

Some Ideas about the Canon of the Bible

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1 The Canon of the Old Testament

1.1 Important Witnesses

1.1.1 The New Testament

Mt 5:17-19; 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21; Lk 24:27.44; John 5:39; 10:35.

1.1.2 Prologue of Jesus ben Sira

according to NETS:¹

(1) Seeing that many and great things have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them, for which reason it is necessary to commend Israel for education

1. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., A New English Translation of the Septuagint, [accessed September 3, 2012], 2009, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/edition/>

and wisdom, and whereas it is necessary that not only those who read them gain understanding, (5) but also that those who love learning be capable of service to outsiders, both when they speak and when they write, Iesus, my grandfather, since he had given himself increasingly both to the reading of the Law and the Prophets (10) and the other ancestral books and since he had acquired considerable proficiency in them, he too was led to compose something pertaining to education and wisdom in order that lovers of learning, when they come under their sway as well, might gain much more in living by the law. (15) You are invited, therefore, to a reading with goodwill and attention, and to exercise forbearance in cases where we may be thought (20) to be insipid with regard to some expressions that have been the object of great care in rendering; for what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have the same force when it is in fact rendered in another language. And not only in this case, but also in the case of the Law itself and the Prophets (25) and the rest of the books the difference is not small when these are expressed in their own language.

1.1.3 2 Maccabees 2:13-15

according to NETS:²

13 The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Neemias, and also that he

2. Pietersma and Wright, A New English Translation of the Septuagint

founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings. 14 In the same way Ioudas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war that had come upon us, and they are in our possession. 15 So if you have need of them, send people to get them for you.

1.1.4 Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 25

Beckwith mentions Philo talking about what everyone of the "Therapeutes" would take to his place of devotion, not the common things of life but

(the) Laws, and (the) Oracles given by inspiration through (the) Prophetes, and (the) Psalms, and the other books whereby knowledge and piety are increased and completed (νόμους και λόγια θεοσπισθέντα δια προφητῶν και ὕμνους και τὰ ἄλλα οἷς ἐπιστήμη και εὐσέβεια συναύξονται και τελειοῦνται)³

1.1.5 Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:7-8

... and this is justly, or rather necessarily done, because every one is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that

3. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 117.

have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration; and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also. 8. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only twenty-two books, [8] which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...⁴

4. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Volume IV: Antiquities of the Jews XVIII-XX / Flavius Josephus Against Apion / Concerning Hades / Appendix / Index*, Whiston, William <trans> (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988), p. 158.

1.1.6 4 Esra 14:37-46

So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we proceeded to the field, and remained there. And on the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink." Then I opened my mouth, and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory; and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed. And the Most High gave understanding to the five men, and by turns they wrote what was dictated, in characters which they did not know. They sat forty days, and wrote during the daytime, and ate their bread at night. As for me, I spoke in the daytime and was not silent at night. So during the forty days ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, "Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge." And I did so.

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5. James H. Charlesworth, *Apocalyptic literature and testaments*, vol. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983), 995, p. 554f.

1.1.7 Talmud, Baba Bathra 14b-15a

Our Rabbis taught: The order of the Prophets is, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets... The order of the Hagiographa is Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job, Prophets, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra and Chronicles... Who wrote the Scriptures? — Moses wrote his own book and the portion of Balaam and Job. Joshua wrote the book which bears his name and [the last] eight verses of the Pentateuch. Samuel wrote the book which bears his name and the Book of Judges and Ruth. David wrote the Book of Psalms, including in it the work of the elders, namely, Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Yeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. Jeremiah wrote the book which bears his name, the Book of Kings, and Lamentations. Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The Men of the Great Assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther. Ezra wrote the book that bears his name and the genealogies of the Book of Chronicles up to his own time... Who then finished it [the Book of Chronicles]? - Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.⁶

6. Quoted according Isidore <ed> Epstein, Baba Bathra translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices, [accessed September 19, 2012], http://www.come-and-hear.com/bababathra/bababathra_0.html.

