

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
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CANONICAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS:
ESTABLISHING THE VALIDITY AND ELEVATING THE WEIGHT OF ACCURATE *TEXTUAL* CITATIONS

A THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

It is no surprise that one of the favorite pastimes of theologians is creating and sustaining narratives that seek to explain circumstances of certain periods of history. One current and controversial example is the supposed cultural background of the Ephesian church, which is intended to negate any attempts at foisting Paul's commands for women on the contemporary church. And while this narrative has been thoroughly critiqued and opposed by numerous scholars, other creative narratives have not been so closely scrutinized.¹ One such hypothesis is the corruption of Scripture that took place under those who were zealous to maintain an orthodox or perfectly harmonized text.² This is not to say that such views have not been critiqued, for they surely have been.³ However, in the process of critiquing such hypotheses, certain elements have resisted significant evaluation (save for a few voices of opposition) and have simply been assumed into modern scholarship.

These assumptions have led to a number of problems. First, many now view the Scriptures through a skeptical lens, which makes it difficult to properly define Scripture. To combat this we will seek to show the merits of a presuppositional model for defining Scripture. Second, such skepticism has led to historical analyses of Scripture and canon, which tend to

1. James R. Beck, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

2. This is dealing primarily with Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996). However, Ehrman is simply carrying to fruition the latent concepts of corruption that have existed since Adolf Harnack and Walter Bauer. The major difference is that Ehrman is focusing solely upon Christology.

3. Recently Daniel Wallace has brought together many scholars to level Ehrman's position. However, even here Wallace is sympathetic towards some of Ehrman's ideas, but he is not willing to carry them to the same extent. See esp. Daniel B. Wallace, "How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?," in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence*, ed. Daniel B. Wallace, *The Text and Canon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 52.

discount the theological nature of both. Here we will argue that neutrality in the field of history, when dealing with topics that are inherently theological, is neither attainable nor desirable. Third, and most pertinent, text critics have developed a criterion that requires the earliest available reading within the manuscripts to be the most likely reading. This is largely due to the fact that the earlier texts are more likely to have avoided corruption. However, this view has numerous problems. This third issue is the predominant focus of this thesis, since it will be argued that such a position does not deal faithfully with all of the available evidence. Particularly, this concept overlooks or discounts the citations of the Fathers, which in many cases come from an earlier period than the earliest manuscripts. The goal is to offer enough evidence from these early periods to encourage reasoned eclectics to become more eclectic.

In an ideal setting, this thesis would begin and end with a simple inquiry into the writings of the early church fathers, in pursuit of what may be considered early readings of Scripture. The position here is, when taken at face value, the amount of citations we see in the Fathers yields enough support for retaining verses that do not exist within the Alexandrian text-type. However, modern text-criticism does not foster an ideal setting for anyone. Therefore, simply offering examples of such citations and the texts that they seem to be using would be a bit premature. Instead, it is necessary to deal with some foundational issues that, if accepted, can lay the axe to the roots of this project from the start.

To begin, in chapter 1, we will look at the nature of the canon and how pursuing this area of study in the wrong manner can lead to a devaluing of the role of the Fathers. The issue here is inspiration. Though evangelicals typically have a robust understanding of inspiration, when it comes to the historical questions of canon their pursuits tend to muffle such a position. Instead, we will seek to defend a definition of canon that begins with inspiration (or the divine

nature of Scripture) and works outward from there. The result is thinking of canon as simply existing, rather than developing. That is, from the minute Scripture was written it was Scripture and thus canon.

In chapter 2, the concept of corruption will be addressed, with the goal of placing such an issue in its proper perspective. Though it will not be argued that alterations never happened to the texts of Scripture, it will be shown that an overtly pessimistic attitude in reference to the Scriptures is unwarranted. This pessimism shows up not only in liberal higher-critical methods, but also in worn down forms within evangelicalism. Though it is primarily the concept of orthodox corruption that will be analyzed, it will also be argued that mild forms of this theory can easily hinder one's understanding of patristic uses of Scripture.

Chapter 3 will critique the concepts of earliest-equals-best, oral tradition, and the late reception of Scripture as Scripture. On each of these fronts we will offer plausible alternatives that will allow for more inquiry into the nature of the quotations of the early Fathers. The main issue with the earliest-equals-best hypothesis is the a priori discounting of Byzantine witnesses that may derive from an earlier period. Though textual critics typically go by the title of "modern eclectics," it is no secret that "eclectic" in this title frequently does not mean what it says. That is, rather than searching through the thousands of variants, which eclecticism seems to require, the most often pursuit is to adopt the Alexandrian readings over and against all others. For the second issue, it will be argued that a pursuit after authoritative oral sources is a subjective enterprise that has yet to yield any verifiable data. Moreover, the only thing that keeps conservative scholars from taking this pursuit further is the written Scripture. But this will bring us back to the question of authority that is so important in the very nature of inspiration of a text (see chap. 1). The final concept of a later acceptance of Scripture will also be grounded

thoroughly in our definition of Scripture. At this point we will look at the words of the Fathers and ascertain whether it is permissible to say they did not have a high opinion of the canonical texts.

Our main pursuit is dealt with in chapter 4, where a wealth of citations are offered in the hopes that the scholarly community will take seriously the weight of such evidence for early renderings of the text of Scripture. This is by no means intended to elevate the Fathers to a status above the earliest manuscript evidence; it is simply meant to *advocate caution in placing the majority of weight on these manuscripts*. Though we will note briefly our dislike of the concept of the earliest reading equaling the most valid, such a position is assumed in this project. The desire is that by appealing to citations from the Fathers it will be made clear that there were indeed early-known alternate readings of the biblical material. This earlier material was being quoted from texts, and these texts would then be just as early as the available manuscripts. Hence, the criterion of antiquity can be applied to readings that are found in later manuscripts, especially when corroborating material is found within the earliest strata of the Fathers' writings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A survey of the pertinent material of this topic reveals that there are a number of positions that need to be avoided. Many of these views can be seen on a spectrum from left to right. Those at the far right believe things like the only adequate textual variants are the ones that appear in the *Textus Receptus*.⁴ D. A. Carson in *The King James Only Debate* has adequately dealt with this position, and has shown that it is untenable. However, in numerous cases he is too harsh towards the Byzantine text-type in general. For example, he writes, "There is no unambiguous evidence that the Byzantine text-type was known before the middle of the fourth

4. Though Green offers a great work for finding variants, seeing the hand of Satan on every variant like he does is not something we will be pursuing in this thesis. Jay P. Green, *Unholy Hands on the Bible*, vol. 2 (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund, 1992).

century.”⁵ Carson offers three ways in which this claim can be substantiated, but his third is the most pertinent. He believes that the Byzantine text-type appears “nowhere” when “reading the New Testament quotations found in the writings of the pre-A.D. 350 church fathers to discover if the biblical passages they quote approximate *any* particular text-type” (emphasis added).⁶ This note on *any* is important because Carson goes on to point out how, when there is an apparent citation of the Byzantine text-type, these citations are also found in the other manuscript families.⁷ Hence, he is arguing that there is no way to prove that it is the Byzantine as compared to the Caesarean texts, for example, that are being cited. Nevertheless, it seems possible to make a case against this when the focus is solely upon omissions. Also, Carson only points to one of Gordon Fee’s articles in support of this point, so the question remains: who has done the work of drawing out all of these citations so that Carson might state so clearly that no evidence exists in all the works of the Fathers? Assuming, however, that citations can be found that are at variance with the Alexandrian manuscripts, Carson is correct to point out that this will only prove that the Byzantine text-type is as old as the Alexandrian; it still does not make it the most accurate.⁸

Maurice Robinson and William Pierpont are on the right of this spectrum, but they come much more toward the center in dealing with the text. They believe that the modern arguments for the corruption of Scripture are not convincing. Furthermore, they argue that modern eclecticism is not treating the Byzantine material in a fair manner. In fact, they are convinced that their support of the Byzantine text-type is more faithful to the Wescott and Hort tradition than the opposition. They write, “Such an approach parallels Westcott and Hort, but

5. D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 44.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 45.

with the added caveat against dismissing the Byzantine Textform as a significant transmissional factor.”⁹ In other words, they seek to evaluate the Byzantine witnesses along with the Alexandrian in search for the most accurate variant. Two of their external criteria are important for this thesis: (1) “A reading preserved in only a single MS, version or father is suspect;” and (2) “A reading supported by various versions and fathers demonstrates a wider variety of support than a reading lacking such.”¹⁰ These criteria are a reasonable guide in the search for quotations.

On the left side of this argument are those who believe that Scripture is a convention of the early church, and was corrupted to the point that we cannot know what the original forms were. Ironically, though this position seems to require agnosticism on textual issues, some of those in this camp are the most vocal text critics. Those working on the *Historical Jesus Movement* would represent the farthest end of this view, but there are some who inch a bit more toward the right. Surely complete accuracy, as in exact reflection of the autographs, is not a tenable position. Yet, it is valid to compile a text that is as close to the autographs as possible. But how one goes about this is where the issue is felt most keenly. Even if it can be shown that the citations of the Fathers support a Byzantine text-type, a problem still remains: were they correctly citing? Bart Ehrman believes that the theological issues of those days were a major cause in the way the text was rendered by the Fathers. He states, “theological disputes, specifically disputes over Christology, prompted Christian scribes to alter the words of Scripture in order to make them more serviceable for the polemical task.”¹¹

9. Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, Kindle (Cambridge, MA: Anchor-Cross Publishing, 2005), 43502.

10. *Ibid.*, 43671; 43682.

11. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture the Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

At another point, in a footnote, Ehrman deals with 1 John 5:7 as “the most obvious instance of a theologically motivated corruption.”¹² The issue is not so much Ehrman’s position on 1 John 5:7, but rather the way in which he makes it appear like all of Scripture must reflect a similar corruption. However, Daniel Wallace has taken Ehrman to task on this point, and the subsequent articles in Wallace’s book draw out numerous areas of fallacies employed in Ehrman’s study.¹³ Yet, Ehrman is not alone. One of the more pervasive concepts that affects the pursuit of citations is the position that very little of what was written can be trusted. Particularly, there is the insistence that even if a verbatim citation exists it cannot be known for sure that this was a citation of Scripture. Instead, such citations were probably just ““making use of tradition that we may suppose to have been of Pauline [or apostolic] origin,”” writes Michael Holmes.¹⁴ But as will be shown, many citations come with a scriptural address, which makes it very hard to support Holmes’ position.

Towards the center of this debate are Bruce Metzger and Michael Kruger, though both of them tend to push in opposite directions. Metzger seeks to look at canon strictly from a neutral historical perspective, and it is at this point that Kruger calls into question whether such a position is indeed feasible. That is, Kruger wonders if Metzger’s (and others) pursuit to be neutral is actually possible. The following study deals with Metzger’s material in the light of Kruger’s criticism. The intent is not to cast doubt on Metzger’s ability as a historian, but to show how Kruger is correct in his assessment. Metzger seems incapable of studying the canon without making theological statements. And though it may seem unfair to criticize him at this point, his

12. Ibid., 45.

13. Wallace, “How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?”

14. Michael W. Holmes, “Polycarp’s Letter to the Philippians,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and C. M. Tuckett (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 211.

thoughts have shaped a generation of textual critics. Hence, whether intentional or not, some of Metzger's concepts need to be challenged before moving forward. Two of these are his insistence upon the fact that even verbatim citations are probably mistakes, and Scripture as a late development.¹⁵

Finally, the *Cambridge History of the Bible* has some valid criticisms for those who have too readily discounted the Byzantine text-type: "Original readings may be discerned in the various witnesses to the so-called Western text, while the Byzantine text (brusquely dismissed by most exegetes since the days of Westcott and Hort) often reflects the putative original in both vocabulary and word-order. This indicates that all the major text-forms have their roots in the second century."¹⁶ Based on this, this thesis is not so much concerned with supporting the Byzantine text as it is concerned with showing that the Alexandrian readings do not necessarily have to be the oldest.

Within many of the texts above, and numerous others, attention has been given to the citations of the Fathers. So, one might ask, what is the need for this study? The answer is one of scope and accuracy. Though the texts deal with citations in general, there has been no clear focus upon those passages that are lacking in the Alexandrian texts. This is not to say that none of them are dealt with, but rather they are only dealt with in a passing and incomplete manner. Often, only one citation is mentioned when in fact numerous Fathers quote it.¹⁷ Furthermore, the databases and scriptural indexes available for searching this material are lacking in accuracy (see procedure below). This study is necessary if for no other reason than verifying these references.

15. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 62.

16. J. N. Birdsall, "The New Testament Text," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. Peter Runham Ackroyd and Christopher Francis Evans, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 343–4.

17. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 62.

LIMITATIONS AND PROCEDURE

In order to make this a manageable project, the focus will be on passages that are omitted from the TR. This in no way is meant to lend support to the TR, but is just a procedure to ensure that all the data is given a fair chance. Also, it would be just as easy to speak of these omissions as “additions” depending upon one’s perspective. However, this project is operating within the guideline of “innocent until proven guilty”—that is, unless it can be demonstrated that a reading should not exist it should be kept. Still, this does not mean the reader need be so credulous that he simply believes the texts exist. Instead, all that is being said is that there is good reason to accept multiple possibilities for a given passage. Also, dealing with omissions in the gospels is notoriously difficult due to parallel passages. Hence, the only omissions that will be related are those that have no clear parallel, or are prefaced by a Father as being written by a certain author.

Another delimiter is the date of the two earliest manuscripts. Since the goal is to show that certain readings go back to an early stratum, the material searched will come from Fathers up to roughly fifty years after those manuscripts. This, of course, assumes that John Chrysostom for example (the last of the Fathers studied), did not simply invent his copy of the Bible. Instead, it is more likely that he was working from a copy that had been established prior to his writings.

The process for this study will begin with BibliIndex, which is a database that has been coded to many foreign (e.g., French) compilations of the works of the Fathers. This database allows a search to be made for specific passages. However, many of the references have not been verified, and many more are incorrect. Hence, this is only a generic tool to point in the right direction. The second procedure is searching the scriptural indexes of Phillip Schaff’s volumes. Likewise, this has its limitations, since many of the references are in error. Also, at a few points

the translations seem to have used a biblical text for certain citations rather than translating verbatim from the Fathers. This was discovered by looking into the original text, which in many cases housed a different reading than Schaff. For this reason, all of the texts, except for those that were not available, are given in the closest to the original language. This means that where the Greek is not available, the Latin will be given, and where the Latin is not available the English will be used.

Finally, this thesis is predominantly concerned with theology and the theological outworkings of many historical hypotheses. As will be made clear, it seems virtually impossible to avoid some theological biases when engaging New Testament historical studies. Because of this, one of the goals will be to draw out elements within historical texts that have a marked theological bent toward them. Metzger and Ehrman are the two most prominent individuals who will be dealt with in this manner. But rather than denigrate their work, we are simply trying to expose the fallacy of neutrality that is often claimed by these (and other) authors.

