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First-Century Biblical Canonization

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**First-Century
Biblical Canonization**

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“Second-Century Heresy Did Not Force the Church into an Early Canonization”

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Introduction

In our twenty-first century world, it is clear for those who listen to God that Satan is hard at work trying to discredit the authority of God's Written Word, the Bible. Led by Satan, there are many today who would like everyone to believe that God's Word is like all other literature, a work of man that is not inspired by a loving Creator who wants the best for His creation. If one accepts this deception, then God's Word becomes open for individual interpretation allowing personal desires and rationalization to control meaning. In reality, the Bible then becomes a way for each person in his or her sinful state to get God to agree to their own agenda and/or to totally disagree with what is written because it is not of God but of earlier less knowledgeable man. Within this scenario, there are no absolute truths but instead ineffective acceptance of all forms of ungodly behavior ranging from minor affronts such as little lies to horrendous destruction through all forms of ungodly living including every form of sexual perversion, which is destroying many children and adults, to mass murder of our unborn.

With such clear attacks against God, His Word, and those who are trying to faithfully follow Him, it is clear that an accurate understanding of the formation of our contemporary Bible is worth investigating. This article clearly shows that through the leading of the Holy Spirit, God protected His Inspired Word from its inception making it clear to His followers how His Word had been fulfilled through Jesus, the Messiah; He accomplished this through inspiring some of His Early Church leaders to write timeless works declaring the Gospel and proper holy living, which eventually became known as the New Testament. These inspired writings help all who listen to understand more fully the spiritual battles that were and are raging as Satan continues to deceive as many as possible. God has and will continue to protect His Inspired Word for all who faithfully follow Him.

Canonization: Was It Established by God or through Councils?

When anyone looks back in history at the biblical canonization process, they come away with two irrefutable facts: from a practical standpoint, the contemporarily accepted New Testament books of the Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox churches were being used by a majority of the churches of the Mediterranean world and beyond by the end of the first century, and secondly, the Roman Catholic Church formalized our contemporary Bible through an agreed upon canon by the end of the fourth century through several councils. So in reality, the real question becomes, whether or not God establish the Canon of the Bible and the churches recognized His work, or did God stand apart from His redemptive work and gave different church groups the responsibility to figure out the canon on their own through logical reasoning and then finally present an agreed upon canon?

When one looks at the history of canonization, most would agree that the entire Bible of Jesus' day was what is now known as the Old Testament, and that it was firmly established and utilized by Jesus and His disciples as the authoritative Word of God. It consisted of the **Tanakh** (*Torah*/Teachings, *Nev'im*/Prophets, and *Ketuvim*/Writings); these parts are still used by most contemporary Christians. Upon examination of the quotations from Jesus' disciples of the Tanakh into Greek, it is noted that many of the quotations came directly from the Septuagint, which was a second-third century B.C. translation of the original Hebrew into Greek. Secondly, it is important to note when Christians started using the writings of some of Jesus' early disciples as authoritative Scripture alongside the Tanakh. If Early Church leadership especially Jewish leaders used specific writings to supplement the Tanakh and considered them equal in authority, this would show that God was guiding them because without His direction, no Jewish follower of Christ would go against God by adding to His Word. Jesus Himself said that He came to fulfill God's Word versus abolishing or changing any part of it (Matt 5:17-19; Luke 16:16-17; et al.).

Early Church Usage of the Books of the New Testament

Although the Canon of Scripture as we know it today was not ratified by the Western Church through the Councils of Hippo (A. D. 393) and Carthage (A. D. 397 & 419) until the fourth century,¹ it can be shown that the Early Church as early as Peter's writings showed Paul's writings to be considered equally important in understanding God and His ways as the Tenakh (2 Peter 3:13-15). In addition, it is clear that many of Christ's first century followers were proclaiming a Gospel messages that showed the world how God had and was fulfilling the prophetic messages regarding the coming Messiah contained within the Tanakh (Acts 8:25; 14:5-7, 21-22; 15:7; 20:24; cf. 2 Cor 8:16-18; Luke 1:1-4; Rom 15:15-16; 1 Cor 15:1-6).