1.1.8 Vulgate Prologue of Jerome to the book of Kings

The Hebrews have 22 letters... Again, they have five double letters: Caph, Mem, Nun, Pe, Tsade. For at the beginning and in the middle of words these are written one way, and at the end of words another way. Whence it comes about that five of the books are by most people reckoned as double: Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Jeremiah with Ki-noth, that is, his Lamentations. As, then, there are 22 letters of the alphabeth ... so the count of the books is 22. Their first book ... we name Genesis. The second ... is named Exodus. The third ... Leviticus. The fourth ... we call Numbers. The fifth ... is entitled Deuteronomy. These are the five books of Moses, to which properly they give the name Torah, that is, the Law. They make a second category of the Prophets, and begin it with Jesus the son of Nave... Then they add ... the Book of Judges; and in the same book they include Ruth, because the events narrated in it occurred in the days of the Judges... Samuel follows third, which we call the first and second of Kings. Forth comes Kings, which is contained in our third and fourth of Kings ... The fifth is ... Isaiah. The sixth ... Jeremiah. The seventh ... Ezekiel. The eighth, the Book of the Twelve Prophets... The third category contains the Hagiographa. And the first book takes its rise from ... Job. The second from ... David, whom they comprise in a single book of Psalms, divided into five parts. The third is ... Salomon, who has three

books: Proverbs... The fourth is Ecclesiastes... The fifth is the Song of Songs ... The sixth is ... Daniel. The seventh ... Words of Days, which we can more expressively call a Chronicle of the whole divine history: among us the book is entitled the first and second of Paraleipomena. The eighth ... Esdras, which among the Greek and Latin is itself likewise divided into two books. The ninth ... Esther. And thus altogether there come to be 22 books of the old Law, that is, five of Moses, eight of the Prophets, and nine of the Hagiographa. Although some set down ... Ruth and Kinoth among the Hagiographa, and think that these books ought to be counted (separately) in their computation, and that there are thus 24 books of the old Law; which the Apocalypse of John represents as adorning the Lamb in the number of the 24 elders... This prologue can fitly serve as a Helmed (i.e. equipped with a helmet, against assailants) Introduction to all the biblical books which we have translated from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may know that whatever is not included in these is to be placed among the apocrypha...⁷

7. Quoted according Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, p. 119f. This prologue was written about 391-94 A.D.). The semitic names of the biblical books in transcription were left out.

1.2 Some thoughts about the OT Canon

1.2.1 The canonization

of the message of the prophets starts already in the Old Testament (Dt 4:2; 12:32; 18:15-22) and continues throughout the history of revelation (Dan 9:2; Zec 1:1-6).

1.2.2 The starting point

for Christians is what Jesus Christ and the New Testament say about the Old Testament canon.

The New Testament presupposes a collection of holy and inspired writings of the Old Testament (Mt 5:17-19; 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:21; Lk 24:27.44).

The Holy Scriptures of Jesus and the Holy Scriptures of the Jews were identical (John 5:39; 10:35; compare Rom 3:2).⁸

The tripartite canon of the first century Jews with "law, prophets and writings" is also known to the New Testament (Lk 24:44).⁹

Mt 23:34 and Lk 11:51 probably imply that the "Scripture" of Jesus and the "Scripture" of his listeners started with Genesis and ended with Chronicles (so Beckwith and Maier).

8. G. <ed> Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*, TVG Monographien und Studienbücher (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1990), vi + 199 pp, p. 9.

9. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, p. 105-109.

1.2.3 Some Jewish statements

from the intertestamental period, the time of Jesus and the first centuries make it seem very probable that the canon of the Old Testament was already completed before the Christian era.

Since Jesus Ben Sira we find a tripartite canon with Torah, Prophets and Writings.¹⁰

Since Jesus Ben Sira no new book has been added to the canon according to the testimony of the sources.¹¹

There was no "Palestinian canon" which was different from a supposed "Alexandrian canon".