When Metzger seeks to trace the development of the canon, but then gives his definition of inspiration and how this plays into his narrative, it is our contention that this is blurring the lines between disciplines. At the same time, when Ehrman speaks of corruption as a thing that simply happened, but then intends to recreate the New Testament in order to apply the text, again we see a mixing of disciplines. The goal is not to separate these disciplines, but to call for honesty that has been lacking in much of the material. The pursuit of neutrality inevitably ignores the ministrations of the Holy Spirit, due to his invisibility. Hence, this is not a neutral enterprise, but a naturalistic one. For this reason, we will not be seeking neutrality, but rather dealing with the history of the New Testament with a decidedly presuppositional framework—that is, church history must begin with what the head of the church (Jesus) has taught.

CHAPTER 1: DEFINING CANON

This chapter is intended to establish a presuppositional definition for canon, and to break down the division between canon and Scripture. In other words, it will be argued that canon and Scripture should be understood on their own terms for what they are. This is a theological question that must be settled before engaging the development of the canon because one's view of "development" will be greatly affected. For instance, if the definition defended here is accepted, it will be clear that canon did not develop so much as it just always was.

Ever since the publication of Kurt Aland's *The Problem of New Testament Canon*, it has become common to argue that the very notion of an early defined set of biblical books is a misnomer.¹⁸ Instead, it is argued that the notion of canon cannot even be talked about until the fourth century, when a list of twenty-seven books was deemed canonical by the Synod of Hippo Regius (AD 393), or one of the subsequent councils of AD 397 and 419.¹⁹ Following the foundation laid by Aland, R. M. Grant states,

The Canon of the New Testament was the result of a long and gradual process in the course of which the books regarded as authoritative, inspired, and apostolic were selected out of a much larger body of literature. . . . The books rejected from the Canon were rejected because they seemed to conflict with what the accepted books taught. Selection thus involved not only comparison among books but also comparison with a norm viewed as relatively fixed.²⁰

18. Though this view was obviously a standard position prior to Aland (e.g., Harnack before him), his work can be considered the intellectual cement that foisted this position into the academy. From Aland's work this theory would no longer be confined to the liberal quarters of Christendom. Today the majority of evangelical scholars work from a presuppositional framework largely indebted to Aland. This cannot be overemphasized, since it is not just Aland's understanding of canon that has invaded evangelicalism, but also his genealogical method of textual transmission has become assumed, even by those who critique it. Kurt Aland, *The Problem of the New Testament Canon* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1962).

19. It is not our intention here to retell the historical process by which the twenty-seven books of the New Testament became accepted as canonical. This has been done in virtually every introductory text on the NT. Instead, we are in pursuit of a much more fundamental issue—that is, can we trust the early church fathers when they cite canonical texts. In other words, were the Fathers citing the canon or were they creating a canon? For a conservative historical look at this issue see Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2009).

Though there is variation among this position, Grant's concept may be assumed as a paradigmatic example of the historical-critical method meeting canonical development. In other words, the development of the canon is viewed through the lens of historical inquiry, without any recourse to the nature of the Scripture contained within the canon. This position has some nefarious outworkings that will be dealt with in the following section, but for now the intent is to simply show how this historical framework is flawed from the beginning—that is, the very definition that is assumed for “canon” in order to follow this course is invalid.

Before moving forward, it is important to note the pervasive nature of this concept within evangelical literature, or at least literature loosely associated with the movement. Bruce Metzger, for example, gives a definition almost verbatim to that of Grant's: “The recognition of the canonical status of the several books of the New Testament was the result of a long and gradual process, in the course of which certain writings, regarded as authoritative, were separated from a much larger body of early Christian literature.”²¹ There are a few key differences, but the most important for our purposes is Metzger's addition of the word “recognition;” this is intended to give the idea that Christians were simply recognizing a status that could have already existed.

The problem, however, is that throughout his work Metzger is intent on showing that the writings later included in the canon were never clearly accorded scriptural status until the time of the canon's solidification. He writes, “The evidence provided . . . from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers does scarcely more than point to the existence and, to some extent, the

20. R. M. Grant, “The New Testament Canon,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. Peter Runham Ackroyd and Christopher Francis Evans, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 284. Similarly Hans von Campenhausen argues, “One can, in my view, speak of a ‘canon’ only where of set purpose such a document or group of documents is given special, normative position, by virtue of which it takes its place alongside the existing Old Testament ‘scriptures.’” Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, trans. J. A. Baker (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1997), 103.

21. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 1.

dissemination of certain early Christian writings in the form of gospels and epistles. Certainly there is little enough recognition of their being regarded as ‘holy Scripture.’”²² In other words, though the term “recognition” seems to allow for the concept that Scripture was Scripture from the time it was written, Metzger’s conclusions largely militate against this. What ends up happening then is very much the same as Grant’s pursuit to figure out when the church fathers applied canonical (i.e., scriptural status) upon the books they chose to include in the Bible. The goal is purely historical, and gives the impression that Scripture becomes Scripture when it is baptized as such by the “anonymous” figures of church history.²³

Lest this appear to be overly critical, it should be noted that Metzger acknowledges the problem with approaching the question of canon purely from the historical vantage point. In his final chapter he offers a discussion of the *testimonium*, which he considers, along with Calvin, to be the reason Christians can affirm Scripture to be authoritative. Again, the issue is not one of intentions, for it is clear that Metzger is supportive of an inherently authoritative corpus of writings, or canon of Scripture. Simply put, the problem is with certain ideas that seem to conflict, thereby nullifying such presuppositional convictions. The clearest instance of this comes by way of Metzger’s discussion of inspiration. What he writes is worth quoting at length:

In short, the Scriptures, according to the early Fathers, are indeed inspired, but that is not the reason they are authoritative. They are authoritative, and hence canonical, because they are the extant literary deposit of the direct and indirect apostolic witness on which the later witness of the Church depends. . . . Thus, while it is true that the Biblical authors were inspired by God, this does not mean that inspiration is a criterion of canonicity. A writing is not canonical because the author was inspired, but rather an

22. Ibid., 75.

23. It is safe to assume that this is not Metzger’s intent. Yet due to the works of one of his most illustrious students, Bart Ehrman, who thinks he is carrying Metzger’s work to its logical conclusions, it seems naïve to think Metzger’s works are innocent in the liberal swing taken by Ehrman. It is no small-known historical reality that the disciples of great thinkers have a tendency of exploiting the silences and ambiguities within their teachers’ works. And just as none would release Barth of all blame for the many issues of his followers, it seems equally necessary to take issue with Metzger’s consistent playing of the fence with the issue of the nature of Scripture. Ibid., 4.

author is considered to be inspired because what he has written is recognized as canonical, that is, is recognized as authoritative in the church.²⁴

Once more the inclusion of the word “recognized” is important; except in this instance it is working in the opposite direction. Whereas Metzger initially attempts to allow for the early church’s recognition of canonical books (see usage above), here the term is pointing to the inspiration of the apostles as a conditional reality predicated upon the *recognition* of their works as authoritative.

Metzger is clearly looking at inspiration from a historical perspective, however, his definition does not seem to square with the data of the Bible, for Scripture requires Scripture to be written through the θεόπνευστος (inspiration) and movement of God’s Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; cf. 2 Pet 1:21).²⁵ So, one wonders how it is possible to remove from apostolicity the objective requisite of inspiration while at the same time requiring apostolicity as the bedrock of canonicity, which is the core of Metzger’s tripartite criteria for the canon.²⁶ The only recourse at this point would be to point out that the required inspiration, which would be validated by the church at a

24. *Ibid.*, 256–7.

25. It is hard to separate Metzger’s historical moorings from his theological, since he often lumps such concepts together in the same sentence. At this point, for example, Metzger seeks to support his views from Scripture and not just history. In this way, we feel justified in portraying one of his flawed theological presuppositions.

26. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 253. It is not Metzger’s association with inspiration and authoritative material that is the problem so much as it is the requirement of Scripture itself for those who write in the name of God to be inspired. In the same paragraph, Metzger is arguing for other texts that might be inspired—presumably the lost letter to the Corinthians and others. His point is well taken, but the conclusion that this requires inspiration to be removed from the criteria of canonicity strains credulity. There are two feasible options that seem preferable: (1) the letters that were written by the apostle were not inspired, much like not every action that Peter did was inspired (these men were not infallible); and (2) the letters were inspired, but they were never intended to be canonical. The first option allows for the reality that not everything the apostles wrote was inspired. For example, few would seriously argue that Paul’s weekly grocery lists were inspired. Alternatively, option (2) allows for there to be lost inspired material, but this in no way means it was ineffective. Perhaps, Paul’s letter was simply intended to bring about the results that are seen in 2 Corinthians, which God saw fit to not have “lost.” In either case, inspiration still remains a necessary point of apostolic authority: “To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord)” (1 Cor 7:10 ESV). It seems highly unlikely that Paul could offer such an injunction if he did not consider himself to be inspired. All Scripture citations in English are taken from the ESV, unless otherwise noted.

later date was simply part of God’s metanarrative—in that, he foreordained the church’s ability to recognize the authoritative nature of Scripture (which was authoritative based upon its apostolic witness), and in doing so deemed the church authoritative enough to render the apostles inspired, in a manner that would proleptically fulfill such passages as 2 Timothy 3:16. Though circularity is inevitable when dealing with the canon, this position is patently vicious.

At the same time, other authors give views that attempt to account for one side of canonical development with neglect to the others. J. R. McRay writes, “The formation of the NT canon must, therefore, be seen as a process rather than an event, and a historical rather than a biblical matter.”²⁷ The first part of this definition is very much agreeable, but that latter half once again seems to ignore the nature of Scripture. Similarly, Elmer Towns adopts Thiessen’s criteria for canonicity, which requires four elements—the fourth being “marks of inspiration”—in order for a book to be considered Scripture.²⁸ In other words, each book was evaluated by an external standard and then, based upon this, the texts were deemed scriptural (though it is argued that they were simply being recognized as such). Finally, Paul Enns states, “The terms *canon* and *canonical* thus came to signify standards by which books were measured to determine whether or not they were inspired.”²⁹

According to Michael Kruger the issue with the concepts developed by Metzger, McRay, Towns, and Enns, is not that they are wrong, but that they naturally reduce to placing an external authority upon the Scripture, as well as ignore the inability to actually pursue historical inquiry in an unbiased manner.³⁰ Although liberals openly defend a position of the historical

27. J. R. McRay, “Bible, Canon of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, 2nd ed., Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 156.

28. Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 84–5.

29. Paul P. Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), 172.

development and the baptizing of Christian works as Scripture, the more conservative positions seem to lead in the same direction. The difference, of course, is the latter's allegiance to the notion of inherent authority in the texts. But Kruger introduces a number of valid criticisms at this point. He asks, "If the criteria of canonicity, as the name suggests, provide some sort of norms or standards by which we determine whether a book comes from God, then where do the criteria themselves come from?"³¹ Kruger takes special interest in the historical answers to this question.

When the criteria are seen to be concepts developed by the early church fathers, then one might wonder why we should trust them in the first place.³² What exactly gives these men the right to decide what Scripture should look like? Indeed, this is the major issue with the orthodox corruption as dealt with later. The problem is that once this is posited, all ground is now lost for arguing that orthodoxy is orthodoxy because it *is* orthodox. Instead, it becomes very easy to see how orthodoxy is orthodoxy because it was *deemed* to be orthodox by the Fathers. On the other hand, and this is where Kruger focuses, there are those who seek to support the criteria strictly from a "neutral" historical perspective.³³ The problem, though, is that whenever scholars argue from this position of neutrality they are assuming a number of concepts that can only be derived from specifically orthodox interpretations of Scripture. As a thought experiment, try to explain the validity of apostolicity without using the Bible to make your point. Kruger thinks this

30. Kruger places these under his criteria-of-canonicity model. Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 77–8.

31. *Ibid.*, 83.

32. *Ibid.*

33. This is one of Kruger's main criticisms for any of the historical models, inasmuch as neutrality is not a possible position. *Ibid.*

to be impossible: “This shows again that this argument works only if a person already has a worldview that is amenable to the Christian system.”³⁴

If it is impossible then to remove one’s self to a position of neutrality (assuming that this would even be desirable in the first place), how exactly are we supposed to understand the canon? According to Kruger, it is not the problem of history per se, but the problem of placing so much emphasis upon history that the canon is “‘subject[ed] . . . to the relativity of historical study and our fallible human insight.’”³⁵ In other words, it would be wise to acknowledge our indebtedness to the scriptural worldview in our discussions of the canon. In order to do this, however, one needs a clear understanding of the nature of the canonical texts—the very thing that the historical models tend to neglect.³⁶ Also, it is necessary to recognize what type of question is being answered via historical versus other means. So, there are two foundational issues: (1) properly describing the canon; and (2) understanding the nature of Scripture itself.

Ultimately, the definitional problem is the major issue with all the views above; lacking clarity on the nature of Scripture is the byproduct. According to Kruger, there is not just one definition of canon, but rather there are three. First, there is the “exclusive” definition, which views the canon as the completed list of twenty-seven books.³⁷ Proponents of this view seek to stop all talk about a canon before the synods and councils mentioned above—that is, the only thing canon truly means is the established list of books of the fourth century church. Second, the

34. Ibid., 84.

35. Kruger is quoting R. Gaffin. Ibid., 88.

36. It should be clear that all of the people quoted above understand Scripture in the sense that it is authoritative in and of itself. However, their theories of the canon do not begin here. As a result the progression is backwards. There is an assumption of authority, which must be proven through historical means. But if it must be proven through historical means, whence comes the assumption? History by itself does not provide an adequate basis for such a view of Scripture; the only place one can formulate such a concept is from the biblical texts themselves. The first step is to acknowledge that a presuppositional framework is in operation. Ibid., 80, fn 55.

37. Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 29.

“functional” definition allows for the books to be considered canonical from the point in time they are *considered* to be Scripture.³⁸ Third, the “ontological” definition views the texts as being canonical from the time they are written.³⁹ This final definition is thoroughly grounded in the nature of Scripture as inspired text that has been given to the people of God. Interestingly, each of these definitions is technically correct. The problem is that most pick one as the *only* definition of canon. For a clear construction of canonical development, Kruger correctly argues that each definition must be part of the picture. The only difficulty is that unless the proper framework is used, there is no way to keep one of the definitions from destroying the others.

To solve this problem Kruger has developed what he calls the “self-authenticating model” of the canon.⁴⁰ The important feature of this model is that it moves beyond the claims of the historical model, which claims that the canon has internal evidence of its divine nature. According to Kruger, “A self-authenticating canon is not just a canon that claims to have authority, nor is it simply a canon that bears internal evidence of authority, but one that guides and determines how that authority is to be established.”⁴¹ At first glance, it is hard to see how this concept is acceptable given the nature of the criticism of circularity above. Indeed, Kruger states further, “In essence, to say that the canon is self-authenticating is simply to recognize that one cannot authenticate the canon without appealing to the canon.”⁴² No doubt this is circular, but after further explanation it becomes clear that the cycle is not vicious like the other positions.

38. *Ibid.*, 34.

39. *Ibid.*, 40.

40. To be clear, he is not inventing a new theory, but rather developing an already existing concept into a robust theory of canon. Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 89.

41. *Ibid.*, 91.

