre of the Gospels, the time period within which they were written, their proximity to their source, and their handling of sources both written and oral all point to an expectation of historical reliability is a helpful starting point for scholars wanting to weigh the veracity of events portrayed in the Gospels. In classic Keener fashion, he demonstrates his claim with copious citations of both secondary and primary research (to the tune of 3,628 footnotes and a 127-page secondary source bibliography!). Only someone that has done the work in the primary literature can justifiably claim what Keener has concerning the Gospel's genre.

Any quibbles I had while reading did not concern the mainline argument. At times he seems to suggest greater differences between the synoptic Gospels and John than is necessary based on the evidence, and Keener is also unclear on his position of authorship of fourth Gospel. For his argument in this book, however, only an appeal to an eyewitness source was necessary (Note, Keener does argue for apostolic authorship of John in his two-volume commentary *The Gospel of John*). Smaller matters aside, *Christobiography* is an excellent work of scholarship that should impact the surrounding discussions of the genre and historical reliability of the Gospels for some time.

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God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology. By J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019, 416 pp., $34.99.

For decades, scholars have debated whether or not the Bible coalesces around a single, conceptual center. More recently, perhaps as a result of the sheer number of proposals, biblical theologians seem to have become less interested in the pursuit of a center. Though there are notable exceptions, many evangelical scholars now doubt that a single theme may be proven to ground the unity of the diverse biblical materials. However, in their latest book, J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays breathe new life into the discussion by arguing that God's relational presence "lies at the heart of the Bible's overall message" and "forms the cohesive center of biblical theology" (325).

Duvall and Hays begin by describing their approach to biblical theology (BT). Like many others, the authors adopt an approach that is exegetical, inductive, theological, both descriptive and normative, and canonical (2–4). They explain that by *center*, they mean "the megatheme that provides the cohesion that connects the other pervasive themes, along with the details, into a coherent whole" (4). Using the image of a spider-web, the pair posits that the center must relate to all the major themes in BT, though it may connect to some of these indirectly (4–5). Duvall and Hays conclude by discussing two issues that play an important role in the rest of the book: the first involves the tension between transcendence and immanence (5–8), while the second has to do with the theological import of anthropomorphisms and figures of speech (8–9).

After addressing these preliminary matters, the authors turn to the task of proving that "almost every book (indeed almost every chapter) of Scripture touches on the presence theme" (327). They attempt to validate this claim by spotlighting key themes, sections, or episodes within each biblical book and then showing how these connect with their proposed center. Since I cannot summarize their entire case, a few examples of their argumentation will have to suffice. In their chapter on the Pentateuch, the pair defends their thesis by arguing that Gen 1–3 revolves around the loss of the divine presence (16–20), that both the disclosure of the divine name (Exod 3:14–15) and the covenant formula (Exod 29:45–46) involve relational presence (24–27, 33), and that the attachment of God's name to his chosen dwelling place (Deut 12:5–7) reflects his intention to bless Israel with his "dramatic, relational,

yet holy and dangerous, presence" (53). Turning to the historical books, Duvall and Hays contend that the importance of God's presence in Judges is revealed through the strategic use of the phrase "they did evil in the eyes of the LORD" (61–62). Moreover, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles emphasize relational presence by focusing on the tabernacle (66–67) and the temple (71–72, 80–84). Duvall and Hays also identify relational presence as being at the heart of wisdom literature (112). In Proverbs, Woman Wisdom should be understood as the depiction of "the relationship with God that Proverbs calls for" (106). Moreover, Job's crisis is finally resolved by God's presence (108), and Qoheleth's call for the fear of the LORD intimates the significance of divine presence (109). The authors then contend that prophetic literature also demonstrates the centrality of God's relational presence through its references to God's Spirit (125–26, 141–44, 156–57), judgment (117–20, 128–30, 138–40, 155), and the restoration of covenant relations (120–24, 132–34, 141–44, 156–57). Likewise, Duvall and Hays see the Synoptics and Acts as corroborating their overall argument. According to the two, these books are primarily interested in "show[ing] that Jesus himself manifests God's personal presence as the incarnate Son of God, that the kingdom of God is rooted in the reality of God's relational presence, and that presence lies at the heart of kingdom righteousness and discipleship to Jesus" (167). Similarly, the authors argue that relational presence is the center of Pauline theology (222), since Paul proclaimed a gospel that communicates God's presence (227–30) and stresses the believer's union with Christ (230–34). Their survey ends with the Johannine literature, which is said to "[offer] a magnificent vantage point from which to survey God's relational presence among his people" (279). Finally, Duvall and Hays conclude their book by returning to their thesis, comparing relational presence to other possible central themes, and contending that "no other theme unites biblical-theological thought in such a comprehensive yet flexible manner" (328).

In my judgment, Duvall and Hays' latest effort successfully demonstrates the value of thematic, whole-Bible BT by ably tracing the theme of God's relational presence through the entire canon. In so doing, they also provide succinct overviews of debated issues in biblical scholarship without getting bogged down in esoteric details. Nevertheless, while Duvall and Hays do showcase the *centrality* of God's relational presence, I remain skeptical that they have sufficiently proven this theme to be *the* center of BT. This skepticism

arises from at least three considerations. First, much of the evidence that Duvall and Hays posit could be (and has been) used to argue for the priority of different centers. To give just one example, the inclusion between Gen 1–3 and Rev 19–22 could just as easily be understood to highlight the kingdom theme rather than relational presence. Moreover, while Duvall and Hays try to show that relational presence is a more foundational theme than other proposed centers (328–29), their discussion was much too cursory to defend such a sweeping assertion. Second, the authors' use of the concept of "God's relational presence" lacked specificity. At times, relational presence is used interchangeably with wisdom (106, 262), God's word/Scriptures (223–24), the act of creating (280), and even God and Jesus themselves (175). While a central concept must be flexible (328), "God's relational presence" becomes so malleable that it at times threatens to lose any definite meaning. Lastly, the pair's exegesis occasionally seems forced. In particular, they do not persuasively show how relational presence is central in books like Ruth, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and James.

Though I was not convinced by its thesis, I still found much to appreciate in *God's Relational Presence* and I commend Duvall and Hays for writing a superb, biblical-theological treatment of a central, biblical theme. I believe churchmen and pastors interested in learning more about the overall message of the Bible will benefit greatly from the book. Moreover, I think *God's Relational Presence* could serve well as assigned reading for BT courses at the undergraduate level.

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How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets. By Peter J. Gentry. Wheaton: Crossway, 2017, 144 pp., $17.99.

