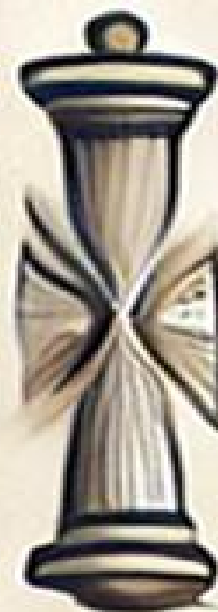
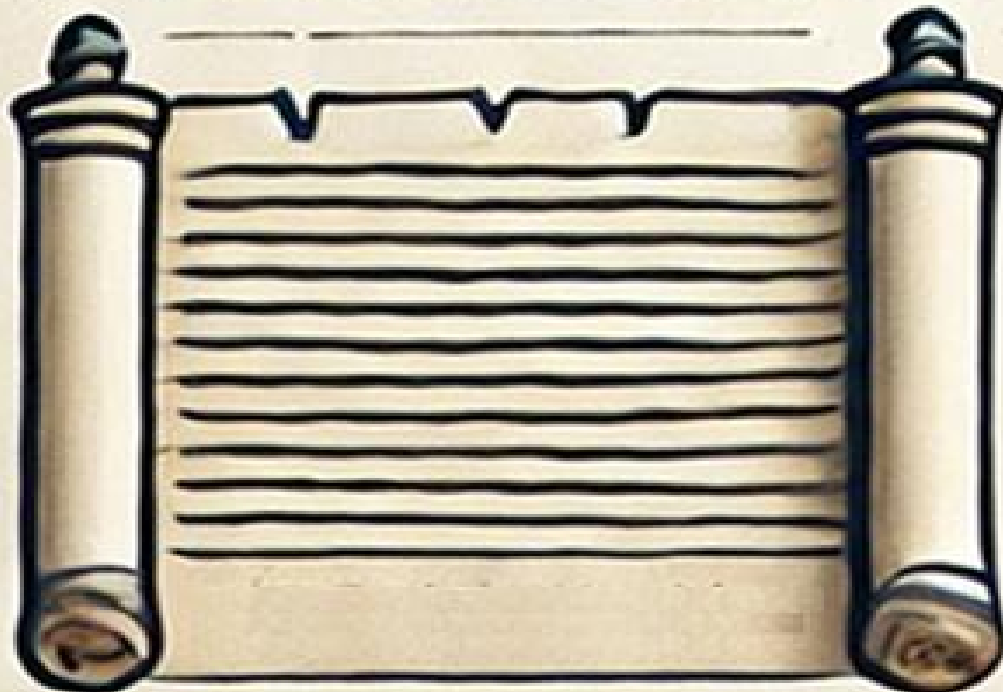


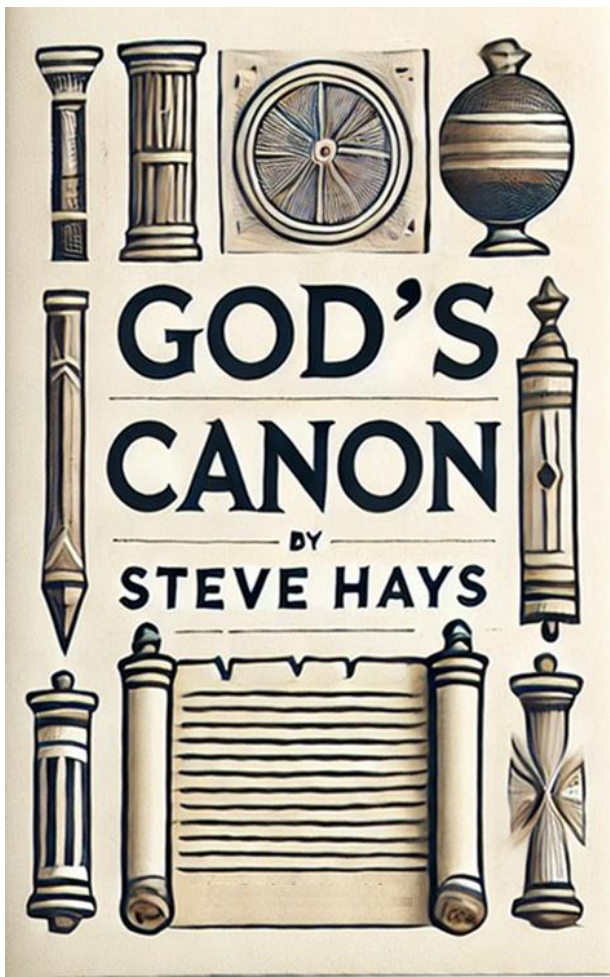
GOD'S

CANON

BY

STEVE HAYS





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Preface

Over the years I've written a number of occasional pieces on the Protestant canon of Scripture. These were frequently written in response to Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox attacks on the Protestant canon of Scripture. Oftentimes I summarize or quote from various scholars to make their scholarship available to readers who may not have ready access to their works.

John Hendryx has kindly offered to collate this material in the form of an ebook.

Chapter 1

Retroengineering the Canon of Scripture

In his classic monograph on *The Character of Physical Law*, Richard Feynman makes the following observation (pp. 45-47):

This is a good illustration of the relation of mathematics to physics...Mathematics, then, is a way of going from one set of statements to another...In fact the total amount that a physicist knows is very little. He has only to remember the rules to get him from one place to another and he is all right, because all the various statements about equal times, the force being in the direction of the radius, and so on, are all interconnected by reasoning.

Now an interesting question comes up. Is there a place to begin to deduce the whole works? Is there some particular pattern or order in nature by which we can understand that one set of statements is more fundamental and one set of statements more consequential?

It is like a bridge with lots of members, and it is over-connected; if pieces have dropped out you can reconnect it another way...What I have called the Babylonian idea is to say, "I happen to know this, and I happen to know that, and maybe I know that; and I work everything out from there. Tomorrow I may forget that this is true, but remember that something else is true, so I can reconstruct it all again. I am never quite sure of where I am supposed to begin or where I am supposed to end. I just remember enough all of the time so that as the memory fades and some of the pieces fall out I can put the thing back together again every day."

This is analogous to the way in which we can retroengineer the canon of Scripture from the intertextuality of Scripture.

Catholic apologists typically treat the Bible as a random collection of books, lacking inner unity. As such, only the Magisterium could canonize the Bible, for unity must be imposed by an extraneous source on this otherwise disparate and arbitrary collection of books.

On a related note, Catholic apologists also say that sola Scriptura undermines the Protestant canon, for Scripture itself doesn't furnish a table of contents.

However, modern studies on the intertextuality of Scripture increasingly document the internal unity of Scripture. And, of course, the unity of Scripture figures in the canonicity of Scripture, as an interconnected set of books.

The self-witness of Scripture to the canon of Scripture

I. Introduction

Reflecting the herd mentality of Roman Catholics, it has become fashionable for Catholic epologists to allege that sola scriptura is self-refuting unless the canon of Scripture is self-referential. However, this allegation overlooks the self-witness of Scripture to the canon of Scripture.

In this post I'll briefly classify and summarize the different kinds of internal evidence we find in Scripture for the canon of Scripture.

I'm not going to present all the documentation, because I've done that elsewhere. This is just a little roadmap of how to approach the issue. When one offers copious documentation, it's possible for a reader to lose his way in the welter of detail. My post is just a guide to the documentation I've already provided for these different lines of evidence.

II. Intratextuality

By this I mean the self-witness of individual books to their own authorship. Certain types of authorship are a sufficient condition of canonicity. If a writer is a prophet (e.g. Moses, David, Daniel, Isaiah)

or apostle, then he's qualified to write a book of the Bible. That principle can also extend to, say, a member of the Petrine or Pauline circle (e.g. Mark, Luke, author of Hebrews).

Likewise, it's not coincidental that two NT books were penned by Jesus' siblings (James, Jude). For these are two "insiders."

Authorial ascriptions can either be explicit or implicit. Conservative commentaries, Bible introductions, reference works, articles, and monographs expound and defend the intratextual evidence of Scripture.

III. Intertextuality

As one scholar defines it:

Intertextuality is the study of links between and among texts. Many written texts, especially biblical ones, were written with full awareness of other texts in mind. Their authors assumed the readers would be thoroughly knowledgeable of those other texts. The New Testament books, for example, assume a comprehensive understanding of the OT. Many OT texts also assume their readers are aware and knowledgeable of other OT texts. (1)

It is in the nature of intertextuality itself to proceed diachronically. Some biblical texts presuppose, on the part of their readers, a rather thorough knowledge of other, previously written texts.(2)

This can take various forms, such as common authorship, quotations, foreshadowing, literary allusions, or a storyline thread (e.g. Gen-Kings; Ezra/Nehemiah–Chronicles).

Of course, we also need to make allowance for how a book is quoted, how it functions in the author's argument, or its preexisting

reputation.

In addition, historical narratives create a chronological framework in which to fit books belonging to other genres (e.g. Wisdom literature, Major/Minor prophets). For example, Ellis uses the Book of Acts as a bridge to other NT writers.

If intratextuality is self-referential, then intertextuality is cross-referential.

Helpful writers on the intertextuality of Scripture include Bruce Waltke, E. E. Ellis, John Sailhamer, Stephen Dempster, and David Noel Freedman.

Due to the prophetic orientation of Scripture, the canon of Scripture is also interconnected by a promise/fulfillment schema. Informative writers on Messianic prophecy include T. D. Alexander, Jim Hamilton, Derek Motyer, Michael Rydelnik, O. P. Robertson, and John Sailhamer.

IV. Paratextuality

As one scholar defines it:

The Bible as a literary work is made up of text and paratext. Paratext may be defined as everything in a text other than the words, that is to say, those elements that are adjoined to the text but are not part of the text itself if the 'text' is limited strictly to the words. The paratext of Scripture embraces features such as the order of the biblical books, the names assigned to the different books, and the differing schemes of textual division within the books.(3)

A Catholic might object on the grounds that this is really extrabiblical evidence inasmuch as it takes for granted a standard edition of the Bible.

However, Freedman has argued that Ezra was the editor of the Hebrew canon. And his argument has been refined by Sailhamer's recent book on the Meaning of the Pentateuch.

Yet Ezra was, himself, a Bible writer. Therefore, his edition of the OT would figure in the self-witness of Scripture.

Likewise, Stanley Porter has argued that Paul was probably responsible for compiling his own letter collection. And, if not Paul, one of his hand-picked deputies, like Luke or Timothy, while C. E. Hill has argued that John may have had a hand in canonizing the four gospels.

Helpful writers on the paratextuality of Scripture include Greg Goswell, John Sailhamer, and David Noel Freedman.

V. Postscript

i) A Catholic epologist might object that appealing to the self-witness of Scripture sidesteps the question of why we should even believe the testimony of Scripture.

However, that objection changes the subject. That ceases to be challenge to the logical coherence of sola Scriptura. Instead, that objection attacks the veracity or credibility of the claim, rather than the coherence of the claim.

And there are various ways of defending the self-witness of Scripture.

ii) A Catholic epologist might also object on the grounds that appealing to the self-witness of Scripture cannot settle the question of the Apocrypha.

However, internal evidence cuts both ways. The internal evidence for a given book (intratextuality) may either be consistent or inconsistent with its ostensible authorship.

I'd add that I have no problem with also using external evidence to corroborate the canon. I'm simply responding to the Catholic objection on its own terms.

Chapter 2

Approaches to the canon of Scripture

I. The argument:

The canon is often regarded as the weak link in the Protestant case. External attestation rates at most a probable conclusion. So the Catholic apologetic apologist will say a Protestant has no right to invoke Scriptural authority since he has no authority for his canon of Scripture. In nature of the case, the Bible can't refer to itself as a completed totality until it's complete, and once it's complete it can't refer back to itself since any such reference would have to be after the fact. So we can only draw the boundaries of the canon from a

vantagepoint outside the canon. That being so, our knowledge of the canon depends on the testimony of the Church. But absent a magisterium, this means that Protestants are leaning on a fallible process to yield a reliable result. Or so goes the argument. By way of reply:

II. External attestation

i) This objection assumes that the only form of attestation is external attestation. Even if that were so, when Trent defines the scope of the canon, it appeals to the testimony of the church fathers. But in that event, the Roman church is reliant on the same basic sources as are the Protestant churches.

ii) If the case for the canon depends on historical evidence, so does the case for Catholicism. How does a Catholic apologist set out to prove the primacy of Rome or apostolic succession without some recourse to historical evidence? Tradition is but another name for history.

iii) Even if the case for the canon were entirely dependent on external attestation, that does not, of itself, introduce an element of uncertainty into the process. Once again, the Church of Rome has a low doctrine of Scripture because she has a low doctrine of providence. But there's nothing haphazard about ordinary providence. In Gen 24, for instance, the reader is expected to discern that God's hidden hand guided Abraham's servant to find the right wife for Isaac.

iv) Access to God's word is not merely a matter of general providence, but special providence, for revelation and redemption are correlative (cf. (e.g. Ps 147:19-20; Jn 4:22; Rom 3:2; 9:4; 10:9-16; Eph 2:12; 4:17-18). A probable providential inference has the

practical force of strict inference. A full house may not be a royal flush, but it trumps three of a kind every time. If you knew that God had stacked the deck in such a way that the opposing player never got better than a straight, while dealing you a full house, you'd bet all your chips on that hand just as if it were a royal flush in spades.

III. Internal attestation.

However, the case for the canon is not only or primarily limited to external attestation. There are also multiple lines of internal evidence. You just need to look at how the Bible is put together.

By way of objection, a modern-day Catholic might counter that this appeal rests on a naïve, precritical view of Scripture. We can no longer invoke the witness of Scripture, because higher criticism has overturned the traditional time, place, and authorship of many Biblical books. To this I'd say two things:

i) Even if this were an argument against a Protestant canon, it is hard to see how it also amounts to an argument for a Catholic canon. It is no alternative to a fallible canon of infallible books to offer an infallible canon of fallible books. So this objection looks like the theological equivalent of a homicide/suicide in which a killer first murders his victim, then shoots himself in the head.

If Scripture is inspired, then its self-referential claims are similarly inspired. But if we cannot credit the Bible when it vouches for the circumstances of its own composition, then we cannot trust it in any other matters of consequence. So this objection either proves too much or nothing at all.

ii) This objection assumes that the findings of higher criticism are compelling. But conservative scholars have written many books and

articles in which they offer a point-by-point rebuttal of such sceptical theories.

My appeal to internal attestation will build on that foundation. The relevant literature, in a vast and varied series articles, monographs, commentaries, and Bible introductions, is in the public domain. I need not reinvent the wheel at this juncture.

Much of the internal attestation takes the form of cross-attestation. The density of allusion is so rich that I can only skim the surface for purposes of illustration.

1. OT Intratestamental attestation

The Pentateuch constitutes a bloc of Scripture that is the cornerstone of what follows. And here are internal continuities as well. The Toledoth -formula (i.e., "these are the generations of..." (Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2]) serves as a structuring device. Joseph's farewell address (esp. 50:24) supplies the anticipatory rationale for the Exodus (cf. 3:6ff.), while Exod 1:1-5 is a résumé of Gen 46:8-27 (cf. 35:22-26). Exod 1:1 opens with "and," connecting it with the preceding narrative. The latter chapters of Exodus had dealt with the material arrangements of the Tabernacle while Lev 1-17 deals with its staffing and activities. Lev 18-27 is preoccupied with laws that anticipate the conditions of the Conquest and settlement. Numbers takes up the narrative thread where Exodus left off. Deuteronomy is a document of covenant renewal. Chaps 1-3 succinctly recapitulate the prior narrative of Israel's wilderness wandering. Chap 18:18ff. makes provision for a prophetic order. Chap 28:15ff. makes provision for Israel's apostasy. Chap 31 hands off the reins of authority to Joshua. Josh 1:1 takes up from where Deut 34 (the obituary of Moses) leaves off. The ending of Joshua is taken up in Judges 1:1; 2:6-9. Ruth is situated in the period

of the Judges (1:1) and sets the stage for the Davidic kingship. 1 Kgs 1-2 continues the transition of power from 2 Sam 9-20. Chronicles reviews the history of Samuel-Kings from a post-Exilic perspective, while its genealogies reach back to the very beginning of canonical history (1Chron 1:1f.). 2 Chron 36:22-23 is taken up in Ezra 1:1-4. Ezra and Nehemiah are synoptic. Esther updates the mortal enmity between the Israelites as the Amalekites— represented by Haman (3:1; cf. 1 Sam 15; Exod 17:16). The Pentateuch is also held together by various unifying devices such as narrative/poetry/epilogue sequencing and narrative typology.

The Law supplies the supporting material for the covenant lawsuit (Isaiah-Malachi). Likewise, the historical books provide background information on the social conditions under which the prophets labored (cf. 2 Kgs 19-20; 2 Chron 22-24; 35:25; 36:12,21-22; Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

It would be rather artificial to speak in terms of the canonization of the Psalter. The psalms of David and other inspired contributions (2 Sam 23: 1-2; 1 Chron 25:1,5) were not private compositions that had to win a wider recognition over time. Their composition was an indigenous and official expression of Israel's devotional life from the get-go. Again, Solomon's inspired wisdom and royal standing would have ensured immediate reception for his writings (1 Kgs 4:29-34). It is anachronistic to retroject rabbinical debates back into the formative period of the canon. There was, likewise, no process of canonization for the law of Moses (Exod 25:16,21; 40:20; Deut 10:2,5; 17:18; 31:9,24-26).

The intertextuality of the OT can be documented in detail, ranging from broad redemptive-historical surveys (e.g. 1 Sam 12:6-12; 2 Kgs 17; Neh 9; Ps 78; 105-106; 135-136) to specific allusions and

applications, e.g. Josh 24:32 (Gen 33:19; 50:25); Judg 11:15-27 (Num 20-21); 1 Kg 2:27 (1 Sam 2:31-33); 1 Kg 16:34 (Josh 6:26); 2 Kg 18:4 (Num 21:4-9); 1 Chron 5:1 (Gen 35:22; 49:4); Ps 2; 89:2off. (2 Sam 7:14); Ps 8 (Gen 1); Ps 83:9-12 (Judg 4-8); Ps 104; 148 (cf. Gen 1); Ps 114 (cf. Exod 14-15; Josh 3:13-17); Ps 132 (2 Sam 6-7); Eccl 3:20; 7:29; 12:7 (Gen 2-3). Isa 54:9 (Gen 9:11); Jer 26:18 (Mic 3:12); Ezk 14:14,20; 28:3,13ff. (Gen 1-3; 6:9ff; Job 1:1; Dan 6); Ezk 37:1-12 (Gen 1-2; Ps 46:4); Hos 12:3-4,12-13 (Gen 25:26; 27:41-29:30; 32:22-23); Micah 6:4; 7:20 (Gen-Exod); Zech 8:9 (Haggai).

We also have cases of nested intertextuality in which C adapts B, which, in turn, adapts A. For example, 2 Chr 6:41-42 is tertiary to Ps 132:6-10, which is secondary to 2 Sam 6:12-29. This is a higher-order form of cross-attestation.

2. Intertestamental attestation

Let us now move to some examples of intertestamental attestation. The case for the OT canon is further simplified by the fact that the OT is practically canonized by the NT. This includes collective designations, viz., "the law and the prophets," "the scriptures," "the Psalms" (=Hagiographa?), "the oracles of God"; citation formulas, viz., "God says"; quoting an author by name (e.g. Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Jonah), sweeping historical references that span the canon—"from Abel to Zechariah" (=Genesis to Chronicles?)—as well as a pervasive subtextual fabric of allusion to the OT.

On the last point, it may be objected that bare allusion does not amount to canonical stature. Taken by itself, that is true enough. But when an allusion supports the express argument or narrative design, it does implicate the normative status of the primary source. The fact, moreover, that an author feels secure in merely alluding to the

primary source generally supposes an unspoken recognition of and deference to the authority of that source on the part of his audience. Indeed, it trades on a traditional preunderstanding of the source in application to the question at hand.