42. *Ibid.*

The answer to this problem is in the nature of self-authentication as a foundational belief. For example, suppose someone were asked to name what he sees on the table (an apple) in front of him. Assuming that he is not visually or cognitively impaired, he will reply that an apple is on the table. After this, he is asked how he knows that an apple is on the table, to which he will reply that he sees it there. Pressing the matter further, the interviewer asks him how he knows he is seeing an apple there. At this point, the man will become frustrated and wonder why he volunteered for the survey in the first place. The point is that the man is convinced (reasonably so) of his ability to see and recognize things, without any external justification of his ability. The fact that he can see the apple can be viewed as evidence in support of his ability to see, but it does not prove his ability in any more than a vacuous sense of the word “proves.” For this reason Kruger is convinced that his theory is not capable of *proving* that the canonical material is from God—just as it is impossible to prove to someone that he can reason when he is convinced that he lives in a *Matrix* world—but rather “the Christian faith, . . . can give an adequate account of how it can be known that these [twenty-seven] books are canonical.”⁴³

The end result of this theory is a system in which it is possible for the elect (this would even include the apostles) to acknowledge the divine nature of the canonical material.⁴⁴ Kruger writes, “This environment includes not only providential exposure to the canonical books, but also the three attributes of canonicity that all canonical books possess—divine qualities, corporate reception, apostolic origins—and the work of the Holy Spirit to help us recognize

43. Kruger’s defense is much more elaborate and should be consulted before discounting this view. It is assumed as a conceptual framework for the remainder of this project, but space does not allow an adequate appraisal of all of Kruger’s nuances. The main point is the need for an integration of all three definitions, which is lacking in the other canonical theories. *Ibid.*, 92.

44. Though this idea was given a slight nod from Metzger above, the *testimonium* is only the human side of the process of God’s witness of himself. In order for the *testimonium* to mean anything it needs to take place in a way that God can guarantee that his words are recognizable. In other words, discussing the canon must begin with God’s inspiration of his written word (*contra* Metzger).

them.”⁴⁵ Notice, that the “criteria” of canonicity is included here as only one aspect of the overall concept of canon. Furthermore, the assumption of God’s providence in the writing and collecting process is clear.⁴⁶ What we are after, then, is the proper starting point for dealing with the canon. Rather than just asking historical questions, it is necessary to first develop one’s understanding of the nature of Scripture.

Though it is clearly not the intent of all those who seek to deal with the canon in a purely historical manner to discount the inspiration of the Bible, inevitably talk of the canon purely from this angle muffles such a concept. Hence, while our focus here will be historical, it will begin with the assumption that Scripture was Scripture the minute it was written, and that due to God’s providence, the elect may recognize this. The result of this will be pursuing lines of evidence that may have been overlooked in other studies. For example, rather than seeking to show how and when Scripture was simply deemed to be Scripture, we will look for evidence that Scripture was simply recognized as such. Moreover, evidence for this, if it is indeed a viable position, should come from the earliest segments of the church—inasmuch as the very first readers of Scripture would have recognized the God-breathed nature of Scripture. The major strength of this model is its allowance for all definitions to be working together rather than tearing each other down. Thus, canon can be seen as a process by which the Scripture that was written by the apostles, through the inspiration of God, was recognized as such by the elect, through the aid of the Holy Spirit. In turn, this definition supports the development of orthodoxy according to a text instead of a text corresponding to the orthodox.

45. Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 113.

46. For an outline of the self-attesting Scriptures see Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 49. Though not as thorough as Kruger, the fundamental agreement is what we are after.

CONCLUSION

In order to properly answer the questions dealt within in this thesis, the concept of Scripture needs to be clearly stated. The position here is that from the moment Scripture was written it was authoritative because it came from the inspiration of God. Hence, there is an overt theological lens by which this canon will be viewed. From the first to the twenty-seventh book of the New Testament, each was canonical because it was first Scripture. In this way, there is an overlap between the two concepts that many scholars try to avoid. But there is good reason to question the need to do so. It should not be concluded from this chapter that historical questions about the canon's development are irrelevant. Quite the opposite is the case. The starting point is what needs to be clarified. Whereas numerous scholars approach the questions from the starting point of history and then use this to answer the theological questions, the opposite will take place here.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING ORTHODOXY

Bart Ehrman has popularized a position that sees the development of the canon as a process that involved a group of scribes and church fathers who sought to develop an authoritative list of writings in support of their views. Their views, of course, were believed by them to be the “orthodox” position, and hence the removal of other works that could work against them was seen as a necessary move in safeguarding the “truth.” The result of this theory is questioning whether the canon is actually an inherently authoritative set of books at all. At the same time, a mild form of this theory has found its way into many evangelical works.⁴⁷ On this end of the spectrum there is a marked intention of retaining the inspired nature of Scripture, while also making room for theological corruptions within the text. Both of these positions create problems that need to be addressed. The purpose of this chapter is to defend the early segments of the church, as well as the authors of the New Testament, from this charge of corruption. Without being able to trust these individuals there is no good reason to look to their works in the first place. Hence, this is the first step in elevating the trustworthiness of the earliest written Christian texts.

ORTHODOX CORRUPTION

According to Bart Ehrman, “theological disputes, specifically disputes over Christology, prompted Christian scribes to alter the words of Scripture in order to make them more serviceable for the polemical task.”⁴⁸ He continues, “Scribes modified their manuscripts to make them more patently ‘orthodox’ and less susceptible to ‘abuse’ by the opponents of

47. David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 300–6; Frederick Fyvie Bruce and Philip W. Comfort, *The Origin of the Bible* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 192–3.

48. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 3–4.

orthodoxy.”⁴⁹ Ehrman’s quotations in this passage are important for truly grasping what he is talking about. Orthodoxy, for instance, is seen to be little more than a position that was stamped as approved by the majority of (or at least the most outspoken) Christians.⁵⁰ In other words, it is not just that scribes were making things conform more or less to the teachings of the Bible, but rather to orthodox teachings that they placed upon the Bible.

According to this theory, the earliest manuscripts were copied, those copies were also copied, and then a largely anonymous force, sometime during the second century, altered those copies. These final “altered” copies then became the foundational documents for all subsequent copies. Once the orthodox copies had been created, the original text was lost (or even destroyed), and today we are left with a series of variant readings that are only useful for showing the beliefs of the “orthodox” of the early church.⁵¹ At times, this leads Ehrman to question the validity of reconstructing the original text at all; at other times, he is convinced that the original can be discovered, but only through measures that seem dubious at best.⁵²

The easiest way to draw out some of the implications of this scheme is to look at a few of Ehrman’s proof texts for his position. First, Matthew 24:36 is used as evidence for the way in which a scribe would have changed a verse in order to remove the ability for misapplication. The majority of texts read, “Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης καὶ ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν, οὐδε οἱ ἄγγελοι τῶν οὐρανῶν, εἰ μὴ ὁ πατήρ μου μόνος” (but concerning that day and hour no one

49. Ibid., 4.

50. Ibid., 12.

51. Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2005), 59; Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 217.

52. For the former view see Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 219. In fact, Wallace’s article is largely given over to showcasing how Ehrman vacillates between these two mutually exclusive positions to the point that it is hard to know for sure what he truly believes. For the latter view see Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 75.

knows—not even the angels of heaven—except the Father alone).⁵³ However, there is a variant that is attested in \aleph and a few other manuscripts with the words οὐδε ὁ υἱός (not even the Son). Ehrman believes this phrase should be included as the original, and most new translations agree. The difference, of course, is how they arrive at their conclusions. Whereas the ESV and NIV include this phrase due to its inclusion in \aleph , Ehrman believes it should be included because its removal shows the activity of a scribe who was trying to save the orthodox position from a possible adoptionist reading of this passage.⁵⁴ In other words, it was likely that the early scribes saw οὐδε ὁ υἱός as having the potential of limiting Christ’s deity (in this case his omniscience), which could then be exploited by adoptionists.

Ehrman makes the same case for Mark 1:1, which reads “ Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ” (The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God). The difference here is that rather than drop a phrase from the text the scribe added one in—namely, υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ. It is argued that without this phrase the text opens the door for adoptionists to view Jesus as a mere man, whose baptism (which follows abruptly after this introductory verse) was the place that God adopted him.⁵⁵

Lest one think this is simply an issue of textual variants, Ehrman applies his concept to the entirety of canonical development.⁵⁶ In his telling chapter, “Inventing Scripture: The Formation of the Proto-orthodox New Testament,” Ehrman states,

53. All Scripture quotations in Greek are taken from Robinson and Pierpont, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*. The English translations that follow are my own.

54. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 92.

55. *Ibid.*, 75.

56. It is necessary to point out that the nature of this project requires a blending of discussions that typically are kept separate—that is, textual transmission and canonical development. The problem is that both of these concepts overlap at significant points. On the one hand, the fine line between canon and Scripture is such that I do not think it should be maintained. In other words, when we discuss canon we should be discussing Scripture and

Probably every Christian group of the second and third centuries ascribed authority to written texts, and each group came to locate that ‘authority’ in the status of the ‘author’ of the text. . . . [Therefore], when proto-orthodox Christians recognized the need for *apostolic* authorities, they attributed these books [the four anonymous gospels] to apostles . . . and close companions of apostles.⁵⁷

So, at some point during the history of the church those sympathetic to an orthodox standard not only changed phrases in the text, but also claimed false authorship of the gospels. The result of such a position is a denial of many New Testament writings as canonical, as well as the inclusion of works typically kept out of the canon.⁵⁸

Indeed, it is not even clear if Ehrman believes a text can be inherently authoritative.⁵⁹ But then the question must be asked: what does he desire to do with questions like this? It is one thing to cast doubt upon certain textual readings, inasmuch as the result is typically just another reading. However, if a textual critic, who desires to find the original in order to apply it to one’s life, does not believe in an authoritative text, what exactly is he applying? Moreover, why consider yourself a textual critic in pursuit of an original text in the first place? The original text at this point becomes nothing more than a proverbial carrot at the end of a stick. If this position is correct, the logical conclusion is a Bultmannian rejection of more than just the historical Jesus.

vice versa. To separate these two, is to fall back into the problem of ignoring the self-authenticating nature of Scripture. For a thorough treatment of this unnecessary bifurcation see Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 29–34. Furthermore, Ehrman and many other scholars extrapolate the evidence that they lay at the textual level to the canonical level, i.e., we cannot trust a canon whose text has been tampered with so thoroughly.

57. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 235.

58. At points Ehrman suggests that other writings such as the *Gospel of Thomas* are only unorthodox because the viewpoint was not part of the winning party of church history. The only thing that keeps him from including this in the canon is the fact that “their real author [due to the late date of forgery] obviously did not adhere to any of the forms of lost Christianity we have been discussing.” Ibid., 207.

59. At one point Ehrman describes how he became aware of the fact that the New Testament writers were just like the scribes who copied their material. Just like there were later emendations for a certain cause, Matthew and Luke changed Mark for some purpose. It is as if the conspiracy goes all the way back to the first books of the Bible. Perhaps, the first writers of Scripture were concerned with being orthodox! Indeed, it appears as if they wrote their material in a way that would condemn “heretics” (Gal 1:9; assuming, of course this is original) and support “orthodoxy” (John 14:6). Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 212–3.

Regardless, there are some good reasons to reject this understanding. To begin, the fundamental definition Ehrman is working with at this point neglects the inherent nature of a spiritual Scripture. In other words, much like his mentor, he is looking at the canon only at the historical level. Scripture is not Scripture the moment it is written, but it is Scripture the moment the church decides to alter it into a useable state, and then deems it Scripture.⁶⁰ It is a wonder that the original text is even of value, since authority derives from those who gave it to the text. Therefore, whatever form of the text was deemed authoritative should, on this historical model, be considered canonical. This would mean that every variant that existed within the fourth century works should technically be adopted as the most authoritative form of Scripture. This quickly devolves into the view held by the Roman Catholic Church.⁶¹ And even if one were able to reconstruct the original, it is no longer clear why this original would have any more authority than the later versions. This is especially important given Ehrman's grounding of his view in the way that Matthew and Luke "corrupted" Mark. If the corrupting influence happened at such a basic level it does not seem reasonable to even pursue an original form of Matthew, since even here it has already been tampered with.⁶²

At the same time, Ehrman's method has been scrutinized for being methodologically flawed. In the case of Matthew 24:36, it is no surprise to scholarship that there is evidence for including οὐδε ὁ υἱός. In fact, as noted above, many of the new translations opt for this text. The issue, however, is one of certainty. Whereas the translation committees of the NIV and ESV

60. Again, Metzger made room for the spiritual nature of canon, but the point still stands that his method militates against this caveat he relates at the end of his book. Ehrman has simply exaggerated this emphasis and virtually choked any remaining life of a self-attesting Scripture.

61. Kruger makes this point at numerous junctures. See esp. Kruger, *Canon Revisited*, 80.

62. Wallace adds, "He [Ehrman] is more certain about what the corruptions are than about what the original wording is, but his certitude about the corruptions presupposes, as Silva has eloquently pointed out, a good grasp of the original wording." Wallace, "How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?," 48–9.

have had to wrestle over the evidence and make a decision that is the most *probable*, Ehrman seeks to remove all doubt in his approach. According to Philip Miller,

Ehrman has indicated his desire to follow a two-step methodology: (1) establish the oldest reading using accepted text-critical methods and (2) only then inquire after theological influence. . . . However, based on external evidence alone, it is difficult to establish this reading as the oldest reading. In some sense, Ehrman has strayed from his two-step method by placing the bulk of his argument on the notion of scribal embarrassment over Jesus' ignorance of his own return.⁶³

Said otherwise, Ehrman is using his theory to explain a passage that will help explain his theory.

This is the type of circularity that we have been trying to avoid from the beginning of this study.

This is by no means the only passage that portrays what Miller calls the “criteria of unorthodoxy.”⁶⁴ Still, it is one of the more popular verses due to the level of Ehrman's certainty.

But his certainty causes at least one more question to be asked: if the orthodox were so concerned about removing the potential for “heretical” uses of the text, why would they not also chop off the exact phrase in the Marcan parallel? “If the orthodox responded to adoptionistic or Arian use of Scripture by changing the text for Matthew 24.36, not only would we *expect* issues with Mark, but we would anticipate similar alterations to places where Jesus could be construed as limited in body or mind,” writes Adam Messer.⁶⁵ Yet, there is virtually no evidence of large scale tampering with these passages. Therefore, either Ehrman's conspiracy was so good that it is largely unnoticeable, or such a criterion needs to be abandoned.

63. Philip M. Miller, “The Least Orthodox Reading Is to Be Preferred: A New Canon for New Testament Textual Criticism?,” in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence*, ed. Daniel B. Wallace, The Text and Canon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 71.

64. Miller shows the similar process Ehrman uses when dealing with John 1:18, Hebrew 2:9b, and a list of eleven other verses. *Ibid.*, 74,78–9, 82 respectively.

65. Adam G. Messer, “Patristic Theology and Recension in Matthew 24.36: An Evaluation of Ehrman's Text-Critical Methodology,” in *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence*, ed. Daniel B. Wallace, The Text and Canon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 173–4.