Peter Gentry, the director of the Hexapla Institute and Donald L. Williams Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary, has provided a valuable gift to the modern, western church. His concise introduction to interpreting the Prophetic books makes explicit the ancient Near Eastern principles that often evade modern western Christians. Beyond making these principles explicit, Gentry exerts considerable energy applying these

principles to passages of Scripture. The result is that readers have a step by step model to help them interpret other prophetic passages. Gentry's goal is clear: "We need to spell out in detail the rules for reading this kind of literature [prophetic literature] if the church is going to understand these texts as the authors intended us to understand them (14)." In just over 130 pages, Gentry identifies and discuses seven key characteristics that help his reader interpret these texts better.

Gentry begins the introduction with an effective illustration that stresses his concern: different strategies are employed for reading different types of literature. Just as the front pages of a newspaper are read differently than the comics, so we ought to adopt strategies when interpreting the Prophetic books besides those employed to interpret other genres such as Epistles.

After demonstrating the importance of understanding the prophetic books on their own terms, Gentry moves to discuss seven key characteristics integral to reading and understanding the prophetic books. The first of the seven characteristics is exposing covenant disloyalty. Gentry illustrates the centrality of this topic by discussing Isaiah 5-6 and its literary structure. By investigating Isaiah 5-6, Gentry uncovers the centrality of the word-pair social-justice: a word-pair used to sum up the covenant. The centrality of this covenant demonstrates that the message of the prophets is a message about "how the world of God, already revealed and received in the past, applies to the present circumstances and situations" (30).

Next, Gentry discusses the purpose of announcing future events. Prediction of the future served several purposes. 1) The prediction of the future distinguished the Lord form the idols (32). 2) The prediction of the future was necessary to explain the exile (37). 3) The prediction of the future demonstrates that deliverance takes time (38-39). 4) The prediction of the future demonstrates the sovereignty of the Lord over the nations (39). 5) The prediction of the future proves the trustworthiness of the word of the Lord (40). Each of these reasons again demonstrate the centrality of the covenant since they serve a covenantal purpose: Israel is called to account for covenant violation (40).

The function of repetition in Hebrew Literature is covered next by Gentry. In this chapter, Gentry stresses that Hebrew Literature is recursive (i.e., progressively repetitive) (41). Hebrew authors often discussed topics, not in a linear manner, but by beginning a conversation from one perspective,

ending it, and then by discussing the same topic again from a different angle or perspective (42). This approach to writing leads to the following dominant features: the couplet, word-pairs, and chiasm (44-51). He concludes this section by discussing the importance of noting this feature when interpreting Hebrew Literature in general, and the prophets specifically (51-58).

The fourth characteristic Gentry discusses is the reason and importance for the speeches about foreign nations. Gentry argues that Deuteronomy, and chapter 32 in particular, explains this characteristic (60). By analyzing the literary structure of Deuteronomy 32, Gentry identifies two central themes: 1) God will bring judgment on the foreign nations, and 2) God will fulfill his covenant promise in saving the nations through Israel (65). After showing the centrality of these themes in Deuteronomy 32, Gentry demonstrates that these two themes are also central to the oracles concerning the nations in the prophetic books. Gentry illustrates this by discussing Isaiah 13-27 (the oracles concerning the foreign nations in Isaiah). These two themes demonstrate that God is sovereign, and this fact should comfort Israel and modern Christians alike (70).

The final three chapters concern three characteristics about the future: namely, the nature of typology (chapter 5), the nature of apocalyptic (chapter 6), and the prominent theme of the already and not-yet (chapter 7). Gentry points out that prophecy is not only concerned about events in the near future, but events in the distant future (see Gentry's chart on pp. 72-74). The nature of the prophecy (whether it concerns near or distant events) affects the manner in which the prophet speaks: the more distant the prophecy, the more symbolic the prophecy. In his discussion of typology, Gentry focuses on one past event in Israel's history (i.e., the exodus) and its use as a model for a future event in Isaiah. After illustrating the nature of typology, Gentry explicitly lists the four factors that govern typology. These factors are, first, *correspondence* between a past person, event, or institution to a future person, event, or institution (90). Second, there must be escalation between the past and the future; namely, the fulfillment of the type is better than the type itself (90). Third, there must be biblical warrant to interpreting a past person, event, or institution as a model for the future baked into the original text (90). Fourth, the canon of Scripture creates, controls, and develops typological structures so that a type is repeated across the canon (90).

Beyond typology, prophets could also use apocalyptic literature to describe the future. Apocalyptic, according to Gentry, is often used to communicates

distant future events. By nature of discussing far-distant events, this communication strategy is highly symbolic (93-94). Gentry illustrates the nature of apocalyptic by discussing the oracles of the foreign nations in Isaiah 13-27 (95-96). The literary structure of these oracles demonstrates that there are three groups of five oracles intentionally arranged. The first five oracles have prose headings that are straightforward geographically while the following five oracles are more mysteries (95-96). The final five oracles have no prose headings and Isaiah's style becomes highly symbolic (97). From here, Gentry defines apocalyptic as a kind of literature that "has to do with revealing secrets, usually about the future" (98). Gentry then lists several common characteristics of apocalyptic: 1) it has a narrative framework; 2) it provides a schematization of history or division of history into segments; 3) it is often given by a heavenly messenger; 4) it involves a God-eyed view of history; 4) it is characterized by colorful metaphors and symbols; and 5) its focus it typically future hope despite current troubles (98-100). Gentry concludes this chapter by discussing several apocalyptic passages while noting several sub-principles essential to interpreting this type of literature (e.g., the need to identify the text's historical referent [105] and the vision's literary structure [106]).

Last, Gentry discusses the nature of the already and the not yet. Gentry illustrates this principle by discussing Luke 4:16-21 since this passage quotes only part of Isaiah 61:1-2. In effect, Jesus announces that the year of the Lord's favor has been fulfilled, but not the day of vengeance: two events that are placed side by side by Isaiah in Isaiah 61:2. What Isaiah did not understand was that "there would be a gap of at least two thousand years between the first half of the verse [the year of the Lord's favor] and the second half [the day of vengeance]" (120). In light of this characteristic, Gentry warns readers not to construct a chronology of the coming of the king and his kingdom only from the OT prophets; rather, Christians must reply on the teachings of the NT to clarify which prophecies apply to the first coming and which apply to the second coming (122).

This book is a welcome addition to Old Testament studies. One primary strength of the book is its accessibility. Gentry's thorough and simply handling of complicit topics contributes to the book's accessibility. For example, Gentry explains the concept "hendiadys" in one line (22). Moreover, in less than one and a half pages, Gentry lists and describes the components

of typology (89-91). Gentry's concision provides the starting point for his reader so that they can begin to analyze these concepts on their own.