By early to mid-second century, many churches already had their own collections of inspired writings that were authoritative and similar to each other. It is important to note that there did not appear to be an urgency for leaders of the various areas to come to a collective agreement on an agreed upon canon even during times of extreme heresy such as Marcion's false teachings in the second century.² In fact, after hearing Marcion's

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 98.

² John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 1-2. Marcion came to Rome around A. D. 130 and was expelled around 140 because he had gone against orthodox Christianity proclaiming that the god of the Old Testament was not the God of Grace proclaimed in the New Testament.

Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, trans. by Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), §IV: 5, 269-273; §V:2-21, 513-641. What is important to us is that Marcion viewed Paul as the great apostle of the Gospel of Grace and based his version of the New Testament on a modified version of Luke's Gospel and ten of Paul's letters Marcion's New Testament collection as described by Tertullian is the oldest surviving

view of God and Scripture at a special hearing before the church leaders in Rome, Marcion was immediately excommunicated from the Church.³ If Marcion and other heretics were such an imminent threat to the Gospel proclamation, it seems that the Church would have signed off on a formal canon during the second century. But, in reality, although there was not a known formal canon ratified by any specific council(s), we have evidence from second-century church leaders such as Irenaeus, that God had already solidified a canon for His Church; it was recognizing heresy according to alterations and/or misrepresentations of existing Scripture (*Heresies* 3.15.1).

The Evidence for Early Canonization: Textual

The Gospels

Although there are no known early-second century codex with all four gospels, that does not prove that they did not exist. As Bruce discusses the fact that P(45), an early third-century Alexandrian codex,⁴ contained the fourfold Gospel and Acts, it was also very possible that P(75), a late second-century or early third-century Alexandrian codex could have easily contained all four gospels, although its present state only witnesses to two gospels (Luke and John).⁵ Even the small remnant of P(52), a late first century or early second-century codex containing a small portion of John, might have originally contained all four Gospels.⁶

Paul's Letters

Regarding Paul, the oldest textual evidence that is currently known is manuscript P(46); this manuscript provides textual evidence of an early Pauline corpus that existed in the mid-second century. Y.K. Kim points out that palaeographical evidence indicates that there is a good chance that P(46) is actually a late first-century or early second-century document.⁷

canonical list to date.

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-65), *I Apology* 26. Justin, a Christian teacher at Rome, says that Marcion had many followers around the world during his lifetime.

³ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 90-91.

⁴ Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 129. P(45) is an early-third century codex.

Bruce Manning Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2 ed. (1968; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 252. P(45) is comprised of both Alexandrian and Western type text.

⁵ Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 129. P(75) is a late-second century or an early-third century codex.

Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 255. P(75) agrees with Codex B.

⁶ Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 129.

⁷ Y.K. Kim, "Palaeographical Dating of P(46) to the Later First Century," *Biblica* 69, no. 2 (1988): 248-57. Kim's argument is based on the literary style, omission of iota adscriptum, and the usage of εϵ

Most scholars today agree that Marcion modified and used *an existing* Pauline collection.⁸ Blackman looks at Harnack's critical work and states that Marcion did not change as much of the New Testament Scripture as we give him credit, he was following the Western text, which was available to him.⁹ After carefully studying the Pauline Corpus that Marcion used, John Clabeaux concluded that Marcion's role was not the creation of a new text but the adaptation and modification of an already existing Pauline Corpus.¹⁰ As Clabeaux drew his work to a close, he stated that Marcion's so-called Western text that he used as the basis of his edition of the Pauline Corpus was probably a product of the East. He went on to state that this would explain the high frequency of agreement between Old Latin "I" and some of the distant Eastern Versions. The text-type that he used could have already enjoyed a fairly broad circulation.¹¹

The Evidence for Early Canonization: Early Church Leaders' Works

The Gospels

Papias (A.D. 60-130), Bishop of Hierapolis (H.E. 2.15; 3.36), is presently our

instead of εκ before compounds with β, δ, and λ. These three characteristics of the text caused Kim to consider an early dating for P(46).