If the NT canonizes the OT, there's a sense in which the OT canonizes the NT OT inasmuch as the OT and NT form a unit: the OT represents promise; the NT, fulfillment. Thus, they are two halves of a whole. Judaism alone is a half-finished bridge.

Space does not permit a survey of all the NT citations and allusions to the OT. I just mention this because it constitutes one major line of evidence. As I said above, independent lines of evidence can converge on the same destination.

3. NT Intra-Testamental attestation

i) Apostolic authorship

If a book is by an apostle then it automatically merits inclusion in the canon. And this follows from the fact that the Apostles were divinely authorized spokesmen of the gospel. This is not the same as saying that apostolicity is a necessary condition of canonicity, but any surviving apostolic writing is necessarily canonical by virtue of its inspiration.

By traditional reckoning, this would cover Matthew and John, the Pauline, Petrine, and Johannine Epistles, and Revelation. And their apostolicity is attested by various lines of internal evidence.

ii) Common Authorship

Insofar as various books of the NT share common authorship, they naturally group into cross-attesting blocs. This would include the

Lucan corpus (Luke-Acts), the Pauline corpus (Romans—Philemon), the Petrine corpus (1-2 Peter), and the Johannine corpus (John; 1-3 John; Revelation). It would be unnatural in the extreme to evaluate the canonicity of each book on a strictly case-by-case basis. Such an atomistic approach cuts across the mutually supportive testimony presented by their shared authorship. In addition, cross-attestation extends to secondary as well as primary authorship (e.g. the Pauline and Petrine speeches in Acts).

iii) Common theology

Insofar as certain doctrinal emphases bridge over different books by different authors, they are mutually supportive. Many examples could be cited. The Fourth Gospel's christological reflections on the presence of God (1:14; 2:19-21; 4:20-24) hooks up with the pilgrim theology of Stephen (Acts 7:44-50), the typology of Hebrews, and a congruence of themes in Revelation (7:15; 21:3,10-11,22-23). Again, the paraenetic materials in James have many points of contact with the Sermon on the Mount. Or again, while all of the Paulines naturally share a core theology, we find a number of specific affinities—both in terms of the choice and treatment of topics—between Romans and Galatians (e.g. Abraham, justification, life in the Spirit, bondage & liberation), while the overlap is even more pronounced in the case of Ephesians and Colossians. Once again, there's a highly antithetical strain running the length of the Johannine corpus with respect to how the author characterizes the nature of the spiritual conflict: God/Satan; truth/falsehood; children of light/darkness, &c. (which is a further evidence of their common authorship). The larger point is that various books of the NT have strings in each other. You can't tug at one without jerking another. You can't pull one thread without unraveling reams of fabric.

iv) Common Associates

The NT authors share a number of contacts and go-betweens. Mark is an associate of both Peter and Paul (Acts 13:5; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24; 1 Pet 5:13). Timothy is an associate of both Paul and the author of Hebrews (Acts 16-20; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:19; Col 1:1; Phil 1:1; 1 Thes 1:1; 3:2,6; 2 Thes 1:1; 1-2 Tim; Heb 13:23). Luke is an acquaintance and/or associate of Paul, Mark, Mnason, Philip, and James (Acts 21:8;16,18; Col 4:10,14; 2 Tim 4:11). Barnabas is an associate of both Paul and the Jerusalemite apostles (Acts 4:36; 9:27;11-15; 1 Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1,9, 13; Col 4:10). Silas/Silvanus is an associate of both Peter and Paul (Acts 15-18; 2 Cor 1:19; 1 Thes 1:1; 2 Thes 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12).

This sets up a network of associates who are in a position to crosscheck each other's work. They are all well-connected in their access to genuine information on the life and teaching of Christ. None of the authors was a rogue writer, making up his theology to suit his own taste or his readership's. An informal process of peer review was in place.

v) Common sources

It is generally agreed that the Synoptics presuppose some form of literary interdependence. And literary interdependence is a form of cross-attestation.

2 Pet-Jude are also synoptic, although the direction of dependence is a matter of debate.

vi) Common kinship

Leadership in the NT church operated along the lines of an extended family. This principle has OT precedent as well, for in some cases, canonical literature would have been preserved in family archives. For example, the "sons of Asaph" constituted a liturgical dynasty that stretches from the Davidic monarchy to the Restoration (1 Chron 25; 2 Chron 20:14; 35:15; Ezra 3:10; Neh 11:17,22; 12:25). It is fair to say that they exercised custody over the Psalms of Asaph (50,73-83). This sort of familial trusteeship is ignored in discussions of the canon.

Such blood-ties are hardly surprising in an organization that began with a small core group (cf. Acts 1:15), and was originally situated in a tribal society. Mary was a relative of Elizabeth (Lk 1:36). Elizabeth belonged to the Aaronic clan (Lk 1:5), which implies that Mary was also of priestly lineage. Based on Mt 20:20, 27:56, Mk 15:40 and Jn 19:25, it appears that Mary and Salome were sisters or sisters-in-law. Salome was the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee. This would make the Apostle John a cousin of Jesus. Although this identification is not a sure thing, it would explain a couple of otherwise puzzling details. Why did Jesus entrust his mother to John (Jn 19:26-27)? Granted that his half-brothers were not yet converts to the cause (cf. Jn 7:5), but why turn to John? But if Mary is John's aunt, then all is clear. How is it that John enjoys entrée with the high priest (Jn 18:16)? But if John is also of priestly pedigree—vis-a-vis the Elizabeth-cum-Mary-cum-Salome connection, we have a place to start. James and Jude—authors of the respective letters bearing their names—are brothers, and half-brothers of Jesus. Mark and Barnabas were cousins (Col 4:10). Paul had a sister and nephew in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). We could chart other relatives but this will suffice for present purposes.

By virtue of this familial matrix, the NT authors would have access to inside information. Jesus and John were probably childhood playmates. Given Paul's former connections, it is not surprising that his sister had some well-placed informants. Luke could have gotten some of his information via Paul or by interviewing his sister. Barnabas, Mark, Mnason and Philip would be excellent sources on the Church of Jerusalem. The dominical family would have been the obvious and even exclusive source of information for the Lucan nativity accounts. Given the affinities between Lk 6:20 and Jas 2:5, or Lk 6:24-25; 12:16-21,33 and Jas 4:13-5:2, it's not hard to guess which family member he tapped for details. Indeed, we have direct confirmation for a fact that Luke met with James—and other members of the Mother Church—on the occasion of one of Paul's journeys (Acts 21:18).

vii) Common timeframe

All of the NT writings are either by first or second generation Christians. The Apostolate had an inbuilt time limit (Acts 1:21-22). This consideration alone knocks all the NT apocryphal out of bounds.

The books of the NT canon enjoy a chain-of-custody extending back from the present day to the 2C or in many cases the late 1C. That is to say, it is possible to document the continuous existence and identity of these books on the basis of patristic usage, the MS tradition, versions, lectionaries, catalogues, &c.

Paul is a partial exception, but an exception that proves the rule, for he is acutely sensitive to his anachronistic status, like the issue of a miscarriage (1 Cor 15:1). Paul is a paradigm of grace, and not Apostleship (1 Tim 1:15-16). As such, this special case sets no precedent for an open canon, and indeed militates against pseudonymity.

The fact that the NT writers were also contemporaries establishes a webwork of accountability relationships. In principle, any author of a NT book would be answerable to his fellow apostles or associates. To be sure, inspiration is not subject to appeal. The point, rather, is how this dynamic would cut against inauthentic writings. A pseudonymous book, or anonymous book by an unqualified spokesman, would never be accepted by churches under Apostolic jurisdiction. It is not without reason that the NT apocrypha all fall outside the lifetime of the Apostles and their associates. When someone tried to palm off a letter under an assumed name, the alias was shot down by the fact that Paul was still on the scene (2 Thes 2:2; 3:17).

viii) Common affiliation

Many of the NT writers are affiliated with the mother church in Jerusalem, either as members or via members. An outstanding example is Mark. It is generally asserted, without much by way of argument, that Mark was not an eyewitness to the events recorded in his Gospel. But conservatives often lean on the tradition that he wrote his Gospel under the direction of Peter. Whatever stock we place in this tradition, there are firmer clues to his sources and resources. I'm surprised by the lack of systematic attention to Acts 12:12ff. Here we learn several suggestive details regarding the background of Mark. The family home was in Jerusalem, and it was also a house-church. The fact that the topographical indicators intensify in Mark's gospel as the narrative nears Jerusalem and environs reinforces that identification. It is also the first destination after Peter's jailbreak, and its members have the ear of James, then head of the Jerusalem Church (v.17).

This opens up a rich vein of possibilities. To begin with, since the family home was in Jerusalem, there is no reason to suppose that Mark either couldn't or wouldn't have been an eye-witness to the public ministry of Christ in Jerusalem. Jesus always drew a crowd. He was easily the most interesting religious phenomenon to visit Jerusalem within living memory. As a charismatic and iconoclastic figure he would prove irresistible to a young man like Mark. Even if Mark were not at that time a follower, sheer curiosity would compel him to join the spectators whenever Jesus came to town. So I think it likely that parts of his Gospel were based on personal observation. A highly parochial reference like Mk 15:21 suggests personal knowledge. The fact, moreover, that the family home was also a house-church whose members were on a first name basis with Peter and James suggests that Mark's family may well have been in on the ground floor of the Christian movement.

In any case, Mark was in a position to interview any or all of the Jerusalemite Apostles. His home was a clearing house of first-hand information, even before he set a foot outside the door. Apart from any literary designs, Mark would naturally pepper them with questions about Jesus at every opportunity. Wouldn't you if you were on personal terms with Peter, James, John and the whole gang? Remember, too, it's not just tradition that attributes the composition of this Gospel to Mark. All of our Greek MSS designate the same authors for the same gospels. If these designations were added after the death of the authors, it is unaccountable why there aren't any variant designees.

Luke is also well connected. He knows Mark. He knows Mnason, who was a charter-member of the mother church. Presumably he crossed paths with Silas and Barnabas, both of whom were well-placed members of the Jerusalem Church. Of particular interest is

his acquaintance with James, the Lord's brother and the head of the mother church in Jerusalem. Manaen would be a direct source of information on the Herodian dynasty (Acts 13:1), especially if Luke were a member of the same congregation (Acts 11:28, Western Text).

No doubt our record is only skimming the surface. Luke's circle of contacts would have included quite a number of first-hand informants he could draw on in writing his history of the Christ and sequel history of the Church. And for some of the episodes in the sequel he was an eyewitness in his own right. The fact that Paul could rattle off the names of 24 members belonging to a church he'd never even visited (Rom 16) affords us some hint of the living data-base that would also have been at Luke's disposal. The further fact that Luke even had access to official correspondence (Acts 23:25-30), which is not altogether surprising given his high-ranking Roman patron, evidences the caliber of his contacts.

We must keep in mind that publication of a gospel by Mark or Luke presupposes some degree of sponsorship. Unless Mark's gospel had official backing and a receptive audience, the project would get nowhere. The publication and distribution of NT literature would have been an in-house operation, requiring an elaborate subcultural infrastructure. Through word-of-mouth and informal transcription, copies of copies multiplied and spread abroad. Luke presumably dedicated his two-part history to Theophilus as a way of jump-starting the process.

ix) Independent contacts

Besides all this inside information, the record includes some parties who had their own informal channels. Luke's two-part history is dedicated to Theophilus. "Most excellent" (*kratiste*) is an honorific title. While it was sometimes used as a polite form of address, in

Lucan usage it is reserved for procurators (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25). A number of high Roman officials figure in Lucan accounts (e.g. Pilate, Felix, Festus, Gallio), and Theophilus was in a position to double-check the accuracy of Luke's story, or even supply him with key information. Other officials who were involved with the Christian movement, such as the Asiarchs (Acts 19:31), Erastus the Aedile (Rom 16:23; cf. Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20), Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7,12), the Praetorian Guard (Phil 1:13), and members of the imperial household (Phil 4:16) were well poised to ask around.

x) Intertextuality

We find a number of incidental correlations in the NT. 1 Tim 5:18 seems to be a verbatim quote from Lk 10:7. Since this Gospel and the Pastorals were both written prior to Acts, the chronology would be feasible. The alternative is to attribute this logion to some free-floating tradition. But a couple of impediments stand in the way of that alternative:

- (i) It fails to explain why Paul's wording follows the Lucan rather than Matthean form (cf. Mt 10:10).
- (ii) Paul's citation formula implies a written source, so that appeal to oral tradition is ruled out.

In his Eucharist formulary, where Paul is expressly drawing on tradition (1 Cor 11:23-25), he often agrees with the Lucan wording against the Matthean and Marcan parallels. Moreover, the eschatological aspect of communion is distinctive to Luke and Paul (Lk 22:16,18; 1 Cor 11:26). Paul's precis of the Resurrection appearances also follows the order of Luke—first Peter, then the Twelve (1 Cor 15:4b-5; Lk 24:12,34,36), as does his appeal to Scriptural support (1 Cor 15:3-4; Lk 24:45-47). 1 Thes 2:15-17 recalls

Lk 11:49ff., while 2 Thes 5:2-7 appears to be patterned after Lk 12:39-40; 21:34-36. Again, we're only grazing the surface.

None of this is intended to limit Paul's source of knowledge to Luke alone, but merely to document his familiarity, either with the final published edition of the third Gospel—since we don't know the interval between the composition of Luke and Acts—or a preliminary draft. And it stands to reason that Paul would be partial to Luke, for the "beloved physician" was an especially attentive and tenacious friend (e.g. 2 Tim 4:11). Again, the point is not to suggest that one gospel is more accurate than another, for each of the Evangelists is free to select, arrange, adapt and paraphrase the material without prejudice to its factual content.

The relationship between Mt 5:34-37 and Jas 5:12 affords another quite specific instance of intertextuality. An especially fulsome example is the series of parallels distinctive to Luke and John. There are also striking points of contact between James and 1 Peter (e.g. Jas 1:2-4,10-11,14; 4:6-10; 1 Pet 1:6-7,23-24; 5:5-6), which isn't surprising given their intimate association.

Based on the above survey, I conclude that the books of the Bible intermesh in multiform ways, like a latticework of interlocking joints. Just as built-in redundancy is a safety feature in critical systems, the intersection of so many books at so many points means that the canon of Scripture is "overbuilt," and stands or falls as a unit rather than an aggregate. It is interwoven with threads of inspired allusion and attestation.

IV. Jude and Pseudepigrapha

Jude's use of pseudepigrapha has raised some eyebrows. The question is hampered by our lack of background materials. What was common knowledge for him and his audience is often lost to us. But a few observations are in order.

i) The fact that a sacred author quotes from an extracanonical source doesn't commit him to accepting the source at face value. Moses offers a subversive reading of the Song of Heshbon (Num 21:27-30). It was originally an Amorite taunt-song. Now the tables are turned as Israel bests the Amorites and makes them eat their own words! The irony trades on a conspicuous contrast between the original context and its recontextualization.

For his part, Jeremiah (Jer 48:45-46) preserves the original referent (Moab), but time-shifts the terms fulfillment from past to future. So Moses and Jeremiah both disregard original intent as they adapt the material to score points. They make inspired use of uninspired materials. It is precisely because the material is uninspired that they indulge in such literary license. What is normative is not the primary source, but the use made of it in the secondary source.

ii) 1 Enoch is a sectarian document of Essene pedigree.⁽⁴⁾ As such, it would never have found its way into the Temple archive alongside the canonical scrolls—or from there into the synagogal lectionaries (cf. Lk 4:17; Acts 13:15,27; 15:21).⁽⁵⁾ Josephus, a Pharisee who accompanied Vespasian and Titus when they captured Jerusalem and despoiled the Temple, indicates that the Temple was the repository for holy books of Judaism (Life 75; Wars 5.7). That would comport with OT precedent (cf. Exod 25:16; Deut 10:5; 17:18; 31:9,26; 1 Sam 10:25; 2 Chron 29:30). This official registry presumably set the gold standard for lectionary usage as well.

iii) Likewise, the Assumption of Moses betrays Essene and Pharisaic traits.⁽⁶⁾ Based on its studied allusion to the 34 year reign of Herod (6:6; cf. Josephus, Ant. 17.8.1), the Testament of Moses dates at the earliest to the turn of the 1C AD. It is extremely far-fetched to suppose that a mid-1C author like Jude would be appealing to such a novel document—with no representation in the Temple archives or synagogal lectionaries—as canonical writ. Indeed, R. Bauckham has proposed that the Assumption may be itself dependent on Jude, who is—in turn—dependent on the Testament of Moses.⁽⁷⁾

iv) Nor do we find Jude employing standard scriptural citation formulas (e.g. "it is written," "scripture says"). Hence,, there is no formal reason for supposing that Jude ranked this material with Holy Writ.

v) In judging Jude's estimate of Jewish pseudepigrapha, we must remember that his brother was a very traditional Jew, as is evident from his letter, his administration of the Jerusalem church (e.g. Acts 15), and his ultraist disciples (Gal 2:12ff.). Given this establishmentarian emphasis, it is unlikely in the extreme that he would have ranked sectarian (=Essene) literature on par with Scripture. Now it is no doubt possible that his kid brother was less conservative, but to assume that Jude was way out of the mainstream isn't very plausible given the impact and position of his elder brother. This was a society in which primogeniture mattered.

vi) What's more, the leadership of James over the Jerusalem church, which was the mother church of Christendom, was such that his kid brother could never have functioned in that body unless he enjoyed big brother's approval. There would have been no receptive constituency for the very letter under review.

Chapter 3

Canonical criteria

1. Traditional discussions of canonical criteria focus on ecclesiastical or rabbinical criteria. The high-church argument is that we need an authoritative church to impose unity on the books of the Bible. The implication is that Scripture is, in itself, an arbitrary anthology. Deny the authority of the church, and that snaps the string holding these books together.

But that extrinsic solution reflects the self-reinforcing attitude of the high churchman. Because he automatically defaults to Mother Church to solve all questions, he never takes the time to examine the Bible from the inside out.

If we didn't have a standard edition of the Bible, if we just had pile of books, could we arrange these books in a logical order?

2. In general, I think this is a two-step process:

i) How were books of the Bible originally received by their target audience?

ii) Our own canonical criteria should reproduce the original grounds for their reception.

3. There's a sense in which "canonicity" is, itself, an ecclesiastical concept. So we need to define our terms. Is there an equivalent concept in Scripture?

4. One of the ecclesiastical criteria for canonicity was conformity to the rule of faith. That's a rather "Catholic" criterion.

From a Protestant perspective, there's a fundamental sense in which this is backwards. The Bible is the rule of faith. The Bible is the judge of tradition, not vice versa.

5. On the face of it, this procedure might seem to be circular. If we identify the Bible with the rule of faith, then how can it function as a criterion of canonicity? You would have to have a Bible for the Bible to be a canonical criterion. But, in that event, how could you use the Bible to judge which books comprise the Bible?

6. But this facile conundrum is more apparent than real.

i) For one thing, you could have a part/whole relation. We see that in Deut 13 & 18, which presents criteria for false prophecy:

a) A prophet is a false prophet if his prediction is false.

b) But even if his prediction is true, he is still a false prophet if his prophecy functions to incite rebellion against the Mosaic covenant.

So a Biblical book (or corpus) like the Pentateuch could function as a canonical criterion for other canonical "candidates."

Therefore, it's not the whole Bible judging the whole Bible.

ii) In addition, the question of whether the Bible has a procedure for determining its own canonicity frames the issue in a question-begging way.

For that reflects an ex post facto outlook, as if you had a two stage process:

a) First the canon of Scripture is written.

b) Then some body, after the fact, must approve the canon of Scripture.

But this is artificial. It's true that Jews, after the completion of the OT, and Christians, after the completion of the NT, reexamined the question of whether we should exclude some books or include other books.

And there's a sense in which a Protestant, when he considers the traditional canon, is doing the same thing.

Yet we need to distinguish between this ex post facto reflection, and the grounds on which the books of the Bible were received by the target audience.

And, as I've already said, our ex post facto outlook should reproduce the original grounds.

7. Meredith Kline, in *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, tried to break free from ex post facto criteria for the canon, and derive canonicity from the Bible itself.

