

	<p><b>Links to Topics:</b> Introduction</p> <p><b>2.1 The concept of scripture</b></p> <p>2.1.1 Biblical terminology</p> <p>2.1.1.1 Hebrew terms</p> <p>2.1.1.2 Greek terms</p> <p>2.1.2 Creeds &amp; confessions of faith</p> <p>2.1.2.1 Definitions</p> <p>2.1.2.2 Statements about the Bible</p> <p>2.1.3 Christian scriptures in comparison to</p> <p>2.1.3.1 Judaism</p> <p>2.1.3.2 Islam</p> <p>2.1.3.3 Hinduism</p> <p>2.1.3.4 Buddhism</p> <p>2.1.3.5 Christian sects</p> <p><b>2.2 Idea of inspiration</b></p> <p>2.2.1 Biblical terminology</p> <p>2.2.1.1 Hebrew terminology</p> <p>2.2.1.2 Hebrew concepts</p> <p>2.2.1.3 New testament terminology</p> <p>2.2.1.4 New testament concepts</p> <p>2.2.2 History of understanding</p> <p>2.2.2.1 Up to modern era</p> <p>2.2.2.2 Modern era perspectives</p> <p>2.2.3 A perspective on inspiration</p>	<p><b>MAKING SENSE</b></p> <p><b>OF</b></p> <p><b>THE BIBLE</b></p> <p><b>2.0</b></p> <p><b>How did the Bible come into being?</b></p>	<p><b>Links continued:</b></p> <p><b>2.3 Concept of Canonization</b></p> <p>2.3.1 The Idea of Canon</p> <p>2.3.2 The Hebrew Canon of Scriptures</p> <p>2.3.2.1 History of Process</p> <p>2.3.2.2 Arrangement of the Documents in Hebrew Bible</p> <p>2.3.2.3 A Jewish Theology of Scripture</p> <p>2.3.2.4 A Christian Theology of the Old Testament</p> <p>2.3.3 A Christian Canon of Scriptures</p> <p>2.3.3.1 History of Process for the New Testament</p> <p>2.3.3.2 Arrangement of the Documents in the New Testament</p> <p><b>2.4 Application to Third John</b></p> <p>2.4.1 The Implications of Third John as sacred scripture</p> <p>2.4.2 How did Third John find acceptance in the canon of the New Testament?</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p><i>Studies by</i></p> <p><i>Lorin L Cranford</i></p> <p>All rights reserved ©</p> 
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## INTRODUCTION

How does a religion establish an authority base for advocating its teachings? Most every cultist group on the fringe of some established religion will base its teachings mostly on the charismatic personality of its leader. Among the established world religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, a major authority base will be some set of sacred writings regarded as holy or sacred scripture.<sup>1</sup> These writings may be viewed differently in terms of origin, nature, and extent of authority, but they occupy a place of reverence and are looked to for direction in the doctrinal framework of each religion.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian Bible is a phrase that generally means the same thing across the spectrum of different branches of official Christianity. But the term can and does differ at the point of the inclusion or exclusion of numerous ancient documents within the Bible. There is the Protestant Bible and the Catholic Bible. Both of these will differ in content from the differing versions of the Orthodox Bible. But while the specific contents of the

<sup>1</sup>“Name given to the holy writings of any religious group. These are usually gathered into an authorized collection or canon to which final appeal in religious questions is made. Scriptural writings comprise a large portion of the world’s great literature. Different religions define the authority of their scriptures in varied ways, but devout members of most religious groups generally regard their scriptures as in some way different and more sacred than other writings. Among the sacred scriptures of other religions are the Vedas and Upanishads of the Hindus, the Theravada of the Buddhists, and the Qur’an of the Muslims. Christians recognize the Jewish scriptures—Torah, Prophets, and Writings—as Scripture, along with the four Gospels, 21 Epistles, the Book of Acts, and the Revelation. Some Christians also recognize the Apocrypha as Scripture. Christians call their book of scripture the Holy Bible.” [Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1915.]

<sup>2</sup>For a very helpful categorizing of some 47 different sets of sacred writings among religions in the world today, see “Religious texts,” wikipedia.org.

Christian Bible may vary, a general consensus will prevail across all Christianity that the Bible represents sacred scriptures which contain the revealed will of God for His people.

But this describes a modern perspective of the Bible. How did we come to this perspective? What was the perspective during the era of the Old Testament and also that of the first Christian century? Also, what does the Bible say about itself? Understanding these starting points is essential if we are to grasp how Christianity has derived its understanding today.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1 The Concept of Scripture

Various modern dictionaries provide definitions of the terms Bible and scripture. In English it matters whether the word is capitalized or not. If Bible then the meaning is “the sacred scriptures of Christians comprising the Old Testament and the New Testament” or one of the books of the Bible. If bible, the meaning is “a publication that is preeminent especially in authoritativeness or wide readership,” e.g., the fisherman’s bible.<sup>4</sup> When capitalized, Scripture means “(1) capitalized : the books of the Bible — often used in plural (2) often capitalized : a passage from the Bible,” but scripture normally means “a body of writings considered sacred or authoritative.”<sup>5</sup> The Spanish word ‘biblia’ follows closely the meaning of the word Bible in English.<sup>6</sup> Also the German word ‘Bibel’ follows a similar definitional meaning.<sup>7</sup>

Across these modern languages the general description for the English word ‘scripture’<sup>8</sup> will basically hold true for the Spanish ‘la Sagrada Escritura’, although this term focuses on the Christian Bible as sacred scripture.<sup>9</sup> The German word ‘Schrift’ requires the adding of the adjective for it to specify sacred scripture of a general designation: Heilige Schrift.<sup>10</sup> The French word ‘écriture’ follows a generally similar pattern to



<sup>3</sup>For more in-depth studies of the topic the origin of the Bible see two separate studies I have done in churches over the years. A five session overview done for the First Baptist Church of Shelby, NC, “History of the English Bible,” at <http://cranfordville.com/Studies/HisBibleFrame.html>. Or, the seventeen session “The Origin and History of the Bible,” at the Bible Study Series page: <http://cranfordville.com/IBC%20Cologne/index-BibleStudies.html>. The latter includes a detailed study of the origin of both the English Bible and the German Bible.