⁸ Publications arranged chronologically.

Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament*, 60-73. Knox builds a case demonstrating that Marcion worked from an existing list of Paul's letters that was already circulating in the Roman world during his life.

John James Clabeaux, "The Pauline Corpus Which Marcion Used: The Text of the Letters of Paul in the Early Second Century," (PH.D. diss., Harvard University, 1983), 5, 12-15, 225-30. Clabeaux agrees with his peers regarding Marcion's use of an existing Pauline collection. His contribution to understanding Marcion's text comes from his statistical data, which worked with 53 Marcionite deviations from Alexandrian text. His work showed that Marcion's text as viewed through Tertullian's writing matched the Old Latin text (mostly I & D: I type shows exposure to non-Western Greek MSS and was widespread reaching even to present day France and Spain, and D type is typified by Lucifer of Cagliari and the Latin parts of the Great Bilinguals) 90.5% of the time and the Greek Western MSS (mostly "D") 43.4% of the time.

Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 4. Metzger states that as early as Paul's own day, Paul encouraged the sharing of his letters [Colossians 4:16].

Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 130. Bruce states that it is important to realize that from the early second century onward, Paul's letters circulated not singly, but as collections.

⁹ Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence*, 50-51, 58, 168.

¹⁰ Clabeaux, "The Pauline Corpus Which Marcion Used," 5-6.

Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 93-94, works through some of the modifications that Marcion made to Paul's letters.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 246-47.

Gilles Quispel, "Marcion and the Text of the New Testament," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, no. 4 (November 1998): 350, 356-359. Quispel concurred with Clabeaux saying that Marcion's text for Paul is pre-Western. He states that it does not match what became Western text by the end of the second century. He thinks that the text was taken over from some ancient Roman Christian community instead of being brought in from the East.

earliest known patristic witness who discussed more than one Gospel; he discussed both Matthew and Mark per Eusebius (H.E. 3.39). F.F. Bruce notes that when Clement of Rome (a Western witness) wrote the Corinthians around the close of the first century appealing for unity, he used the words of Jesus as being at least on a level of authority with those of the prophets as he quotes parts of the Sermon on the Mount (*1 Clement* 13.1f).¹² Bruce Metzger notes that Clement made definite allusions to Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, and Hebrews.¹³ Upon examination of an Eastern witness, Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, which was written around A. D. 107, it becomes apparent that Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (H.E. 5.24), used quotes and/or direct allusions to Matthew, Luke, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, 1 Peter, and 1 & 2 John as authoritative writings.¹⁴ This single letter shows a large group of authoritative New Testament writings that were all considered as part of an authoritative canon for Polycarp. These early witnesses coupled with Peter's earlier witness that Paul's work was considered by him as being on the same level as other Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16) demonstrate that early on the early Church used the Gospel Witnesses of the apostles and a collection of Paul's letters as an authoritative canon of works inspired by God.

Through Justin Martyr we find that it was normal for the Gospels (Memoirs of the Apostles; *1 Apology* 66) and/or the Prophets to be read during Sunday worship services, which was followed by an exhortation to imitate the good things learned (*1 Apology* 67.3-4).¹⁵ Justin shows us that it is normal for local churches to have and read from

¹² Ibid., 121.

¹³ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 42-43.