Also, David Hutchinson has taken Ehrman to task in regards to seven of the pieces of evidence that he puts forth to support his position on Mark. For the sake of brevity only two of these will be addressed. Hutchinson first finds a problem with Ehrman’s appeal to the antiquity of the reading of $\nu\iota\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \tau\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. Although Ehrman argues that the earliest valid evidence supports this reading, Hutchinson is not convinced: “Apart from \aleph , which is of course significant, the short reading occurs only in two other Greek manuscripts, the corrector of 28 and also Θ , which dates from the ninth century. The inclusion of $\nu\iota\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ finds support in B, a fourth—century manuscript, W, a fourth—or fifth—century manuscript, as well as the Greek manuscripts A and D, both from the fifth century.”⁶⁶ In other words, without giving all the weight to \aleph the manuscript evidence seems to be about even for $\nu\iota\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \tau\omicron\hat{\upsilon}\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. This does not even take into account the “versional evidence,” which largely supports the longer reading.⁶⁷ On the other hand, Hutchinson shows how it is easier to explain the omission of this text by later scribes due to “homoioteleuton (similar ending).”⁶⁸ Because this is such a common approach to this text, even the majority of new translations have opted for its inclusion.⁶⁹ And though this is clearly not a thorough treatment of Ehrman’s position, the point remains that he seems to be operating with the assumption of the validity of his theory of corruption once again.

If Ehrman’s concept is correct, it is not just textual variants that cannot be trusted, but entire sections (if not all) of the quotations of the Fathers must be called into question. If they

66. Furthermore, Hutchinson catches Ehrman in an exaggeration as he cites two of the “best” early manuscripts for his position. But as Hutchinson just demonstrated only one of these actually supports his point. David Hutchinson, “The ‘Orthodox Corruption’ of Mark 1:1,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 48, no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 40–1.

67. *Ibid.*, 41.

68. *Ibid.*, 42.

69. I point this out only because one of the standard criteria for these translations has been to yield priority to the earliest texts. If anyone would enjoy supporting NU over the Byzantine text-type it would be these translations. Yet, even they are in opposition to Ehrman’s conclusion.

cannot be trusted to have passed down Scripture as it was, how can they be trusted to relate Scripture at all? The point is that the very nature of a conspiratorial orthodox corruption levels any recourse we have for appealing to the writings of the Fathers for any doctrinal matter. If Ehrman were consistent with his position, he would have to admit that all patristic writings are in some sense geared toward establishing a thorough orthodoxy—an orthodoxy that is grounded in their own ideas. Hence, every citation can be submitted to scrutiny with the result that someone like Cyprian was not developing Trinitarian doctrines from biblical texts, but believed in a Trinity and then went about creating Scriptures to support his point. Furthermore, one wonders how Ehrman can be so convinced that the writings of the early church foster enough evidence that they “would be sufficient alone for the reconstruction of practically the entire New Testament.”⁷⁰ It is agreeable that such is the case, but it is not at all clear how such an assessment can be made when the very foundation of our trust in such Fathers has been so thoroughly questioned: who is to say they are quoting the New Testament at all? In sum, it appears that Ehrman is playing two sides of a fence with wet cement on both sides. Where he ends up will depend largely upon which side dries first.⁷¹

THE FOUNDATIONS AND EVANGELICAL ADOPTION

Ehrman is largely basing his work upon the theory created by Walter Bauer. Bauer argues that the history of canonical development is one of moves and countermoves from two different parties: orthodox and heretics. Only, like Ehrman makes clear, these terms do not hold their traditional meaning on Bauer’s theory. Instead, orthodoxy is seen as the movement that won

70. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 126.

71. This is Wallace’s point when he critiques Ehrman for saying one thing when talking to scholars and another to his popular fan following. Wallace, “How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?,” 25. (Sadly, the cement has dried and Ehrman now considers himself an atheist and opponent to Christianity.)

the battle.⁷² The major difference is that Ehrman's christological version of corruption allows the conspiracy to be moved back further than Bauer's concept of consolidation in the heart of Rome. Bauer argued that it was the power and influence of the church at Rome that was the cause for the eventual acceptance of an orthodox position.⁷³ It is necessary to deal with this concept because, as Rodney Decker points out, "contemporary scholars such as Ehrman seem to *assume* the validity of Bauer's general thesis."⁷⁴ Indeed, we will argue that the acceptance is much broader than those like Ehrman. However, for the sake of brevity, only one pertinent issue with Bauer's thesis will be dealt with here.

Bauer represents the apostolic fathers as though they were attempting to fight off the overabundance of heresy during their time. In one instance, he argues that Polycarp was in the minority, fighting back against an overwhelming opposing "heretical" force.⁷⁵ On this understanding, letters were being written to communities that were willing to adopt the more orthodox position that Polycarp was establishing. Furthermore, if Thessalonica was a stronghold for heresy prior to Polycarp's letters, Bauer believes that there is a real case to be made that that form of Christianity came before Polycarp's.⁷⁶ What this means is that Polycarp is endeavoring

72. Bauer does claim to keep the traditional definitions of these terms, but his purpose is merely pragmatic. The fact remains that he sees the orthodox position as orthodox because it was able to establish itself as such. Heretics are considered heretics only from the historical point of view, that is, the early church believed these parties to be heretics. The practical result, however, is the same as Ehrman's outright redefining of the terms. Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), xxii.

73. *Ibid.*, 122.

74. Italics in original. Rodney J. Decker, "The Bauer Thesis: An Overview," in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*, ed. Paul A. Hartog (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 17.

75. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, 74–5.

76. Here Bauer appeals to the rendering of "*hoi polloi*" as "the overwhelming majority." But it is a wonder that he thinks this aids his position when he has already laid the axe to such a concept for establishing the original position. Earlier he write, "Majority and minority can change places and then such a use of language, . . . , would easily lead to obscurities and misunderstandings." Apparently this is only the case, though, when a majority position seems to threaten his concept of prior belief systems. In the case of the heretics, if they can be shown to be

to fight against a form of Christianity that apparently could draw its heritage from the earliest sources of Christian material (or that the earliest sources of material were indeed the writings of the Fathers).

This can be best seen in Bauer's insistence that the Pastorals were derived from Polycarp, rather than vice versa.⁷⁷ But if this is the case, the implication for textual citations in the Fathers is enormous. Rather than seeing valid links between New Testament texts and the Fathers, the reader must assume that it is possible that the Fathers were inventing material that was later scripturalized. "Nevertheless," as Paul Hartog notes, "because the following phrase [the one Bauer appeals to] parallels 1 Timothy 6:7, it seems likely that Polycarp is dependent upon 1 Timothy."⁷⁸ When we arrive at Ehrman, however, the point has simply been moved back in order to make the position more tenable. Instead of viewing the New Testament as being based upon the Fathers, the texts were already theologically reworked prior to their time (cf. fn. 43).

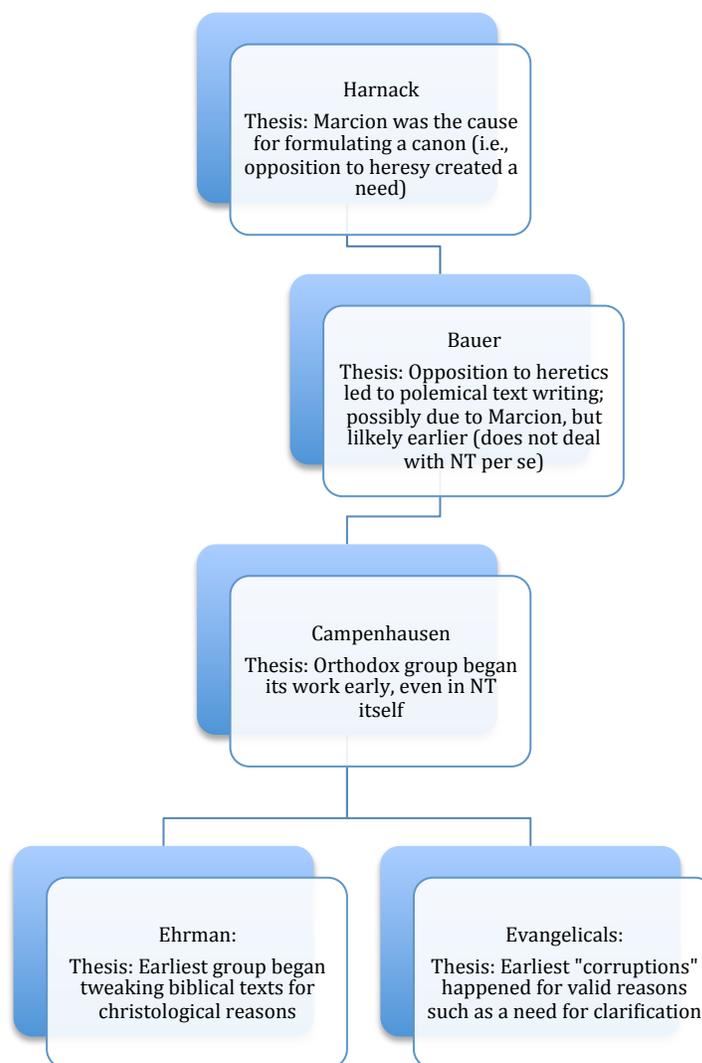
At the same time Ehrman appeals to Hans von Campenhausen for "an authoritative" discussion of canonical development.⁷⁹ At this point, it becomes clear what has happened by the time we arrive at *Orthodox Corruption*—that is, small installments have been made upon the previous foundations whereupon the future scholar then builds further. The following chart summarizes the progression of theories:

in the majority at the time of Polycarp it is evidence for their originality, but if the opposite were true (as the bulk of patristic material indicates) it is irrelevant. Ibid., xxii, 73.

77. Ibid., 84.

78. Hartog critiques Bauer on a number of different areas; this is a gross simplification of his point. However, the point here is not so much to refute Bauer (for that has already been done), but rather to show to what extent his material has been absorbed into the academy. Paul A. Hartog, "Walter Bauer and the Apostolic Fathers," in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*, ed. Paul A. Hartog (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 42. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture's Fascination with Diversity Has Reshaped Our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), pt. 1.

79. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 39.



There are, of course, plenty of other sources that could be included here, but for our purposes it is important to see just a sampling of how the theories built upon one another. In particular von Campenhausen offers the most support for moving this concept of corruption to its earliest strata. He argues, “It is not accidental that Paul emphasizes that he received the Gospel ‘neither from men nor by agency of men’, but was called directly by Christ himself. Perhaps he was afraid that doubts will be cast on his apostolic independence, if he names the personages from whom he received his tradition, and so to that extent appears to be dependent on them.”⁸⁰ In

80. Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, 115.

other words, Paul fabricated a story of receiving direct revelation in order to establish his apostolic credentials. Elsewhere, von Campenhausen argues for a “gnosticizing tendency” within the Gospel of John.⁸¹ Finally, he places the spin on the Synoptic problem that most evangelicals seem to overlook: “Matthew and Luke had already not only expanded their Marcan source but also revised [the typical stopping place for evangelicals] and corrected it.”⁸²

In each of these instances, the inspiration of the texts of the Bible is clearly not the starting point. On the issue of Paul’s revelation, without discounting miracles, there seems to be no reason to resort to such a measure for Paul to save face. After all, others like Peter (2 Pet 3:16) and Luke (Acts 13:9) validated his material. On the other hand, numerous authors have demonstrated the indebtedness of the Gnostics to John, and not the other way around.⁸³ Our main concern, then, is von Campenhausen’s understanding of the Synoptic problem. It is not, of course, his acceptance of dependence on Mark, but his assertion that Matthew and Luke not only expanded upon Mark, but also “corrected” him. (Still, the fact that Mark is posited as the first gospel is also based upon skepticism toward the witness of the Fathers.)⁸⁴ The view of

81. It is ironic that Green’s *Unholy Hands on the Bible* makes the same claim, except that the Alexandrian text-type was Gnostic in its origins. If this is so readily dismissed, one finds it hard to understand why Campenhausen is viewed as so authoritative. *Ibid.*, 122.

82. *Ibid.*, 160.

83. See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England: Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press; W. B. Eerdmans, 1991); Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, 2nd ed., *Encountering Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*.

84. It is not realistic to deal in depth with the Synoptic problem at this point, but I do hold reservations as to the validity of Marcan priority. This is largely based upon the predominant Matthean priority that is posited within the patristic material. My thesis applies to this area as well, inasmuch as accepting the witness of the Fathers would lead to Matthean priority, unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. However, there is no overwhelming evidence to the contrary, but rather overwhelming hypothetical instances that seem to work against the position of the Fathers. Craig L. Blomberg, “The Synoptic Problem: Where We Stand at the Start of a New Century,” in *Rethinking the Synoptic Problem*, ed. David Alan Black and David R. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 34–5.

inspiration required to allow Mark to make mistakes that need correction, is deficient to say the least. In support of this, F. David Farnell writes,

A careful examination of church history reveals that shifts about the nature of inspiration were decisive in the radical change, specifically shifts in historical-critical discussions of the Synoptic Problem related to the Two-Gospel and Two-Document hypotheses. Such significant departures from the orthodox view of inspiration were in turn influenced and/or motivated by philosophical assumptions stemming from Rationalism, Deism, and the Enlightenment, to name few.⁸⁵

Farnell may be going a bit too far in arguing that every evangelical that supports some form of these theories has adopted the methods of those who originally formulated the concepts.

However, it is unclear how the conclusions of such positions, which initially required truncated versions of inspiration, can be maintained without the foundations. This is like cutting down an apple tree, but insisting on hanging the apples that grew on the branches in their original places with string—eventually the apples are going to die.

This brings us to the final category of “evangelicalism,” which needs to be qualified because the concept of corruption is usually not the same. The acceptance of alterations to the text in an evangelical framework typically ignores the nefarious side of corrupting influences. Nevertheless, in at least certain practical manifestations, the mindset adopted when dealing with the canon is similar. Within evangelicalism, it is not so much the acceptance of certain elements of the corruption narrative, but rather the overarching assumption that the text of the Bible needs to be viewed with suspicion.

This shows up in a number of different ways, but one of the most pronounced is in the realm of supposed alterations of the Gospel of Mark by Matthew and Luke. For instance, D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo state, “An example [of Mark’s primitive theology] is Mark 6:5, where the evangelist claims that, because of the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, Jesus ‘*could not do*

⁸⁵ F. David Farnell, “How Views of Inspiration Have Impacted Synoptic Problem Discussions,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 34.

any miracles there.” They continue, “In the parallel verse, Matthew says that Jesus ‘*did not do many miracles there*’ (13:58).”⁸⁶ It is helpful to see both verses side by side:

Matthew 13:58	Mark 6:5
“And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”	“And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.”

Now, let us revisit Carson and Moo: “It is argued that it is more likely that Matthew has removed the potentially troublesome implication that Jesus was incapable of working a miracle than that Mark has added it.”⁸⁷ Surely there is a problem if Mark’s text is stopped short like it is in Carson and Moo. However, viewed side by side, it is clear that there is no actual problem with these two versions of the text after all. When read in context, Mark is saying (in essence) the exact same thing that Matthew is. The difference is one of style not of theology.⁸⁸

Again the issue is not the problem with the text so much as it is the assumption that often keeps scholars from looking for the best explanation. Before moving forward and explaining why there is a discrepancy and possible alteration to doctrine, one should ask if there is a discrepancy in the first place. The starting point is simply backwards. Liberal theologians have the luxury of beginning with the position that Scripture is flawed and needs correction; evangelicals, however, should be seeking to defend against this rather than accepting it and simply offering better explanations. Though, it is clear that evangelicals have become pretty nifty at offering explanations, the underlying assumption essentially remains intact—that is, the texts

86. D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 97–8.

87. *Ibid.*, 98.