Gentry's accessibility is not only evident in his ability to summarize, but also in his illustrations. It is an understatement to say that Gentry is a master at contextualization. His opening illustration exemplifies this point since it is not only memorable, but germane to his main point (11-13). Moreover, his vivid word pictures provide pithy modern images of ancient prophetic hermeneutical principles. For example, he compares the recursive nature of Hebrew poetry to a 3-D Imax with Dolby surround sound (17) and later to the sound system of a Honda Acura RL (51). In illustrating the central message of the book of Isaiah, Gentry compares the message of the book to a kaleidoscope (18). Each of these illustrations demonstrate in different ways the accessibility of Gentry's writing. This book discusses complex issues in a manner accessible to all Christians.

Another strength of Gentry's book is the fact that Christians with a wide variety of theological background can benefit from it. As noted above, Gentry does not presume that his reader possesses an understanding of technical terms, rather he defines them clearly and thoroughly. However, seminary students and professors too will glean much from this book. For example, in Gentry's discussion of typology, Gentry provides a profound statement to support viewing the books of Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah as literary units. And this is done in just two sentences. This is just one example of how Gentry teaches on multiply levels at once.

One further strength is Gentry's methodology. Gentry's has written a "How to" manual, or, in other words, a guide to help readers interpret the biblical prophets. Thus, by definition, his goal is not merely to teach content, but method. In order to teach method (in this case a method to interpreting the prophets), an author must first clearly state the principles essential to interpreting this literature. Next, the author must model these principles. This modeling provides the reader a step by step guide so that they can replicate the method on subsequent passages. Think of a You-tube video. If I want to learn how to graft an avocado tree, it is helpful for me to first learn the steps, but a successful teacher will not just tell me the steps, but model the steps. This is what Gentry does. He teaches his reader seven characteristics of the prophetic books, and then he exegetes several passages of Scripture in order to model these principles. Gentry's method matches his intended goal.

Gentry's book was very beneficial to my own study of the prophetic books. With that said, there were a few minor issues they could have been improved. First, Gentry does not include study questions, exercises, or bibliographies for further reading in any of his chapters. The inclusion of study questions would function to solidify the material digested while exercises could have provided the reader with the ability to practice Gentry's principles with some further hands on guidance. The inclusion of these items would have contributed to his overarching goal.

Second, Gentry's chapter on the already and not-yet principle is quite short (less than 6 pages). As mentioned above, Gentry is incredibly skilled at summarizing complex issues concisely. Gentry's discussion of Luke 4's use of Isaiah 61, for example, is incredibly profound. Nonetheless, a brief survey of his table of contents demonstrates that this chapter is by far the shortest chapter.

Third, Gentry's chapter on the already and not-yet only covers this theme already from the perspective of the NT, but this principle is already operative in the OT. For example, restoration according to the Prophets includes both a return from exile and the forgiveness of sins. Israel has returned from physical exile in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, but obviously not from spiritual exile. Gentry discusses this fact in chapter 14 of *Kingdom through Covenant*, but interestingly, omits it from this work. Perhaps he felt that this point was tangential to the chapter's main point: namely, the teachings of Jesus and his apostles are essential to understanding "what prophecies apply to the first coming and which apply to the second coming [of Christ]" (122).

Despite these minor details, anyone who decides to dedicate five hours to reading this book will be greatly helped. They will know seven key characteristics essential to understanding the biblical prophets, and they will have a model to help them interpret other prophetic passages. Gentry has successfully spelled out the rules for reading the biblical prophets, as was his goal (14).

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The Bible in a Disenchanted Age: The Enduring Possibility of Christian Faith. By R. W. L. Moberly. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018, 234 pp., $25.00 hardcover.

R. W. L. Moberly (PhD, University of Cambridge) has more than 30 years teaching experience and is the author of 9 books and dozens of book chapters and journal articles. He currently serves as professor of theology and biblical interpretation at Durham University, England. Although primarily an Old Testament scholar, he seeks to bridge the divide between disciplines to show the enduring significance of biblical teaching for Christian faith and practice today. In *The Bible in a Disenchanted Age*, Moberly sets out to provide a fresh understanding of what the Bible is and how it should be understood, believed, and applied in our own times, when belief in its teachings is becoming less viable for large segments of the populace. In contrast to traditional "evidentialists," Moberly suggests a more existential approach. Believing communities should create and sustain the necessary plausibility structure in which privileging the biblical witness becomes viable for non-believers. This environment should then foster a readiness to trust, respond to, and ultimately live by the content of that witness.

Moberly develops his argument in four chapters. In chapter 1 he presents what he sees as the problem with approaches that rely on the Bible's historical reliability as grounds for its relevance today. Western culture has become increasingly "disenchanted" with the notion that there is inherent meaning in the world by virtue of God's existence and actions. As such, society no longer ascribes privileged status to the Bible, and methods that rely on "reading the Bible like any other book" can offer no good reason why the Bible and its God should not be discarded like "any other book." In chapter 2 Moberly proposes "three primary ways of reading the Bible: as history, as classic, and as Scripture" (42). According to Moberly, both historical and classical study take the Bible seriously "without taking it religiously" (50). These approaches "are compatible with a believing approach" and "should be used to inform one," being equally at home and relevant in both Christian and secular contexts (51). As such, however, these approaches do not offer the best defense for enduring Christian faith, even if they offer valuable insights.

In chapters 3 and 4 Moberly offers his vision for reading the Bible as Christian Scripture. Christianity, not unlike other systems of thought, privileges

some ideas to help makes sense of God and the world. At issue is not the fact that Christians privilege something, but that they privilege the Bible rather than other potential sense-making sources. Moberly explores how the sociological concept of "plausibility structures" can help Christians understand how someone might "respond positively to the biblical story in such a way as to seek to become part of it as it continues today" (93). Two key elements, according to Moberly, are necessary for coming to faith in the God of the Bible. First, the notion that the Bible holds the key to making sense of God, self, and the world must be a plausible option, which results only from interaction with believers who privilege the canonical writings of the Christian Bible as the source of knowledge about the true God (thus creating the necessary plausibility structure). And, second, there needs to be "a responsive openness to the God whom Jesus represents," which is the only way "words *about* God . . . can also become words *from* God that convey a living divine reality" (140, emphasis original). Each chapter ends with a case study where Moberly compares elements of Virgil's Aeneid to Daniel 7 to illustrate the issues discussed in the chapter.

