

Some Missteps in Narrating the Bible's History

JOHN D. MEADE AND PETER J. GURRY

John D. Meade is Associate Professor of Old Testament and Director of the Text & Canon Institute at Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, Arizona. He earned his PhD at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. He is the author of *A Critical Edition of the Hexaplaric Fragments of Job 22-42* (Peeters, 2020), and the co-author of *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford, 2017). Dr. Meade has presented papers at the Evangelical Theological Society, the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, and the Society of Biblical Literature, and the International Patristics Conference in Oxford. He is currently writing a book with Peter Gurry on how we got the Bible with Crossway. Dr. Meade and his wife are members of Trinity Bible Church in Phoenix.

Peter J. Gurry is Assistant Professor of New Testament and Codirector of the Text & Canon Institute at Phoenix Seminary, Phoenix, Arizona. He earned his PhD from the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, England. He is the co-editor of *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (IVP Academic, 2019) and co-author of *A New Approach to Textual Criticism* (SBL Press, 2017). He is also the author of *A Critical Examination of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Brill, 2017). Dr. Gurry has presented his work at the Evangelical Theological Society, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the British New Testament Conference. He is currently writing a book with John Meade on how we got the Bible with Crossway. Dr. Gurry and his wife are members at Whitton Avenue Bible Church in Phoenix.

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 17–18¹²) 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.

-
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” 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 Matthäusevangelium: 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. Hag. 13a “as it is written in the book of Ben Sira” (לְשׁוֹן כְּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר בֶּן סִירָא); Yebam. 63b “it is written in the book of Ben Sira” (כְּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר בֶּן סִירָא), 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=PLNsBGwVPAR6ciaiuUNVxGLt-RiNyTCn>.