88. It needs to be made clear that I am in no way calling into question Carson or Moo’s fidelity to the Scriptures. What I am intending to do is simply show why it is necessary to constantly check our presuppositions when dealing with NT texts (or any theological issue). Even NT scholars of such a high caliber can overlook half of a verse while attempting to explain the “problem” with it.

of Scripture were altered to conform to some other standard. There is no need to deny that alterations did occur at the scribal level, for this is clear enough from the thousands of variants. But here, at the point of the Synoptics, there is little difference between Bauer, Campenhausen, and Ehrman's version of Matthew and Luke altering Mark, and Carson and Moo's. The major point of contention is that Carson and Moo would not see this as a move toward helping orthodoxy along, so much as simple clarifying glosses.⁸⁹

This issue can also be seen in the works of other scholars who look at Scripture as a developing entity, all the while altering the concept of inspiration to get there. According to William LaSor, David Hubbard, and Frederic Bush, "In fact, the production of prophetic books was a much more prolonged and complex process than the inspiration of a speaking prophet. It is now recognized that behind prophetic literature lies the work of editors and arrangers and circles who preserved oral traditions and presented them to later generations of God's people."⁹⁰ Millard Erickson paints a similar picture: "In some cases long periods of time elapsed from the occurrence of the event until its recording in Scripture. During this period, the community of faith was transmitting, selecting, amplifying, and condensing the received tradition as well."⁹¹

Once these hypotheses are constructed within the framework of the New and Old Testaments, there is little wonder that the subsequent writings of the Fathers are looked at in a similar manner. The problem at this point is whether or not we can trust the Fathers to pass down accurate citations, or if they too felt the need to invent new ways of telling the story. As noted above, Ehrman believes that due to the material of the Fathers it is possible to reconstruct almost

89. Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 97.

90. William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 595.

91. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 174.

the entirety of the Bible. But then there comes a question: if this is the case (and most scholars agree here) what are the criteria for separating what is a biblical reference from what is not? For example, when Polycarp writes, “For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is antichrist,” is the benefit of the doubt to be given that he is indeed citing a text?⁹² If not, the alternatives offer little hope in upholding a realistic and fair outlook on patristic material.

CONCLUSION

Although Ehrman’s theory of corruption has been heavily critiqued, the foundations of his theory run much deeper. Through the influence of Harnack, Bauer, and Campenhausen there seems to have been an acceptance of at least the fundamental concept of perversion within the biblical stream. Though Bauer did not deal much with the biblical text, Campenhausen began to argue that corruption was an integral part of the writers of the Bible. Ehrman continues this thought and seeks to support it from the angle of Christology. The problem for the evangelical community is deciding how far such theories are to be accepted. Though it is clear that scribes have from time to time altered the texts, it seems highly unlikely that anything like the thorough corruption Bauer and Ehrman envision actually took place. Moreover, the nature of inspiration seems to require a more elevated concept of Scripture, which is undermined when, for instance, Matthew is viewed as correcting Mark. Ideally, evangelicals would do well to avoid these pitfalls. And if one allows that the original writings were not corrected theological documents, but rather inspired writings, and that the Fathers typically related actual texts of Scripture (as they say they did), one must engage with the patristic material that stands against the earliest textual witnesses.

92. Polycarp, “Epistle to the Philippians,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Phillip Schaff, vol. 1, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 7.

CHAPTER 3: CANONICAL DEVELOPMENT

There are three final areas that typically inhibit using the citations of the Fathers to support alternate readings. The last two of these issues can be viewed as developments within the canon; the first is only loosely associated, but is included here for convenience. It is with the final two issues that the historical interest of the question of canon comes into focus. Only with the starting point of Scripture being Scripture in its nature can the issues of oral tradition and the recognition of Scripture be properly resolved. The purpose of this chapter is to relate each of these final objections in a way that showcases their pertinence to the issue of citations, and then to offer a better position. This is only meant to be a sampling of a few of the more pronounced problems. Furthermore, there is no intent to cover exhaustively the possible applications of the following material.

EARLIEST TEXT EQUALS BEST

As noted in the introduction, we are going to work from the basis that the concept of “earliest-equals-best” is at least theoretically viable. The reason “theoretically” is used, is simply because there are multiple ways in which an earliest “reading” can be demonstrated. The issue at hand is whether or not the earliest physical copy of a reading is what necessitates *the* earliest reading. Also, it is tempting to place this as a sub-heading under the previous section, since the origin of the concept seems to stem from the same place; however, there is no way to prove that this one criterion descends directly from a pessimistic outlook on the texts as a whole.

It is clear, however, that the criterion of earliest-equals-best often militates against those who try to use it. Imagine, for example, that the scene painted by Ehrman is true: at some point during the second century virtually all corruptions of the New Testament were completed. Yet, Ehrman is convinced that the readings found within \aleph are more likely original than any Western

or Byzantine text-type, due to the early date (fourth century) of κ .⁹³ This is an interesting concept given the fact that the corruptions still took place two centuries prior to κ . Hence, on the corruption narrative the reality is that any text after the second century must be seen as equally flawed. Unless, of course, the argument is that κ most closely represents the original reading of the text after corruption. But such a position is quickly reduced to irrelevancy: few would desire to apply a corrupt text to their lives.

On the other hand, for those who trust that the Scriptures were not mutilated early on such a pursuit does seem beneficial. The issue now is how one arrives at the earliest reading. This question is often pursued from two angles: (1) those who support the KJV and thus the *Textus Receptus*; and (2) those who support the Alexandrian text-type. One major example of this is Carson's book *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*.⁹⁴ The problem, though, is that this is simply a reductionistic way of looking at things. Carson's book is a great critique of those who truly support the TR, but it deals only in passing comments with the Byzantine text-type in general.⁹⁵ Carson's text is indebted to the theory of descent that Wescott and Hort popularized. In this model, the Alexandrian text-type is considered to house the earliest and *best* witness of the autographs. No doubt they are the earliest available texts, but the term "best," which is used in most modern New Testament introductions, is a bit misleading.

In fact, the way the Byzantine text is related in general is concerning. Carson states, "To keep a correct perspective it is important to note that the TR is not exactly the same as the Byzantine tradition. The Byzantine text-type is found in several thousand witnesses, while the

93. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 130–1.

94. The KJV is merely one example; there are many who support the TR without supporting the KJV. However, if one supports the KJV one must also support the TR.

95. Carson, *The King James Version Debate*, 56–7.

TR *did not refer to one hundredth of that evidence*” (emphasis added).⁹⁶ Yet, whenever Carson criticizes the Byzantine text-type he makes arguments that apply instead to the TR. On the other hand, Raymond Brown writes, “This conflated text that smooths out difficulties and harmonizes differences was used in the liturgy of the Byzantine church The *Textus Receptus* . . . exemplified this tradition.”⁹⁷ It is interesting how for Carson the TR can be a horrendous sampling of the Byzantine text-type, but for other scholars it is the prime example of that text-type. And to bring the issue into focus Craig Blomberg notes that even if we were to look to the writings of the early Fathers to sort things out, “they were not always based on what we would consider the most reliable manuscripts of their day.”⁹⁸ In other words, anyone who would attempt to support the Byzantine text-type from the writings of the Fathers is misguided because they too could have been reading from already flawed texts.

J. N. Birdsall traces this skepticism towards the Byzantine text-type to the work of Karl Lachmann, who argued that later texts were “*ipso facto* the worse.”⁹⁹ When Wescott and Hort took up this theory, the result was that the newest manuscript finds (once assessed as the earliest) were assumed to be the most valid texts. According to Birdsall, “[W]hile Lachmann’s method was designed to deal with manuscripts and their readings, Wescott and Hort applied genealogical method to text-types.”¹⁰⁰ Once submitted to this criterion, the three major text-types that Wescott and Hort believed existed were reduced to two early candidates (Neutral and Western)—needless

96. *Ibid.*, 37.

97. Raymond Edward Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 49.

98. Craig Blomberg, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 4.

99. Birdsall, “The New Testament Text,” 309.

100. *Ibid.*, 310.

to say the Byzantine text-type was not among them. In fact, the Byzantine text-type was all but written off as a late mixture of differing textual streams.¹⁰¹ The problem, according to Birdsall, was that “Wescott and Hort were often basing themselves upon a single manuscript, the Codex Vaticanus (B), in which for them the Neutral text was best preserved.”¹⁰² Hence, from this one manuscript a concept of an entire text family was developed, which was then supported using the single manuscript that was supposed to house such a textual family.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to adequately engage in this debate. For now, the concern is simply that the scene has not changed all that much from the time of Wescott and Hort. Though numerous scholars have critiqued their methods, the underlying text that is used to establish their own translations is still based upon “the general validity of their [Wescott and Hort] critical principles and procedures,” according to Metzger and Ehrman.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, the process now involves a few more manuscripts other than B. In sum, modern canons of textual criticism have found every way to discount the early witness of the Byzantine text-type. Still, Birdsall is not convinced:

However, it was a mistake of earlier years to dismiss the readings of this text as in all respects worthless. Many of them are not innovations. Zuntz is at pains to demonstrate that Byzantine readings may be ancient, and he declares with justice that Byzantine readings which recur in Western witnesses must be ancient, since the two streams of the tradition never met after the fall of the Western empire. G. D. Kilpatrick in various essays has striven to show in accordance with the rational eclecticism so ably practised by him that Byzantine readings may be original.¹⁰⁴

Zuntz’ concept allows for the reality of two independent traditions, which is important since some discount the Fathers’ citations simply because they can be found within the Western text as

101. *Ibid.*, 319.

102. *Ibid.*, 310.

103. Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 136.

104. Birdsall, “The New Testament Text,” 321–2.

well.¹⁰⁵ Kilpatrick, on the other hand, points to Alexandrian recension habits that seem to be ignored in the texts utilized in this discussion. It should suffice for now that the argument is anything but confirmed, and if the material of the Fathers can lend support it is worth the effort.

ORAL TRADITION

Another issue for appealing to the citations of the Fathers is the ability, when all else fails, to argue that their words are not citations of Scripture, but citations of the oral tradition passed down through the church.¹⁰⁶ Like the concept of corruption, the notion of oral tradition usually begins within the New Testament era. This section is not intended to discount the idea that an oral tradition existed, for it almost certainly did. However, there are at least two ways in which the oral tradition is used improperly.

First, the concept of an oral tradition, whether speaking of it in holistic terms or trying to identify its use throughout the Bible (e.g., searching for a canon within the canon), is purely conjectural. The fact is that there was almost certainly not one oral tradition, but many oral traditions. That is, there was no one set tradition that circulated in some esoteric manner throughout all of Judea, and somehow found its way into writing.¹⁰⁷ Instead, it seems more likely that the process of inscripturation was a matter of setting the record straight. For instance, when Luke wrote his gospel, it was with the intent to give Theophilus, “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:4). In other words, Theophilus had received a tradition and it

105. Carson, *The King James Version Debate*, 47. Here Carson assumes that every citation that exists is both the Western and Byzantine text is necessarily from the Western text, but such subjective reasoning cuts both ways.

106. So Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 42, 62; Grant, “The New Testament Canon,” 286, 297; and R. P. Casey, “The Patristic Evidence for the Text of the NT,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and C. M. Tuckett (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 332.

107. Some envision this process as *the* oral tradition being eventually written by the authors of Scripture. But this brings up the question of authority, which we will see below. John Nolland, *Luke 1 - 9:20*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Lynn Allan Losie, Word Biblical Commentary 35A (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 6, 12.

needed to be checked against an authoritative record of events.¹⁰⁸ Surely Luke compiled his record from “eyewitnesses” (v. 2) or oral sources, but he also used the narratives already extant. The point is that already at the time of Luke the oral traditions were being committed to writing to become one tradition. Said otherwise, there was not one oral tradition that was recorded in writing, but the writings were an attempt to capture the valid elements of the many oral records.

Second, the oral tradition¹⁰⁹ is many times elevated to a status beyond scriptural material—that is, the oral material, when it can be identified, is authoritative in and of itself. Though not always clear, this type of thought can be seen in incipient form even when discussing the passage of Luke above. According to Joel Green, “For Luke, the basis of the tradition of God’s work is not ‘the many’ who had compiled narratives (v 1), but this new group—‘eyewitnesses and servants of the word’—to whom he also had access.”¹¹⁰ It is important to not infer too much from Green, but the way he places the emphasis upon Luke’s sources seems to lessen the validity of the written material of his day. The result is that Luke would be more interested in finding the tradition from the spoken words of eyewitnesses, rather than appealing to other written gospels. But this seems to overlook the option that Luke was simply someone that Theophilus trusted, and would receive his words as the truth. There is some precedent for this in the way certain gospels were preferred in various regions.¹¹¹

108. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 65–6.

109. I am retaining the singular term here, simply to remain in step with the way it is used in virtually all scholarly material. Ideally, this would be “oral traditions,” but it is too cumbersome, as it seems to require qualification almost every time it is used.

110. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1997), 40.

111. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 176.

This issue is much more than an inference. Grant and Metzger argue that the elevation of written material was only a late occurrence, whereas getting to the root tradition was a “psychological” disposition that was the norm for earlier Christians.¹¹² From Papias it may be ascertained that Christians prior to the late second century preferred to gather their knowledge of Christ from testimony, rather than writings.¹¹³ But this seems to be an unnecessary dichotomization. Imagine if one were to speak with a WWII veteran about his experience. Obviously, most people would enjoy hearing the firsthand account, but though this may surely bring the scene to life in a new way, no one would then argue that this is a more authoritative method of knowledge than the written tomes on the matter. The issue with early Christianity does not seem all that different upon reflection. There is no reason why one should discount the stories that John or one of his disciples told to their congregations, for these were surely enjoyable. However, there is no need to elevate these stories above the written material. In fact, due to the nature of Scripture as not just a record of events, but also as a theological record of events, which is profitable for “teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16), it is unclear what *better* purpose oral material could have served.

In fact, what is most interesting is that the evidence marshaled in support for this theory often cuts both ways. Papias writes,

If, then, any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders,—what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice.¹¹⁴

112. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 53.

113. Grant, “The New Testament Canon,” 234.

114. Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1890), 3.39.4.

There are two obvious features here: (1) Papias acknowledges that the material was already written down; and (2) the material was written by the “elders,” i.e., apostles. It is curious, however, that this is overlooked in favor of the notion that Papias was seeking an oral tradition, as if there were *a* supplementary tradition that was given to the followers of these men, along with the writings. But assuming that Papias did believe this, it still does not follow to simply apply this belief to the church at large.¹¹⁵ Perhaps this was just Papias’ view due to skepticism.

Furthermore, Papias’ acknowledgment of written books seems to support the notion argued by Kruger that, “orality and textuality in early Christianity should not be seen as mutually exclusive. They exist within a symbiotic and mutually reinforcing relationship.”¹¹⁶ The fact that Papias acknowledges that the apostles wrote down material militates against the notion that the oral nature of tradition was valued above writings: if so why would they bother writing at all? Unless, of course, we are to entertain the theory that they only wrote because of extraneous need—that is, the circumstances forced their hands (quite literally)—there seems to be no real explanation.¹¹⁷ In fact, this argument seems a bit humorous given the fact that when the apostles did write they quoted heavily from the Old Testament, which is clearly a text.