Moberly's insightful observations, creative proposal, and gracious tone combine to make *The Bible in a Disenchanted Age* a constructive and thought-provoking voice in the conversation about the relevance of the Bible in our day. He undertakes a daunting task, seeking to remain in continuity with historical Christian understandings of God and the Bible while recognizing the "postmodern" culture of our day and seeking not to be ignorant of the learnings of modernity. His taxonomy of three ways to study the Bible (historic, classic, Scripture) provide a useful framework for identifying the scope and intention of published works that interact with the biblical text. He also offers a constructive proposal for how these approaches should relate, giving the historical and classical readings of Scripture due recognition for their contributions while placing them in proper relation to engagement with the Bible as Scripture. Moberly's work emphasizes Christian faith as more than mere intellectual assent to a set of facts, highlighting the Bible's intended role "as a fundamental resource for understanding the realities of God and of life" (172). By contextualizing this idea with the notion that every person necessarily privileges some source of guidance, Moberly insightfully exposes the Christian privileging of the Bible as less novel than many in this "disenchanted age" might assume.

Despite these commendations, a number of objections can be raised against *The Bible in a Disenchanted Age*. The "evidentialist" approach to the Bible is dismissed based on its inability, according to Moberly, to lay claim to privileged status over alternative ancient sources. He does not, however, address the fact that the content of the Bible, if historically reliable, has existential implications. If Jesus really did rise from the dead, that has implications for every person alive. Additionally, Moberly places very little emphasis on the roles of the Spirit and the gospel in Christian conversion. He acknowledges this shortcoming as "a strategic decision" (173) that allows him to focus on the human aspects of coming to faith. Consequently, *The Bible in a Disenchanted Age* paints a picture of Christian faith primarily in sociological rather than theological terms. Finally, someone might ask why the sociological process of coming to believe the Bible should be privileged over a similar process experienced by converts to a different belief system. People who truly believe something *experience* the object of their belief as true. For example, even though Christians hold that the biblical account of God and the world represents reality, devout Buddhists *experience* their own belief system as true and trustworthy and good. They too have trusted communities that create the necessary plausibility structure and they also have a willingness to trust in the teachings of their authoritative sources. But this experience in and of itself does not necessarily correlate to the ultimate veracity of their belief system. Moberly objects to reading the Bible "like any other book" on the basis that it provides no grounds for privileging the biblical perspective above "any other book," but I do not see how his proposed process of coming to faith–with an openness to learn in the context of a plausibility structure created by a community–offers grounds for privileging faith in the Bible over faith in a different belief system where the same process is at work.

The Bible in a Disenchanted Age is not meant to be an in-depth discussion of the topic, but rather an "exploration," offering insights and presenting ways forward without fully developing the subject matter. It is intended for a broad audience, including pastors, scholars, students, and interested lay Christians from a wide range of Christian traditions. The strength of Moberly's work is that it shows Christian belief to be much richer than mere intellectual assent. Although I am not convinced that he provides grounds for privileging the Christian viewpoint above others, Moberly offers a helpful sociological

account of how a person comes to believe and keeps on believing as well as a model for reclaiming the viability of Christian belief in a "disenchanted age."

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Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals: The Origins and Spirituality of Black Music in the United States, 3rd ed. By Hans Rookmaaker. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2020, 248 pp., $19.99 paper.

Hans Rookmaaker's *Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals* is more than a scholarly work in ethnomusicology, historical theology, or cultural analysis. It is a love letter to African American music—jazz in particular. Rookmaaker (1922–1977) was a Dutch Neo-Calvinist scholar of culture and the arts. He completed his doctorate in art history at the University of Amsterdam before founding the art history department at the Free University in Amsterdam. Rookmaaker's life's work was to apply Neo-Calvinist theology to the arts, as can be seen in several works published both during and after his life. *Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals*, an analysis of African American music, was first published in 1960, during America's Civil Rights era; how appropriate that P&R has published this new edition in 2020, during the country's most defining moment of race relations since.

Rookmaaker does not approach his work as a disinterested chronicler. Rather, his agenda is to praise African American music, to show its relationship to the Christian faith, and to defend it against its white detractors. His stated purpose is "to give as complete a picture as possible of developments in black music . . . in the USA" in order to "provide more insight into the spiritual background and qualitative differences of the various genres" (v). To do so, he traces the history of black music from its roots in Africa to the various fruits of spirituals, blues, folk music, ragtime, and jazz.

Rookmaaker's thesis becomes evident as the book progresses: black music in North America was the offspring of African Americans' tragic experience of oppression and their resilient Christian faith. This was music that could only come from black Americans because of their experiences in

this country. The two essential elements of African American music, then, are its blackness and its Christian-ness. The music climaxed, Rookmaaker argues, just prior to World War I in the joyful, hopeful, polyphonic jazz of New Orleans. But to the degree that it has been Westernized and commercialized by whites or has drifted away from its roots in biblical spirituality, it has suffered degradation and impoverishment.

Chapter 1 details the beginnings of African American music, with the fusion of essentially black styles—call-and-response and storytelling—with the evangelical hymns of Watts, Wesley, and others. This fusion produced a new kind of music, the Negro spiritual, which Rookmaaker explains in chapter 2. Black spirituals were popularized by groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Unfortunately, here readers can see the beginnings of the westernization and commercialization the author so laments. The Fisk Jubilee Singers simultaneously represent the triumph and appropriation of black artistic creativity. On the one hand, they gained an audience within mainstream culture; on the other, when they were led by a white conductor to tour for the entertainment of white audiences, their songs were gutted of their somber, biblical, and prophetic subject matter. What was left was much lighter, serving only to entertain, rather than convict, white audiences.

Beginning in chapter 3, Rookmaaker turns his attention to jazz, and it becomes clear that he desires to give special attention to this genre. Jazz arose, he argues, not out of decadence and depravity in bars and brothels—a common myth which he says "can be attributed to (historians') craving . . . for lawless sleaze"—but out of the varied and rich musical heritage of black and Creole residents of New Orleans (59). This music was informed by the blues, ragtime, string-based folk music, and original, non-Western elements. This lack of Western influence is why, the author argues, jazz appeared "wild" to untrained ears, why it should not be judged by Western standards, and why it inevitably suffered impoverishment when commercialized by white-run record labels for white audiences. Chapter 4 follows the genre's migration to northern cities. The new epicenter of jazz was Chicago, a home that would fundamentally alter the genre, as white Chicagoans began to imitate it. These musicians made jazz more individualistic—a perversion that led to much commercial success, influencing the genre back down to the ground level and corrupting the jazz of black artists like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. Chapter 5 continues the unfortunate tale of commercialization

and degradation, showing how the realities of the Depression meant that only what could become popular in the mainstream (white) culture could be lucrative. Thus, jazz musicians closed up shop, starved, or sold out to the mainstream style. Many exchanged good music for good money, whitewashing the craft and demoralizing the craftsmen.