¹⁴ "The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians." *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* Volume 1. Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885. Reprint, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, 33-36. Following are some of the obvious quotes and/or allusions to New Testament Scripture within Polycarp's letter to the Philippians: § 1– quote from Ephesians 2:8–9a; § 2– combining of Romans 4:24 and 1 Peter 1:21; allusion Ephesians 1:20; Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9; parts of Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:36-38; Matthew 5:3, 10; § 4– allusion 1 Timothy 3:3; quote from part of 1 Timothy 6:10; allusion to Ephesians 6:10f; § 5– quote from Galatians 6:10; allusion to 1 Timothy 3:8; partial quote of 2 Timothy 2:12; § 6– quote from 2 Corinthians 5:10; § 7– combining of 1 John 4:2-3 and 2 John 1:7; part of Matthew 6:13 and 26:41(Mark 14:38); § 8– quote from 1 Peter 2:24 with "tree" substituted for "cross (cf. Galatians 3:13 and OT for "tree" versus "cross;)" § 10– combining of Ephesians 5:21 and 1 Peter 2:12; § 11– quote from 1 Thessalonians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:2; § 12– quote from Ephesians 4:26 and allusions to Matthew 5:43-48.

¹⁵ *1 Apology* 67.3-4: καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου λεγομένη ἡμέρα πάντων κατὰ πόλεις ἢ ἀγροὺς μενόντων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συνέλευσις γίνεται, καὶ τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων ἢ τὰ συγγράμματα τῶν προφητῶν ἀναγινώσκειται, μέχρις ἐγχωρεῖ. 67.4 εἶτα παυσαμένου τοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος ὁ προεστὼς διὰ λόγου τὴν νοθεσίαν καὶ πρόκλησιν τῆς τῶν καλῶν τούτων μιμήσεως ποιεῖται [TLG #001 67.3-4], "And on the day called Sun (Sunday), all who live in the cities or country at the/some place a meeting begins and the things to be remembered from the apostles (memoirs of the apostles=gospels) or the combined writings of the prophets

multiple Gospels and the Old Testament. But it is Tatian, a student of Justin, who helps us pin down the number of Gospels. After Justin's Martyrdom in A.D. 165, Tatian went back to his native Assyria and produced a single Gospel, the *Diatessaron*, from the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John using John as his general framework.¹⁶ Tatian's *Diatessaron* links Justin's multiple Gospels to the four Gospels that were known to individuals such as Irenaeus simply as "the Gospel."¹⁷ Further early evidence comes from an author of an apocryphal work called the "Gospel of Peter." Its author, probably writing in Syria or Asia Minor, also drew on all four Canonical Gospels to write a Gospel according to Peter around the mid-second century.¹⁸ This apocryphal work again shows usage of the four Canonical Gospels as a norm for its day. Another

are read, as far as allowed (time permits); 67.4 then, when the reader has stopped, the one who has been leading (προεστὸς pf.ptc. of προέστημι) verbally gives instruction and a challenge to imitate these good things." All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. My Greek source for the Apostolic Fathers is the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) CD ROM.

Justin differentiates between Old and New Testaments. In the quote given above, it is possible that the records of the apostles refers to New Testament writings while the combined writings of the prophets refers to Old Testament writings. Even though we do not have a list of accepted writings for either category, we see that by mid-second century, a member of the Roman church states that it is normal to read from both the Old and New Testaments during Sunday worship services.

¹⁶ Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, 126-27.

¹⁷ Earlier, Irenaeus had stated that heretics were perverting the interpretation of Scripture, which he defined as the evangelists, the apostles, the law, and the prophets (*Heresies* 3:3.6). Later, in the same book, Irenaeus goes on to show how *The Gospel* is comprised of four Gospels. He says that the Word, who has been manifested to men, has given us *The Gospel* under four aspects, but bound together by one Spirit. Irenaeus goes on to state that the four aspects are the Gospels according to John, Luke, Matthew, and Mark (*Heresies* 3:11.8).

¹⁸ Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. by R. McL. Wilson, vol.1 (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1991), 221. Schneemelcher places the time of writing around mid-second century, but implies that it is not a firm figure. Attested in Syria prior to A.D. 190 by Serapion through a manuscript found in Egypt.