115. Grant extrapolates this one instance and argues that the whole church was in agreement with this notion. Grant, “The New Testament Canon,” 234–5.

116. Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 89.

117. Tom Thatcher and Tom Thatcher, eds., “Beyond Texts and Traditions: Werner Kelber’s Media History of Christian Origins,” in *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and Written Gospel* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 16. Also Stephen Young argues that such instances could be seen as oral tradition being captured through a process after it was spoken. Hence, there was no direct writing by the apostles. Instead, their messages were captured via a process that Young does not detail, but only intimates. Stephen E. Young, *Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers: Their Explicit Appeals to the Words of Jesus in Light of Orality Studies*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament*. 2. Reihe 311 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 80. This is the esoteric type of theory we are trying to avoid here. How exactly can one account for a fluid oral message with no boundaries that just happens to be written down at some point. The way this is answered by many is that the orthodox wrote down what was conducive to orthodoxy (see Ehrman above), but none of this deals with the issue that from all angles the earliest segments of Christendom relate that works were written early. Moreover, heresies like Marcion’s all tended to derive their concepts from the same texts. So, even the heretics were not completely

Finally, Kruger argues for another interpretation of Papias' understanding, which seems more acceptable:

Papias provides a number of indications that he is functioning according to standard historiographical practices: (1) he mentions that he “inquired” (ἀνεκρίνον) into the words of the elders, the same language Polybius uses to describe the “interrogation” of eyewitnesses; (2) he claims to have carefully “remembered” (ἐμνημόνευσα) what he learned from the elders, a phrase that Bauckham understands as “making notes” to aid memory and which matches the historiographical practices of Lucian; and (3) he “certifies” (διαβεβαιούμενος) the truth of these things to the reader.¹¹⁸

On this rendering, it is possible to see Papias as engaging the written material as a historian of his time. Instead of trying to cast doubt upon the written material, he would be inquiring desirously from those who are still around to speak of the events. Furthermore, this opens the door for the position that Papias may have assumed the validity of the written material, but was interested in further exploits that were not recorded (much like the narratives of the infancy of Christ). This comports well with his inclusion of many works performed by Phillip, which are not included in Acts.¹¹⁹ So, rather than seeking to subvert Scripture, perhaps Papias was simply interested in more than what was offered. In any case, it does not seem necessary, first, to apply Papias' mentality to all of early Christianity, or second, to assume that Papias is against written texts. After all, Papias seems to desire others to accept a writing of his own.¹²⁰

fond of orality. And is it not ironic that Cyprian seems to appeal to a very similar oral concept (apostolic tradition) to support orthodoxy. This pursuit of orality seems to be a reversal of the oral apostolic tradition handed down through the church. Except now it is the heretical groups that were better fitted to pass on the message!

118. Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 105–6.

119. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 53.

120. To be clear, what we are arguing against is not so much the existence of oral tradition, but the quick recourse that is made to it whenever a text seems to support readings not found in the earliest textual witnesses. J. Keith Elliott is fond of this procedure, as he points out that the apparent biblical references in the *Didache* could just as easily be seen as references to an oral source. J. Keith Elliott, “Absent Witnesses? The Critical Apparatus to the Greek New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers,” in *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew F. Gregory and C. M. Tuckett (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

SCRIPTURAL RECOGNITION

The final issue that we will deal with is the theory that it was not until a relatively late period of time that Scripture was considered Scripture by the Fathers. This is important largely because in cases where citations have no early manuscript support, some may simply point to this as the Fathers' insertion of doctrinal formulations. Also, this position allows for a very loose method of citation that was utilized. It is generally accepted that many of the Fathers paraphrased or merely alluded to Scripture, but if they did not consider their texts to be Scripture the picture is a bit different. It is no longer a paraphrase that one worries about, but a complete reworking. This is akin to the revising that Marcion undertook, except in this case we would be back to the orthodox camp reworking material to make it Scripture. At the same time, the final chapter of this thesis should be sufficient to show that such a case of paraphrasing and allusions is a bit overstated. To be sure, there are places where Tertullian, for example, writes, "Also, he [Jesus] taught that fasting will fight against the more awful demons," an allusion to either Matthew or Mark.¹²¹ Yet, there are numerous instances where Tertullian prefaces his material with the exact location of his citations (see chap. 4).

Typically, Irenaeus is credited with being the inventor of the concept of Scripture. According to Eric Osborn, "This new concept, of a normative scripture which comes from Christ and his true disciples, is the work of Irenaeus."¹²² Prior to his words, such as Scripture equaling a "rule of truth," the early Christians did not view the written texts that we now find in the New Testament as the prescriptive words of God—or at the very least they did not view them as the

121. Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 8.3.

122. Eric Francis Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 251.

only works of the Holy Spirit.¹²³ Instead, it was by the hands of Irenaeus that the church began to ascribe a status to the writings of the apostles that had not been heard of before. However, Hubertus Drobner makes an interesting statement in regards to this theory: “Even if there was no officially recognized, generally reliable canon of the NT at the time of Irenaeus . . . , on the basis of his argumentation it may be assumed, in any case, that *in his view* the canon was *already* firmly established and the gnostic writings were excluded as apocryphal” (emphasis added).¹²⁴ In other words, in the mind of Irenaeus he was not inventing some sort of canonical-scriptural concept, but merely using it to assert the truth of his position. But this is far different from developing a theory that the church supposedly adopted after his time. The issue seems to be whether or not we can trust Irenaeus to be accurately relating the status quo of his era.

For Drobner it seems like the scene Irenaeus paints could be viewed in less than a realistic manner. Still, it is hard to imagine how Irenaeus is supposed to have convinced the majority of believers of his time to adopt a position such as an authoritative body of literature, unless there was not already some precedent for the belief. But assuming it were possible for Irenaeus to simultaneously be convinced of a theory of Scripture that did not exist, and then convince everyone else he was right, this position requires one to either overlook or explain away much of the material of earlier Fathers.¹²⁵

The first instance of an early attestation of the New Testament writings as Scripture comes from Papias:

123. *Ibid.*, 247.

124. Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 119–20.

125. This also does not take into account theories that Irenaeus was basing his assessment of Scripture upon another earlier source. T. C. Skeat deals with this in reference to Irenaeus’s association of the four gospels with the four creatures of Ezekiel and Revelation. T. C. Skeat, “Irenaeus and the Four-Gospel Canon,” *Novum Testamentum* 34, no. 2 (April 1, 1992): 194–99.

But I shall not hesitate also to put down for you along with my *interpretations* whatsoever things I have at any time learned carefully from the elders and carefully remembered, guaranteeing their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those that speak much, but in those that teach the truth; not in those that relate strange commandments, but in those that deliver *the commandments given by the Lord to faith*, and springing from the truth itself (emphasis added).¹²⁶

It would be strange if Papias were relating his interpretations of oral ideas at this point, and given the assessment above there is a good chance that he is actually speaking of written texts.

Moreover, at a later point we read “Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Ἑβραϊδι διαλέκτω τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο” (Indeed, Matthew brought together the oracles [viz., message of God] in

Hebrew).¹²⁷ In all of this, it is probable that Papias was relating his interpretations of a written text, he considers the text to be the message of God, and he equates this text with the commandments of the Lord. His interest in the oral accounts was then one of affirmation (see above). Indeed, this is the conclusion B. F. Lightfoot and Philip Schaff came to long ago:

“[These are] ‘interpretations’ of the Gospel accounts, which had been made by others, and to which Papias prefers the interpretations or expositions which he has received from the disciples of the apostles. *This interpretation of the word alone saves us from difficulties and Papias from self-stultification*” (emphasis added).¹²⁸ In other words, those who argue that Papias is elevating an oral witness, not only discount that written materials existed, but they make Papias contradict himself—that is, at one point he is valuing some oral authority and at another he speaks of the texts in high regard. Though this does not prove that Papias considered the writings to be Scripture, it is hard to imagine much less given his understanding of the oracles and commandments of the Lord.

126. Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius*, 3.39.3.

127. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Kirsopp Lake, J. E. L. Oulton, and H. J. Lawlor (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 3.39.16.

128. Eusebius, *The Church History of Eusebius*, n. 949.

Similarly, Polycarp is often presented as having no real conception of New Testament texts equaling Scripture. For some, Polycarp had an elevated concept of the apostles' writings, but not to the point of making them Scripture. According to Metzger, "At the same time Polycarp's mind is not only saturated with ideas and phrases derived from a considerable number of writings that later came to be regarded as New Testament Scriptures, but he also displays latent respect for these apostolic documents as possessing an authority lacking in other writings."¹²⁹ Many of the word choices here are rather telling. For example, Polycarp's use of the texts cannot be used as evidence of seeing them as Scripture because they only later became Scripture, and his granting of a heightened position to the apostles is only latent. But this is not an accurate rendering of the evidence. In fact, prior to this assessment Metzger notes how the most pertinent piece of evidence (when evaluated at face value) actually seems to indicate that Polycarp viewed these writings as Scripture.

Polycarp writes, "Modo, ut his scripturis dictum est, irascimini et nolite peccare, et sol non occidat super iracundiam vestram" (Only, it is said in these Scriptures, "grow angry and refuse to sin," and "do not let the sun set upon your wrath").¹³⁰ Both of these passages occur in Ephesians 4:26, where Paul uses the first one from Isaiah to validate his message, which is the second verse Polycarp quotes. Within the context it appears that Polycarp is either (1) equating the reference from Isaiah and Ephesians as two separate verses, with both equaling Scripture; or (2) citing Ephesians as Scripture, with Isaiah being a part of Paul's words. Still, Metzger desires to grant that it is possible that Polycarp is intending the equation to apply only to the first part of

129. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 63.

130. Polycarp, *Polycarp to the Philippians*, ed. Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 12.1.

this verse.¹³¹ Besides the fact that this is grammatically unlikely due to the usage of the plurals, Kruger argues that there are no grounds for logically separating these passages.¹³² Also, Kruger notes how hard it would be to ascribe an error (the second option taken by some) to Polycarp, since he is elsewhere so accurate when relating Pauline material.¹³³ At least in this one area, then, it is probable that we have a depiction of what Polycarp thought of the Pauline epistles.

Finally, Kruger notes, “Given the high authority that Polycarp grants to the apostles, it is reasonable to think that letters from Peter and John would bear the same authority as letters from Paul.”¹³⁴ It is interesting to think how one could yield such authority to a document, without the slightest idea of it being Scripture. In fact, is not the only difference here one of quality—namely, Scripture as the words of God, and authoritative texts that of man? Given this difference it seems possible to insert a division here and argue that Polycarp merely considered the works of the apostles as works of authoritative men. However, there is one more thing to consider. Though the English translations obscure the close connection here, it is not hard to see that Polycarp is clear in his association of the apostles and the prophets of old: “καθὼς αὐτὸς ἐνετείλατο καὶ οἱ εὐαγγελισάμενοι ἡμᾶς ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται” (just as he [Jesus] commanded us; even as the apostles and the prophets proclaimed to us).¹³⁵ The point is that if one is to claim that the early church ascribed the title Scripture to the writings of the prophets

131. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 62.

132. Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 195.

133. *Ibid.*, 196.

134. *Ibid.*

135. Polycarp, *Polycarp to the Philippians*, 6.3.

(i.e., the Old Testament), there must be a similar (if not identical) conviction already present for the apostles. This is especially important because Polycarp was not alone in his assessment.¹³⁶

One final issue that is often overlooked is the value of the biblical witness to its own nature as Scripture. To say that the early Christians did not value New Testament writings as Scripture seems to go directly against what the texts in some places imply and others exclaim. For example, from the beginning it is seen that the early church gathered together, but in such gatherings there is no mention of their musing over an oral tradition or sharing stories that they had heard about Jesus. Instead, what we find is that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship” (Acts 2:42). Of course, at this point it is possible that the nature of such teaching was oral, but to then say that the written documents carried less weight until the church decided to elevate their status is absurd. Furthermore, Paul quotes Luke as Scripture (1 Tim 5:18) and Peter ascribes the same title to Paul’s epistles (2 Pet 3:16).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen how requiring the earliest extant manuscripts to be the best witness of the earliest form of a text is methodologically flawed and how it is not as simple as pitting the *Textus Receptus* against the Alexandrian text-type. Though the TR is clearly a faulty tradition, it is still only a very small fraction of the family in which it resides. In fact, Carson makes it clear that it merely referred to a handful of Byzantine manuscripts. Therefore, much work needs to be done before it can be concluded that all Byzantine readings are late. In this light, there is much to commend the concept of an earliest reading, and for this reason we have argued that it is possible to arrive at such readings (at least in some cases) upon the citations of

136. Kruger delineates a slew of similar passages from Ignatius and 1 Clement, which need not be repeated here. The point is that such a level of authority is being rendered unto the apostles that it is hard to see how there is any real difference between their works and the works of the prophets. If the disposition of these men was so set on elevating the reverence of the apostles themselves, it is only natural to conclude that an apostolic work would bear the same authority. But then this is the definition of Scripture! Kruger, *The Question of Canon*, 189–99.

the Fathers. However, two obstacles stand in the way of pursuing this line of evidence: (1) appeals to orality, and (2) appeals to the later date of Scripture.

In the first area it is argued that the early church valued an oral tradition over written material. Hence, whenever citations appear in the Fathers that are not in the earliest manuscripts it should be viewed as a record of a piece of oral tradition. Yet, this position has been largely based upon one piece of evidence—that is, a citation by Papias (ironically in written form). But when this citation is taken in context there is no reason to interpret Papias as viewing texts as subpar to an oral witness. Again, it should not be forgotten that Papias was writing his views, which were presumably to be viewed as authoritative. It would seem strange to hold such a double standard. Finally, the second objection seeks to show how the early church had no concept of Scripture, other than the Old Testament. But this too does not deal fairly with the patristic witness. Whether it is Ignatius, Polycarp, Papias, or Irenaeus there seems to be a consistent early witness that the apostolic writings were valued as Scripture from the beginning. Based upon this, it seems logical that the Fathers would take great care in citing such material.

CHAPTER 4: SCRIPTURAL CITATIONS

This final chapter is devoted to looking at the many instances where the Fathers cite passages that do not exist within the earliest available manuscripts. The point is not to argue that the material cited by the Fathers is the original text, but rather what they are citing goes back to an earlier, or at least similar, time period. That is, given the following evidence it should not be taken for granted that the earliest manuscripts are necessarily the earliest readings. And if the theory of earliest-equals-best is to stand, much more work needs to be done before simply assuming the validity of the earliest manuscripts. Before gathering the data, however, a few notes need to be made.

First, the material is laid out according to the order of the English New Testament. This is being done simply because it is the easiest way to keep track of the data. Second, it is notoriously difficult to deal with omitted texts that occur within in the gospels, because of parallel accounts. For example, it is impossible to show which gospel Tertullian is referencing when he cites Jesus as saying, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (cf. Matt 11:15; Mar 4:9; Luke 8:8).¹³⁷ Since this is so, the material from the gospels is severely limited. This, however, should not be interpreted to mean that there is little evidence of citations of omitted gospel passages, for there are many instances in which a citation is possible. However, for our purposes we are seeking to relate only those instances that are clearly referencing an omitted passage. Next, we are assuming the position that the Latin fathers were citing from an Old Latin translation.¹³⁸ Logically what this means is that what they are citing is even older than their time

137. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 4.19.