Here Rookmaaker reveals the heart of the book: the history of jazz is a history of beautiful, God-imaging, culture-making creative genius, born in the flames of suffering and Christian hope, that has never been accepted by majority white culture on its own terms. At every point, white culture has introduced corrosive effects into the life of jazz through commercialization and appropriation for white audiences ignorant of the heart of the genre. This happened most in the 1930s.

Rookmaaker's estimation of black music is unequivocally positive. He not only praises it *per se*, he also defends it against its detractors—mostly white Christians who, for reasons from ignorance to racism, dislike it. But his estimation of the trajectory of African American music is ambiguous at best. At the time of his writing, he believed it had begun to lose its battle against its two existential threats—the corruption of its blackness and the corruption of its Christian-ness. His ambiguous posture is seen in the book's last two chapters, in which Rookmaaker describes the developments of modern jazz. The genre had shifted to "the unconventional, the irrational, the absurd" (172). Rookmaaker is willing to applaud the talent of the best modern jazz musicians—Miles Davis, most importantly—yet he describes the evolution of the genre as a whole in disastrous terms, primarily because of its departure from a Christian worldview. This jazz was characterized by freedom, irrationality, and individualism, but lacked Christian joy.

Rookmaaker concludes with an appeal to his fellow white Christians to take jazz music seriously, engaging it on its own terms. "Much of this (white) trouble with jazz," he argues, "has more of a social than artistic character. . . . jazz is (seen as) wrong because it is music that belongs to a socially lower world." This attitude, he says, "smacks of racism" (210). Rookmaaker, against this racist mentality, proclaims that "black music . . . is certainly worthwhile and sometimes is a clearer fruit of Christian civilization than a lot of Western music is" (212).

Jazz, Blues, and Spirituals is not just an amusing-but-outdated bit of obscure cultural analysis. It is a model of humble, charitable neighbor love. Hans Rookmaaker—who had nothing to gain from his defense of African American

music—chose to listen in, to engage another culture on its own terms, and to make an honest assessment. This reviewer suggests that in doing so, he provides a model for many white Christians sixty years later. In a culture where the heaviest national topic of discussion is the state of race relations, many white Christians do not know where to begin. Perhaps the place to begin is where Rookmaaker began—listen in. Listen to a culture that seems foreign to you. Take stock of what you do not yet understand. Refuse to judge another culture on your own terms. This does not have to start with that culture's politics or religion; it can start with something as simple as a song.

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A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019, 336 pp., $29.99 paper.

In *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon,* Abraham Kuruvilla provides a fresh approach to preaching which challenges conventional models. Kuruvilla builds upon the hermeneutical methodology outlined in his previous work, *Privilege the Text!* and develops a comprehensive homiletical method which takes the reader from text to the moment of delivery. Kuruvilla is senior research professor of preaching and pastoral ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary and author of several books and journal articles.

Kuruvilla defines preaching narrowly. He distinguishes "edifying preaching" as separate from "evangelistic proclamation." Preaching, therefore, is carried out "in a gathering of Christians for worship" and "is for those already in relationship with God" (2). As a result, he concludes that "there is no *hermeneutical* constraint arising from every text of Scripture to mention the gospel of salvation in every sermon" (3). Rather than applying a Christocentric, or redemptive-historical hermeneutic, Kuruvilla approaches the text with what he calls a "christiconic interpretation" of the Bible which presupposes that "each pericope of the Bible is actually portraying a characteristic of Christ, showing us what it means to perfectly fulfill, as he did, the particular call of that pericope" (30).

Familiar concepts are often redefined within the author's proposed method. The exegetical process is referred to as "discerning theology." Citing Paul Ricoeur, Kuruvilla argues that the author of a biblical text projects a "*world in front of the text*" (29). This "projected world" from a given pericope of Scripture is the "theology of that pericope" which he argues provides the only valid means of application. Once the preacher has identified the pericopal theology, it should be articulated in a sentence called the "theological focus" which functions as a label for the "authorial *doing*" of the text, where doing is distinguished from merely the author's *saying* (40). Once the work of "discerning theology" has been completed, then one must proceed to the next stage, which the author calls "deriving application."

Kuruvilla refers to the process of crafting the sermon as "creating maps." This serves as an alternative to the traditional model consisting of a "big idea," or proposition, followed by main points. He uses the analogy of the preacher as a "curator guiding visitors in an art museum through a series of paintings" where the "sermon is thus more a *demonstration* of the thrust of the text than an argument validating a Big Idea" (88). Kuruvilla's sermon model consists of multiple "moves" rather than points, which include primary moves meant to explain the text and a final, secondary move which applies the text (135). Kuruvilla's goal is the make the sermon seem "frictionless and almost seamless" (134). The latter sections of the book are dedicated to the traditional elements of homiletics such as illustrations, introductions and conclusions, writing manuscripts which are written for the ear, and matters of delivery.

Kuruvilla asserts that each pericope of Scripture has its own voice, or "pericopal theology," and must be given a hearing of its own. His insistence that in each text the author is "doing something" is helpful for thinking of Scripture in terms of applications, not merely propositions. Kuruvilla's unique "christiconic" interpretation provides a theological method of preaching the ethical demands of Scripture, without resorting to moralism. By seeing Christ as the perfect man, one can see the ethical prescriptions of Scripture ultimately fulfilled by Jesus and exemplified by him. Proponents of a Christocentric model may find Kuruvilla's model lacking, while others may welcome his method of allowing each text to speak on its own terms.

The pattern for sermon construction Kuruvilla proposes is a fresh consideration of the task of preaching. Kuruvilla sets himself apart from "big idea" propositional preaching and prefers to use the term "theological focus"

as a label for the text. What follows from this is an approach to preaching which is text-based, application-driven, and aims to be one seamless unit which provides for a subtle presentation which he calls "curating." This novel approach to preaching provides the reader a new perspective from which to reimagine the process of sermon preparation.

Kuruvilla seems to overestimate the distance between his model and traditional models. The terminology of "theological focus" and "demonstration" is helpful and provides a new conceptual label, but ultimately describes the same functions fulfilled by "proposition" and "argumentation," from which the author seeks to distance himself. Kuruvilla's sermonic model of "revelation, relevance, and application" looks suspiciously like the traditional elements of "explanation, illustration, and application" (135). Kuruvilla criticizes Haddon Robinson's "big idea" which results from the preacher's abstraction and synthesizing, calling it a reduction by which "the dross of a text is melted off to leave behind the gold of a Big Idea, which is then preached" (264). This seems an uncharitable depiction of Robinson's model. What is more, Kuruvilla himself engages in abstraction from specific to general, though he applies the terminology of the "author's doing" and "deriving application" (59-60). Ultimately, Kuruvilla's model seems more like a shift in preaching philosophy than a radically distinct method.