Cf. Alan Kirk, "Examining Properties: Another Look at the Gospel of Peter's," *New Testament Studies* 40, no.4 (October 1994): 572-95. Kirk presents a good argument showing that the author of the Gospel of Peter wrote his gospel after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and drew on all four of them as he wrote his. This view is opposed by individuals such as John Crossan and Helmut Koester who advocate the writing of the Gospel of Peter prior to the Four Gospels. An interesting point in his argument came with his discussion of how the author of the Gospel of Peter identified the first day of the week, which we presently call Sunday. In the early Church, all of the Gospel writers normally referred to Sunday as "the first day of week (μίαν σαββάτων)," but later (as early as the writing of Revelation (1:10)), it was called "the Lord's Day (ἡ κυριακή ἡμέρα)." The author of the Gospel of Peter (9.35– Τῆ δὲ νυκτὶ ἧ ἐπέφωσκεν ἡ κυριακή & [12.50– Ὁρθρου δὲ τῆς κυριακῆς Μαρίας ἡ Μαγδαληνῆ, (from a TLG search)]) calls it "the Lord's Day." This places the Gospel of Peter later than the Four Gospels. Yet, it would seem that it could have been written as early as sometime in the late first-century around the time that John wrote Revelation.

witness of this time period, the *Muratorian Canon*, provides a partial list of four Gospels.¹⁹ The first two Gospels are missing from the fragment, but the fragment explicitly names the third and fourth Gospels as that according to Luke and John respectively and then goes on to discuss John's letters (*Muratorian Canon* 1-30).

As we move from mid to the closing of the second century, we find a Church Father, Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200), who was probably a native of Asia Minor, who listened to Polycarp as a boy in Smyrna, studied in Rome, and eventually became the bishop of Lyons in France. Being a well traveled Christian leader and apologist, he states that the Gospel proclamation consists of four gospels, those according to John, Luke, Matthew, and Mark (*Heresies* 3.11.8). In addition to listing the four specific gospels that make up "*The Gospel*," Irenaeus answers our main question regarding Marcion's influence on the New Testament Canon. He says that Marcion and his followers have mutilated "*the Scriptures*" by *not acknowledging* some writings at all *and shortening* the Gospel according to Luke and the letters of Paul (*Heresies* 3.12.12).²⁰

Paul's Letters

As early as A.D. 68, there is evidence through 2 Peter 3:15-16 that Paul's letters were being collected and treated authoritatively as Scripture.²¹ Clement of Rome, writing

¹⁹ Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 36. The Muratorian Canon implies that Bishop Pius has not been dead long (lines 73-77) and that Valentinius and Miltiades have composed a **new** psalm book for Marcion (lines 82-83). It appears that the Muratorian Canon was written when Marcion was still alive and not too much after Bishop Pius died, which was around A.D. 154 (*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3d ed., 1292).

²⁰ As a note of interest: When Irenaeus is refuting the Ebionites, Irenaeus considers Luke and Acts combined as part of "the Gospel," which has been made known through Luke. Irenaeus tells the Ebionites that they should reject Luke's work if they reject Paul as an elect of God. He stated that they should reject Luke's work because he testifies of Paul's authenticity and then proceeds to quote Acts 9:4, 15-16, which shows Jesus' personal call of Paul into Christian ministry (*Heresies* 3.15.1). Irenaeus discusses information from Acts and Paul's letters as Scripture (*Heresies* 3.12.9).

W.A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180. Strange seems partially mystified because Justin Martyr writes of Jesus' post resurrected appearance in such a way that he seamlessly combines Luke 24:25, 44ff with Acts 1:8 (*Apology* 50.12; δύναμιν . . . λαβόντες). He is mystified because Justin's work shows an awareness of Luke but not Acts. This might be another case where Luke and Acts are known together as Luke.