The so-called "Synod of Jamnia" which has been seen as the closure of the Old Testament canon since Heinrich Graetz (1871) has never happened in the way this theory presupposes.¹²

The statements in the Talmud about Ezekiel, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Esther whether these books "defile the hands" or "must be hidden" or not, do not presuppose

10. Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*, p. 13.

11. So *ibid.*, p. 13; and Beckwith, compare B. S. Childs in Ingo u.a. <Hrsg. > Baldermann, *Zum Problem des biblischen Kanons*, *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), p. 17f.

12. So J. P. Lewis, "What do we mean by Jabneh?" *The Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (1964): 125–132; S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, 1976); Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*; Maier, *Der Kanon der Bibel*.

that those books have been canonized in Jamnia. Because some of those statements are from after the first century.

The decision of the council of Trent (1545-1563) to include Tobit, Judith, 1st and 2nd Maccabees, Jesus ben Sira and certain additions to Daniel within the canon of the Old Testament is understandable when we look at the way certain church fathers have used those books, but this decision does not agree with the Jewish Hebrew canon.

2 The Canon of the New Testament

2.1 Important Witnesses

2.1.1 The Muratorian canon

. . . at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed [them in his narrative]. (2) The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. (3) Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, (4-5) when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, (6) composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not (7) seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, (8) so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. (9) The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. (10) To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], (11) he said, 'Fast with me from today to three days, and what (12) will be revealed to each one (13) let us tell it to one another.' In the same

night it was revealed (14) to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, (15-16) that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it. And so, though various (17) elements [3a] may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, (18) nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith (19) of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things (20) have been declared in all [the Gospels]: concerning the (21) nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, (22) concerning life with his disciples, (23) and concerning his twofold coming; (24) the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, (25) the second glorious in royal power, (26) which is still in the future. What (27) marvel is it then, if John so consistently (28) mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, (29) saying about himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes (30) and heard with our ears and our hands (31) have handled, these things we have written to you? (32) For in this way he professes [himself] to be not only an eye-witness and hearer, (33) but also a writer of all the marvelous deeds of the Lord, in their order. (34) Moreover, the acts of all the apostles (35) were written in one book. For 'most excellent Theophilus' Luke compiled (36) the individual events that took place in his presence — (37) as he plainly shows by omitting the martyrdom of Peter (38) as well as the departure of Paul from the city [of Rome] (39) when he journeyed to Spain. As for the Epistles of (40-1) Paul, they themselves make clear

to those desiring to understand, which ones [they are], from what place, or for what reason they were sent. (42) First of all, to the Corinthians, prohibiting their heretical schisms; (43) next, to the Galatians, against circumcision; (44-6) then to the Romans he wrote at length, explaining the order (or, plan) of the Scriptures, and also that Christ is their principle (or, main theme). It is necessary (47) for us to discuss these one by one, since the blessed (48) apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor (49-50) John, writes by name to only seven churches in the following sequence: To the Corinthians (51) first, to the Ephesians second, to the Philippians third, (52) to the Colossians fourth, to the Galatians fifth, (53) to the Thessalonians sixth, to the Romans (54-5) seventh. It is true that he writes once more to the Corinthians and to the Thessalonians for the sake of admonition, (56-7) yet it is clearly recognizable that there is one Church spread throughout the whole extent of the earth. For John also in the (58) Apocalypse, though he writes to seven churches, (59-60) nevertheless speaks to all. [Paul also wrote] out of affection and love one to Philemon, one to Titus, and two to Timothy; and these are held sacred (62-3) in the esteem of the Church catholic for the regulation of ecclesiastical discipline. There is current also [an epistle] to (64) the Laodiceans, [6b] [and] another to the Alexandrians, [both] forged in Paul's (65) name to [further] the heresy of Marcion, and several others (66) which cannot be received into the catholic