138. For an introduction to this concept see Edward L. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church: Themes and Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 95–9. For more detail see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Baker Academic, 2001), 29–35; and A. J. B. Higgins, “The Latin Text of Luke in Marcion and Tertullian,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 5, no. 1 (January 1, 1951): 1–42. and Higgins.

since it is coming from a translation. Whether or not these readings are original is not our concern here. Instead we are simply trying to demonstrate that they are just as early as the earliest available manuscripts. The survey of material will take into account material up to the time of John Chrysostom (c. 349-407), whose works are from less than a half-century after the earliest available manuscripts. Next, if the original language is not given it is because the original sources were not available. In other words, some of the material was only accessible via English translations. Finally, the words in brackets are absent in one or more of the earliest manuscripts.

THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

Matt 6:13 [“Οτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἄμην.]

Translation: [For the kingdom and the power and the glory is yours forever. Amen.]

(1) *Didache* (c. AD 100): ““Οτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας.”¹³⁹

T: For the power and the glory is yours forever.

The *Didache* is lacking ἡ βασιλεία (the kingdom) and Ἄμην (amen). It seems more likely that they were dropped in citation, rather than this is the source of the passage. But this is one of the issues that we are seeking to point out: such a position must be argued, not simply assumed. The other option is to see this as the source of the passage, but in order to do this it seems necessary to begin with the presupposition that the earliest texts reflect the original. Hence any variation is a deviation from that original.

(2) Chrysostom (c. 386): “for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”¹⁴⁰

139. *Didache*, 8.2.

Matt 17:21¹⁴¹ Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.]

T: [But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.]

Mark 9:29 Τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν, εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ [νηστείᾳ].

T: This kind is able to come forth by nothing, except by prayer and [fasting].

These two verses are given together because in the following examples it appears that the passage from Matthew (absent in the earliest manuscripts) is being cited. However, in Mark 9:29 the word νηστεία (fasting) is also absent from the earliest manuscripts. It is interesting, though, that in each instance that this passage is referenced, even if Mark is being quoted, fasting is the focus. That is, no matter which verse is being cited νηστεία is present. Hence, whether Matthew or Mark is being cited the omitted concept still exists.

(1) Tertullian (c. 200-40): “Docuit etiam adversus diriora daemonia ieiuniis proeliandum.”¹⁴²

T: Also, he [Jesus] taught that fasting will fight against the more awful demons.

Again, there are only two options for where Tertullian is deriving this information, and whether it is Matthew or Mark, fasting only appears in the later manuscripts.

(2) Origen (c. 200-30): “Τοῦτο δὲ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐκπορεύεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.”¹⁴³

No translation is needed; it is clear that this is a verbatim citation of Matthew.

140. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 19.10.

141. The broken line indicates a parallel account.

142. Tertullian, *On Fasting*, 8.3.

143. Origen, “Homily on Luke,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Origen*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 13 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 13.7.

(3) Basil the Great (c. 360): “Τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ γένος οὐκ ἐξέρχεται εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ.”¹⁴⁴

T: For this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

This appears to be a citation of Matthew, with the substitution of ἐκπορεύεται with ἐξέρχεται. This substitution does not change the meaning and is best explained by the use of a synonym. To attribute this to Mark is difficult due to the different syntax.

Mark 11:26 [Εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀφίετε, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα.]

T: [But if you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins.]

This is an interesting citation, since there is a ready parallel in Matthew, which is almost verbatim. In fact, when Cyprian cites this verse Schaff notes that it is in reference to Matthew.¹⁴⁵ However, as we will see in his citation there is a notable problem with such an assertion.

(1) Cyprian (c. 250): “Also according to Mark: ‘And when ye stand for prayer, forgive But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your sins.’”¹⁴⁶

Cyprian introduces this quote with the location of the passage: Mark’s gospel.

Furthermore, Cyprian follows this up with more support from Mark. In the second section Schaff ascribes Cyprian’s reference to Mark, but it is not clear why it should be any different for this first quote, especially when Cyprian was convinced of where both citations came from.

Mark 16:19 καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ. [16:9-20 is absent]

144. Basil the Great, *On Fasting*, 1.9.

145. Cyprian, *Treatises*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 22.

146. Ibid.

T: [and he sat down at the right hand of God]

This is a hard passage to deal with since it is part of the longer ending of Mark, which does not have great textual support. Still, there are a few instances in which references from the Fathers seem to come from these verses. A number of them are not included here because they fall under the ambiguous area of having parallel references. However, in the case of Mark 16:19, the case can be made that this is the passage being cited, as the syntax of the parallel passage does not match the citations.

(1) Irenaeus (c. 180): “In fine autem Evangelii ait Marcus: *Et quidem Dominus Jesus, postquam locutus est eis, receptus est in caelos, et sedet ad dexteram Dei.*”¹⁴⁷

T: Also, at the end of the gospel of Mark he says: “And indeed the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken, was received into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God.”

Once more we have a clear introductory phrase that places a passage in the specific gospel. Hence, if this citation is trustworthy by the time of Irenaeus the longer ending of Mark, or at least this verse of the ending, was available.

(2) Tertullian: “filius ascendit in superior caelorum, . . . hic sedet ad dexteram patris.”

T: the Son ascended into the heights of heaven, . . . he sits at the right of the Father.

The present tense of *sedet* works well if this is a citation of the aorist in Mark. In the context of Mark Jesus sat down. So, from the perspective of Tertullian Jesus is still sitting.

147. Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses: textu Graeco in locis nonnullis locupletato, versione Latina cum codicibus Claromontano ac Arundeliano denuo coll., praemissa de placitis gnosticorum prolusione, fragm. necnon Graece, Syriace, Armeniace, commentatione perpetua et indicibus variis*, ed. William Wigan Harvey (Typis Academicis, 1857), 3.11.6.

Luke 9:55 [καὶ εἶπεν, Οὐκ οἶδατε οἴου πνεύματος ἐστε ὑμεῖς]

T: [and he said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of.”]

(1) Clement of Alexandria (c. 200): “Ταῦτά τοι καὶ ὁ Κύριος πρὸς τοὺς ἀποστόλους εἰπόντας ἐν πυρὶ κολάσσα: . . . Οὐκ οἶδατε . . . ποίου Πνεύματός ἐστε.”¹⁴⁸

T: The Lord even said these things to the apostles when they were calling for punishment by fire: . . . You do not know . . . what spirit you are of.

This is an especially interesting passage since Clement has been used to support the Alexandrian text-type because he seems to quote it in Acts.¹⁴⁹ If nothing else, this at least shows that the Fathers probably had access to numerous textual streams from early on. Sorting out which is original in this case will prove to be a tricky enterprise.

(2) Chrysostom: “ὡς ὅταν λέγη· Οὐκ οἶδατε ποίου πνεύματος ἐστε.”

T: as when it said, “You do not know what spirit you are of.”

In this context, Chrysostom is using the verse to support the idea that the disciples, as well as everyone else, need the Holy Spirit. One might fault his exposition of this text, but there is still only one place in Scripture from where he can be getting this verse—Luke 9:55.

Luke 9:56 [ὁ γὰρ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν ψυκᾶς ἀνθρώπων ἀπολέσαι, ἀλλὰ σῶσαι.]

T: [For the Son of Man did not come to destroy the lives of men, but to save.]

148. Migne also has this recorded in Latin. Clement of Alexandria, “Fragmenta,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Clement of Alexandria*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 9 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), orat. 8 in Matt 8.

149. James Hardy Ropes, *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles: Volume III: The Text of Acts* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), clxxxviii.

(1) Tertullian: “et Veni inquit animam salvam facere.”¹⁵⁰

T: and he said, “I have come to save the soul.”

Tertullian seems to be citing this passage in periphrastic form. Notice how he does not use the phrase “Son of Man,” and ignores the first part of the verse. Nevertheless, this is the only place in the New Testament that the verse is stated in this way. Schaff agrees, and places a note that this is most likely referring to Luke 9:56.¹⁵¹

(2) Cyprian: “For as the Lord says in His Gospel, ‘The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’”¹⁵²

John 5:4 [Ἄγγελος γὰρ κατὰ καιρὸν κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρα, καὶ ἐτάρασσε τὸ ὕδωρ.]

T: [For an angel came down at a certain time to the pool, and stirred up the water;]

(1) Tertullian: “piscinam Bethsaidam angelus interveniens commovebat.”¹⁵³

T: The angel, intervening, disturbed the pool at Bethsaida [or perhaps Pool of Bethesda].

This is an interesting citation because the pericope that Tertullian is referring to takes place within Jerusalem, not Bethsaida. So, one wonders if he was making the mistake that often happens today—namely, confusing Bethsaida and Bethesda. In either case, this scene exists only in John’s gospel.

150. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 12.

151. Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 12 fn. 20.

152. Cyprian, *Epistles*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 58.2.

153. Tertullian, *De Baptismo*, 5.5.

(2) Chrysostom: “Καὶ ἄγγελος καταβαίνων ἐτάραττε τὸ ὕδωρ.”¹⁵⁴

T: And the angel, coming down, stirred up the water.

It is important to note that the theological issues that Tertullian and Chrysostom are supporting with this verse may not be valid. For instance, Chrysostom goes on to relate how the angel gave the water special powers for healing, and how this was supposed to teach the Jews about the spiritual healing available with God.¹⁵⁵ However, we are not searching after the correct interpretation of Scripture, but rather the fact that such a passage was indeed available.

John 8:59 Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐκρύβη, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, [διελθὼν διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν· καὶ παρήγεν οὕτως.]

T: But Jesus was hidden, and he went out from the temple, [passing through their midst; and thus disappeared.]

(1) Irenaeus: “so again did He in non-comprehensible form, pass through the midst of those who sought to injure Him.”¹⁵⁶

In this case, Irenaeus’s note about those who sought to injure him is important, since Jesus does get away from crowds elsewhere. In John, however, his escape is from adversaries.

(2) Origen: “sed quomodo in Joannis Evangelio scriptum est, quoniam insidiabantur ei Judaei, et elapsus est de medio eorum, et non apparuit.”¹⁵⁷

T: but how it has been written in the Gospel of John, whereas he was being plotted against by the Jews, he had disappeared from their midst, and was not visible.

154. John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Hebrews,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: John Chrysostom*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 63 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 36.1.

155. Ibid.

156. Irenaeus, *Fragments*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 52.

157. This is only available in Latin. Origen, “Homily on Luke,” 19.3.

One will notice again there is a preface to this passage that makes the source clear.

Acts 8:37 [εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος Εἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας,
ἔξεστιν ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι
τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.] [also absent in Robinson]¹⁵⁸

T: [And Philip said, “If you believe with your whole heart, it may be done.”]

And he answered and said, “I believe the Son of God to be Jesus Christ.”]

(1) Irenaeus: “ὡς αὐτὸς ὁ εὐνοῦχος πεισθεὶς, καὶ παραντύκα ἀξιῶν βαπτισθῆναι, Ελεγε·
Πιστεύω τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.”¹⁵⁹

T: as the eunuch himself was convinced, and at that moment wanted to be
baptized, saying, “I believe the Son of God to be Jesus Christ.”

(2) Cyprian: “In the Acts of the Apostles: ‘Lo, here is water; what is there which hinders me
from being baptized? Then said Philip, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou
mayest.’”¹⁶⁰

THE PAULINE CORPUS

Rom 8:28 Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν,
[τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν.]

T: But we know that everything works together for good to those who love
God, [to those who are being called according to a purpose.]

158. This is an important verse for showing that this is not simply a matter of Byzantine versus Alexandrian text-types. Wherever a variant exists (in this case within the Western text) and also exists within the early strata of the Fathers, we must ask if it can be original. The Greek here is from the TR.

159. Irenaeus, “Contra Haereses,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Irenaeus*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 7 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 3.12.8.

160. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 12.3.T.43.

(1) Clement of Alexandria: Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσι.¹⁶¹

There is no substantial difference between this citation and the verse above.

Furthermore, this occurs within a larger citation that ends at Romans 8:30.

(2) Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350): “ἄψευδὴς γὰρ ὁ εἰπὼν· Ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν. . . . διὰ τοῦτο ἐπήναγεν ὁ Ἄπόστολος λέγων Τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν πλητοῖς [*sic*] οὖσιν.”¹⁶²

T: For he is trustworthy who said, “That all things work together for good to those who love God.” . . . Therefore, the apostle adds and says, “To those who are being called according to a purpose.”

(3) Chrysostom: “Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν. . . . Εἰπὼν τοινυν τὸ μέγα τοῦτο ἀγαθόν, . . . οὕτω λέγων, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσι.”¹⁶³

T: But we know that everything works together to those who love God. . . . Indeed, after saying this great blessing . . . so he says, “to those who are being called according to a purpose.”

161. Clement of Alexandria, “Stromata,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Clement of Alexandria*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 8 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 4.7.

162. Cyril, “Procatechesis,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Cyril*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 33 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 1.

163. John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Romans,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: John Chrysostom*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 60 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 15.1.

Rom 10:15 Καθὼς γέγραπται, [Ὡς ὡπαῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων εἰρήνην],
τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων τὰ ἀγαθὰ.

T: As it is written: “[How beautiful are the feet of those preaching peace];
those preaching good tidings.”

(1) Irenaeus: “Et Paulus autem dicens: Quam speciosi pedes evangelizantium bona,
evangelizantium pacem!”¹⁶⁴

T: And as Paul also said: “How beautiful are the feet of those preaching good
tidings; those preaching the good news of peace!”

(2) Tertullian: “Quam maturi pedes evangelizantium bona, evangelizantium pacem.”¹⁶⁵

T: How perfect are the feet of those preaching good tidings; those preaching
the good news of peace.

This is an interesting citation because in both the Latin text and Schaff’s English translation the text is referenced in the footnotes as Isaiah 52:7. This is surely possible, as this is clearly where the verse is derived from. However, the context makes it clear that Tertullian is citing Paul in this case. In fact, the following sentence says, “Now when he [Paul] announces these blessings . . . he uses titles that are common to both [the Father and Son].”¹⁶⁶ Tertullian is using Paul’s material to argue for the deity of Christ in this instance. However, the order does follow more closely the Isaianic text. So, perhaps it would be best to suspend judgment on this citation, while noting that it is at least possible that Tertullian was using Paul’s material like he says he is.

164. Irenaeus, “Contra Haereses,” 3.13.1.

165. Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, 5.5.

166. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 5.5.

(3) Chrysostom: “Τότε λοιπὸν εἰσάγει τὸν προφήτην λέγοντα· Ὡς ὠραιῶοι οἱ πόδες τῶν τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων εἰρήνην, τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων τὰ ἀγαθὰ.”¹⁶⁷

T: Furthermore, he then introduces the prophet saying, “How beautiful are the feet of those preaching peace; those preaching good things.”

Again, it is possible that this is a citation of Isaiah, however, there are two things that militate against this. First, the order, unlike Tertullian only matches Paul’s usage. Second, Chrysostom indicates that he is citing Paul’s usage of this text.