I think it's possible to build on his work. There are areas in which I think we can improve on his argument.

Kline argues that canon and covenant are correlative. God has a written contract with Israel. The covenant was the rule of faith.

8. But this brings us to another point. There was no formal process or procedure for canonizing the Pentateuch. That would be historically artificial in the highest degree. God imposes his law on Israel. He doesn't put it up for a vote.

The reception of the Pentateuch was immediate. Moses was God's prophet. And challenges to his authority were swiftly and sternly punished by God.

9. The correlation between canon and covenant is true as far as it goes. And it lays a firm foundation. But the thesis becomes overextended when Kline tries to apply the treaty form beyond Deuteronomy or Exod 20-22.

i) To his credit, he does a good job, up to a point, in showing how the Prophets relate to the Torah. The Prophets are prosecutors of the covenant lawsuit.

That's true as far as it goes. But it's reductionistic. For the prophets are prospective as well as retrospective. They don't merely call on Israel to look back at the Exodus and the Law. They also look forward to something beyond the Mosaic status quo. To the Messianic age.

The prophets occupy a paradoxical position. On the one hand, they are outsiders in the sense that they are challenging a decadent religious and civil establishment.

On the other hand, their authority comes, in part, from the Mosaic covenant. They are pulling rank on covenant-breakers.

At the same time, their authority also derives, in part, from a special commission. God calls them. God inspires them.

So it isn't entirely reducible to the Mosaic covenant. They have a special vocation.

ii) There is also a sense in which you could treat Genesis as an extended historical prologue. And there's no doubt that Genesis

anticipates the Mosaic Covenant.

But that's not all it does. It also looks beyond the Mosaic covenant. There's a Messianic motif which writers like Sailhamer, T. D. Alexander, and Michael Rydelnik (to name a few) have done a good job of tracing out.

So Kline's argument is valid to a degree, but reductionistic.

iii) Once again, there's a sense in which the Historical Books document Israel's compliance or noncompliance with the Mosaic covenant. That's the raw material for the prophets to indict Israel for nonperformance.

And this is not only a useful way of relating the Historical Books to the Pentateuch, but a way of relating the Historical Books to the Prophets. So the coordination operates on more than one plane.

Yet the analysis is reductionistic. Just as the Prophets are prospective as well as retrospective, the Historical Books are prospective as well as retrospective. There's an unfolding Messianic theme in the Historical Books as well.

Not only does this involve a linear development, but a parallel development, for several Messianic motifs come into play.

Moreover, there's a literary device which unifies the preexilic Historical Books. The next writer in line will incorporate the ending of the previous book in the opening of his sequel. So these writers stand in conscious succession.

Furthermore, although some of these books are anonymous, there's a generic sense in which the Historical Books are in-house literature,

produced by royal scribes or royal historians. This would give them an automatic entree into the canon.

It's also only natural that you'd have post-exilic Historical Books. From the viewpoint of the Restoration, these would reflect on God's justice and mercy, fidelity and providence.

iv) Kline's analysis breaks down with the Psalter. I think there's a better way to integrate the Psalter into the OT canon:

Basically, the Psalter is a poetic version of prosaic revelation regarding history, law, and messianism. It covers the same ground as the Law, Prophets, and Historical Books, but it does so in a lyrical mode adapted to the worship of Israel.

As with the Historical Books, the Psalms are in-house literature. The founding author (David) was both a king and a prophet. Other Psalmists are official employees of the religious establishment. Instant canonicity.

v) Kline's analysis also falls apart with the Wisdom literature. I think there's a better way to integrate the Wisdom literature into the OT canon.

To begin with, "Wisdom Literature" is a modern scholarly classification. I don't have a problem with that classification, but looking at these books from within, I'd distinguish Job from Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Canticles.

Bracketing Job for the moment, the Wisdom Literature is another case of in-house literature. The founding author was a king and a sage. Although Solomon isn't technically a prophet, his inspired wisdom is the functional equivalent.

With one exception, the other contributors were also official insiders. Inspired royal scribes. Indeed, part of a dynasty.

With that royal patronage, recognition would be immediate.

I'd also add that in his attempt to assimilate the Wisdom Literature to the Mosaic covenant, I think that Kline misses their true purpose.

There's a domesticity to the Wisdom Literature. The Pentateuch and the Historical Books tend to focus on a nomadic existence, followed by a period of conquest.

But what was life like after the dust settled? During periods of comparative calm and stability?

Of course, ancient Israel always had to fight for her existence, but the Wisdom Literature accentuates a peacetime lifestyle rather than a wartime life style. An urban lifestyle. Day to day living. What did Israelites do at home, when they weren't on the battlefield?

So there's a focus on social life. The bread-and-butter issues. Friends and neighbors. Marriage. Child-rearing. Domestic disputes. Aging. Coming of age. Doing business. Life at court. Government corruption. Economic disparity. Temptation and betrayal.

It's a window into the ordinary and perennial. And I don't see that this literature requires a special justification for its place in the Scripture of Israel.

vi) Of course, the provenance of Job is obscure. My guess is that this coincides, more or less, with Solomon's international court. There would have been God-fearers in OT times. Courtiers, resident aliens, or trading partners who came to know the true God through their contact with the Chosen People.

An interesting case in point is Prov 31. This wasn't written by an Israelite. But the Queen Mother of Lemeul was a God-fearer. I assume that Job represents a similar case.

Aside from the sapiential motifs, which it shares in common with Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, I think that Job has less in common with other OT books than it does with Revelation—in the NT.

Both books distinguish between heaven and earth. Both books deal with apparently inscrutable suffering of the righteous. Both books pull back the veil to show that history is controlled from the throne room of God. Even though life here-below may seem to be inexplicable in success of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous, there is an overarching purpose, which is ordinarily undetectable, and the scales of justice will be righted at the end.

vii) Kline's thesis is even more strained when he tries to subsume the NT to the treaty form.

There is a generic sense in which the Gospels and Acts parallel OT historical narratives. The Gospels are to the Pentateuch what Acts is to Joshua.

And there are times, like 2 Corinthians, when an Apostle resumes the prosecutorial role.

In general, thought, it's inevitable that missionaries like Paul would supervise their churches through pastoral correspondence. That doesn't have to answer to some literary precedent in the OT. That's a practical necessity.

The Apocalypse is too complex to shoehorn into one genre. To some extent, John is heir to Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. But with the

inscriptional curse (22:19), he is also heir to Moses.

To a Jewish reader, that would be a breathtaking comparison. Indeed, a sacrilegious comparison unless the Jewish reader were a Christian.

There's a sense in which all of the NT writings are in-house writings. The NT church was a familial, tight-knit community. There was a built-in constituency for this literature. I think each book would enjoy immediate acceptance by the immediate audience to which it was directed. Known writers writing to a known audience—even if, at this distance from the events, we can't always reconstruct the provenance of a particular document.

This is why the history of the NT canon can be misleading. It doesn't reflect the immediate reception of a NT book, but subsequent disputes by later readers in distant localities. Same thing with rabbinical squabbles so many centuries after the fact.

Chapter 4

How we got the New Testament

I. The Missionary Church

When we ask, “How we got the NT,” we are actually asking several different questions. One question is how did the books of the NT

originate? How are they related to each other? Why these 27 books? Why not fewer books, or more books, or different books?

That question has reference to the original production of the NT canon. Who are the NT writers, and how are they related to each other?

Then there's the historical question of how early Christians came to recognize the NT canon. That is also an evidentiary question. Where we're consulting very early Christian writers, or somewhat later Christian writers who incorporate the testimony of very early Christian writers, that may shed valuable light on the first question. It's a form of corroborative evidence. It helps to identify the writers of the NT.

Mind you, there is internal evidence as well as external evidence to on matters of dating, authorship, and so on.

Finally, there's the retrospective question of how Christians at a later date should recognize the NT canon. Do we evaluate the tradition or traditions which have come down to us? Or do we simply rubberstamp the result?

This is obviously a question that Protestants must ask themselves since we believe in the necessity of sifting tradition. Questioning received answers.

But it's also a question that Catholics have to confront. For example, the Tridentine Fathers debated the scope of the canon. And modern Catholic Bible scholars ask the same questions as their Protestant counterparts.

From a Protestant perspective, the first question is the primary question. Answering the second question helps us to answer the first question, although that's not our only source of information.

If you read Bart Ehrman or the average Catholic epologist, you'd think the process went something like this: a lot of indistinguishable Christian literature was written in the first phase of the Christian church. Later Christians then had to do some sorting. They started with this bit, random pile of books. They tossed out some books, and the remainder became the canon.

But this set of books is arbitrary. If Christians did their own sorting, without the church authorities breathing down their necks, they'd come up with a different canon of books.

However, this approach to the NT canon fails to connect the NT canon with NT history. The history of the NT canon parallels the history of the NT church. A detailed argument is presented by Earle Ellis in *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Brill 2002). And his conclusions are reaffirmed by Paul Barnett in *Finding the Historical Christ* (Erdmans 2009). For now I'm going to summarize their conclusions.

Is there a unifying principle to the NT? On traditional authorship, we can group some of the NT books based on common authorship. Likewise, many NT books were penned by apostles. But five books were not. How do the non-apostolic writers (and writings) related to the apostolic writers (and writings)? And how does a writing by one apostle relate to a writing by another? Is there any coordination?

As Ellis has detailed, the NT is not a random anthology of unrelated books. Rather, it falls into four blocks of interrelated material.

The NT church was a missionary church. It had four missionary teams with four team leaders: Peter, Paul, James, and John.

(By “James” I mean James the Just, brother of Christ, and not the Apostle James.)

The above statement needs to be slightly qualified. On the one hand, John was an itinerate evangelist, but we don't have any NT evidence of a Johannine missionary team. On the other hand, we have a Jacobean missionary team, but James may have merely overseen their efforts rather than functioning as an itinerate evangelist in his own right.

They divided up the mission field in the far-flung Roman Empire. There was some overlap between one mission field and another. And they were at liberty to shift their base of operations.

The NT literature is missionary literature, targeting different demographic groups. For example, the Gospel of Matthew and Letter of James are directed at Jews and Jewish Christians.

There are natural alliances as well. For example, Jude is the younger brother of James.

On this analysis, Mark is a member of the Petrine circle, Matthew and Jude are members of the Jacobean circle, while Luke and the author of Hebrews of the Pauline circle.

Each missionary team has a Gospel—as well as correspondence. To evangelize and disciple the lost, church-planters needed Christian literature—especially literature attuned to the particular needs of the demographic niche they were targeting.

On this analysis, we can correlate the NT documents as follows:

Petrine Mission

Gospel of Mark
1-2 Peter

Pauline Mission

Gospel of Luke
Book of Acts
Romans-Philemon
Hebrews

Johannine Mission

Gospel of John
1-3 John
Revelation

Jacobean Mission

Gospel of Matthew
Letter of James
Letter of Jude

II. Self-canonization

Two scholars have argued that Paul and John probably had a hand in canonizing the NT.

1) Porter, S. "Paul and the Process of Canonization," C. Evans & E. Tov, eds. *Exploring the Origins of the Bible* (Baker 2008), 173-202.

As Porter summarizes his own argument, in somewhat understated fashion:

[Paul] would have been the only person, apart from his few closest associates, who would consistently have access to the many copies produced by his scribes and companions. The only other person or persons who would have had such access would probably have been his closest followers, such as Luke, or possibly Timothy. If Paul were not the initiator of the collecting process, and if there were not copies of the letters readily available, then the act of instigating the Pauline collection must have fallen to one of these close companions...Thus, the collection process must have involved a close follower or advocate of Paul, who perhaps undertook such action near the end of Paul's life, possibly when he was in prison in Rome, or very soon after his death. Luke is the most likely figure for such a scenario, on the basis of the internal Pauline evidence (Col 4:14; Philem 24; 2 Tim 4:11), church tradition regarding Luke's relation to Paul (especially in Acts, but also in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.23.1; 3.10.1; 3.14.1; etc.), and even much critical scholarship regarding the authorship of Acts. In any case, there is reasonable evidence to see the origin of the Pauline corpus during the latter part of Paul's life or sometime after his death, almost assuredly instigated by Paul and /or a close follower or followers, and close examination of the early manuscripts with Paul's letters and of related documents seems to support this hypothesis.(8)

You'd have to read the entire essay for the detailed, supporting evidence, but that gives you the basic idea.

Porter's essays is concerned with the specifics of the Pauline corpus, but that has some general relevance to other literary subsets which combine to form the NT canon.

2) Hill, C. E. *Who Chose the Gospels?* (Oxford 2010), chap.10.

Where does all this leave us? At a minimum, it seems best to conclude that Papias, writing probably in the 120s, knew all four of our Gospels, for there are sound reasons for acknowledging his use of them in the fragments of his writings that have survived. This would make Papias the earliest first-hand source for a recognition of all four Gospels. Was it he, then, who chose the Gospels?(9)

But Papias also reports earlier tradition. We cannot be sure exactly how early this tradition goes, but a reasonable assumption is that the information he derived from 'the elder' was learned sometime around the year 100 and in any case not very many years thereafter. All agree that the information he imparted included tradition about Mark and Matthew, and if Eusebius' source in EH 3.24 indeed goes back to the same person, it would mean that all four Gospels were known to Papias' elder at around the turn of the second century, very near the time when, according to most scholars, John's Gospel was first released for circulation.(10)

The report in EH 3.24.7, on the other hand, allows for an even earlier endorsement of the four Gospels. For it says that the apostle John 'welcomed' or 'received' the three previous Gospels and 'testified to their truth.' He is said to have observed that they only lacked 'the account of what was done by Christ at first

and at the beginning of the preaching,' which he then supplied in his own Gospel. This would make the aged apostle John the earliest 'chooser,' endorser, or 'canonizer' of the four Gospels. This is not to claim of course that this testimony about John 'choosing the Gospels' is historically factual, only that it is an extremely early tradition.[\(11\)](#)

Origen, in the third century, knew of a similar tradition. In his Homilies on the Gospel of Luke he mentions in passing that he had read in an older writing (it is a pity he doesn't name it) that 'John collected the written Gospels in his own lifetime in the reign of Nero (54-68 CE), and approved of and recognized those of which the deceit of the devil had not taken possession; but refused and rejected those which he perceived were not truthful' (Hom. Lk. 1, fr. 9). These two traditions have a few things in common. Both assign the 'canonization' to John; both say John 'welcomed' or 'recognized' (the same Greek word is used by each author) the other three; and both say John made some assertion of the 'truth' of the three previous Gospels (the elder positively, Origen by way of denying the truthfulness of others).[\(12\)](#)

Chapter 5

The Bible as autobiography

I. Introduction

i) This post will be something of an annotated bibliography of some worthwhile books, essays, and articles regarding internal evidence for the canon of Scripture. It's just a sampling of the literature. It can be supplemented by other sources (e.g. commentaries, Bible introductions, monographs). The arguments are subject to various refinements.

But the material I cite here gives a good overview of the issues. A good way to frame the issue.

ii) The Bible is partly a history and biography of other people and events. But it's partly autobiographical well inasmuch as it not only tells a story about other people and events, but it also tells a story about itself. About its writers. About their life and work. For they wrote as they lived. And when we consider the evidence for the canon of Scripture, we should include the internal evidence for the canon of Scripture—in addition to the external evidence.

iii) In Catholicism, the internal evidence is irrelevant, for what ultimately counts in Catholicism is the external verdict of the church. Of the various contenders, the church had to determine which candidates to include or exclude.

iv) Ironically, Bart Ehrman begins with the same premise as Catholicism. He regards the canon as an arbitrary collection. The product of power politics in the church.

v) The Catholic argument generates a dilemma. Either these particular books belong together or they don't. If they belong together, then you shouldn't need an ecclesiastical fiat to constitute

or justify that collection. Conversely, if you need an ecclesiastical fiat to constitute or justify that collection, then it must be fairly arbitrary.

vi) Another problem with the Catholic orientation is that it directs us away from the Bible to church history. We're no longer looking at the primary source material. Yet the canon of Scripture is, itself, a primary source datum for the canon of Scripture. It contains within itself a certain amount of internal evidence regarding its own composition and codification.

vii) Yet another problem with the Catholic orientation is that tradition doesn't speak with one voice on the scope of the canon. The deliberations at Trent simply reopened old questions. Although it handed down a verdict, that was a split decision.

viii) We might expect the principles of canonicity to be somewhat different for the OT and the NT. The books of the NT were composed by first or second-generation Christians. By contrast, the OT was written over a span of many generations.

ix) Something as apparently superficial as the order of the books might also be a historical witness to the date and/or identity of the canon as a whole. Take the OT. In principle, there's more than one way to arrange the books. Different organizing principles could be employed. Still, even if the sequence of the Hebrew canon is somewhat artificial and traditional, this raises the question of when that convention was standardized. If, say, it was standardized well before NT times, then that pre-Christian canon would be the default canon used by Jesus and the Apostles. And any evidence we have for the identity of that pre-Christian canon would also be evidence for the OT canon of the NT speakers and writers.

II. The NT witness to the NT canon

Ellis, E. *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

i) His basic thesis is that all 27 books of the NT can be grouped under four coordinated missions, each headed by a leader of the NT church:

Petrine Mission

Gospel of Mark
1-2 Peter

Pauline Mission

Gospel of Luke
Book of Acts
Romans-Philemon
Hebrews

Johannine Mission

Gospel of John
1-3 John
Revelation

Jacobean Mission

Gospel of Matthew

Letter of James

Letter of Jude

ii) Ellis uses the Book of Acts as a lynchpin to identify and synchronize the key players.

iii) He also defends the traditional authorship of the NT books.

So Ellis does a good job of considering both the individual units and collective dynamics of the NT canon.

IV. The OT witness to the OT canon

1) G. Goswell, "Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* (December 2008).

Goswell discusses the way in which the OT canon is put together. While his article is not attempting to make a case for the Hebrew canon, his analysis furnishes a lot of documentary evidence which is applicable to that question. To quote a few examples from his article (available online):

The ordering of books can be classified according to a number of principles. These principles need not be mutually exclusive but one may reinforce another, and there may be more than one possible principle reflected in a particular order. Unless stated by the author or editor, it is left to the reader to surmise what rationale is at work in the ordering of the literary blocks that make up a larger whole. It is not necessary to know or decide how deliberative the process of ordering was,³ for the focus of

this study is the effect on the reader of the order, not its historical production.⁴ It is not my aim to second-guess what was in the mind of those responsible for the ordering of the biblical books. The following are some possible principles of order as inferred by the reader after an examination of the biblical material:

(1) Size of the book, e.g. the sequence: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Book of the Twelve (= Minor Prophets) in the Babylonian Talmud (B. Bat. 14b) may be arranged according to decreasing book length.

(2) Chronological setting, e.g. Ruth 1:1 ('In the days when the judges ruled') would seem to explain the LXX placement of this book following Judges, seeing that it is set in the same era of Israelite history.

(3) Common authorship, either stated or assumed, e.g. Jeremiah-Lamentations in the LXX, though the text of Lamentations does not explicitly name Jeremiah as its author.

(4) Storyline thread (e.g. Joshua-Kings), with successive books narrating what happened next, remembering, however, that it is the next significant thing that happened which is featured, not just the next thing, given the necessarily selective nature of narrative.

(5) Genre, e.g. the bringing together of different books into a prophetic corpus, and the collecting together of Wisdom books (though a convincing definition of what is 'wisdom' is notoriously difficult).

(6) Thematic considerations, though any book is likely to have a number of major themes, so that alternative placements are possible on this basis, e.g. Proverbs followed by Ruth (BHS) with the figure of Ruth providing a real-life example of the 'good wife' described in Prov 31:10-31.

(7) Literary linkages, e.g. by means of catchwords, such as used in the Book of the Twelve (as Hosea-Malachi is viewed in the Hebrew canon).(13)

The liturgical character of the Megillot is an appropriate arrangement in a section leading up to the book of Chronicles (or beginning with Chronicles as in Aleppensis and Leningradensis) and consists of five festal scrolls. The five scrolls are connected to the five main festivals (following the festal order, assuming the year starts with the month Nisan): Song of Songs (Passover), Ruth (Weeks), Lamentations (the ninth of Ab), Ecclesiastes (Tabernacles or Booths), and Esther (Purim).