Church (67)— for it is not fitting that gall be mixed with honey. (68) Moreover, the epistle of Jude and two of the above-mentioned (or, bearing the name of) John are counted (or, used) in the catholic [Church]; and [the book of] Wisdom, (70) written by the friends of Solomon in his honour. (71) We receive only the apocalypses of John and Peter, (72) though some of us are not willing that the latter be read in church. (73) But Hermas wrote the Shepherd (74) very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, (75) while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair (76) of the church of the city of Rome. (77) And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but (78) it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among (79) the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among (80) the Apostles, for it is after [their] time. (81) But we accept nothing whatever of Arsinous or Valentinus or Miltiades, (82) who also composed (83) a new book of psalms for Marcion, (84-5) together with Basilides, the Asian founder of the Cataphrygians . . .¹³

13. The text is taken from The Muratorian Fragment, [accessed September 22, 2012], <http://www.bible-researcher.com/muratorian.html> where it is given according to Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 305-307. On the website the background of the fragment is explained in the following way: "The Muratorian Fragment is the oldest known list of New Testament books. It was discovered by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, and published by him in 1740. It is called a fragment because the beginning of it is missing. Although the manuscript in which it appears was copied during the seventh century, the list itself is dated to about 170 because its author refers to the episcopate of Pius I of Rome (died 157) as recent." This is a Latin translation

2.1.2 Origen

Eusebius of Caesarea¹⁴ writes about Origen:¹⁵

3. In his first book on Matthew's Gospel, maintaining the Canon of the Church, he testifies that he knows only four Gospels, writing as follows: 4. "Among the four Gospels, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism, and published in the Hebrew language. 5. The second is by Mark, who composed it according to the instructions of Peter, 1979 who in his Catholic epistle acknowledges him as a son, saying, 'The church that is at Babylon elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son.' 6. And the third by Luke, the Gospel commended by Paul,

of a Greek original and often difficult to understand.

14. Philip Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilius: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1890), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.html>, p. 434-435 (Eusebius, Church History VI, 25,3-14).

15. Origen was born around 185-186 A.D. in Alexandria, Egypt. First he was a student and then since 203 teacher at the Catechetical School there. 231 he was excommunicated by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria. He then founded a Christian school in Caesarea in Israel. He was a very prolific writer. He made a difference between faith (pistis) on the one hand and knowledge or deeper insight (gnōsis) on the other hand. Deeper insight does not deny faith, but is far superior. Origen probably died 254 A.D. as a result of having been tortured in the Decian persecution. See K. Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, edition no. 16 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1981), §17k.

and composed for Gentile converts. Last of all that by John.” 7. In the fifth book of his Expositions of John’s Gospel, he speaks thus concerning the epistles of the apostles: “But he who was ‘made sufficient to be a minister of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit,’ that is, Paul, who ‘fully preached the Gospel from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum,’ did not write to all the churches which he had instructed and to those to which he wrote he sent but few lines. 8. And Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, ‘against which the gates of hell shall not prevail,’ has left one acknowledged epistle; perhaps also a second, but this is doubtful. 9. Why need we speak of him who reclined upon the bosom of Jesus, 1989 John, who has left us one Gospel, though he confessed that he might write so many that the world could not contain them? And he wrote also the Apocalypse, but was commanded to keep silence and not to write the words of the seven thunders. 10. He has left also an epistle of very few lines; perhaps also a second and third; but not all consider them genuine, and together they do not contain hundred lines.” 11. In addition he makes the following statements in regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews in his Homilies upon it: “That the verbal style of the epistle entitled ‘To the Hebrews,’ is not rude like the language of the apostle, who acknowledged himself ‘rude in speech’ that is, in expression; but that its diction is purer Greek, any one who has the power to discern differences of phraseology will acknowledge. 12. Moreover,

that the thoughts of the epistle are admirable, and not inferior to the acknowledged apostolic writings, any one who carefully examines the apostolic text will admit.’ 13. Farther on he adds: “If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul’s. 14. But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts, wrote it.” But let this suffice on these matters.