1 Cor 3:3 ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις [καὶ διχοστασίαι]

T: for where there is among you jealousy, and strife, [and divisions]

(1) Irenaeus: “ὅπου γὰρ ζῆλος, καὶ ἔρις, φησὶν, ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ διχοστασίαι”¹⁶⁸

T: “For where jealousy and contention,” he says, “are among you, even divisions”

(2) Cyprian: “for where there are in you emulation, and strife, and dissensions”¹⁶⁹

(3) Chrysostom: “Τοῦτο μάλιστα ἐν τῇ πρὸς Κορινθίους ἐσήμανεν Ἐπιστολῇ εἰπών·

Ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις καὶ διχοστασίαι . . .”¹⁷⁰

T: This he especially indicates in the Epistle to the Corinthians, saying, “For where there is among you jealousy, and strife, and divisions . . .”

Gal 5:19, 21 Φανερά δέ ἐστιν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν [μοιχεία], . . . φθόνοι, [φόνου], μέθαι, κῶμοι,

167. Chrysostom, “Homilies on Romans,” 18.1.

168. Irenaeus, “Contra Haereses,” 4.38.

169. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 12.3.T.3.

170. Chrysostom, “Homilies on Hebrews,” 8.5.

T: But the works of the flesh are made known, those being: [adulteries], . . .
jealousies, [murders], drunkenness, obnoxious parties, . . .

(1) The Shepherd of Hermas (c. 100): “Audi, inquit: Ab adulteriis, . . .”¹⁷¹

T: “Listen,” he says: “[abstain] from adulteries, . . .”

This is cited in Latin because the Greek is incomplete at this point. Migne notes how the Greek has this reading in two codices.¹⁷²

(2) Cyprian: “Paul to the Galatians: . . . ‘But the deeds of the flesh are manifest, which are: adulteries, . . . murders, . . . envyings, drunkenness.’”¹⁷³

The order is different here, but the two missing elements are included.

(3) Basil the Great: “ΠΡΟΣ ΓΑΑ. Φανερά δέ ἐστι τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστι μοιχεία, . . . φθόνοι, φόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι . . .”¹⁷⁴

This appears to be a verbatim citation, save for the lack of the moveable v.

Eph 5:19 λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς [πνευματικαῖς]

T: speaking to yourselves psalms, and hymns, and [spiritual] songs

(1) Cyril of Jerusalem: “λαλοῦντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς”¹⁷⁵

This is the same wording with the inclusion of ἐν. This is important because in Colossians, where the “spiritual songs” are also mentioned the surrounding verbiage differs.

171. Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., “Shepherd of Hermas,” in *Patrologiae Graecae*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 2.8.

172. Ibid., 2.8 fn. 18.

173. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 12.3.T.64.

174. Basil the Great, “Moralia,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Basil*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 31 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 69.1.

175. Cyril, “Catechesis,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: Cyril*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 33 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 17.33.

(2) Chrysostom: “λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς ἐν ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς
πνευματικαῖς”¹⁷⁶

Again, the only difference is the placement of the preposition.

Eph 5:30 ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, [ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν
ὀστέων αὐτοῦ.]

T: For we are members of his body, [of his flesh and of his bones.]

(1) Irenaeus: “Καθὼς ὁ μακάριος Παῦλός φησιν, ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ἐφεσίους ἐπιστολῇ: Ὅτι
μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος, ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων
αὐτοῦ.”¹⁷⁷

T: Just as the blessed Paul said in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “For we are
members of the body, of his flesh and of his bones.

1 Tim 6:7 οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰσηνέκαμεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον, [δῆλον ὅτι οὐδὲ] ἐξενεγκεῖν τι
δυνάμεθα·

T: For we have not brought anything into the world, [it is clear that neither]
will we take anything out.

(1) Cyprian: “And therefore the apostle well exclaims, and says: ‘We brought nothing into this
world, neither indeed can we carry anything out.’”¹⁷⁸

This translation is a bit freer, but it is still substantially the same. The alternative
reading is farther from this by adding different words as well as omitting the ones mentioned.

176. John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Ephesians,” in *Patrologiae Graecae: John Chrysostom*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 62 (Cambridge University Press, 1882), 19.2.

177. Irenaeus, “Contra Haereses,” 5.2.3.

178. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 8.10.

(2) Chrysostom: “οὐδὲν γὰρ εἰσηνέκαμεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον, δῆλον ὅτι οὐδὲ ἐξενεγκεῖν τι δυνάμεθα.”

This is the same as above, only Chrysostom has τοῦτον specifying “this” world.

Heb 11:37¹⁷⁹ ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπίσθησαν, [ἐπειράσθησαν], ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίπρς ἀπέθανον·

T: they were stoned, sawn in half, [tempted], and died by the sword;

(1) Clement of Alexandria: “Ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίπρς ἀπέθανον”¹⁸⁰

T: they were stoned, tempted, and died by the sword

It is not hard to see how one of these words could have been left out of subsequent manuscripts. The form and sounds are very similar, and it is interesting that Clement does indeed leave out ἐπίσθησαν.

(2) Origen: “ἐν τῇ πρὸς Ἑβραίους οὕτω γεγραμμένοις: Ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπίσθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν.”

T: as it is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “They were stoned, sawn in half, and tempted;”

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

1 Pet 4:14 [κατὰ μὲν αὐτοὺς βλασφημεῖται, κατὰ δὲ ὑμᾶς δοξάζεται.]

T: [indeed, according to them he is blasphemed, but according to you he is glorified.]

(1) Cyprian: “And Peter, . . . , say, . . . ‘which indeed according to them is blasphemed, but according to us is honored.’”¹⁸¹

179. Hebrews is included here for convenience’s sake; there is no intent to argue for Pauline authorship.

180. Clement of Alexandria, “Stromata,” 4.16.

The only difference here is Cyprian's pronoun usage. It is not hard, however, to see how this can happen: the difference is between ὑμᾶς (you) and ἡμᾶς (us).

1 John 4:3¹⁸² [καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν·] καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου
 T: [and every spirit who does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God;] and this one is antichrist

(1) Polycarp: “Πᾶς γὰρ, ὅς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογεῖ, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, Ἀντίχριστός ἐστι.”¹⁸³
 T: For, whoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is Antichrist.

As noted above, Metzger notes how this is either a mistake or a record of tradition. Both issues have already been dealt with; however, one wonders at this point why another option must be sought when this citation has a ready explanation in a text-type.

(2) Irenaeus: “Et omnis spiritus qui solvit Jesum, non est ex Deo, sed de Antichristo est”¹⁸⁴
 T: And every spirit who lessens Jesus, is not from God, but is of the Antichrist.

This is an interesting citation because it differs in substance from the content in 1 John 4:3. However, it is clearly a variant and not an issue of omission.¹⁸⁵ In other words, Irenaeus cites something here as if it were not absent in the text. Though it differs, this would become an

181. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 11.5.

182. There are many allusions to this passage as well (e.g., Ignatius, Origen, and others), but like the other passages above we have only included what appear to be clear citations.

183. Polycarp, *Polycarp to the Philippians*, 7.

184. Irenaeus, “Contra Haereses,” 3.16.8.

185. Schaff offers some great text critical notes at this point. He relates how the text may have been corrupted from another form, but it is important to note his insistence that some physical form existed. Irenaeus, *Against Heresy*, ed. Phillip Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), 3.16.8 fn. 8.

issue of deciding which variant is correct. To remove this verse without noting its reference, even in this form, is not the best option.

(3) Tertullian: “certe Qui negat Christum in carne venisse hic antichristus est”¹⁸⁶

T: certainly whoever denies Christ to have come in the flesh, this one is antichrist

(4) Cyprian: “Also in the Epistle of John: . . . ‘But whoever denies that He is come in the flesh is not of God, but is of the spirit of Antichrist.’”¹⁸⁷

1 John 5:7 [ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν.] [also absent in Robinson]

T: [Since the witnesses in heaven are three: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.]

(1) Cyprian: “[I]t is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ‘And these three are one.’”¹⁸⁸

This thesis was initially inspired by a desire to support this verse as original; however, it now seems as though it was indeed an addition at a later time. Tertullian makes two supposed citations as well, but in both cases it is dealing with the word *unum*, making the three one. Only Cyprian seems to use a form that is close to this text. Yet, even Cyprian’s statement does not seem to require a citation of a text. Instead, it seems to be an interpretation of the passage. Cyprian is included simply to have all the material available for omitted verses. However, this author is now in agreement with Metzger.¹⁸⁹

186. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 24.

187. Cyprian, *Treatises*, 12.2.T.8.

188. *Ibid.*, 1.6.

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that the list of these citations is dealing only with texts that do not exist within the earliest manuscripts, but are found in later texts. Given such a small number of omitted verses, the evidence above is sufficient to conclude that the Fathers had access to numerous streams of texts. Determining which ones are original is a task for another thesis, but for now it should at least be noted that it is not as simple as appealing to the witness of the earliest manuscript evidence. Furthermore, there is sufficient data to conclude that many of the omitted texts were believed by the Fathers to be from a text, not simply from oral tradition. Also, the close syntactical link between all but two citations and the supposed texts they came from render it highly unlikely that the Fathers were making up material for the cause of orthodoxy. Though hypotheses should be made in order to explain how such apparently verbatim citations came to exist within the Fathers, one should begin with the simplest explanation—i.e., they are actual citations—until further evidence requires otherwise.

189. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York, NY: American Bible Society, 1971), 647–9.

CONCLUSION

Though it is tempting to assume that the earliest available manuscripts house the original text of the Bible, such a position is flawed for a number of reasons. Most importantly, this view is often founded upon a narrative of corruption. Specifically, the textual critic must strive to find the earliest manuscripts because this virtually guarantees that theological corruption did not take place. Assuming that one could guarantee that corruption did not take place until the late fourth century, perhaps this would be a viable option. However, the prevailing authorities consistently point out how the majority of corruptions took place within the second century. If this is accepted then it also follows that the only manuscripts that can house the original text would come from the late first century. Since these texts are not available, one wonders why those who hold such views continue to see the available fourth century manuscripts as so reliable.¹⁹⁰

However, the problem dealt with in this thesis is not so much the acceptance of the early manuscripts, but the arguments used by some to remove other manuscripts from sight. Although the modern criteria for textual criticism have had some criticism from those who prefer the Byzantine manuscripts to the Alexandrian, the majority of modern translations have given primacy to this latter group of manuscripts.¹⁹¹ While there are numerous criteria, one in particular finds its way into many discussions of manuscript evidence—that is, the antiquity of the Alexandrian corpus. It is upon this premise that it is argued that these texts are superior to the

190. This criticism is only leveled at those who actually seek to push this issue to its furthest extent. The majority of reasoned eclectics do not go this far. In fact, a consistent comment among the literature is that the NT material we possess today is extremely reliable. Still, it is not hard to see how the underlying concept of corruption can lead to questions of reliability.

191. Leland Ryken, *Choosing a Bible: Understanding Bible Translation Differences* (Crossway, 2005); Zane Clark Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text* (Thomas Nelson, 1982).

majority text, whose manuscripts are much later.¹⁹² And though this latter assertion is true, it seems most vacuous, since there are numerous ways in which one might establish antiquity. For example, Old Testament scholars have long posited that the Masoretic Text (MT), though more recent than the Septuagint (LXX), reflects a more ancient text.¹⁹³ Hence, in many places the MT is preferred over the LXX. For some reason, however, this exercise is reversed within New Testament studies. This thesis has been an attempt to offer some evidence in support of possible early readings that do not occur within the earliest manuscripts.

Before offering the textual evidence, it was necessary to deal with many issues that were deemed detrimental to such a pursuit. To begin, chapter 1, detailed the necessity for a thoroughly biblical definition of canon and Scripture. In the end, the two concepts cannot be discussed apart from one another. That is, when one deals with canon (historically or theologically) one will invariably be working from a particular conception of what canon is. This led us to conclude that the best route for evangelicals to take is a presuppositional model that places Scripture at the foundation of any canonical research. In this light, canonical development may be defined thus: the *recognition of already* inspired works by the elect throughout the early segments of church history.

Chapter 2 dealt with the Bauer thesis and its modern proponent Bart Ehrman. It was acknowledged that numerous problems with Ehrman's concept of corruption were ignored in order to focus on those that are pertinent to our topic. Those who wish to look deeper into this

192. This is a bit of a simplification, since many argue that it is not just the dates, but also the issue of corruption that causes pause for accepting the Byzantine texts. This point, however, is granted. The difference I have is that it seems difficult to claim corruption for texts that are omitted in the Alexandrian manuscripts, as this is an argument from silence. Hence, when it comes to omissions, logic should allow for the benefit of the doubt to be granted to the majority text, unless it can be sustained that such omissions are the most valid. This thesis is an attempt to show that these are not indeed the most valid.

193. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed., rev. and expanded (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012), 11–2.

issue would do well to read the detailed critique by Wallace, as well as the popular work by Jones.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, it should be clear that Ehrman's concept of corruption falls short due to his redundant use of one or two examples of corruption (and late corruption at that), and his underestimation of the clarity with which the early church fathers related their sources. Still, this corruption narrative has been included within a number of evangelical works, albeit a moderated form. However, the results are very similar. Whereas Ehrman (now an atheist) calls for an abandonment of the Bible, evangelicals seek to explain how such corrupt elements came about. Surely there are a number of cases in which this is valid, but there are also many areas where the cases are overstated. The evidence given is enough to show that yielding too quickly to this theory has deleterious effects upon New Testament and patristic research.

The idea of corruption leads naturally to the theory that the earliest available manuscripts are necessarily the best witnesses of the original text. Yet, as already mentioned, this carries with it the problem of when corruption took place. For this thesis, however, we have made it clear that such a view is at least theoretically plausible. Therefore, chapter 3 delineated numerous reasons why one should not simply stop with the earliest manuscripts when determining an early reading. One of the most important of these reasons is the fact that many of the early church fathers tell us the specific location of the passages they are citing. On a different note, this chapter sought to balance orality and textuality within the early church, in order to remove doubt that the Fathers were citing physical texts and not oral traditions. Finally, it was argued that Scripture was viewed as Scripture from its inception, rather than being deemed so by the church. This is an important point to consider when thinking about the weight the Fathers attached to the material they were citing.

194. Wallace, "How Badly Did the Scribes Corrupt the New Testament Text?"; Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's "Misquoting Jesus"* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007).

After dealing with some of the many objections in chapters 1-3, chapter 4 is given over to passage after passage of clear citations from the patristic period. There are a number of important elements to note from this material: (1) many of the citations come with a location indicator such as, “as it is written in the Gospel of Mark;” (2) most of the citations come from two or more authors; (3) some of the passages can come from only one place within the Bible; and (4) the syntactical overlap between the biblical witnesses and the Fathers is such that it requires an answer. As to the first point, if one can trust the Fathers there seems to be no good reason to discount their ability to know which book they were citing from. This does not mean the Fathers had to be citing the original form of a text, but it does mean that such a text was extant prior to the Alexandrian material. Point (4) is also important because it renders the appeal to orality unlikely. Again, none of this material requires the citations to be original, but it should cause one to think critically before rejecting a passage simply because it is absent from the earliest available manuscripts.

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