The books that follow Chronicles, that is, the Psalms⁷³ and Proverbs, are directly connected with the founding dynasts, David and Solomon. Chronicles followed by Psalms gives the poetic pieces of the Psalter a liturgical setting in the musical cult (re)-organized by David (cf. 1 Chronicles 23-27; 2 Chr 7:6; 8:14; 23:18; 29:25³⁰; 35:15), and a number of psalmic titles help to cement such a connection (e.g. the titles of Psalms '42-50, 62).⁷⁴ Ruth may be treated as a 'Davidic biography,' since Ruth and Boaz are the great-grandparents of David (Ruth 4:18-22). Song of Songs (e.g. 3:11) and Qoheleth (read as royal autobiography⁷⁵) each have connections with Solomon. The liturgical role of the Megillot also suits the Chronicles frame. Esther provides a happy ending to the Megillot, especially when read after the tragic expressions of Lamentations.

With regard to the order(s) of the books that make up the Hebrew Bible, the following may be said by way of summary. The ordering of books according to storyline would seem to

explain the sequence of books in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. The books of the Latter Prophets also are ordered according to chronology, whether the sequence is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve, or Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve. The highs and lows of the covenant relationship between God and Israel are thereby plotted through time. The order of books in the Writings may in part reflect (presumed) order of composition, with Davidic and Solomonic works at the beginning and Persian period compositions at the end (Esther onwards). It is not true, therefore, that only the Greek OT has a dominating historical principle.

The placement of Joshua-Kings after the Torah and in the section labeled 'Former Prophets' suggests an understanding of these four books as illustrating and applying the teaching of the Pentateuch, and so, too, the prophets whose oracles are recorded in the Latter Prophets are viewed as preachers of the Law.

The reader also perceives that the grouping of books according to common genre explains the enjambment of Psalms-Job-Proverbs and this has the effect of declaring the Psalter to be a wisdom book. So, too, juxtaposing Daniel-Esther-Ezra/Nehemiah suggests that all three books are being read as court tales. Thematic considerations explain those lists that put Ruth before Psalms or have Ruth following Proverbs, and the pairing of Ecclesiastes with Lamentations or of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The fact that there are alternative orders reminds the reader that book order is a paratextual feature, and that different orders suggest alternative ways of reading the same book.

The placement of either Chronicles (1 Chronicles 1-9) or Ezra-Nehemiah (Nehemiah 9) at the close of the Hebrew Bible implies that these books recapitulate and evaluate (from certain viewpoints) the entire sweep of biblical history. In almost every case, the location of a biblical book relative to other canonical books, whether in terms of the grouping in which it is placed, or the book(s) that follow or precede it, has hermeneutical significance for the reader who seeks meaning in the text. Consciously or unconsciously, the reader's evaluation of a book is affected by the company it keeps in the collected library of Scripture.[\(14\)](#)

2) Freedman, D. *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (University of Michigan Press 1995); "The Symmetry of the Hebrew Bible," *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman* (Eerdmans 1997), 1:496-520.

Before presenting some of Freedman's case, I'll make a few preliminary comments:

i) Unlike the other scholars I've cited, Freedman is a liberal. However, to somewhat oversimplify our classification, there are two kinds of liberals. On the one hand, there are copycat liberals who simply regurgitate the latest fad in Bible criticism. On the other hand, some liberals are genuine scholars. They know their way around the primary sources. They do their own research. As a result, they may stake out iconoclastic positions which buck the liberal groupthink. Freedman is that kind of liberal. A fairly independent and very erudite scholar.

ii) From what I can tell, his work on the OT canon has been rather neglected. My best guess for this neglect is that his assumptions are too liberal for conservatives while his conclusions are too conservative for liberals.

iii) In assessing his case, we need to distinguish between the raw data which he presents, and the historical reconstructions by which he attempts to explain the data. The data stand alone—apart from his historical reconstruction.

iv) Apropos (ii-iii), it's quite possible to agree with his general conclusions even though you disagree with some of his explanations or operating assumptions. You can present an alternative explanation to account for the same data.

v) Even some of his operating assumptions are harmonious with conservative presuppositions. For example, here is one of his working principles:

In the Bible, historical narratives generally come down to the time of the author(s); therefore the latest episodes recorded are roughly contemporary with the writers(s) of the stories. Put another way, the work is composed or completed shortly after the last of the stories is finished, and the work may be dated accordingly. A significant burden of proof rests with those who wish to extend the period between the end of the narrative and the composition of the work.[\(15\)](#)

a) This principle is quite reasonable. Even conservative. If applied consistently, it would lead to the early dating of various books which liberals typically date much later.

b) It does, however, suffer from one oversight. Given his methodological naturalism, Freedman is unable to make allowance for the possibility (much less actuality) that a work might also record an episode before it occurs. But dating a book of Scripture must take into account the prophetic dimension.

Freedman also says:

The work of the final editor was mainly in organizing and arranging already existing books and even larger collections certainly not in composing any books, and perhaps only to a very limited extent in what we would call editing of manuscripts. The symmetry of the two parts is thus all the more remarkable, for the compiler was working with a whole set of already completed pieces...The tools available to the compiler were limited essentially to the selection and arrangement of the constituent units and perhaps a modicum of editorial adjustment of particular passages.(16)

Once again, this quite consistent with conservative assumptions.

I'll address the more liberal aspects of his presentation in a separate excursus (see below).

vi) Freedman's basic thesis is that the entire OT canon, exclusive of Daniel, was codified by Ezra and Nehemiah c. the 5C BC. Much of his supporting evidence involves the bilateral, chiastic symmetry of the Hebrew OT, which is patterned after the acrostic numerology of some OT Psalms and other poems. (e.g. Pss 25; 34; 37; 119; 135; Prov 31:10-31; Lam 1-4) As such, the OT canon forms a carefully and delicately balanced, literary unit. He also draws attention to various correlations between one book and another.

The only monkey wrench in Freedman's analysis is Daniel, which throws the numerical symmetry out of balance. (I'll address that issue in a separate excursus.)

I can't reproduce all of Freedman's supporting arguments, but here's a sampling of summary statements or representative claims:

Ezra [Neh 8] is reading from the first books of the Bible, which reflects that the Bible is not only the story of the people of the Bible, i.e., Israel, but that it is also the story of the Bible itself.

The similarities between Jeremiah (in its present form) and the D-work [Deuteronomy thru Kings], on the one hand, and between Ezekiel and the P-work [Genesis thru Numbers] on the other, have long been noted.

I also think that First Isaiah was associated with this reform and that the first C-Work [Chronicles] and the first Book of Isaiah were connected in that fashion. First Isaiah, while a denunciatory prophet in the tradition of Amos (and possibly his disciple), nevertheless was remembered in the tradition as the one who collaborated with the King, Hezekiah, in the salvation of Jerusalem.

We can thus line up the Major Prophets with the major historical works of the Hebrew Bible as indicated. In the case of Isaiah...we have two points of contact: First Isaiah with Hezekiah and the First Chronicler's Work...Overall, we find numerous points of agreement in both works, especially in the emphasis on Jerusalem, the Temple, the dynasty of David, and the continuous commitment and support of Yahweh.

Third, I wish to pursue the matter of literary associations a little further and at the same time include in the overall picture the

collection of Minor Prophets. First of all, I think we can link groups of Minor Prophets with Major Prophets, just as we have tried to show a significant connection between the Major Prophets and the major historical narratives in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, in the final form of the Book of the Twelve, we can recognize certain groupings with natural affinities...Thus the last three books of the Twelve belong to the postexilic period... Fourth, with regard to the rest of the Minor Prophets, we can assign the three 8C prophets to the domain of First Isaiah... namely, Hosea, Amos, and Micah. This group balances the association of the last three.

The reverse order places Ezra-Nehemiah first, followed by Chronicles, thus producing an odd circular effect if the books are read consecutively. In this present order, the Chronicler's Work begins with the account of the Edict of Cyrus, in which the Jews in captivity were not only permitted but encouraged to return to their homeland in Judah and also to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The narrative continues to the end of Ezra-Nehemiah; then it begins all over again at the beginning of Chronicles with Adam the genealogies derived from the Book of Genesis. The whole history of the people is covered once more, with particular emphasis on Judah from the time of the accession of David until the end of the kingdom. Then the last entry in Chronicles repeats the Edict of Cyrus to the Jews in captivity with which Ezra-Nehemiah began, thus forming an envelope around the whole work and echoing an even of central importance to the author or editor.

Instead of being at the end of the Writings, Chronicles is at the beginning of this whole unit, thus making Ezra-Nehemiah the last book of the section and of the Bible itself. The Chronicler's

Work, therefore, forms an envelope around the Writings, encompassing all of the other books previously mentioned and constituting a unifying and ordering framework for them. At the same time, the connection between the two is stressed by the repetition of the paragraph that comes at the end of Chronicles... At the beginning of Ezra-Nehemiah, we find the same paragraph as an echo, reminding the reader that Ezra-Nehemiah is the sequel to or continuation of the book with which the section opened. The idea inherent in this arrangement—namely, that the Chronicler’s Work encompasses the interior works—is also appropriate with respect to their contents and themes. Thus, the Chronicler’s Work covers the whole span of the Hebrew Bible, from the beginning to the present day (the time of Ezra-Nehemiah), and everything within the framework fits into that time span. More than this, the major themes and emphases in the Chronicler’s Work are exemplified in the other associated works.[\(17\)](#)

What these numbers [e.g. word counts] show beyond any question is the precise built-in symmetry the whole work, including its major and minor parts. I call the underlying pattern bilateral symmetry; by this I mean that the whole Hebrew Bible is divided into two equal halves, and these in turn are subdivided into relatively equal or proportionate parts, with further subdivisions also exhibiting similar patterns.”

The symmetry we posit is not only bilateral but also chiastic. We begin therefore with the Prophetic collection, consisting of two parts, Former and Latter Prophets, each containing four books.

To summarize, briefly, we interpret the numerical data to mean that the Hebrew Bible as we know it, with the single exception of

the book of Daniel, existed in its present form as early as the end of the 5^C BCE, and consisted of two precisely symmetrical halves, which in turn were made up of four subsections of five and four books respectively, matching parts in chiasmic order, with a supplement of five more small books to make the numbers come out evenly.

The crucial fact for me is the lack of any historical account after the time of Nehemiah. That is a prime indicator of the end of the literature, as it is hard to imagine that the Jewish community could live through the times of the late Persian kings, the coming of Alexander, and the massive changes all over the Near East without referring to them at all. Only the book of Daniel bridges the gulf between the Persian period Bible and the new age of tumult and ferment, from the Persians to the Romans.

Whatever the origin of the division of the Torah into five books, this number clearly has a leading role in the selection and arrangement of the books of the Writings. Thus there are five major books: Chronicles (which comes first in the major medieval manuscripts, including the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex), Psalms (which itself is divided into five books, doubtless to correspond to the five books of the Torah), Job, Proverbs, and Ezra (including Nehemiah; they are each on book in the Hebrew Bible). To these are added the five Megilloth: Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther.

As just mentioned, in the great medieval Manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible the Writings begin with Chronicles and end with Ezra-Nehemiah, which together constitute a single continuous

narrative and thus form an envelope around this whole division of the Bible.

We conclude that the compiler settled on the number twenty-three to juxtapose the fours and fives of the two halves, to emphasize the association with the alphabetic numbers, i.e., 22 and even $22+1=23$, and to reinforce the alphabetic principle. The use of successive numbers, especially in Hebrew poetry, both for parallelism and for enhancement, is well known.

We affirm that there is a connection between a presumed Hebrew Bible containing twenty-three books in the Persian period, and that it was correlated with the 'augmented' Hebrew alphabet reflected in at least two alphabetic acrostic Psalms (25 and 34). We argue that the 23-book Bible already existed in that arrangement in the latter part of the Persian period (around 400 BCE) and was organized with the augmented alphabet in mind.

We attribute the conception and execution to the Scribe Ezra and the Governor Nehemiah, who may have worked partly in tandem, but also in sequence, with Ezra responsible chiefly for the conception and Nehemiah for the execution and completion of the project. The separate memoirs of these men were attached to the end of the work, thus ending and completing the whole work.

V. The OT witness to the NT canon

It's natural for us to think of the NT as a witness to the OT. But that cuts both ways. If the OT is prophetic, and if the NT represents the literary fulfillment of the OT, then the OT is also a witness to the NT.

Some of the best authors on OT prophecy are T. D. Alexander, Alec Motyer, Michael Rydelnik, O. P. Robertson, and John Sailhamer.

Chapter 6

The OT witness to the OT canon

I. Bruce Waltke on the OT canon

How do we begin to pull together the various pieces of the Old Testament corpus? The answer lies in this crucial concept: blocks of writing. A careful reader of the Old Testament immediately notices that although the Old Testament is a collection of books of different kinds and periods, certain books share commonalities with others: vocabulary, literary genre, thematic continuities, and other intertextual evidences. These natural boundaries, not imposed by a scholar seeking to systematize, but present in the text as a reflection of the authors' intentions, allow us to organize the Old Testament books into blocks of writing and in turn to track the themes of the books both within and among the blocks. By taking these natural boundaries seriously, we begin the process of building a coherent theology that is based on the shape of the canon and/or on the thrust of the texts themselves.

Assume for a moment that the Old Testament does not come to us as a bound volume with the ordering of its books predetermined by tradition, but as a random pile of thirty-nine individual volumes. How would we begin to organize this pile? Which book would we begin to read? The book of Genesis would likely strike us as a promising candidate...the various promises and covenants made by God to Abraham do not come to fruition: no nation, no land, no blessing to other nations. Instead, the book ends with the sons of Israel residing in Egypt, not in the homeland God promised them.

The book of Genesis requires a sequel, and we find it in the book of Exodus. In terms of chronology, the book of Exodus picks up four hundred years after the end of Genesis, continuing the story of the sons of Israel and their march toward nationhood. Plot, however, is not the only connection between the two books. Various textual phenomena, easily observable to the careful reader, reflect an intentional effort by the author or authors/or editors to maintain continuity between the two books.

Other books are drawn into this block of writing by similar textual phenomena: Exodus and Leviticus are tied together geographically. Exodus ends at Mount Sinai; the entirety of Leviticus takes place at Mount Sinai. Furthermore, the section on ceremonial law extends from Exodus 25 to Leviticus 9. This material is so unified that one could easily argue that it is part of the same book. Geography and time line continue to serve as the unifying agent for Leviticus and Numbers: Leviticus takes place at Mount Sinai; Numbers traces the path of the Israelites from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab. Furthermore, the two books are also tied together by their last verses.

Following the line of plot development and inner-textual links, we would eventually arrive at 2 Kings. Joshua 1 is a pastiche of Deuteronomy (see chap. 18, n.10); Judges 2:6-8 repeats Joshua 24:28-31, but in a chiasmic structure bringing closure; 1 Samuel brings closure to the period of the judges; and 1 Kings 1-2 brings the so-called 'succession narrative' (about David's heir to the throne) begun in 2 Samuel 9 to a close...Hence, we have one unified story, from God's creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people of God to Babylon, Primary History.

Though the Primary History provides the principal account of the history of the kingdom of God, other books also serve to recount portions of this same history. The book of Chronicles charts the story from Adam through the exile and extends the plot beyond the Primary History to the enthronement of Cyrus, the king of Persia, who allowed the Israelites to return to Judah to rebuild the temple. This story is then continued by Ezra-Nehemiah, which recounts the return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple and the city wall of Jerusalem. Hence, Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah form another block of historical narrative, tracing Israel's history from Adam to the reestablishment of Israel in the land as the second Jewish commonwealth with its religious and political structures fully in place so that it can survive under the successive hegemonies of Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The remaining books can be divided based on genre and function. The books of the prophets...easily form a single block—the Prophetic Literature. The five books that make up the book of Psalms, which evolved from earlier anthologies of Israel's liturgical petitions and praises, stands alone comprising the

Hymnic Literature. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job form the Wisdom Literature.

Ruth has strong thematic connections to the Primary History; Song of Songs is ascribed to Solomon and has strong connections to Proverbs 7; Esther, concerned with the preservation of the people of God, evokes echoes of another attempted genocide in the book of Exodus and brings to conclusion God's command to the Benjamite Saul son of Kish to exterminate the Amalekites centuries later by another Benjamite, Mordecai, probably a distant descendant of Kish (Est. 2:5).[\(18\)](#)

At this juncture, Waltke is simply laying down some markers for further development. He will amplify these points in the course of his OT theology.

Although it is not his specific intention to defend the OT canon, it's easy to see how his organic analysis of the OT books as larger literary units is effectively mapping out a strategy for how to explain and defend the contours of the OT canon from within the viewpoint of the OT canon itself. This is not a random pile of books. Rather, the OT books grow into each other and out of each other, like a branching tree, from the roots through the trunk through the various offshoots leading up to the crown. We can witness their canonical point of origin, development, as well as the end-product.

By contrast, the OT apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, which were composed in Inter-Testamental times, fall outside this historical narrative.

Likewise, the historical books provide the historical narrative within which the Prophetic, Hymnic, and Wisdom Literature reside,

whether in terms of the place, date, author, audience, and occasion concerning their own composition, or their literary allusions to earlier books of the canon. And a parallel argument can be made for the NT canon.

II. Stephen Dempster on the OT canon

The Tanakh is not a random concatenation of texts, but a Text with a discernible structure, a clear beginning, a middle and an ending. Genesis and Chronicles are the beginning and ending, and the middle is carried with a narrative storyline into which many and various poems, much legislation, lists, building instructions, tribal boundary records, reports of visions and prophecies and many small stories have been appropriately placed. The narrative continues until it is interrupted by a substantial block of poetic commentary from the prophet Jeremiah through to the book of Lamentations, after which it resumes with Daniel and concludes with Chronicles.

The narrative 'bookends' of this Text, Genesis and Chronicles, are very different...Despite the significant differences, there are striking similarities. Genesis and Chronicles are virtually the only books in the Hebrew Bible saturated with genealogical lists...A key purpose of genealogies in some contexts is to show a divine purpose that moves history to a specific goal. It is easier to see the big picture when a wide-angle lens is used to look at the canon. Genesis begins with Adam, and the storyline quickly progresses through history, using genealogies, until Abraham arrives on the historical scene. The storyline follows Abraham and his descendants, and Genesis closes with Abraham's grandson predicting that an individual from the family of a

great-grandson (Judah) would wield a ruling scepter over all the nations and preside over an astonishingly fertile land (Gen 49:8-12). Chronicles begins with Adam and rapidly moves through history, largely using genealogies until David from the tribe of Judah arrives. And after David there is the explicit hope in a future seed from his line, who will rule according to the oracle of the prophet Nathan (1 Chr 17). Abraham and Sarah are called out of Babylon (Babel) to go to the promised land at the beginning of Israel's national history in Genesis 12; their distant descendants hear the same call to leave Babylon and return to the promised land in 1 Chronicles 36.

But these two books are not only about genealogy that culminates in a Davidic dynasty; they are about land—geography and dominion. Genesis establishes a domain over which humans are to realize their humanity. The world was created by the command of God; the garden of Eden becomes the prime habitat of human beings until their exile from it. Humans are expelled from the earth with the judgment of the great deluge. The postdiluvian human community is dispersed across the face of the earth at Babel. And when Abram arrives on the historical scene he is promised a commodity that has been in short supply for human beings: a land to call his own. He never quite gets it, except for a graveyard of his wife. By the end of Genesis his descendants are exiled in Egypt from this land of promise. From this exilic vantage point the aged Joseph's remarks conclude the book of Genesis: "I am about to die; but God will surely visit (paqad) you and bring up out (ala) of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (50:24).