2.1.3 Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius¹⁶ writes about the New Testament canon in his Church History:

1. Since we are dealing with this subject it is proper to sum up the writings of the New Testament which have been already mentioned. First

16. Eusebius was born about 260-265 and died about 339-340. He became bishop of Caesarea in Israel. His Church History (*Historia ekklesiastike*, often quoted as "h.e.") is of enormous historical value because many quotes from now lost old christian books can be found in it. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §1b + 17m.

then must be put the holy quaternion of the Gospels; following them the Acts of the Apostles. 2. After this must be reckoned the epistles of Paul; next in order the extant former epistle of John, and likewise the epistle of Peter, must be maintained. After them is to be placed, if it really seem proper, the Apocalypse of John, concerning which we shall give the different opinions at the proper time. These then belong among the accepted writings. 3. Among the disputed writings, 788 which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of James and that of Jude, also the second epistle of Peter, and those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person of the same name. 4. Among the rejected writings must be reckoned also the Acts of Paul, and the so-called Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to these the extant epistle of Barnabas, and the so-called Teachings of the Apostles; and besides, as I said, the Apocalypse of John, if it seem proper, which some, as I said, reject, but which others class with the accepted books. 5. And among these some have placed also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have accepted Christ are especially delighted. And all these may be reckoned among the disputed books. 6. But we have nevertheless felt compelled to give a catalogue of these also, distinguishing those works which according to ecclesiastical tradition are true and genuine and commonly accepted, from those others which, although not canonical but dis-

puted, are yet at the same time known to most ecclesiastical writers—we have felt compelled to give this catalogue in order that we might be able to know both these works and those that are cited by the heretics under the name of the apostles, including, for instance, such books as the Gospels of Peter, of Thomas, of Matthias, or of any others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. 7. And further, the character of the style is at variance with apostolic usage, and both the thoughts and the purpose of the things that are related in them are so completely out of accord with true orthodoxy that they clearly show themselves to be the fictions of heretics. Wherefore they are not to be placed even among the rejected writings, but are all of them to be cast aside as absurd and impious.¹⁷

2.2 Theodor Zahn's overview of the history of the canon of the New Testament

This overview is based on Zahn's summary¹⁸ of his own extensive work of eight volumes "Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons und der altkirchlichen Litteratur" (1881–1908).

17. Schaff, NPNF2-01. Eusebius Pamphilius: Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine, p. 220-225 (Eusebius, Church History III,25:1-7).

18. Theodor Zahn, Grundriß der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904)

2.2.1 §1 Main concepts (p. 1-14):

The word canon (Greek: kanōn)¹⁹ is related to cane (Greek "kanē")²⁰ as in "cane of reed". From kanē as something straight developed the meaning "ruler" or "straightedge" for kanōn (p.2). The Greek word kanōn was then also used for "list, table" (p. 6). The regular use of kanōn for the Bible is evident from the middle of the 4th century A.D. (p. 7) according to Zahn in the sense of "list" (catalog; p. 9).²¹ The Latin speaking church uses then the name "canon" (kanōn) for the Bible in the original sense of "(authoritative) rule of faith" (regula fidei). The terms "old testament"²² and "new testament"²³ implied the idea of a completed collection of documents of revelation. Irenaeus of Lyon does not use "testament"²⁴ for the Bible yet, but this usage of the word is found in Clement of Alexandria,²⁵ Tertullian (testamentum) and Origen. Books belonging to this completed collection were defined as "being in the testament"²⁶ (compare 2 Cor 3:14). A condition for being part of this collection of revelation documents was the ecclesiastical use which means the book had to be read during the services on a regular basis (p. 12). Compare in this context the original usage of the

19. Greek: κανών

20. Greek κήνη, Hebrew qaneh קִנֵּה ; Syriac qanya' ܩܢܝܐ ; Assyrian-Babylonian kanû.

21. Greek: katalōgōs κατάλογος

22. παλαιά διαθήκη

23. καινή διαθήκη

24. διαθήκη

25. Clement of Alexandria served around 200 A.D. at the Catechetical School of Alexandria. Before this he travelled in Greece and the Near East. He started as a student of Pantaenus and then became his successor as teacher at the school in Alexandria which he left during the persecution in 202-203 A.D. See Heussi, *Kompendium der Kirchengeschichte*, §17g + h.