A Manual for Preaching is a challenge to reconsider traditional models and concepts in preaching. The unique preaching philosophy it proposes makes it most suitable for experienced homileticians rather than those just beginning to preach. While some of the author's claims may be met with resistance, Kuruvilla provides a fresh perspective which challenges the expositor's weak points and invites one to think afresh about the homiletical process.

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Retracing Baptists in Rhode Island: Identity, Formation, and History. By J. Stanley Lemons. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019, 736 pp., $69.95 paper.

J. Stanley Lemons is Emeritus Professor of History at Rhode Island College. He has specialized in the history of Rhode Island and has authored or

co-authored several books relating to the state's social and religious history. In this his latest book, *Retracing Baptists in Rhode Island*, he has produced a comprehensive history of Baptist life in the state, with all of its diversity and transformations over time. In this work, Lemons emulates other works that are devoted to Baptist history within particular states, such as Albert W. Wardin's *Tennessee Baptists* and Wayne Flynt's *Alabama Baptists*.

Probably no one in the twenty-first century would regard Rhode Island as having a prominent place in Baptist life. The story of America's First Baptist Church, which was founded in Providence, and Roger Williams's plea for religious liberty are iconic, but after these Rhode Island uses recedes into the background in the telling of Baptist history. However, Lemons argues that it was once at the center of Baptist life in America. It was home to America's first Baptist churches: Particular, General, and Seventh Day Baptists. Baptist churches were not established beyond Rhode Island until 1663, and when they were established they came from Rhode Island. It could claim America's first Baptist association and the first college founded by Baptists. Lemons makes a compelling case that until the Great Awakening, "the center of gravity of Baptists in America was Rhode Island" (2). And for decades afterward, Rhode Island continued to have an impressive amount of influence among Baptists in America and they maintained an formidable presence in the state into the twentieth century.

Lemons traces the story of how the early vibrancy of the Baptists gradually cooled and with penetrating insights he uncovers the conditions that eventually led to their decline. Changing demographics was paramount. In the nineteenth century, waves of immigration into the state, as well as a gradual outward migration of Rhode Islanders to the frontier, revolutionized the character of Rhode Island. Simultaneously, the rise of industry led many rural residents to move into the cities, which weakened the churches that had historically constituted the majority of Baptist membership. Baptists attempted to meet the challenge of a rising Roman Catholic majority and the growing ethnic diversity that was a part of it, but they ultimately struggled to adapt to the changing demographics of the state. Already facing numerical decline, theological challenges in the twentieth century led to denominational fractures among the mainline Baptists. Some of the smaller groups like the Six Principle Baptists faced such significant decline that they ceased to exist by the latter decades of the twentieth century. Collectively, Baptists

faced a bleak future as they entered the twenty-first century, but the efforts of Baptists from outside of New England, like that of Southern Baptists, offered some glimmer of hope for future growth.

Lemons makes several important contributions in the book. He offers a satisfying balance between breadth and the sheer depth that this kind of work requires. He adds greater complexity to well-known figures in Baptist history who are commonly depicted one dimensionally. Obadiah Holmes, who is remembered by Baptists as something like one of the ancient confessors for facing physical punishment for his faith, turns out to be a more controversial figure than the conventional account implies (24-26). Similarly, Lemons explores the founding of Rhode Island College, later Brown University, and reveals the political maneuvering and opportunism that undergirded it (75-79). However, he also reveals the myths that have surrounded Roger Williams, who was not a proto-secularist, nor a pluralist, nor a seeker (31).

Lemons reveals the significant amount of diversity that existed in the early religious life of Rhode Island. Although he focuses on the Baptists, divided between their many subgroups, he explores the other religious groups that interacted with and at times challenged Baptist vitality. Groups like the Quakers, Unitarians, Roman Catholics, and Jews shared spaces with Baptists, and the amount of interaction that occurred between them will surprise some readers. Lemons also reveals the ethnic diversity that existed when he explores African American and Native American Baptists, as well as the large numbers of immigrants that came from southern and eastern Europe. Baptists, like Rhode Islanders generally, were far from monolithic. Another form of diversity, Lemons recounts the theological debates that arose throughout Baptist history, which in part led to the array of Baptist groups that vied for their place in the religious landscape. However, it is here, with theological ideas that Lemons struggles at times. He confuses some of the important nuances within Reformed theology. For instance, when he traces the rise of the modern missions movement, he argues that this was proof of the decline of Calvinism among Baptists, but in this analysis he confuses Calvinism with Hyper-Calvinism. The movement that was led by William Carey and Andrew Fuller was a return to an older Calvinism rather than a symptom of Calvinism's decline (173-177). But his analysis that Calvinist theology faced greater scrutiny in the nineteenth century and that it had nearly disappeared among Baptists in the twentieth century seems to be accurate.

Lemons traces the evolution of Baptists from a small upstart group to a religious majority as well as their tragic decline in the twentieth century. The depth of his research is impressive. Although a large volume, the amount of ground that he covers is equally impressive. The book is well written and his argument of the state's significant role in Baptist life is compelling. The nuance that his in-depth account provides makes an important contribution to field. Scholars that study early Baptist history in America and those who study religious life in Rhode Island will want to consult Lemon's work. All who read it will be struck by the revelation that a place that was once the center of Baptist life can become a distant land that more resembles a mission field than a Baptist Zion.

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Judges. By David J. H. Beldman. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020, 316 pp., $34.00.

The Judges volume within the Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary was authored by David J. H. Beldman. The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary (along with its New Testament counterpart) emphasizes theological exegesis and reflection yet without negating the value of historical-critical approaches to the text. It is one among several note-worthy projects attempting to reintroduce theology within the world of biblical studies. David Beldman is associate professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College. He is also the author of two books pertaining to Judges: *The Compilation of Judges: Strategies of Ending in Judges 17–21* and *Deserting the King: The Book of Judges*.

Beldman's commentary is divided into three major sections: Theological Introduction, Theological Commentary, and Theological Reflection. The introduction overviews key concepts such as Israel's covenant relationship with YHWH and literary approaches to Scripture, and it also overviews relevant historical-critical issues such as authorship and socio-religious context. The introduction concludes with a history of interpretation of Judges.