Chronicles also focuses on the land, which Abraham and his immediate descendants did not possess. This focus narrows to

Jerusalem and the temple within that land. For example, the heart of Chronicles concerns Jerusalem and the temple under David and Solomon, some twenty chapters [1 Chron 17–2 Chron 7]. The ultimate tragedy is the destruction of the temple and the exile of the people to Babylon. Yet the end of Chronicles, like Genesis, is not exile. The note of promise is a directive from Cyrus for them to return to the land and rebuild the temple [1 Chr 36:23]. Consequently, these two books, which function to introduce and conclude the canon and which have such strikingly similar endings, keep the main storyline in view with two of its important themes—dynasty and dominion—being realized through the Davidic house.

A clearly defined ‘middle’ carries this storyline between the beginning and ending of the canon. The story begun in Genesis flows (at times not so smoothly) from the first couple’s loss of land and exile through to Abraham’s call, Israel’s exile in Egypt, the exodus and the possession of the promised land, followed by the institution of the Davidic dynasty and the loss of land culminating in the exile of Judah. The last narrative note before the interruption of this story is the favour shown to Jehoiachin, the exiled Davidic king in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27-30). This historical sequence of events from Genesis to Kings is disrupted by a body of poetic literature that functions to provide a pause in the storyline to reflect on the tragedy of the exile, its causes and significance. It is here that a profound dialogue occurs, in which God addresses Israel in the first person through the voice of the prophets and Israel addresses God in the first person through the voices of the psalmists.

Significantly, the first book of this commentary, Jeremiah, indicates that exile is not God’s final word...After this

commentary the narrative storyline resumes in Babylon with the vision of Daniel's son of man, which charts a glorious future for Israel...But the seventy years stands for a much longer span of time—seventy sevens, probably 490 years or a complete period of time...the Danielic clock has started ticking. The command of a foreign king, named 'Messiah' in the biblical text, who has ended the rule of Babylon [Isa 45:1], presages the coming of another Messiah (Dan 9:25), who will not only end the world order but also establish a new one—the kingdom of God—in which Jerusalem will be the centre of the earth, a city set on a hill radiating light to the nations (Is 2:1-5; 60:1-22).

From Adam to David. From the creation of the world to the building of the temple, which will give new life to the world and from the divine rule will extend to the ends of the earth. Genealogy and geography, dynasty and dominion. This represents the story of the Tanakh, a story that leaves Israel still in a type of exile, waiting for someone from David's house to come and build a house to bring about the restoration of all things. This is the overall message, presented in a storyline with commentary, shows that the Tanakh is a book and not a ragbag. To be sure, it consists of many texts, but these find their part in a larger Text. The many stories together constitute a single Story. And this Story is about the reclamation of a lost human dominion over the world through a Davidic dynasty. In short, it is about the coming of the kingdom of God, and it is unfinished.

A significant structural feature of the biblical narrative is typology...typological features emerge naturally when the biblical text is understood as a Text. This is particularly clear for the twin themes of dynasty and dominion. In each case there is movement from the universal to the particular and back to the

universal. For example, humanity is called to be the image of God, fails in its task and is replaced by Israel, who is regarded as God's son. A tribe is singled out within Israel—a family within the tribe—and an individual, David—becomes the focus. And yet David, his sons and their failures, point forwards to a just Davidic king who will bring the benefits of the rule not only to Israel but to all of humanity. Similarly, the dominion of Adam begins over all creation, and then the land of Canaan becomes the focus, and next the city of Jerusalem and then temple. And from this particular place, the rule of God extends outwards to Israel and the nations, even to the ends of the earth.

Significantly, the New Testament is structured similarly to the Tanakh: story (Gospels, Acts), commentary (Letters), story (Revelation)...The New Testament story begins with a genealogy, one that comprehends the entire history of Israel (Mt 1:1-17)...the New Testament links the beginning and ending of Tanakh's story with the life of Jesus...Jesus is a new David, the culmination of Israel's history, who will bring about an end to the exile. Yet his birth brings light to the Gentiles; a star is seen rising in the east (Mt 2:2), which means the crushing of the enemy's head (Num 24:17). Thus, when Jesus begins his ministry, he, as the new Adam and the new Israel, succeeds where the old Adam and the old Israel failed (Mt 4:1-11). Hence he recapitulates in his life the history of Adam and Israel."

He is the descendant of David who, by virtue of his resurrection, sits on the throne of David as the long-expected descendent of the Davidic house (understood as a dynasty) (Lk 1:32; Acts 2:30-35)...But Jesus is also the Davidic house understood as a temple, in which God's presence is incarnated, a presence that flows out

of him like a surging river giving life to all (John 2:19-22; 7:37-39; cf. 47:1-12).”

From the Davidic centre of Jerusalem the growing band of disciples makes its way from Judea to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)...At the end of the New Testament, ‘history’ resumes in Daniel-like fashion with the book of Revelation, which, in its message, captures the vast kaleidoscope of the latter-day visions of the Tanakh in one stunning panoramic vision. There is the Son of Man (Rev 1:13; Dan 7:13), from whose mouth emanates a sharp sword (Rev 1:16; Is 11:4; 49:2), the one among the lampstands (Rev 1:13; Zech 4), the lion from the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5; Gen 9:9-10) and the root of David (Rev 5:5; Is 11:1).
(19).

Chapter 7

Hypothetical arguments for the Catholic canon

I. The Hypothetical Argument for Catholicism

A popular argument for Roman Catholicism takes this basic form: If God gave us an infallible text, then he'd give us an infallible interpreter.

Variations on this type of argument are adapted to analogous claims, viz., If God gave us a collection of infallible books, he'd give us an infallible collector; if God gave us his Word, he'd give us an infallible Church to assure us that the Bible is his Word.

II. The Hypothetical Counterargument

What these arguments have in common is their hypothetical character. But this type of argument suffers from a basic liability: For every hypothetical argument, it's often child's play to propose a hypothetical alternative.

Consider the following:

If God gave us an infallible text, but didn't give us an infallible interpreter, then an infallible interpreter is unnecessary for God to teach us what he intends to have us to believe.

If God gave us a collection of infallible books, but didn't give us an infallible collector, then an infallible collector is unnecessary to discover the correct canon of Scripture.

If God gave us his Word, but didn't give us an infallible Church, then an infallible Church is unnecessary to assure us that the Bible is his Word.

Put another way, the hypothetical arguments for Catholicism are reversible. You can take a hypothetical argument for Catholicism,

and by a Moore shift, turn that into a hypothetical counterargument against Catholicism.

III. Plausible Alternatives

Incidentally, it isn't difficult to flesh out the hypothetical alternatives. For instance, if the Protestant canon of Scripture is the correct canon, and God wants someone to believe in the Protestant canon, then he can do so causing that person to attend a Protestant church.

God could cultivate that belief through opportune social conditioning. In this case, special providence is a reliable belief-forming mechanism. In this case, God has prearranged historical events so that Protestant churches adhere to the true canon. And God has prearranged historical events so that some individuals will be born at such a time and place that they will attend a Protestant church, where they will be conditioned to believe in the true canon of Scripture.

This doesn't mean that providence, per se, yields true beliefs. Rather, this has reference to situations in which God intentionally employs providential circumstances to foster a true belief in the canon of Scripture.

So it could be as simple as that. What is more, this happens to be a very realistic model of how most OT Jews and NT Christians actually form their beliefs. Their beliefs are largely the result of their natural aptitudes, historical opportunities, and formative experiences.

At the same time, it's also possible for more sophisticated Christians to confirm their belief in the Protestant canon through various lines of evidence.

But even if you're in no position to prove it, the fact that you're in no position to prove it could be a special providential circumstance. God brought you to a true belief in the canon, not by historical evidence, but by historical events. By exposing you to external conditions which are divinely designed to induce true beliefs.

Chapter 8

“The Magisterium in the NT”

I've reviewed most of Cardinal Dulles' recent book on *The Magisterium: Teacher & Guardian of the Faith* (Sapientia 2007). Now I'll circle back and review his case for the Magisterium in the NT.

The first thing I'd note is the he begins with the NT data in building an exegetical case for the Magisterium. Yet that's an illogical starting point.

In stating the “rationale” for the Magisterium, he argued for the antecedent probability of the Magisterium (4-5).

Now, I myself don't accept that methodology. I think we should operate with a revealed rule of faith. Not resort to mere conjecture.

If, however, we grant his methodology for the sake of argument, then the rationale for the Magisterium would apply, not only to the

new covenant community, to the old covenant community.

So is there an OT magisterium, or the functional equivalent? The closest thing we have to a teaching office in the OT is the judiciary. Here are some representative passages:

Deuteronomy 1:9-18

9"At that time I said to you, 'I am not able to bear you by myself. 10The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven. 11 May the LORD, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you! 12 How can I bear by myself the weight and burden of you and your strife? 13 Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.' 14And you answered me, 'The thing that you have spoken is good for us to do.' 15So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes. 16And I charged your judges at that time, 'Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him. 17 You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.' 18And I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.

Deuteronomy 16:18

18" You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

Deuteronomy 17:8-13

8" If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. 9 And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. 10 Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. 11 According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. 12 The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again.

2 Chronicles 19:8-11

8 Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. 9 And he charged them: "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: 10 whenever

a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt. 11And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters, and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!"

Now, this is somewhat analogous to a teaching office insofar as a judge must interpret the law in order to apply the law. Of course, judges qua judges weren't teaching the people. But it's somewhat analogous.

Having said that, is the OT judiciary analogous to the Catholic Magisterium? No.

i) The composition of the OT judiciary wasn't limited to a clerical class. It included local chieftains and tribal elders—as well as priests.

ii) Judicial rulings were not infallible. If they were infallible, you wouldn't have an appellate process. What is more, if they were infallible, you wouldn't have warnings about corrupt judges.

So there is no OT precedent for the Catholic Magisterium. Yet the logic of the argument would require an OT equivalent.

Let's now transition to Dulles' arguments:

Jesus designates him [Peter] as the rock on whom the Church is to be built, gives him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and empowers him to bind and loose—terms probably signifying

the authority to make binding decisions for the whole community (12).

I'm not going to go into all the problems with this appeal, which I done elsewhere. But I'll say the following:

i) Dulles seems to treat the keys as a separate prerogative from the power to bind and loose. I think it more likely that the keys are a metaphor for the power to bind and loose. And as Dulles admits on the next page, this same prerogative is conferred on the Twelve (Mt 18:18).

ii) Although I don't reject the possibility that Peter is the referent in this verse, Gundry has argued otherwise in his commentary on Matthew, and he presents a respectable argument for his interpretation.

iii) Mt 16:18-19 says absolutely nothing about apostolic succession, Roman primacy or the papacy.

iv) Even if you believe in Petrine primacy and apostolic succession, that doesn't select for Roman primacy or the papacy since Rome was not the only place where Peter ministered.

I could say more, but that's a start.

In the early chapters of acts, we see Peter as the unquestioned leader and spokesman of the apostolic leadership (Acts 1:15; 2:25; 4:8; 5:29; 10:24) (12).

Except that if we see that in the "early" chapters of Acts, then we also see a shift in the later chapters of Acts, as other leaders come to the fore (e.g. Paul, James). So this appeal cuts both ways.

In the two letters ascribed to him we see Peter from 'Babylon' (a code name for Rome) directing his fellow presbyters of other communities (12-13).

i) Roman residency is quite insufficient to establish Roman primacy or the papacy. Unless there is something unique about Peter's Roman residency, every place where he ministered could claim the same distinction.

ii) Apropos (i), he's probably writing to other communities where he ministered.

iii) Contemporary Catholic scholars reject the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter, and they also question the Petrine authorship of 1 Peter. Ray Brown, in his NT introduction, is a case in point.

Speaking of which, Dulles refers the reader to the following material;

On the concept of authorship in the New Testament era, see Raymond E. Brown, 'Canonicity,' *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* §89 (Prentice Hall, 1990), 1051-52...Still valuable is the article of Kurt Aland, "The Problem of Anonymity and Pseudonymity in Christian Literature of the First Two Centuries"... (15n5).

And what does Brown say? "In principle there can be no objection to designating as pseudonymous 2 Peter, Jas, Jude, and the Pastorals, Col, Eph, and 2 Thes" (1051).

And Dulles himself says:

Leaders of the next generation, it would seem, sometimes exploited the reputation of the founders by attributing to Peter, Paul, James, and John writings composed after their death,

turning the founders into literary mouthpieces to give added authority to later works... (15).

Keep Dulles' disclaimer in mind as we proceed. Moving along:

When a dispute broke out about the need for Christians to observe the Mosaic Law, a consultation was held with the Apostles and presbyters at Jerusalem, who handed down a judgment that they attributed to themselves and the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:1-29) (14).

Two problems:

i) This tells us nothing about the status of a church council absent the participation of Apostles.

ii) Dulles is assuming that Acts is historically reliable. But contemporary Catholic scholars are less sanguine. Fitzmyer, in his commentary, says "the issue of the historical character of the Lucan account in Acts has been well studied, and it is clear today that a middle ground has to be sought between the skeptical approach and a conservative reaction to it. One has to admit that at times Luke's information is faulty and that he has confused some things in his narrative..." (124), while Brown, in his NT introduction, accuses Luke of "romanticizing" early church history.

Continuing with Dulles:

Since his [Paul's] oral preaching and his letters are of equal authority, the community of Thessalonica is to stand firm and hold to both (2 Thes 2:15)"(15).

Two more problems:

i) This is one of the letters which Brown classifies as pseudonymous (ditto: Aland). As we've seen, Dulles himself endorses the thesis of canonical pseudepigrapha. In that event, 2 Thes 2:15 is not a Pauline command to the church of Thessalonica. Rather, it's the command of a Pauline imposter.

ii) Bracketing Catholic scholarship, the Thessalonians should hold to the oral preaching which they heard direct from the lips of Paul himself. It doesn't extend to allegedly apostolic tradition from some thirdhand source (or worse). To the contrary, this very epistle warns the reader to be wary of spurious apostolic communications (2:2; 3:17). That's the point of 2 Thes 2:15. It's the polar opposite of a blanket endorsement of allegedly apostolic traditions.

The Church experienced the need for continuing doctrinal authority to see to it that the biblical message was faithfully proclaimed and rightly interpreted (15-16).

That conclusion doesn't follow from his prooftexts. Rather, it's tacked on.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in certain passages from the Gospels the Apostles are addressed in a manner that would seem to include their successors. For example, Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus promises to remain present until the end of the age with those whom he sends to speak and act in his name' (16).

More problems:

i) Dulles is equivocating. Most Protestants don't deny apostolic succession in the generic sense that the Apostles made disciples and appointed men to carry on after they died. But "apostolic succession"

is a term of art with a specialized meaning in Catholic theology. Indeed, Dulles defines his terms at a later point:

Each bishop receives with ordination the three functions (munera) discussed above in chapter 1: those of sanctifying, teaching, and governing. The capacity to exercise the munus of sanctifying, as occurs in sacramental actions such as the consecration of the Eucharist, is inseparable from the order itself, and can never be lost. The munera of teaching and pastoral rule, however, cannot be exercised except by bishops in the hierarchical communities with the head and members of the episcopal college (LG 22). Hierarchical communion, a condition for the exercise of these latter functions, is ruptured by schism or heresy (49).

So this is what Dulles actually means by apostolic succession. Needless to say, you can't get any of that from the text of Mt 28:19-20, and it's deceptive to cite Mt 28:19-20 as a proof-text for apostolic succession when there's such a gap between the content of the text and your operative definition.

ii) The kind of apostolic succession Matthew is dealing with is one generation of disciples making another generation of disciples—for the duration of the church age. This has nothing to do with “apostolic succession” in the Catholic sense of the term.

Again, in his high-priestly prayer, Jesus asks the Father to consecrate his disciples in the truth (Jn 17:17-19). In other passages of the Last Discourse the reliability of the Apostles' future testimony is attributed to the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, whose assistance is needed for every generation (14:26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15).

i) While 16:8-10 might apply to every generation, the scope of that statement is hardly restricted to the episcopate.

ii) Conversely, you can't channel the other promises through 16:8-10, as if 14:26 and 15:26-27 apply to every generation. In context, they apply to the Apostolate.

So his prooftexts either prove too much or too little. They either apply too widely or too narrowly to single out the episcopate.

Insofar as the Holy Spirit continues to keep the Church in the truth through the testimony of duly commissioned witnesses, the Church perpetually remains apostolic (16).

More problems:

i) That conclusion doesn't follow from his Johannine prooftexts. It's yet another add on.

ii) Even if, *ex hypothesi*, the inference were valid, it doesn't single out the Roman Catholic church as the recipient of this promise. As usual, Catholic apologists have Catholicism etched on their spectacles, so whenever they see a promise to the church, they assume, without further ado, that this promise must be referring to their own denomination. But that isn't exegesis.

The prophets and teachers of Antioch lay hands on Barnabas and Paul with prayer and fasting when sending them on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:3).

And what does Dulles think that's supposed to prove? Ordination? Holy Orders? But Paul was already an apostle. Barnabas was already an evangelist.

Barnabas and Paul take pains to install presbyters in each of the churches they establish in Asia Minor...Peter and the Twelve lay hands on representatives of the Greek-speaking Christians at Jerusalem (Acts 6:6). Paul exhorts the presbyter-bishops of Ephesus to carry on his ministry as guardians commissioned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). To meet a crisis of leadership at Corinth, Paul affirms the authority of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:15-18) (16-17).

This is all irrelevant to the issue at hand. Except for the Plymouth Brethren, the Primitive Baptists, and a few Pentecostal fringe-groups, most every Protestant denomination accepts the principle of church office. We agree that the Apostles set up a regular Christian ministry. The Apostles laid the foundation, while pastors are custodians of that foundation.

None of the material cited by Dulles begins to specify the Catholic Magisterium. Indeed, drawing our attention to the house-church of Stephanas only reminds us of the vast gap between NT polity and Catholic polity.

The preservation of continuity through duly commissioned, Spirit-guided leaders is further developed in the Pastoral Letters...Paul instructs Titus...He likewise admonishes Timothy (17).

It's deceptive for Dulles to attribute these statements to Paul when Dulles, in fact, regards the Pastorals as pseudepigraphal. And this goes to the heart of his argument. Traditionally, the Pastorals were cited as evidence of apostolic succession under the assumption that they were written by an Apostle to one or more of his successors. That, alone, won't get you apostolic succession, but that's a necessary condition for the argument to have any traction.

If, however, you deny the Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, then what we actually have is an imposter who is writing to a fictitious deputy of Paul. The whole exercise is a literary artifice. Paul is not the writer, while Timothy and Titus are not the recipients. So even if, for the sake of argument, the Pastorals taught apostolic succession, that would be an imaginary apostolic succession.

Mind you, I don't share Dulles' views on pseudonymity. I'm merely evaluating his appeal on his own grounds.

Dulles proceeds to cite 1 Tim 4:14 and 2 Tim 1:6 to show that: The idea of apostolic succession in the ordained ministry is beginning to emerge (17).

Two problems:

i) His interpretation is dubious. As a leading commentator notes:

The increasingly popular understanding of the 'gift' as a commissioning to office (making Timothy the paradigm of later church officers to whom the gifts and authority for ministry were limited) is out of place in this text.[\(20\)](#)

The language here and in the parallel text in 2 Tim 1:6 will not bear the strain imposed by making charisma into 'office.' As Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 772-73, points out, even if in 4:14 the idea of neglecting an office is reasonable enough (though can an office be 'in you?'), the imagery of fanning into flame the 'gift of God' cannot be applied sensibly to an 'office' (773). See also Marshall, 564-65.[\(21\)](#)

ii) To say that we see the idea of apostolic succession "beginning to emerge" is prejudicial. This assumes that the Pastorals only present a

seminal version of church polity. A work in progress. An unfinished product which has to be completed by subsequent, postapostolic developments.

But why should we assume that NT polity is deficient? Why not assume that Paul and other NT writers who speak to the subject laid down the necessary ingredients of church polity?

To Dulles, the NT data is defective because he views it through the lens of Catholicism. But does his viewpoint reflect the viewpoint of the NT writers?

If you're Catholic, then, by definition, NT polity is inadequate since it falls far short of Catholic polity. You look at the data and see all the missing pieces.

But that's a consequence of Catholic theology. That begs the question in favor of Catholicism. And whatever else that may be, it's not exegesis.