26. Greek: endiathēkōs ἐνδιάθηκος

word "apocryphal"²⁷ meaning excluded from the public reading in the service without implying any negative judgment of the book. Three supplementary remarks about this condition are necessary: 1. The books permitted to be read during the services were not the same all throughout Christianity. 2. The judgment varied with regard to more than one book up to later times or temporarily in different ecclesiastical provinces. 3. The definition of a regular reading in church services is not absolutely clear cut. But it is correct in spite of these supplementary remarks to speak of an identity of the books which were canonical with the books which were read regularly in the church services.

2.2.2 §2 The New Testament around 170-220 A.D. (p. 14-27):

Summary on p. 26-27: Clearly belonging to the collection were the four gospels, 13 letters of Paul, Acts, Revelation, 1 Peter, 1 John (to which 2 and 3 John were regularly attached), probably Jude and the Shepherd of Hermas (not in the time from 200-210 A.D). But the judgment of the following books was varying: Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, Apocalypse of Peter, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache), Epistle of Barnabas, 1 and 2 Clement, Acts of Paul and Shepherd of Hermas. The Polemics against Marcion, the Gnostics and the Alogi imply that this collection was not just put together in the times of the discussions but that it had already been present as a result of earlier developments.

27. Greek: ἀπόκρυφος ἀπόκρυφος

2.2.3 §3 The New Testament around 140-170 A.D. (p. 27-35):

1. The Bible of Marcion (p. 28-29). 2. The Bible of the Valentinians (p. 30-32). 3. The Scriptures of the Apostles in Justin Martyr. According to Zahn as is evident from the books used in Justin's writings the Martyr knew the four gospels, Revelation, Romans, 1 Cor, Gal, Eph, (Philippians?), Col, 2 Thes, (Titus, 1 Tm?), Hebrews, 1 Pt, (James?), Acts and Didache among others.

2.2.4 §4 Oldest traces and origin of collections of apostolic writings (p. 35-41):

Many questions will never find certain answers. But it may be viewed as certain that both the fourfold gospel and the corpus of the 13 epistles of Paul originated around the years 80-110 A.D. and were introduced into the ecclesiastical usage of the Gentile Christian churches all the way from Antioch to Rom. These two collections were the foundation of the New Testament. It is equally certain that both these collections were from the start supplemented in the ecclesiastical usage and in the understanding of the churches by another collection of Christian writings. This third collection was varying regarding the numbers of the books but was also regarded as profitable to be used for reading in services and for the teaching and edification of the churches (p. 41).

2.2.5 §5 Origin and his school (p. 41-44):

No essential change of the canon of the New Testament happened through Origen or throughout the third century. The new contribution Origen brought was an exhaustive comparison of

the traditional New Testament collections of different churches (p. 41). The homologumena²⁸ were books that were universally acknowledged as holy scriptures. Antilegomena²⁹ were such books which were not acknowledged as holy scriptures by a part of the churches. The Homologumena of the New Testament were according to Origen the four gospels, 13 letters of Paul, 1 Pt, 1 John, Acts, Revelation. The Antilegomena were according to Origen Hebrews, 2 Pt, 2 and 3 John, James, Jude, Epistle of Barnabas, Shepherd of Hermas, Didache and the gospel of the Hebrews. About Hebrews Origen thinks that it is canonical and from Paul. The ideas are from Paul, but Paul let the final writing be done by one of his disciples. Origen quotes 2 Peter as holy scripture. He himself has no doubts about the authenticity of 2 and 3 John, but he mentions the doubts of some people as a reason that they belong to the Antilegomena. Origen quotes James frequently, but he takes into account that this epistle is not universally acknowledged. In Latin translations of Origen's books James is also called "scriptura divina" (divine scripture). Only once Origen mentions that Jude is not universally acknowledged, but he himself quotes Jude as Holy Scripture and praises this epistle very much. Origen gives the Epistle of Barnabas an equal status with the Catholic Epistles³⁰. Origen views the Shepherd of Hermas as an inspired and very useful book. He assumes that the author is the Hermas of Rom 16:14. But he also takes into account that people oppose this book as not canonical. Origen quotes Didache as holy scripture. This book was viewed as canonical in Alexandria, but by

28. ὁμολογούμενα

29. This expression was used later. Greek: ἀντιλεγόμενα

30. The Catholic or General Epistles of the New Testament are James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 and 3 John and Jude

no means everywhere. Origen mentions the gospel of the Hebrews as the gospel of the Jewish Christian churches, but not of the Ebionites.