The theological commentary section is divided into four main parts: The exposition (1:1–3:6), the cycle of Judges (3:7–16:31), the end section

(17:1–21:25), and a retrospective evaluation. Beldman avoids attempting to integrate each section of Judges into a larger structural framework such as a chiasm and instead prioritizes the cyclical framework of the narratives in the main body (Israel sins, God judges, Israel requests relief, and God delivers). Beldman argues that the primary point of Judges is that Israel has rejected God as king over them. This is suggested by the repeated refrain in the conclusion of Judges: "There was no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Beldman argues that this phrase does not refer to a human monarch or even to Israel's monarchy as a whole, but instead references God's reign over his people. Beldman's primary argument for this point is that Judges consistently portrays Israel's problem as a heart problem (the people have rejected God) rather than a leadership problem. A second key element of Beldman's analysis is what he refers to as a "strategy of circularity." Beldman notes that although Judges is not arranged chronologically, the book has been organized in such a way that the reader gets the sense that things are getting progressively worse as the book proceeds. With the placement of two chronological markers (references to Moses' and Aaron's grandsons) within the final two stories, however, the author turns this sense on its head and the reader realizes that the situation in Israel has been dire since the death of Joshua.

Within the theological reflection portion of this commentary, Beldman discusses the role of Judges within both biblical and systematic theology. Beldman concludes by discussing the relevance of Judges for today.

Beldman's attentiveness to the literary style of Judges produces numerous insights into the meaning of the book. By taking the words of the text seriously, Beldman shows how those words have been artfully employed to communicate the message of the text. Beldman is also successful at selecting key exegetical issues to discuss within his work. Writing a theological commentary, Beldman is unable to address every exegetical issue within Judges, but Beldman's commentary will not leave the reader feeling as though the author ignored exegesis to focus on theology. Concerning theology, Beldman meets the goal of this series, which is to emphasize the theological nature and implications of the biblical text. Furthermore, Beldman's commentary will provide students and pastors with an excellent model for moving from exegesis to theology. It is easy to see how Beldman employed the results of his exegesis to inform his theological reflections.

Given that Beldman recognizes that the "no king in Israel statement" is a key phrase for discerning the main point of the book, it is disappointing that Beldman does not provide a more extensive argument for his interpretation. Beldman's argument for taking God as the referent of "king" in this statement is that Judges identifies Israel's problem as moral and spirit (2:1–15) rather than a lack of good leadership. Beldman's claim seems reasonable, but hardly insurmountable, especially considering that Judges was written during the monarchy when it would have been quite natural to assume that the author is referring to human kingship. Why not discuss the use of "God as king" as a metaphor in the OT or offer any more collaborative evidence in support of this assertion? Perhaps Beldman offers a more extensive argument in his other works, but his argumentation in this commentary appears lacking on this point.

One further critique concerns Beldman's overview of the history of Judges interpretation. History of interpretation has become a popular subject in recent years and with good reason. Paying attention to how biblical literature has been interpreted through the years helps identify the degree to which modern interpreters are limited by their cultural context. Beldman's discussion of the history of Judges interpretation, however, fails to show how the information contained within this section should inform out reading of Judges. This problem is by no means limited to Beldman among those who are interested in the subject, but these discussions often devolve into mere description with little to no explanation of how such studies illuminate the text for the modern reader.

Despite these misgivings, Beldman has written a very helpful commentary. He successfully bridges the fields of biblical studies and theology, which is the goal of this series. Pastors and students will be well-served by his contribution to Judges scholarship.

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The Puritans: A Transatlantic History. By David D. Hall. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019, 520 pp., $35.00 hardcover.

David D. Hall, the emeritus Bartlett Professor of New England Church History at Harvard Divinity School, has devoted substantial effort in his long and

distinguished career to elucidating puritanism. *The Puritans*, Hall's magnum opus, culminates decades of study and traces the origins, progress, triumphs, and defeats of the Puritan movement in England, Scotland, and America. In the process, he advances three arguments worth particular attention. First, Hall shows how the Puritans borrowed heavily from the broader reformed tradition. Second, he adumbrates the tensions which emerged within the Puritan movement. Third, Hall continues the project begun by other scholars to proffer a more sympathetic picture of puritanism.

Hall opens his work in chapter one by tracing the historical and theological roots of puritanism. He identifies John Calvin and the continental reformation as major influences. Further, he highlights the role of biblical authority, the regulative principle, and a concern for ecclesiastical reforms. In chapter two, Hall traces the emergence of puritanism from Elizabethan England. He touches on ecclesiastical flashpoints such as the so-called "vestarian controversy," prophesyings, and exclusive psalmody. With an eye to the seventeenth century, Hall recounts nascent Presbyterianism during the later part of the sixteenth century. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the history of Separatism.

In chapter three, Hall touches on the Puritan cause in Scotland while in chapter four he sketches practical divinity. In chapter five Hall discusses Puritan moral reforms. While avoiding any type of hagiography, he sticks to one of the major themes of the book and contributes a more nuanced vignette of Puritan morality. Chapter six delves into the Puritan movement in the early seventeenth century, once again focusing primarily on England. Hall recounts the emergence of nascent congregationalist and baptistic practices (199-204). Chapter seven provides sustained attention to New England. Chapter eight traces the climactic beginning of the end of puritanism during the 1640s in England and Scotland. Hall situates the emergence of English Baptists in the turmoil of the 1640s. Chapter nine tracks various controversies within the Puritan camp during the middle of the 1600s. In the final chapter, Hall concludes by briefly recounting the Puritan legacy. He reminds readers that by the early 19th century, "no one in Britain or the United States remembered the Puritans" -- at least not accurately (347). Today, thanks in large part to scholars like Hall and churchmen like J.I. Packer, the Puritans experienced a dramatic rebirth. The growth of misunderstandings present in the 1800s have been eclipsed with a more nuanced and powerful historiography (11-12, 350-454).

In evaluating *The Puritans*, Hall successfully argues for a more sympathetic and contextually-aware picture of puritanism. For example, by drawing on primary sources, he shows that women played a larger role in the Puritan family than many have granted (127). Later, Hall highlights how "Puritan-style moral reform is dogged by stereotypes and half-truths" (158).

One of the most insightful contributions of the book is the way Hall astutely emphasizes the ecclesiastical nature of puritanism. While some observers see puritanism as a type of societal tyranny and others view the movement as an individualistic model of piety, Hall captures the ecclesiastically reforming core of puritanism. He shows how so much of the Puritan project focused on matters of preaching, polity, and worship.

Three additional strengths of the book deserve mention. First, while some works on the Puritans refer generally to their writings, Hall provides significant yet judicious quotations from primary sources. This engenders the feeling of bringing the reader directly into contact with the Puritans, their adversaries, and the background movements which shaped both sides. Second, by examining everything from the role of women to moral reforms, Hall continues the trend in recent scholarship away from Hawthorne-esque stereotypes. Third, for any serious student of the Puritans, the endnotes alone are worth the price of the book. In over 130 pages, Hall proffers a magisterial guide to the last thirty years of research (360-493). The endnotes contain more than simple references. Instead, they seamlessly interleave pithy analysis.