He then has a section on the "Responsibilities of Pastors," in which we read things like:

Paul in the Second Letter of Timothy...to Titus he writes...Paul warns...(Eph 4:14) (17-18).

Once more, it's duplicitous of Dulles to attribute these statements to Paul when he denies the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles and Prison Epistles.

And there's a larger point which he overlooks: he quotes the Pastorals to establish the authority of church office, but he doesn't hold the Magisterium to the qualifications laid down in his deutero-Pauline proof texts. What does Paul say on the subject?

1 Tim 3:1-7

1The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:6-9

6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

But many popes, cardinals, and bishops don't measure up to this standard. If you applied that yardstick to the papacy, then many popes would be antipopes. If you applied that yardstick to the episcopate, then that would invalidate the ordination of many

cardinals and bishops. If these are qualifications for church office, then noncompliance disqualifies you for (or from) church office.

Why is it that Catholics like Dulles appeal to the Pastorals in making a case for apostolic succession when they fail to measure the Magisterium by the actual job description contained therein? Because apostolic succession would immediately unravel.

It's quite unscrupulous of Dulles to cite this material in support of Catholic ecclesiology when he's so selective about how he applies it. He only cites it to establish the rights of a bishop, without holding bishops to the commensurate responsibilities. But if apostolic succession would come apart at the seams as soon as you compare the Magisterium with the Pauline job description, then that falsifies the Magisterium.

Continuing:

Peter in his Second Letter... (18).

But Dulles doesn't believe that Peter wrote 2 Peter. It's unethical of Dulles to take the position of Ray Brown or Kurt Aland on authorship, then continue to attribute these documents to their putative authors for polemical purposes.

If the 'angels' of the seven churches of Asia Minor in the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation are, as many believe, bishops, we have here a confirmation that by late New Testament times each local church in Asia Minor may have had a single bishop as its pastor. (19).

Several problems with this inference:

i) There are good arguments for both the late dating and the early dating of Revelation.

ii) The identity of the “angels” is disputed. Aune rings the changes on the interpretive options.[\(22\)](#)

iii) Even if we identify the “angels” as church officers, that wouldn’t establish singular eldership. The “messengers” could just as well be delegates to Patmos from the seven churches of Asia Minor.

iv) Dulles is apparently unaware of the fact that, as Aune points out, “sometimes the address shifts to the second person plural” (109). So the singular number is not used throughout. Rather, it alternates with the plural number, depending on the context.

v) Dulles is tacitly assuming an evolutionary view of NT polity, where Revelation represents a development away from plural eldership to singular eldership. But why assume that everywhere had to use the same model? Why not assume a measure of flexibility? After all, the NT church had a limited talent pool. Would we really expect a standardized model throughout the far-flung Roman Empire? Certainly we see this on the mission field, where missionaries have to be adaptable—and the NT church was a missionary church. Why superimpose a diachronic grid on the data? Why assume there couldn’t be legitimate variation from one place to another?

The New Testament exhibits Church order in its formative stages, but more time was needed for Church order to assume its definitive form. (20).

i) Once again, this assessment begs the question by assuming that the NT only gives us an embryonic version of church polity.

You would only make that assumption if you treat the Catholic Magisterium as your point of reference. Did the NT writers think they were giving us a merely “formative” version of Church order? Subdividing the material into stages on a trajectory to the Catholic Magisterium superimposes a Catholic framework onto the data. Dulles didn’t extrapolate that framework from his prooftexts.

ii) And who would supply the “definitive form”? The Magisterium. So the Magisterium is writing its own job description. The evolution of the Magisterium by and for the Magisterium. Like a military dictator who pins medals on his own uniform.

Together with the promise of perpetuity, Christ has given to the Church the means whereby she can assuredly remain ‘the pillar and the bulwark of the truth’ (1 Tim 3:15; cf. 2 Tim 2:19) (65).

i) Here we see traditional Catholic prooftexting. And because it’s traditional, it doesn’t bother to go back and reexamine the text in context. But, in context, this has reference to the local church. And, in context, the local church would be the church of Ephesus, not the church of Rome or the universal church. Modern Catholic scholars admit this:

A church, in both 3:5 and 5:15, has a local aspect as a home has an address...the anarthrous usage in this chapter in Timothy may be a way of indicating that *ekklesia theou* is to be heard for all practical purposes as a name (see BDF §257.2), perhaps one current already in Ephesus. The use of the phrase here would constitute a delicate compliment to the local usage, encouraging the house churches there to welcome the Pauline directives of this correspondence as they prided themselves on a specifically Pauline name for their Christian assembly.

God's house, understood in this fashion, can be described further as the church of the living God. Just as the oikos as a sign was the actual, local assembly of believers, that same local assembly could be called God's church (as in 3:5 above).(23).

The organization, such as we can reconstruct it, does not resemble the hierarchical arrangement of the clergy described in Ignatius's Letters. It comes closer to the synagogal structure of Diaspora Judaism, an organizational arrangement that, in turn, closely resembled that in Greco-Roman collegia. Such arrangements were available in Paul's milieu. No long period of internal development was required for them to emerge.

There is a complete absence of legitimation of any organizational element in these letters. Leaders are not designated as priests, and none of their functions are cultic in character. Instead, they are given the sort of secular designations used in clubs, and their functions are practical and quotidian...Nothing in the letters supports the idea that structure is in the process of creation.

The elements of church structure found in 1 Timothy and Titus are far closer to the elements suggested by the undisputed letters of Paul than to the ecclesiastical arrangements outlined by Ignatius of Antioch.

It may be well to begin a consideration of Paul's instructions concerning the supervisor by restating two basic points. The first is that the designation "church order in the Pastorals" is misleading. Titus has only a handful of verses that appear to meld the position of elder and supervisor (Tit 1:5-9). 2 Timothy gives no attention to church organization. A better designation, then, is "church order in Ephesus as it can be inferred from 1

Timothy.”...[Second], the best recent study of institutionalization in Pauline churches within the conventional developmental framework reveals how little there is to support the picture of institutional development, once those theological underpinnings are removed and the data are read fairly.

The structure suggested by 1 Timothy is simple. I mention first several key Greek terms that will recur in the discussion. The leadership is exercised by an episkopos who functions as part of a “board of elders” (*presbyterion*, 4:14).

Such a collegial leadership, with a single figure serving as supervisor or coordinator, is the basic structure for intentional groups in the 1C Mediterranean world...In 1 Timothy, we have the board of elders, a leadership position called the supervisor, and subordinate officials—probably both male and female (3:11)—called literally “helpers” (*diakonoi*). The correlation of offices to functions is not revealed. But we learn that the community carries out certain activities that match those we know about in the Diaspora synagogue. It performs public prayer together with reading and exhortation (4:1-3; 2:1-3). It makes charity distribution to widows (5:3-16). It exercises hospitality (3:2). It hears and settles disputes (5:19-20).

The assumption that exactly the same structure prevailed everywhere from the beginning is implausible. We should think rather of patterns of organization that share elements with diverse local expressions.

Paul’s allusion to the *presbyterion* (board of elders) in 4:14 and his comments on elders and widows in 5:1-25 clearly have an ad hoc and circumstantial character. It is possible at this point, therefore, to take stock.

For the most part, however, we see a simple collegial governance: older men form a board with a supervisor and have some helpers for practical assurance. We note again that none of these titles or roles is theologically legitimized. The leaders are not given religious titles and are granted no particular spiritual power. Their tasks appear to be organizational, didactic, and practical rather than cultic or liturgical.

This brings us to my fairly unusual translation of 3:15. If “pillar and foundation of truth” is taken in the usual way, as standing in apposition to “the church of the living God,” there are two unfortunate results. The first is that Paul’s metaphor is fractured. The church cannot logically be both the house and a pillar of or foundation for the house. The second is the unhappy inference that some ecclesiologies have not been slow to draw: to equate the church with “the foundation of truth.” The translation I have suggested, however, avoids both problems and makes better sense of the rhetorical function of the passage.

(25).

ii) Moreover, it’s disingenuous to cite traditional prooftexts for your position after you deny the traditional authorship associated with the traditional prooftexts.

iii) The “promise of perpetuity” doesn’t single out the church of Rome.

Dulles’ case for the Magisterium in the NT is a tissue of fallacies. It has a cumulative effect if you ignore the fact that every link in the chain is broken. A string of fallacies only adds up to a fallacious sum-total.

Chapter 9

Hebrews

A. Authorship

Hebrews is formally anonymous. Over the centuries, that has fueled a lot of guesswork regarding the identity of the author. There is, of course, nothing wrong with anonymity. And any ascription of authorship is bound to be conjectural to some degree. But with that in mind, this may be the most interesting suggestion I've run across:

Many biblical figures are named in Hebrews (see chapter 11), but aside from Jesus, the only New Testament person named anywhere in the text is Paul's associate, Timothy (see 13:23). This seems to eliminate Timothy from consideration as the author, for he would hardly have referred to himself by name. But does it? Some have suggested that 13:22-25 is a kind of brief appendix or postscript to the letter proper, which ends with the long benediction invoking 'the God of peace—who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep' (13:20). In that case, the 'voice' speaking those last four verses may not be that of the author but of someone else forwarding a colleague's sermon on to its intended audience—or even a different audience, for which it was not at first intended. Possibly the reason this second voice at the end of the letter sounds like Paul (see above) is that it was Paul (so Trobisch 1993:320-323, though without hazarding a guess as to the identity of Paul's' colleague). Whoever it was, he mentioned that

‘our brother Timothy has been released from jail’ (13:23). Why is Timothy mentioned? The author of the letter had just asked for prayer ‘that I will be able to come back to you soon’ (13:19), suggesting that he was hindered in some way from coming. The author of the last four verses, by contrast, was not hindered. He was apparently free to come at any time, offering the good news that because Timothy was now free, he and Timothy would come just as soon as Timothy joined him. One possible explanation is that Timothy was the author of the sermon now being sent as a letter ‘to the Hebrews’ (so Legg 1968: 220-23). Timothy, more than anyone else, is named as coauthor (or at least co-sender) of several of Paul’s letters (see 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thes 1:1-2; 2 Thes 1:1; Phlm 1:1), and it is conceivable that here, too, we may have a kind of joint effort. Timothy in prison would have had ample time to compose a long sermon for a specific congregation. This is consistent with the author’s notable interest in ‘those who were thrown into jail’ (10:34), or ‘chained in prisons’ (11:36), or ‘in prison’ (13:3). If this were the case, Paul might then have had the responsibility to see to it that Timothy’s ‘word of exhortation’ reached either its intended audience or perhaps a wider audience than first intended. As he prepared to send it along with his brief cover letter, Paul learned that Timothy had been released and joined with Timothy in his promise to come ‘soon’ in person (13:19,23). Then Paul sent final greetings (13:24) and added to Timothy’s long benediction (13:21-21) a short (and very characteristic) benediction of his own: ‘May God’s grace be with you all’ (13:25). (For further discussion on this see, commentary on 13:22-5).”

All this is somewhat speculative, yet it offers perhaps the best option for those who feel they must attach a specific name to this memorable ‘Deutero-Pauline’ letter. It was Timothy, after all, whom

Paul commanded to ‘focus on reading the Scriptures to the church encouraging the believers, and teaching them’ (1 Tim 4:13). In the book of Hebrews, someone, possibly Timothy, was doing exactly that.[\(26\)](#)

B. Literary allusions

I. Chronological Sequence

How is Hebrews 11 organized? At least up to a point, the arrangement of events is chronological. A few of his allusions are rather open-ended, but most of them can be identified. Based on the standard commentaries, these are the specific individuals and events he refers to in the course of his hortation:

Abel (11:4)

Enoch (5)

Noah (7)

Abraham (11:8ff.)

Isaac & Jacob (11:9ff.)

Jacob & Esau (20)

Joseph (21-22)

Moses (11:23ff.)

Rahab (31)

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha (32a)

David, Samuel, the prophets (32b)

Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego (33b)

Daniel (34a)

Maccabean revolt (34b)

Elijah & Elisha (35a)

Maccabean revolt (35b)

Zechariah (37)

So the general progression is from prediluvial history to the Intertestamental period.

More particularly, from the prediluvial period through the patriarchal era, the Exodus, the Conquest, the Monarchy, the Exile, the postexilic era, and the Intertestamental period.

So he is illustrating his point by beginning at the commencement of human history, and taking that all the way up to the brink of the NT era. From ancient history or the distant past to the epoch immediately preceding the time of his audience.

II. Canonical Sequence

What is the source of his relative chronology? The obvious answer is the OT canon, supplemented by the OT apocrypha when he reaches the Intertestamental period.

He sees the events unfolding in a certain historical sequence because the books of the OT canon were arranged in an editorial sequence such that the canonical order parallels the chronological order.

He has OT history mentally laid out before his eyes as he catalogues this honor roll of OT heroes and heroines. And he has this mental picture of events because he has a mental outline of the OT canon.

The individuals and events cited or alluded to parallel the following books of the Bible:

11:4-22 (Genesis)

11:23ff. (Exodus)

11:31 (Joshua)

11:32a (Judges)

11:32b (Samuel)

11:33b-34a (Daniel)

11:35a (Kings)

11:37 (Chronicles)

For the Maccabean revolt, he must, by definition, turn to extracanonical sources since the date of that episode fell inside the Intertestamental period.

III. Literary Sequence

On the face of it, the linear progression breaks down towards the end of the chapter. For the sequence is consistent until we hit v35. Elijah and Elisha obviously antedate the Maccabean revolt, as does the stoning of Zechariah.

But the anachronism may only be apparent. For it depends on the internal divisions within chapter 11.

We have an explicit transition in v32, where the author admits a shift to a more abbreviated summary of events.

Moreover, as one commentator notes:

The present series of terse clauses is broken in vv35-36 by a piece of connected speech that brings the chronicle of the triumphs of faith to a conclusion and effects the transition to the martyrology in vv 35b-38.

The long chain of asyndeta in v37 is rhetorically effective.[\(27\)](#)

If this analysis is correct, then the presentation is not dischronologous. Rather, the chronology is simply subdivided into shorter literary units, while the overall direction is preserved.

IV. Comparative Sequence

A sidelight of this chapter is that it furnishes a 1C (pre-70 AD) historic witness to the Jewish canon of Scripture.

Of course, the author's selection criteria restrict his range of reference to the narrative genre, as he cites examples of OT heroes and heroines.

But within the limitations of his selection criteria, an incidental consequence of his chronological scheme is to outline the boundaries of the OT canon from Genesis to Daniel and Chronicles.

This may strike the modern reader as out of sequence, since Daniel and Chronicles are not positioned at or near the end of our Christian editions of the OT.

However, the author's sequence does correspond to our ancient sources for the Jewish canon (e.g. Josephus, Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome, the Talmud), where Daniel comes before Chronicles, while both belong to the third division of the canon, at or near the end.

For details, cf. R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (Eerdmans 1986).

There are other witnesses to the Jewish canon, such as Philo, but they don't indicate the overall shape of the OT canon—beyond the bare, threefold division of Sirach.

V. Original Sequence

By contrast, the author's sequence does not correspond to the LXX. This discrepancy is striking since, by all accounts, the author of Hebrews is literarily dependent on the LXX.

The obvious explanation is that our copies of the LXX date to the Christian era. As such, they may not reflect the original content or sequence.

In my opinion, Heb 11 is a neglected witness to the OT canon. And it's a valuable witness because, on the most likely dating scheme, it

antedates (the writings of) Josephus, Jamnia (c. 90 AD), and the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD)—making it our earliest witness to the contours of the OT canon.

Chapter 10

Enoch & Jude

I. Canonics

Jude's quotation of 1 Enoch 1:9 is often touted as a problem for the Protestant canon. If, however, that's a problem for the Protestant canon, then that's also a problem for the Roman Catholic canon, the Eastern Orthodox canon, and most Oriental orthodox canons—except the anomalous case of the Ethiopian Orthodox canon.

Of course, Roman Catholics default to the Magisterium. That, however, is a makeshift solution that fails to address Jude's use of 1 Enoch 1:9. Either Jude treats this passage as inspired Scripture or not. If not, then we don't need the Magisterium to broker the issue; but if he does, then the Magisterium can't very well overrule Jude.

II. The Text

I'm going to reproduce both passages. I'll quote Jude in the ESV, and I'll use the translation supplied by Nickelsburg in his commentary for the Enochic passage.

1 Enoch 1:1-2,9

The words of the blessing with which Enoch blessed the righteous chosen who will be present on the day of tribulation, to remove all the enemies; and the righteous will be saved. And he took up his discourse and said, Enoch, a righteous man whose eyes were opened by God, who had the vision of the Holy One and of heaven, which he showed me...Behold, he comes with the myriads of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to destroy all the wicked, and to convict all flesh for all the wicked deeds that they have done, and the proud and hard words that wicked sinners spoke against him.

Jude 14-15

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

III. The Crux

Jude's use of 1 Enoch 1:9 raises at least two related issues:

- i) Unless he regards the speaker as the historic Enoch, why does he ascribe the utterance to Enoch?
- ii) Unless he regards 1 Enoch 1:9 as true, why does he quote it?

IV. The Enochic Ascription

From what I can gauge, the obvious reason that Jude, in quoting this passage, attributes the utterance to Enoch, is because that ascription is, itself, a part of the original quote. Jude is quoting from a book quoting “Enoch.”

1 Enoch 1:1 is a general superscription for chapters 1-5 (in our extant editions), followed by an introduction (1:2-3) which reaffirms the Enochic superscription. (For details, see Nickelsburg’s commentary.)

Jude introduces 1:9 by paraphrasing 1:1 and then incorporating that ascription into his quote. In effect, he’s quoting 1:1,9. He carries the ascription of 1:1 down into the quotation of 1:9—skipping over the intervening material.

But this does not imply that he himself attributes the utterance to Enoch. Rather, he’s quoting the citation that comes with the pericope (1:1-9). A summary quotation of 1:1,9 (or 1:1-2,9).

He quotes the superscription because the superscription was already a part of the primary text, and, what is more, a part of the text that introduces the oracle of judgment.

So it’s not as if he’s adding his own attribution, or vouching for the ascription. Rather, he’s quoting a quote. For 1 Enoch 1:1-2 explicitly quotes “Enoch” making the statement recorded in v9. Therefore, an accurate quote by a secondary source (Jude) will reproduce the superscription in the primary source—though not necessarily verbatim.

To take a comparison, suppose a pastor preaches a sermon series on Hebrews, using the KJV. He inaugurates the series by reading his sermon text: “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews. God,

who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets...”

Is the pastor attributing Hebrews to St. Paul? No. The pastor is quoting the KJV, which attributes this letter to St. Paul.

Of course, this doesn't rule out the possibility that our pastor may agree with the citation. But we can't infer that from the mere practice of quoting the superscription to introduce the sermon text.

V. The Enochic Background

A common problem with the way the issue is framed is that scholars tend to focus on the background of Jude 14-15 rather than the background of 1 Enoch 1:9. Once they have identified the source of Jude 14-15, that's where they stop.

Yet, to a great extent, 1 Enoch 1:9 (indeed, the whole pericope) is, itself, a secondary source which has its primary source in OT scripture. Therefore, Jude isn't simply quoting 1 Enoch 1:9. For by quoting 1 Enoch 1:9, he is indirectly quoting whatever OT passages 1 Enoch is alluding to. To the extent, which is considerable, that 1 Enoch 1:9 goes back to the OT scriptures, so does Jude 14-15. It's the truth of the OT scriptures, appropriated by 1 Enoch 1:9, which underwrites the truth 1 Enoch 1:9.