2.2.6 §7 Lucianus und Eusebius (p. 54-59):

The Homologumena according to Eusebius are the four gospels, Acts, 14 letters of Paul, 1 Peter, 1 John, possibly also Revelation. The Antilegomena which Eusebius wants to be included in the canon are James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John. The Antilegomena which Eusebius sees as forgeries³¹ and wants to be excluded from the canon are the Acts of Paul, Shepherd of Hermas, Apokalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache and possibly Revelation. The New Testament according to Eusebius is with the exception of Revelation the same as our New Testament. We find this New Testament of Eusebius in Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, in the supplement of the Canon 59 of Laodicea, in the Ecclesiastical Canons of the Same Holy Apostles 85³², probably in the Apostolic Constitutions³³ and Amphilocheus of Iconium takes it into account together with the canon of Antioch (p. 57).

2.2.7 §8 Athanasius (p. 59-61):

In the 39th Festal Letter of Athanasius (367 A.D.) he is the first who presents the 27 books of our New Testament as the

31. *νόθα*

32. See Philip Schaff, ANF07. Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1886), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf07.html>, p. 749.

33. See *ibid.*, p. 573.

alone canonical ones (p. 60). The "kanōnizōmēna"³⁴ are the 27 books of our New Testament. The "apōkrypha"³⁵ are totally rejected writings. The "anaginōskōmena"³⁶ which can be read with profit like the Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, Wisdom of Solomon, Jesus ben Sira, Esther, Judith, Tobias.

2.2.8 §9 The further development of the Greek orient until the time of Justinian (p.61-64).

2.2.9 §10 The approximation of the occident (p. 64-75):

Nobody did more for the approximation of the occident to the orient with regard to the Bible than Jerome (p. 65). Athanasius had also a certain influence on the development in the occident. From 340-343 he was in Rome (p. 66). The relationship of Hebrews and some of the Catholic Epistles to the New Testament: Hebrews remained excluded from the Latin New Testament during the first three quarters of the fourth century (p. 67). 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John had even still in the fourth century an insecure relationship to the Latin New Testament (p. 68). The exclusion not only of James, but also of Jude was around 360 in Africa a done deal. No African author after Tertullian and before Augustine quoted one of those letters (p. 68). There are only a few traces of the distribution of 2 Peter, James, Jude, 2 and 3 John before 380 A.D. (p. 69). In 382 A.D. there was the Council of Rome under the authority of the bishop of Rome Damasus. The then 40-year-old presbyter Jerome was very important in the discussions because he became a trusted man and scholarly adviser of Damasus. The

34. κανονιζόμενα

35. ἀπόκρυφα

36. ἀναγινωσκόμενα

decisions were later renewed and extended by Pope Gelasius (492-96) and Pope Hormisdas (514-523; p. 70). Accordingly the New Testament contains the four gospels, 14 letters of Paul (Hebrews last), Revelation, Acts, seven Catholic epistles (1 and 2 Peter, epistle of the apostle James, one letter of the apostle John, 2 letters of the presbyter John, epistle of the apostle Judas Zealot). This canon was basically the canon of Athanasius. "Rome had spoken, and the nations of the Occident had heard" (p. 71). It took more time in Africa. The councils in Hippo Regius (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.) accepted the canon of the 27 books which had been decided on in Rome (382 A.D.) The idea that James and Jude were apostles was dropped. James and Jude were put last in the list of the Catholic epistles. The idea of two Johns was dropped as well. The decision of 397 was renewed in the council of Carthage in 419. Augustine who had already been an authority as a presbyter amongst the bishops at the council of Hippo was promoting the new canon unremittingly (p. 71).

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