²¹ 2 Peter 3:15-16 (A.D. 68: See Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 843-44, for a discussion on possible dating of 2 Peter). 3:15 καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγείσθε, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν, 3:16 ὡς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς λαλῶν ἐν αὐταῖς περὶ τούτων, ἐν αἷς ἐστὶν δυσνόητά τινα, ἃ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι στρεβλοῦσιν ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπόλειαν N(27), "3:15 And consider the patience of our Lord as salvation just as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom which had been given to him, 3:16 as even in all (his) letters are saying concerning these things in which there are difficult things to understand that the unlearned and insincere are

no later than A.D. 96, alluded to parts of a fairly large Pauline collection *and used them authoritatively* along with the Gospel according to Matthew. Polycarp, writing the Philippians around A.D. 107, quoted Ephesians 4:26 as part of *sacred Scriptures*. He said, “For I have been persuaded that you have been trained in the sacred Scriptures,” and then went on to quote Ephesians 4:26 (*Philippians* 12).²² Through Hippolytus, we learn that Basilides (~A.D. 130), an older contemporary of Marcion, stated that ἡ γραφή λέγει (the Scripture said), “*not through the taught words of human wisdom, but through the teachings of the Spirit, . . .*” This initial part of the sentence is a direct quote in its Greek with 1 Corinthians 2:13a, but Basilides did change 2:13b to fit his message.²³ In addition, Basilides used the formula ὡς γέγραπται (as it has been written) to introduce his combining of Romans 8:22 with 8:19b.²⁴

Irenaeus’ View of Marcion’s Canonization

Irenaeus made it clear that Marcion and his followers had taken their canon from an existing definitive set of authoritative Christian works that Irenaeus called “*the Scriptures*.” Irenaeus strengthens this thought by saying that the rest of the heretics in his day perverted the interpretation of *the Scriptures* (*Heresies* 3.12.12). Regarding Luke’s writing of Acts, Irenaeus stated that the acts and doctrines of the apostles were sound and that the teachings of the apostles were constant, reliable, and accessible to all (*Heresies* 3.15.1). A little later in his work, Irenaeus stated that Scripture was comprised of what

distorting as (they do) the other Scripture leading to their own destruction).”

²² After telling the Philippians that he thinks that they have been well trained in the sacred Writings (ταῖς ἱεραῖς γραφαῖς), he states that the following has been declared in these (holy) writings (ὡς ταῖς γραφαῖς ταύταις εἴρηται), “Be ye angry and sin not (ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε), “ and, “let not the sun go down upon your wrath (ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ παροργισμῶ ὑμῶν; *Philippians* 12).” This quotation appears to come directly from Ephesians 4:26 in which Paul quoted Psalms 4:5 (Septuagint– ὀργίζεσθε; Hebrew– יִצְרָח) in the first half and then added the balance from his general understanding of Scripture. Ephesians 4:26 appears identical, ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε· ὁ ἥλιος μὴ ἐπιδυέτω ἐπὶ [τῷ] παροργισμῷ ὑμῶν (“Being angry, do not sin,” and, “Do not let the sun go down on your anger”). Greek Source: *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) CD ROM.

²³ Westcott and Bruce state that Basilides quotes 1 Corinthians 2:13 as Scripture (W-p 301; B-p 122). This partial quote (1 Corinthians 2:13a) has been modified to change the meaning as follows: the final participial clause was changed from πνευματικῶς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες (by spiritual means comparing spiritual things) to λεγομένη (which it (Scripture) says for itself).