As several scholars have noted:

The holy ones are the faithful angels of God, as in Dan 4 and Job 5:1; 15:15. This reference to God's celestial band recalls Deut 33:2...Zech 14:5c envisions an advent of God along with his holy ones. It is possible that Ps 68:18[17] also speaks of God's

heavenly retinue within the context of theophany...Dan 7:10, a part of Daniel's throne vision, also pictures God as surrounded by myriads of heavenly attendants as at the time of judgment. [\(28\)](#)

That God comes with myriads of holy ones derives from Deut 33:2...The universality of this judgment, indicated already in [1 Enoch] 1:7, is emphasized here by the fourfold repetition of 'all.'...the language here should be read in light of three related OT texts. The first is Genesis 6-9, which repeatedly speaks of the corruption of all flesh and of the judgment that falls on all flesh except for a very small remnant [Gen 6:12,13,17,19; 7:15,21; 8:17; 9:11,15,17]...Two other OT passages (Jer 25:30-32; Isa 66:15-16) may have influenced the wording of 1 Enoch 1:3c-5,9. [\(29\)](#)

In each case, the incident recorded is tied intimately with some set canonical text. The angelic fall (v6) became a very common interpretation of Gen 6:1-4, and the dispute over the body of Moses (v9) was an interpretive tradition that developed due to the rather obscure reference to Moses's death in Deut 34:5-6, which concludes 'but no one knows his burial place to this day' (NRSV). Jude's reference is to the Assumption (Testament) of Moses, but it also evokes the words of Zech 3:1-2. The quotation of 1 En. 1:9 in vv14-15 draws on Deut 33:2, which was considered prophetic of the day of the Lord: "The Lord came from Sinai...with him were myriads of holy ones; at his right, a host of his own" (NRSV). Jude makes judicious and limited use of references to apocryphal literature and evokes only sources that tie into the canonical text and interpretive traditions surrounding it. Jude's use of apocryphal texts is closer to canonical bedrock than is sometimes acknowledged. [\(30\)](#)

VI. Audience Adaptation

Apropos (V), the substance of the passage, quoted by Jude, is thoroughly Scriptural. The only apocryphal element is the Enochic setting, but that's embedded in the citational formula of the primary source which Jude is quoting. An incidental consequence of his re quoting the terms of the original quotation.

We might still ask why Jude references this material in the first place. An obvious explanation is that he did it because this type of literature was venerated by his opponents, and so he's turning it against them. A polemical, tu quoque technique which we find elsewhere in Scripture.

Chapter 11

Pseudepigrapha

I. The Prima Facie Problem

Jude is often thought to pose a problem for the canon. The problem is not that Jude uses extracanonical materials. Other Bible writers

use extracanonical materials too. Truth is truth. As long as the material is true, it matters not where it comes from.

Rather, the question at issue is whether Jude mistakenly uses extracanonical materials as if they were true, when, in fact, they are fictitious.

Various scholars have addressed this issue from various angles, but the coverage is often fairly scattershot. It's useful to review the options in a more systematic fashion.

II. A Problem for Whom?

i) In Catholic and Orthodox polemical theology, this is treated as a problem for the Protestant canon. But if it's a problem for Protestantism, then it's also a problem for Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

ii) There's a tendency among high churchmen to treat ecclesiastical authority as a substitute for a direct solution. They don't have to explain their way out of a problem. They can just invoke their faith in ecclesiastical authority as a safety net that will prevent the church from falling into grave error.

a) But this won't work. First of all, it assumes the church has the authority they ascribe to it.

b) And even if, for the sake of argument, we concede that claim, ecclesiastical authority cannot transform a false proposition into a true proposition. If Jude got it wrong, then ecclesiastical authority is incompetent to salvage his mistake. He said what he said. That's a done deal. The problem can't be retroactively repaired.

iii) Indeed, if Jude is a problem, then the problem is worse for the high church tradition.

a) If Protestant tradition made the wrong call on Jude, that wouldn't falsify the fundamental assumptions of Protestant theological method. We admit that our traditions are fallible.

And that's a strength, not a weakness. In the high church tradition, a primitive error can get frozen into dogma, and then supply the false premise for an escalating series of errors.

Because Protestant tradition is fallible, it is subject to correction. We aren't committed to primitive errors. We aren't committed to taking a primitive error to its logical extreme.

b) By contrast, if Catholicism made the wrong call on Jude, then that falsifies its claim to a divine teaching office. The entire edifice crumbles under a shaky foundation.

c) Likewise, if the Bible is errant, then there's no reason to believe the Church is inerrant. Scepticism about the infallibility of the Bible naturally seeps over into scepticism about the infallibility or indefectibility of the Church.

d) In Orthodoxy, with its fuzzy canon, the problem lies in the opposite direction. An unverifiable canon is no improvement over a faulty canon. And if the Orthodox church cannot even settle the boundaries of the canon, then what does ecclesiastical authority amount to?[\(31\)](#)

In addition, it's arguable that while the Orthodox canon is somewhat fluid, its canon certainly includes the Book of Jude.

III. Inerrancy

i) Some observers of a more liberal disposition might contend that this is a pseudoproblem generated by a dogmatic commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture. Why not simply admit that Jude was mistaken? Apart from a precommitment to inerrancy, is there any reason to suppose that Jude couldn't treat 1 Enoch or the Assumption of Moses as Scripture?

ii) As a matter of fact, there is. All our other sources of information indicate that 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses were never any part of the Jewish canon (cf. Beckwith 1986; Hengel 2004:54-56).

iii) Moreover, Jude was a Palestinian Jew, the kid brother of a very traditional Jew. We wouldn't expect James to rank sectarian, Intertestamental literature as Scripture. By the same token, we wouldn't expect his kid brother to do the same.

So there are antecedent reasons, apart from inerrancy, to doubt that Jude would treat this extracanonical material as Scripture.

iv) Furthermore, a preliminary step in exegesis is to reconstruct the background of a document. Who wrote it? Why? When? Where? To whom or for whom? About whom?

A scholar poses these questions, in part, to identify the viewpoint of the author. It's harder to interpret his statements if we can't ascertain his viewpoint.

In the case of Jude, we know very little about the author, his audience, or his opponents.

The book of Jude is, itself, exceptionally brief. Our knowledge of the author is largely circumstantial. So we have precious little to go on regarding his point of view respecting extracanonical literature. As such, we're not guilty of special pleading when we exercise restraint in jumping to conclusions about his actual view of 1 Enoch or the Assumption of Moses—in possible contrast to his merely polemical use of this material.

v) What is more, it would only be unreasonable to filter Jude through the lens of inerrancy if inerrancy is, itself, unreasonable. But if we have good reason to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture in general, then we have good reason to believe in the inerrancy of Jude in particular—assuming that Jude is Scripture.

I'd add that if Jude is authentic, and there's no good reason to deny its authenticity, then a document by a sibling of Jesus is an excellent candidate for canonicity.

vi) Finally, you don't have to be an inerrantist to deny that Jude regards his extracanonical sources as Scripture, viz. Bauckham, Davids (see below).

IV. Inspiration

i) According to the organic theory of inspiration, which is the mainstream theory in Reformed theology (a la Warfield), inspiration is compatible with the use of sources.

ii) Conversely, the fact that we can trace some ideas to an extrabiblical source doesn't mean that a Bible writer got all his information from extrabiblical sources.

V. Potential Solutions

a) Archer (Archer 1982:430) takes the position that, at this juncture, 1 Enoch preserves an authentic Enochian tradition.

Speaking for myself, I don't find it terribly plausible to suppose that an authentic prediluvian tradition happened to find its way into an apocryphal work, and—what is more—that it also happened to coincide with Jude's argument.

b) Witherington (Witherington 2007:608) says that “from a rhetorical viewpoint it was perfectly appropriate to draw examples from both history and fiction to make one's points about virtue and vice.”

While that's an interesting suggestion, Witherington's only support for this contention is a citation from Quintilian. But whether a Jewish writer like Jude would share the outlook of a Roman rhetorician needs to be established on its own grounds.

c) Charles (Charles 1993) takes the position that Jude's use of apocryphal literature is *ad hominem*. Because the audience and/or opponents held this sectarian literature in high esteem, he answers them on their own grounds.

I think that's a valid consideration. The fact that a Bible writer quotes an extracanonical source doesn't commit him to accepting the source at face value. Moses offers a subversive reading of the Song of Heshbon (Num 21:27-30). It was originally an Amorite taunt-song. Now the tables are turned as Israel bests the Amorites and makes them eat their own words! The irony trades on a conspicuous contrast between the original context and its recontextualization.

For his part, Jeremiah (Jer 48:45-46) preserves the original referent (Moab), but time-shifts the terms fulfillment from past to future. So Moses and Jeremiah both disregard original intent as they adapt the material to score points. They make inspired use of uninspired materials. It is precisely because the material is uninspired that they indulge in such literary license. What is normative is not the primary source, but the use made of it in the secondary source.

d) Green (Green 2008) is critical of Charles' explanation because there's no indication that Jude held a low opinion of the material he was citing. Green's alternative is to emphasize the Scriptural underpinnings of this material.

I agree with Green that overemphasis on the extrabiblical sources can cause us to underemphasize the biblical sources.

At the same time I don't think he quite comes to terms with the logical force of Charles' explanation. For if Jude were making ad hominem use of this material, would we expect him to explicitly distance himself from this material? Wouldn't tipping his hand undercut the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategy?

e) Bauckham (Bauckham 1990:225-233; cf. Davids 206:76) documents the fact that Jews did draw a distinction between canonical Scripture and other inspirational literature.

f) Beckwith (Beckwith 1986:403-405) considers this a case of haggadic embellishment—an accepted literary convention in Jewish circles.

Except for (a), (b)-(f) are not mutually exclusive explanations.

VI. 1 Enoch

i) In vv14-15, Jude quotes a passage from 1 Enoch. Here is the dilemma which many conservative scholars have with his quote:

Jude claims that Enoch said this. Jude calls this a prophecy. And he seems to treat it as true.

But we know that 1 Enoch is a pious fraud. Given its fictitious character, isn't Jude's use of 1 Enoch mistaken? It may be an honest mistake, but it's still a mistake.

However, I'd submit that this analysis is simplistic.

ii) Let's take another example: suppose I say that Tiresias foretold the fate of Odysseus.

I would, of course, be alluding to a scene from Book XI of the Odyssey. Is my statement true or false? That's ambiguous. It all depends on what I have in mind.

a) It's a true ascription. In the Odyssey, Tiresias does, indeed, predict the fate of Odysseus.

b) Is what he said true? No.

c) Is what I said about him true? Once again, that depends. The literary Tiresias is a Theban prophet. He may be a fictitious character, but he plays the part of a prophet.

For me to say he's a prophet is a true statement if I'm referring to his character in the Odyssey. The literary referent is a prophet. He makes prophetic claims.

d) If I thought the literary Tiresias were the same as the historical Tiresias, then my statement would be false. For Tiresias is not a real

person. Hence, he didn't really foretell the fate of Odysseus.

e) Can you tell from my statement about Tiresias whether I think he's a real person or not? No. My statement, in and of itself, doesn't indicate my personal estimation of Tiresias.

iii) Let's take another example: it's quite possible for a fictitious character to make a true statement. A creative writer might put words in the mouth of a fictitious character which truly describe a real world situation. Indeed, that's often the case.

iv) Let's take another example: it's quite possible to have a literary character that is modeled on a historical figure. We have this in historical novels. A novel about the Civil War may include the character of Stonewall Jackson. He was a real person. The novelist may also put words in the mouth of his character which Stonewall Jackson actually spoke.

v) In the case of Enoch, there is both a historical Enoch and a literary Enoch. The "Enoch" of the Bible refers to the historical Enoch while the "Enoch" of 1 Enoch refers to the literary Enoch.

vi) Which "Enoch" is Jude denoting? The immediate referent is the literary Enoch. The "Enoch" of 1 Enoch. The literary Enoch was a prophet. And the literary Enoch said what Jude attributes to him.

Does Jude equate the literary Enoch with the historical Enoch? From his statement alone, you can't tell if he identifies one with the other. How else would he refer to the literary Enoch? To the character in 1 Enoch?

On the face of it, there's nothing mistaken about Jude's statement. His ascription is an accurate ascription. At that level, it's no different

than my statement that Tiresias foretold the fate of Odysseus.

vii) As Green also points out, Jude is quite discriminating in his appropriation of 1 Enoch. There's a lot of fanciful material which he has excluded from his argument. This should caution us against assuming that Jude made uncritical use of his source materials.

viii) Is the statement of the literary Enoch true or false? The statement is true.

The Enochian statement is indebted to Deut 33:2. And that, in turn, forms the basis of eschatological theophanies regarding the Day of the Lord. We have equivalent statements about the return of Christ in the NT.

In sum, there's nothing even apparently—much less actually—erroneous about Jude's use of 1 Enoch.

ix) But even if the Enochian quote were unhistorical, that would not be problematic in case Jude's use of 1 Enoch is merely haggadic or ad hominem.

VII. The Assumption of Moses

i) There's a scholarly dispute as to whether Jude is alluding to the Assumption of Moses or the Testament of Moses. That's irrelevant to the canonical question, so I'll bypass that debate. For convenience, I'll use one title rather than two.

ii) What I just said about 1 Enoch is applicable to the Assumption of Moses. The "Michael," "Moses," and "Satan" in view are their literary counterparts—not their historical namesakes. At that level, Jude's ascriptions are true. The literary Michael did make that statement to

the literary Satan, about the literary Moses. Whether that corresponds to the historical Michael, Moses, and Satan, and whether Jude intended that correspondence, is a separate issue.

iii) Likewise, if Jude's use of the Assumption of Moses is merely haggadic or ad hominem, then this incident doesn't have to be historical to make his point.

iv) As Green points out, the Assumption of Moses is not his only source. He is also dependent on Zech 3:1-2.

v) Is the incident in Assumption of Moses true? For starters, this represents a gloss on the canonical death of Moses in Deut 34:5-6 (par. Num 27:12-13).

The canonical obituary is enigmatic and provocative. A number of scholars think there is a supernatural element to that event inasmuch as God buried Moses (Bauckham 1990:239; Craigie 1976:405; Currid 206:535; Davids 2006:61; Thompson 1974:319). Thus, only God knew where his grave was located.

Why would God do that—unless a marked grave would lead to some form of necromancy or ancestor worship?

vi) In Scripture, Michael, Moses, and Satan are all real people.

vii) Is there any antecedent reason to think that Satan would take an interest in the body of Moses? In many religions, the preservation or proper disposal of the corpse of a holy man is highly significant. Whether he's given an honorable or dishonorable burial is significant to his posthumous reputation.

Likewise, the corpse can become the source or center of a shrine or reliquary. Some religions are legitimated by having this sort of thing

in their possession. It validates their claim to be the true heirs of the Master.

Hence, Satan might have good reason to take an interest in the mortal remains of Moses.

This incident might strike a Protestant reader as fanciful because our own tradition is (rightly) opposed to this sort of thing. But while there's a sense in which devotion to relics is fanciful, the devotion is genuine. And that can be exploited. That's a powerful tool in religious propaganda. (Cf. Bauckham 1990:239-240.)

This sort of thing is also touched on in Scripture (e.g. 2 Kgs 13:21; 18:4).

viii) Also keep in mind what I said about organic inspiration. We shouldn't assume that Jude had to get all his information from Biblical or extrabiblical sources. Inspiration is a resource.

ix) If the description of the dispute between Michael and Satan still strikes the reader as a bit fanciful, we should remember that the Bible has rather imaginative, anthropomorphic, and stereotypical ways of depicting the numinous realm. Stock imagery is recycled from one book to another.

It's natural for Bible writers to describe events of this sort in recognizable terms which the reader is already familiar with—whether Biblical or extrabiblical. That makes the idea easier to conceptualize.

So we shouldn't hold this description to the standards of photographic realism. This isn't a transcript.

Of course, if you don't believe in angels and demons, then the account will strike you as inherently fanciful. But that's a separate issue.

As I said under (iii), it may be the case Jude never meant to vouch for the historicity of this incident. But even if that was his intention, this claim isn't obviously false.

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Chapter 12

James and Jude

1. Who was Jude?

We don't have a lot of direct information about Jude.

i) According to the letter itself, he was the brother of James.

This probably refers to James of Jerusalem. And that, in turn, would make Jude a sibling (stepbrother) of Jesus.

For arguments in favor of this identification, see: (Bauckham 1983; Bauckham 1990); (Blomberg 2006); (Carson/Moo 2005); (Charles 2007); (Davids 2006); (Green (2008); (Guthrie 1990); (Köstenberger 2009); (Schreiner 2003).

ii) From the author's familiarity with the OT, Palestinian pseudepigrapha, and pesher exegesis, it is only natural to identify him as a Palestinian Jew, which would be consistent with, and corroborate, (i).

For supporting arguments, see: (Bauckham 1990); (Ellis 1993:221-26).

iii) Jude was probably one of the missionaries alluded to in 1 Cor 9:5. See: (Bauckham 1990).

2. Who was James?

While we lack much direct information about Jude, there are a number of scriptural and extrascriptural sources of information about James. This makes it possible to draw some likely extrapolations from what we know about James to what we can analogize about Jude.

As it bears on the topic of this particular post, the most salient considerations are:

i) James was a very traditional, Palestinian Jew. A pious law-keeper who resided in Jerusalem and frequented the Temple. Neither a reactionary nor a revolutionary.

For supporting arguments, see: (Moo 2000); (Shanks/Witherington 2003).

ii) After the dispersion of the Apostles, he assumes leadership of the Jerusalem Church.

For more information, see: (Bauckham 1995).

iii) James was the elder brother. In a culture in which primogeniture was a mark of social status, this would mean that he outranked his younger brother.

3. Who were the readers?

From Jude's appeal to the OT, Palestinian pseudepigrapha, and use of pesher exegesis, it stands to reason that his audience shared his cultural outlook.

Either they were Palestinian Jews, or Jews who, if living abroad, identified with Palestinian Judaism.

4. Who were the false teachers?

i) The only thing we can say for sure is that the false teachers were antinomians. Some scholars have taken this to rule out their Jewish identity. But that's premature.

ii) To begin with, they may have been radical Paulinists See: (Bauckham 1990:168)

Indeed, there are modern-day theologians who read Paul the same heretical way, viz. Zane Hodges, Charles Ryrie, Robert Lightner, R. T. Kendall,

iii) If the false teachers weren't Jewish, it's unclear why Jude's very Jewish audience would give them a hearing.

5. Who were the Essenes?

i) As Beckwith explains, "Both parties [Sadducees and Pharisees] had accepted the Maccabean high-priesthood, which began when Jonathan Maccabaeus became high priest in 152 BC, but it appears from the Qumran evidence that the Essenes had from the beginning rejected it and started setting up their separate communities under their own priesthood; and before the destruction of the Temple the Essenes had been excommunicated from Temple worship (Josephus, Antiquities, 18:1:5, or 18:19). The separate existence that they led probably explains why they never actually figure in the New Testament" (Beckwith 1996:170).

ii) Beckwith has also argued that the Essenes did not canonize their own sectarian literature. See: (Beckwith 1986:364).

6. Which pseudepigrapha?

This is a bit complicated:

i) The church fathers attributed Jude 9 to The Ascension of Moses. But Bauckham has argued that Jude is alluding to a different work, The Testament of Moses. However, Charlesworth, for one, demurs.

Due to various recensions, and the incomplete state of our extant sources, it's difficult to be precise.

Beckwith says, "The Assumption of Moses seems, at least in its present form, to be another, though earlier, apocalypse like 2 Esdras, reflecting a mixture of Essene and Pharisaic ideas. Its rejection of the sacrifices offered in the Second Temple (Ass. Mos. 4.7.; 5:1-4; cp. 1 Enoch 89:67,73) is Essene, but its computation of time is Pharisaic" (Beckwith 1986:38-39).

DeSilva says that "after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, E. -M. Laperrousaz has reopened the argument for an Essene provenance for Testament of Moses...We can say for certain that it arises from sectarian circles (the model of Taxo; the rejection of the institution of the Second Temple, at least under its current administration," (de Silva 2000:1195a).

ii) By contrast, there is common agreement on the attribution of Jude 14-15 to 1 Enoch 1:9. And what was the provenance of 1 Enoch? Beckwith has argued at length that the Enochian literature is Essenic. See: (Beckwith 1981; Beckwith 1996); Cf. (Collins 2000:315a)

III. Evaluation

So where does this leave us with respect to Jude's use of the Pseudepigrapha?