One word of disclosure concerning the book is also worth mentioning. The subtitle, *A Transatlantic History*, implies that the book will focus at reasonable length on early American puritanism. However, the work centers primarily on England and Scotland. Only toward the end of the book does America come into view.

Despite being a lengthy book with relatively small print from an academic publisher, *The Puritans* is accessible beyond the university. While specialists will clearly find much to glean from this work, theologians and educated laymen can benefit too. Unlike some other academic works on puritanism, Hall's account is rich in both history *and theology*. Readers with divergent backgrounds can find much to interest them. Although *The Puritans* is not for a neophyte, an educated layman with a working knowledge of the English Reformation could meaningfully enjoy the book. Moreover, pastors with some basic historical knowledge can find a fresh vision of preaching and catechesis.

Over the past half-century, Puritan studies underwent an explosion in growth and a tectonic realignment in perspective. David Hall's magnum opus, *The Puritans*, represents a magisterial achievement and the fitting apogee for a career spent reaccessing puritanism.

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Live Not By Lies: A Manual for Christian Dissidents. By Rod Dreher. New York: Sentinel, 2020, 256 pp., $27.00 hardcover.

In order to understand Rod Dreher's *Live Not By Lies,* it may be helpful to reflect on what Alexis De Tocqueville warned Americans of in 1835. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville warned that Americans, in pursuit of happiness and comfort, will gradually hand over power to a tyrannical Government if they relax their fight for freedom. Tocqueville anticipates the government encroaching on personal freedoms "till each nation is reduced to be nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd." Like Tocqueville, Dreher fears the sacrifice of freedom in the name of comfort and Social Justice has created the conditions for a totalitarian state to emerge in America (93). Dreher is a columnist and writer who has sought to warn the West, specifically Christians, of the pre-totalitarian trends society has gleefully welcomed. In 2017, Dreher's book *The Benedict Option* laid out a "post Obergefell" strategy for Christians to retain a robust faith in an increasingly secular society. *Live Not By Lies* picks up where *The Benedict Option* leaves off and argues Western Civilization has welcomed conditions similar to the conditions that led up to the Red Terror. With the groundwork laid for totalitarianism, Dreher warns Christians that the approaching conflict of ideas is a fight, not only against wicked ideology, but a fight on behalf of truth in a world of lies (151). Christians must be prepared to see, judge and act if they are to weather the gathering storm.

Dreher employs Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's essay *Live Not by Lies* as his rallying cry for Christians. The argument is divided into two sections. Section one is Dreher's identification of the of pre-totalitarianism rising in the United States. Section two is a guide for Christians to live as flourishing dissenters

in a world seeking to irradicate their values. Dreher seeks to convince American Christians of the looming threat of totalitarianism by viewing society through the eyes of dissenters who survived persecution under Soviet rule. As former gulag prisoners and religious outcasts witness American trends regarding the suppression of ideas, and invasion of privacy, Dreher's anti-communist interviewees urge Americans to reconsider the power being allotted to the elites. Through a series of comparisons with the Soviet Union, Dreher concludes that widespread loneliness, pseudo religious ideas of Social Justice, and Big Business's surveillance capitalism is the Brave New World of the twenty-first century and eerily similar to what Soviet dissenters experienced under communism. This Brave New World combines political authoritarianism with an ideology that seeks to control all aspects of life. The new form of soft totalitarianism, is especially persuasive to twenty-first century Americans because it is therapeutic and justifies hatred of dissenters "under the guise of helping and healing." (7).

After arguing there is a threat of totalitarianism facing America, section two is Dreher's manual for Christians to live in the Christian truth while surrounded by the totalitarian lies. The testimonies of Soviet era Christian leaders are meant to equip Christians to retain and transmit the hope of the Gospel through persecution (127). As Soviet era Christians clung to objective truth, cultural memory, family and religion, so should American Christians if they are to avoid being swept away by godless ideology. Dreher's primary emphasis is the need for discipleship under totalitarianism. It is necessary for Christians to acknowledge Jesus is not satisfied with admirers, but he desires disciples. Disciples recognize the cost of their obedience and are willing to suffer for the truth without bitterness. Admirers profess belief, until their belief puts them in danger. To Dreher and the Soviet dissenters, loss of the Christian identity is worse than the loss of freedom (162). The time of testing has come, according to Dreher, and Christians must follow the model of refugee priest Father Kolakovic. Christians must *see* the surrounding reality, *judge* the meaning of those realities in light of truth, and *act* to resist evil (5).

Dreher's primary strength is his underlying cumulative case that Christianity is the only worldview with the tools to combat despotism. The gaps filled by secular ideology are gaps created by society's departure from Christianity. Christianity offers objective truth, meaning and community which

is the void Marxism and secular theories of Social Justice and Progress seek to fill (24). Dreher also convincingly charts the relationship between radical left-wing ideology and capitalism's unchallenged effectiveness. Aiming for convenience, American's have surrendered all privacy by trusting Big Business with their personal information; all the while knowing it will be sold to marketers. Further, cooperate elites are rapidly aligning their brands to propagate the agenda of the radical left, ostracizing those employees and customers who may step out of line with public opinion (71).

Dreher is not shy about his convictions. The United States, and Western civilization at large, are preparing themselves to be consumed by totalitarianism. However, the early voices who warn against tyranny are almost never appreciated by their contemporaries. Is Dreher offering a prophetic warning? Or is his fear of despotism exaggerated? How one answers these fundamental questions will depend on whether or not one is convinced by Dreher's discussion of soft totalitarianism versus hard totalitarianism. The Soviet Union successfully imposed its will through hard totalitarianism. Meaning, they used guns and prisons to kill and torture dissenters in order to gain power. On the other hand, soft totalitarianism is not as visible, but is still as threatening as hard totalitarianism according to Dreher. Instead of being forced out of employment by the barrel of a gun, dissenters under soft totalitarianism are cancelled by a mob on social media in the name of Social Justice. Instead of retaining power with the strength of a militarized secret police force, soft totalitarianism forces its way through the engines of culture in Universities, media and cooperate institutions to win converts and subdue enemies under a banner of tolerance.

Whether or not one agrees with Dreher's pessimistic outlook on the threats of soft totalitarianism, his stories and advice for Christians is practical and necessary. Christians always have much to learn from the stories of our predecessors. With society increasingly extinguishing nominal Christianity through social pressure, Christians and Christian teachers can benefit from the wisdom expounded by those believers who retained their faith, hope and love in Jesus Christ amidst the evil threat of totalitarianism.

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