²⁴ Westcott and Bruce state that Basilides is quoting Romans 8:19, 22 after introducing his proof text with the phrase, “as it has been written.”– (W-p 301; B-p 122). ὡς γέγραπται, φησί· καὶ ἡ κτίσις αὐτὴ συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει μέχρι τοῦ νῦν [cf. Romans 8:22], 7.25.2 τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδεχομένη [cf. Romans 8:19b]. Basilides quoted by Hippolytus in his work *Refutations of All Heresies* (parts of 7.25.1-2). (English; as it has been written, it is being said that the creation itself is groaning and suffering together until now [cf. Romans 8:22], 7.25.2 waiting the revelation of the sons of God [cf. Romans 8:19b].

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had personally testified, which the apostles confessed, and which the prophets had announced (*Heresies* 3.17.4). In a different work, Irenaeus stated the importance of reading both the Old Testament writings and the Gospel witnesses. He said that the followers of Marcion and all other heretics who were saying that “*the Prophets*” were from a different god other than the One announced in “*the Gospel*” needed to read with earnest care the Gospel and prophets in order to find out the whole account of the suffering of the Lord (*Heresies* 4.6.34).

In Conclusion

Is there any reason to doubt Irenaeus when he said that Marcion and his followers had perverted “*the Scriptures*” by removing the parts that they did not want? Irenaeus was well traveled from Asian Minor to Rome to Lyons and eventually became the bishop of Lyons. In addition to specifically saying that Marcion and his followers had removed parts from the Scriptures, Irenaeus stated that the majority of the heretics recognized the Scriptures as they existed; their problem was that they misinterpreted the Scriptures (*Heresies* 3.12.12). By saying that Marcion and his followers had perverted the Scriptures by removing portions of it and that others had misinterpreted it, it is clear that Irenaeus understood there to be a generally agreed upon authoritative group of New and Old Testament writings by the mid-second century.²⁵

Although we do not have an assortment of early lists telling us which New Testament writings were used at various times and places, we have an assortment of early evidence from texts, Church Fathers, and heretics, that conclusively show that there was a recognized Gospel collection and a collection of Paul’s work that were considered as authoritative Scripture.

In addition, we noted above that Irenaeus was not the first orthodox Christian leader to consider Paul’s letters as Scripture: there were many before him including Peter who had said that Paul’s letters were being distorted by the untaught and unstable as they did also the rest of Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Others early witnesses such as I Clement of Rome and Polycarp, who referred to Ephesians 4:26 as sacred Scripture (*Philippians* 12), show that Paul’s letters were treated as authoritative in the first and early second century. Regarding the Gospels, we have early witnesses such as Papias, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Titian, the *Muratorian Canon*, and Irenaeus who clearly show early Gospel collections, which utilized Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

In addition to textual, Church Fathers, and heretical evidence that shows existing collections of Gospels and Pauline letters in use prior to Marcion’s mid-second century usage, I conclude by posing a question. If Marcion and other heretics were such a great threat to orthodox churches, why did it take so long for churches to collectively publish an authorized list of Scriptures? I propose that similar to Irenaeus, most if not all

²⁵ Remember that we had noted above that Irenaeus had said that Marcion’s followers and all other heretics who were saying that “*the Prophets*” were from a different god other than the One announced in “*the Gospel*” needed to read with earnest care both “*the Gospel*” and “*the Prophets*” in order to find out the whole account of the suffering of the Lord (*Heresies* 4.6.34). To Irenaeus, the Old Testament was an important part of “*the Scripture*.”

orthodox second century Christian leadership had a working Canon of Scripture consisting of the Old and New Testament given to them through the leading of the Holy Spirit from God from which they could discern proper biblical teaching from heretical.

So after looking at the evidence, it is clear that as the first century was waning and the second dawning, God had established His expanded written Word, the Bible, for all listening to Him. The writings of the Old and New Testaments highlight the fulfillment of the atoning work of His Sent Son and the didactic words of a few of Jesus' disciples. The expanded Word of God clearly shows His ongoing interaction with His creation leading as many as listen from all ages eventually to the New Heaven and the New Earth, the planned culmination of His Creation of a sin free, free-willed close-knit eternal family.

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