1. Given that James was, by all accounts, a conventionally and devoutly observant Jew who frequented the Temple, and given the further fact that the Essene literature was sectarian literature, written by a schismatic Jewish party that disowned the religious establishment and was, in turn, disowned by the religious establishment, this creates a very strong presumption against the suggestion that James would regard the Essene literature as either canonical or even inspired (i.e. prophetic).

2. Not only would that conflict with his religious principles, but it would also be at odds with his evangelistic policy. To side with a breakaway sect of Judaism would be very offensive to mainline Jews, and from everything we know about James, he was quite sensitive to the dangers of giving unnecessary offense to the Jewish community at large. So, both on principled and pragmatic grounds, there's a strong presumption against the idea that James would treat Essene literature as either canonical or inspired.

3. Likewise, it would be very odd of James or Jude to treat Essene literature as canonical if Essenes didn't even treat their own literature as canonical.

4. What about Jude?

i) He shared the same religious culture. He was subordinate to his older brother. And he collaborated with his older brother.

So, once again, we must presume that he shared his brother's outlook and practice.

ii) Indeed, there is more than just a strong presumption to that effect. For Jude is the very one who explicitly identifies himself to his readers by reference to his brother James. So he is reinforcing that connection.

5. At the same time, both brothers would be very adept at audience adaptation. Jerusalem was a crossroads of international Jewry. A microcosm of the Jewish macrocosm.

Luke underscores that point in his account of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jewish pilgrims from the far-flung Diaspora.

6. In addition, Jude was probably an itinerate missionary who not only ministered to Jewish pilgrims from the Diaspora, but carried the gospel to the Diaspora.

7. As such, Jude would encounter Jews from a wide variety of Jewish traditions. Cross-culture evangelism would include the various schools and sects of Judaism.

8. Jude seems to cite the Intertestamental literature as authoritative. From this, many scholars conclude that he himself regarded this literature as authoritative.

But that's a fallacious inference. For he may be mounting an ad hominem appeal, and the ad hominem argument is, almost by definition, an argument from authority.

You appeal to what your audience or your opponent honors as authoritative.

The NT is full of ad hominem arguments.

9.It's possible that Jude is citing this literature because the false teachers had connections with Essenism. So he's quoting their own in-house literature against them.

Or it's possible that Jude is citing this literature because his readers had connections with Essenism, and would therefore find his appeal persuasive on their own grounds.

10.When a Christian apologist critiques Mormonism or Roman Catholicism, he will appeal to Mormon or Roman Catholic literature. And he will cite their literature as authoritative *for them*, given their religious background and social attachments.

We would expect Jude to do no less. And that interpretation gives us the best fit with the overall evidence.

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Chapter 13

The legendary Alexandrian canon

It isn't possible to simply infer the canon of Diaspora Jews from our copies of the LXX, and this is why:

No two Septuagint codices contain the same apocrypha, and no uniform Septuagint 'Bible' was ever the subject of discussion in the patristic church. In view of these facts the Septuagint codices appear to have been originally intended more as service books than as a defined and normative canon of Scripture.[\(32\)](#)

As we have seen, manuscripts of anything like the capacity of Codex Alexandrinus were not used in the first centuries of the Christian era, and since, in the second century AD, the Jews seem largely to have discarded the Septuagint...there can be no

real doubt that the comprehensive codices of the Septuagint, which start appearing in the fourth century AD, are all of Christian origin.

Nor is there agreement between the codices which of the Apocrypha t include. Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus all include Tobit, Judith, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, and integrate them into the body of the Old Testament, rather than appending them at the end; but Codex Vaticanus, unlike the other two, totally excludes the Books of Maccabees. Moreover, all three codices, according to Kenyon, were produced in Egypt, yet the contemporary Christian lists of the biblical books drawn up in Egypt by Athanasius and (very likely) pseudo-Athanasius are much more critical, excluding all apocryphal books from the canon, and putting them in a separate appendix. It seems, therefore, that the codices, with their less strict approach, do not reflect a definite canon so much as variable reading-habits; and the reading-habits would in the nature of the case be those of fourth and fifth-century Christians, which might not agree with those of first-century Jews.(33).

At this point we encounter the Greek Old Testament in the three great codices of the fourth and fifth centuries: Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus...All exceeded the scope of the Hebrew Bible...In Vaticanus, however, all four of the books of Maccabees are missing and in Sinaiticus, 2 and 3 Macabees, as well as 1 Ezra, Baruch and Letter of Jeremiah—presumably only the result of lacunae in the text. Codex Alexandrinus, approximately one century younger, is, in contrast, much more extensive; it includes the LXX as we know it in Rahlfs' edition, with all four books of Maccabees and the fourteen Odes

appended to Psalms. The Odes also include the Prayer of Manasseh, previously attested only in the Syria Didaskalia and the Apostolic Constitutions.

It should be considered, further, that the Odes (sometimes varied in number), attested from the fifth century in all Greek Psalm manuscripts, contain three New Testament 'psalms': the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Nunc Dimittis from Luke's birth narrative, and the conclusion of the hymn that begins with the 'Gloria in Excelsis.' This underlines the fact that the LXX, although, itself consisting of a collection of Jewish documents, wishes to be a Christian book. The relative openness of the Old Testament portion of these oldest codices also corresponds to that of its 'New Testament': Sinaiticus contains Barnabas and Hermas, Alexandrinus 1 and 2 Clement.(34).

Books were included in the Roman Catholic Bible not on the basis of the Hebrew canon, but according to the contents and sequence of the Latin Vulgate.(35).

A fifth persistent factor that has clouded this discussion is the concept of an "Alexandrian Jewish canon" of Scripture that was broader than the Palestinian Jewish canon. This is based on a lack of clarity about the meaning of the term "Septuagint".

The author of this quotation has assumed that the "Septuagint" in the sense of that collection of texts known from Codices Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus (or in the sense of the critical editions available today) was the "Septuagint" of the Jewish community of the third century B.C.E. This is, however, a grave misstep, because the work undertaken in the third century B.C.E. in Alexandria involved only the Greek translation of the Pentateuch (clearly the scope envisioned by Letter of Aristeas).

Moreover, the quotation involves its author in a paradox: it would be impossible for the third-century-B.C.E. version of the Septuagint to contain the Apocrypha books, since they were all written between 185 B.C.E. and 10 C.E. (with the possible exception of Tobit, which may predate the second century B.C.E.)! Also, telling in the argument against the Alexandrian Jewish canon is that Philo, the Jewish commentator in Alexandria par excellence, never quotes from the Apocrypha (Beckwith 1985: 384).

The “Septuagint” codices mentioned above cannot be used as evidence for an Alexandrian Jewish canon that included the Apocrypha. These manuscripts are fourth- and fifth-century Christian works, fail to agree on the extent of the extra books, and seem to have been compiled more with convenience of reference in mind than as the standards of canonical versus noncanonical books (the fact that one even contained, at one point, Psalms of Solomon strongly suggests this).[\(36\)](#)

We can see that Hellenistic Judaism had a relatively well-defined canon of “Holy Scripture” already in the second century BC, which thus preceded the witnesses of the New Testament writings; in the definition of what was to be regarded as “canonical” the foundation is being laid for the later differentiation between “canonical” and “apocryphal.” I see evidence for this position in the prologue of Jesus ben Sirach from the second half of the second pre-Christian century.

It can therefore be assumed that a differentiation within, “Holy Scripture” as a whole was already existing in Judaism. I believe that the primitive Christian witnesses attest this differentiation as a “given”: the Palestinian canon in the form preserved in the

Massoretic tradition was seen as authentic canon, the other writings transmitted in the Alexandrian canon—both those translated from Hebrew or Aramaic and those originally written in Greek—as “apocryphal.”

The content of the Alexandrian LXX canon, which does not meet the canonical standard transmitted in Josephus (c. Ap I 36-42) according to which the succession of prophets, determinative of canonicity, ended in the time of Artaxerxes I or Ezra and Nehemiah—the description of the Seleucid religious persecution in 1 and 2 Maccabees, Jesus ben Sirach’s mention of the high priest Simon—would have been, from the outset, not only appended to, but considered inferior in terms of authority to the Scriptures of the Palestinian canon. The only question that remains open is whether this distinction was a phenomenon common to Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism or a point of contention between the two communities.

Beside quotations in writings belonging only to the Alexandrian canon, I believe that the reference to prophetic word as Scripture in the Damascus Scroll (to mention only one example) supplies the best evidence in the realm of pre-Christian Judaism of the Hellenistic period that all the writings of the “Palestinian canon” transmitted in the Massoretic tradition already possessed the canonical significance of “Holy Scripture.”...The fact that this document reflects the awareness of a particular trend within Hellenistic Judaism is, with reference to the question of the canonicity of the Palestinian canon, much more likely an argument for an early fixation of acknowledged Scripture than an argument for isolated recognition.

As a translation of already canonized writings, the LXX translation itself has canonical significance both for Judaism and for the Christian church. It derives this significance, however, only from the strength of the canonical authority of its Hebrew original. It was for this reason that the Greek translation was from the moment of its origin onward continuously subjected to verification against the Hebrew text and to recensional correction according to this criterion, as demonstrated by recently discovered translations of Jewish origin from pre-Christian and early Christian times. What we already knew, through Origen, concerning the Christian church of the late second and third centuries, and through the translations or new editions of Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus in the second century, in regard to Judaism of Christian time, has now been demonstrated to be equally true for the Judaism of the pre-Christian and pre-Aquilan period.(37).

Chapter 14

Excursus on Daniel

i) Although Freedman subscribes to the pseudonymity of Daniel and “Second Isaiah” (as well as “Third Isaiah”), he makes some statements along the way which undermine that contention:

a) "The pseudepigraphic material was never as popular as the old writing and only by accident or dissimulation was it accepted into the canon. Daniel is in fact the only genuine pseudepigraph in the Hebrew Bible."[\(38\)](#)

b) But if, by his own admission, Jews rejected the canonicity of pseudepigraphic materials, then how did Daniel slip through the net?

b) "Chronicles ends with the Edict of Cyrus (2 Chron 36:22-23) and Ezra-Nehemiah begins with it (Ezra 1:1-4). These are the only two works in the Hebrew Bible that speak of Cyrus at all (apart from Daniel, which does not enter into consideration for various reasons)."[\(39\)](#)

But if the Book of Daniel was written in the 6C by a Jewish exile who served under Cyrus (Dan 1:21; 6:28; 10:1), then we'd expect him to mention that fact.

c) "It is widely agreed by scholars that, in its canonical form, this book [Daniel] is a product of the Greek or Hellenistic Age, dating from about 165/4 BCE, although it undoubtedly incorporates older materials."[\(40\)](#)

But if it "undoubtedly" incorporates older sources, then why be so sure of the Hellenistic provenance?

d) "With Daniel, we enter into the world of apocalyptic visions, coded messages, revelations through dreams, and angelic interpreters."[\(41\)](#)

But there's nothing distinctively Hellenistic about such phenomena.

e) "Taking both works [Isaiah; 1-2 Chronicles] in their present forms, we can point to the fact that both are postexilic in date, and both make much of the return from the exile in the reign of Cyrus the

Great. While I believe that the event itself is still in the future in the so-called Second Isaiah (chaps. 40-55), it is clearly expected, and the role of Cyrus is very important (see chaps. 44-45.”(42).

It’s fascinating that a liberal like Freedman nevertheless accepts the Isaian oracles about Cyrus as genuinely predictive rather than vaticina ex eventu. But, in that case, why not accept the 8C date of Isaiah in toto?

f) ”Second Isaiah is a throwback to the earlier period of poetic prophetic oracles.”(43).

Wouldn’t be simpler to say he reflects an earlier period because, in fact, he lived back then?

g) ”In any case, however, it is striking that Jeremiah and Ezekiel supply precisely the information lacking in [Second] Isaiah provides the framework within which the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel can best be understood.”(44).

But if Isaiah is preexilic, whereas Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak from their exilic experience, then we’d expect them to fill in the general framework with topical details.

ii) Freedman also commits a basic fallacy. He seems to infer that if the 5C edition of the OT canon didn’t include Daniel, then Daniel must have been written some time after the 5C. But that hardly follows.

Suppose that Daniel was written before Ezra and Nehemiah (allegedly) codified the OT canon. This doesn’t mean we’d expect Daniel to be canonized a century later. Since Daniel contains a number of prophecies, Jews might have taken a wait-and-see

attitude. Postponed the canonization of Daniel until they had a chance to tell whether or not some of his predictions came true. Considering the prophetic character of the book, such a delay, to give his futuristic oracles some shakedown time, is completely understandable.

iii) There are alternative explanations for the exact placement of Daniel in the canon. Goswell accounts for that by noting the motif of palace intrigue (involving Jewish exiles at the mercy of pagan rulers) that Daniel shares in common with the adjacent writings:

Daniel is in this position because of the court tales (Daniel 1-6) that connect with similar tales in Esther and Ezra-Nehemiah.⁷⁶ Daniel following Esther (in the Talmud the order is reversed) provides a theological explanation for the confidence expressed in the book of Esther concerning the survival of the Jewish race, with the lesson of that book put in the mouth of Zeresh, the wife of Haman the archenemy of the Jews (Esth 6:13: 'If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of the Jewish people, you will not prevail against him but will surely fall before him').⁽⁴⁵⁾

iv) Moreover, there are glaring problems with giving Daniel a Maccabean date.⁽⁴⁶⁾

v) Finally, Sailhamer has interacted with Freedman's position on Daniel. Sailhamer's treatment furnishes a useful corrective to Freedman's defective analysis at this juncture:

Regardless of its lack of physical shape, the OT likely was construed in terms that reflected a 'semantic shape' and a theological profile. The OT would have been akin to the unassembled pieces of a jigsaw puzzle still in the box. As with the picture of the puzzle on the box, one could have a mental

construct of how the pieces fit together, and that construct would be a way of showing the meaning of the individual pieces within the whole. Given the mental force of such a construct, a physical copy of the OT canon would have been unnecessary.

Such a mental construct played a key role in understanding the individual pieces of the OT puzzle. A mental construct was just as important, or more so, than the actual physical shape of the OT canon. The meaning of each piece was largely determined by this construct. Understanding the OT and its parts was a function of such a construct.”

The two canonical links (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:3) appear to be read as cross-citations, each citing the other. This is a common way of linking larger sections of the OT canon...The verbal identity of these two texts suggests an intentional strategy. It places identical texts at the beginning of the second (the Prophets) and the third sections (the Writings) of the Tanak.

The central role of the edict of Cyrus at the conclusion of the Tanak appears to be driven by the expectation interjected into the end of the Tanak by Daniel 9. In Daniel 9 Jeremiah's expectation of a return to Jerusalem is projected beyond the immediate return from Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah's promise of a return after seventy years is extended to seven times seventy years, or 490 years, way beyond any future event known at the time including the Maccabean period.

In the version of the Tanak that ends with Chronicles, the next biblical events are to be the coming of the Messiah (Dan 9:25), the death of the Messiah (Dan 9:26), and the destruction of the temple (Dan 9:26b). These events, all taken from Daniel 9 are projected on to the screen of the future by 2 Chronicles 36 at the

close of the Tanak. Those events take us directly into the first century.

Viewed in such terms, OT textual strategies, both compositional and canonical, appear poised to move directly and intentionally into the theological world of the NT. Such textual strategies suggest that the NT is a true descendent of the OT.[\(47\)](#)

Chapter 14

For Further Reading

I. Intratextual evidence:

Standard conservative Bible introductions, as well as major conservative commentaries, discuss the intratextual evidence for individual books of the canon. Representative OT introductions include Archer and Hill/Walton. Representative NT introductions include Blomberg, Guthrie, Carson/Moo, and Kostenberger/Kellum/Quarles.

The commentaries are too numerous to mention, but specific recommendations are available upon request. There are also conservative monographs on the authorship of certain contested books.

II. Intertextual/paratextual evidence:

Representative examples include:

Gregory Beale & D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament Canon*

Stephen Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*

E. E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*

Greg Goswell, "The Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* (Dec 2008)

John Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*

III. Testimonial/Text-critical evidence:

Roger Beckwith, *The OT Canon of the New Testament Church*

Everett Ferguson, "Factors Leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate*

Andreas Kostenberger & Michael Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*

Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*

David Trobisch, *The First Edition of the New Testament*

IV. Monographs

There are also monographs that discuss the role of certain Bible writers (i.e. Ezra, John, Paul) in editing the canon of Scripture, such as:

David Noel Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible*

C. E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, chap. 10

Stanley Porter, "Paul and the Process of Canonization" in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible*

V. The Witness of the Spirit:

John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, chap. 41

Endnotes

1. J. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Zondervan 1995), 212-13; <http://tinyurl.com/y9nej7o>

Ibid. 237-38.

2. G. Goswell, "Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible," *JETS* (December 2008), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3817/is_200812/ai_n31171930/?tag=content;col1

3. Cf. R. Beckwith, "The Earliest Enoch Literature and its Calendar," *Revue de Qumran* 39 (Feb 1981), 365-403.

4. Cf. J. Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, vol. 1 (Ktav, 1971).

5. R. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming," *Revue de Qumran* 40 (Dec 1981), 521-542.

6. R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (T&T Clark, 1990), 235ff.

7. Ibid. 201-202.

8. Ibid. 222.

9. Ibid. 223.
10. Ibid. 223-24.
11. Ibid. 224.
12.
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14. *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible*, vi.
15. “The Symmetry of the Hebrew Bible,” 507.
16. *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible*, 1-2,46,49-51,76-77.
17. “The Symmetry of the Hebrew Bible,” 496,503,505-06,508,514,516-17.
18. B. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Zondervan 2007), 55-59.
19. S. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (IVP 2003), 46-60; 231-34.
20. P. Towner, *The Letters To Timothy and Titus* (Eerdmans 2006), 322.
21. Ibid. 322n40.
22. Cf. D. Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (Nelson 1997), 108-12.
23. J. Quinn & W. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Eerdmans 2000),
24. 262-63, 311.
25. L. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (Doubleday 2001), 75-76,217-19,222,234-35,237; cf. 231-32.
26. J. R. Michaels, *Hebrews* (Tyndale 2009), 310-11.
27. W. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (Word 1991), 387,90.
28. J. VanderKam, “The Theophany of Enoch 1:3b-7, 9,” *VT* 23.2 (1973): 148-50.

29. G. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1* (Fortress Press 2001), 149.
30. G. Green, *Jude & 2 Peter* (Baker 2008), 32.
31. Cf. B. Metzger, *An Introduction to the Apocrypha* (Oxford 1977), 192-95.
32. . E. E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Baker 1992), 34-35.
33. R. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Eerdmans 1986), 382-83.
34. M. Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture* (Baker 2004), 57-59.
35. K. Jobes & M. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Baker 2005), 81.
36. D. DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha* (Baker 2004), 29-30.
37. R. Hanhart, Introduction, M. Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture* (Baker 2004), 2-5.
38. Freedman, *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation*, 276.
39. Freedman, *The Unity of the Bible*, 48.
40. *ibid.*, 78.” Cf. “Because doubtless is incorporates some older sources,” 95.
41. *Ibid.* 96.
42. *Ibid.* 48.
43. *Ibid.* 55.
44. *Ibid.* 60.
45.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3817/is_200812/ai_n31171930/pg_9/?tag=content;col1
- 46 Cf. *The Infidel Delusion*, Appendix I, <http://www.calvindude.com/ebooks/InfidelDelusion.pdf>; A. Steinmann, “Is the Antichrist in Daniel 11”? www.galaxie.com/article/5847/print

47. Cf. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch* (IVP 2009), 173, 211,14-15,17.

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III. The NT witness to the OT canon

Beale, G. & D. A. Carson eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Baker 2007).

The NT canon is a witness to the OT canon. This monograph is not specifically about the OT canon. However, a fringe benefit of this monograph is the way in which it documents the OT canon of the NT writers. And it does this at two levels:

i) A descriptive level, at which it identifies the various NT citations and allusions to the OT.

ii) A normative level, at which examines the way in which NT writers make use of OT literature. And the way they use the OT supplies testimonial evidence for the divine authority as well as the specific identity of the OT.

This doesn't settle every possible question. But it's a very important line of evidence.