<sup>4</sup>“bible,” Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

<sup>5</sup>“scripture,” Merriam-Webster online dictionary

<sup>6</sup>“La Biblia (del griego τα βιβλία, *ta biblia*, ‘los libros’) es el conjunto de libros canónicos del judaísmo y el cristianismo. La canonicidad de cada libro varía dependiendo de la tradición adoptada. Según las religiones judía y cristiana, «transmite la palabra de Dios». La Biblia, o al menos parte de ella, se encuentra traducida a 2 303 idiomas.” [“Biblia,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>7</sup>“Als **Bibel** (auch Buch der Bücher) bezeichnen das Judentum und das Christentum je eigene Sammlungen von Schriften, die als Heilige Schriften Urkunden ihres Glaubens sind. Es handelt sich um zwei Zusammenstellungen von „Büchern“ (griechisch: *biblia*) aus dem Kulturraum der Levante und dem Vorderen Orient, die im Verlauf von etwa 1200 Jahren entstanden sind und zuerst von Juden, dann auch von Christen kanonisiert wurden.” [“Bibel,” wikipedia.org]

Also the French La Bible is similar: “La Bible est un ensemble de textes réunissant l’Ancien Testament, constitué essentiellement de la Bible hébraïque, et le Nouveau Testament.” [“Bible,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>8</sup>“Religious texts, also known as scripture, scriptures, holy writ, or holy books, are the texts which various religious traditions consider to be sacred, or of central importance to their religious tradition. Many religions and spiritual movements believe that their sacred texts are divinely or supernaturally revealed or inspired.” [“Religious text,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>9</sup>“Qué es la Sagrada Escritura ? Lo que llamamos “Sagrada Escritura” – o la Biblia- es el conjunto de Escritos sagrados inspirados en la Primera Alianza y en la Nueva Alianza de Dios con los hombres. Entre los libros sagrados de la humanidad, la Biblia se distingue por el sentido de los acontecimientos históricos que ella relata: ahí descubrimos; a través de esos acontecimientos que han marcado la historia de Israel (Primera Alianza, o en el lenguaje cristiano “Antiguo Testamento”) que no es solamente el hombre que busca a Dios, sino Dios mismo que busca al hombre y hace su alianza con él.” [“Qué es la Sagrada Escritura?,” Marie de Nazareth.com]

<sup>10</sup>“Als heilige Schriften bezeichnet die vergleichende Religionswissenschaft Texte, die für eine Religion normativ sind. In den unterschiedlichen Religionen gibt es auch ein je unterschiedliches Verständnis was als normativer Text gilt. Ebenso ist die jeweilige Autorität eines normativen Textes in den Religionen unterschiedlich. Diese Religionen nennt man manchmal auch Schrift- oder Buchreligionen.<sup>1</sup> In schriftlosen Kulturen spielen kollektive Überlieferungen von Mythen als orale Texte die gleiche Rolle wie heilige Schriften.”

the German word; for the meaning of scriptures it has to be expressed as ‘Saintes Écritures’ but can also be expressed as ‘les textes sacrés’.<sup>11</sup> What becomes clear is that the terms *escritura*, *Schrift*, and *écriture* play directly off the root meaning of the Latin ‘scribens.’ Although the English word *scripture* is derived from the Latin noun ‘scriptura’ from the Latin ‘scribens’, it has lost this more general meaning that is retained in the other modern languages.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.1 Biblical Terminology

When looking at the variety of Hebrew and Greek terms inside the Bible referencing the idea of ‘Bible’ or of ‘scripture’ a more complex picture emerges.

#### 2.1.1.1 Hebrew Terms

The Hebrew word כתב, *katāb*, basically means writing, document (content) or writing (action), which is general in scope. Also מכתב, *machthab*, in specifying a ‘writing of God’ refers to the inscription of the Ten Words on the two tablets of stone on Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex. 32:16). But it also can refer generally to a document or a piece of writing (2 Chron. 21:12). A third word מדרש, *midrāš*, can mean study or exposition of a writing. In Hebrew there was no term equal to scripture or scriptures. Instead the Old Testament references to the various documents are grouped under the traditional threefold division of the Hebrew Bible into Law, Prophets, and Writings.<sup>13</sup>

The word תורה, *tôrâ*, comes from the root word meaning ‘to throw’ or ‘to cast.’<sup>14</sup> The derivative idea of that what God has thrown down as foundational rules and regulations to be followed, that is, the **Law of God**.<sup>15</sup> The word תורה can specify the Law of God as the Pentateuch, or specific regulations contained in the legal code, or general instruction from God not specified in the Pentateuch.<sup>16</sup> The LXX term νόμος, *nomos*, most often trans-

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[“Heilige Schrift,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>11</sup>“Dans le langage chrétien, les Saintes Écritures sont les paroles écrites et dites par les saints hommes de Dieu inspirés par le Saint-Esprit. Par saintes Écritures, on désigne également les textes sacrés juifs.” [“Saintes Écritures,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>12</sup>Another language dynamic surfaces when one shifts from the singular ‘scripture’ to the plural ‘scriptures.’ This happens to some extent in the other languages as well: Spanish: *escritura* to *Escrituras*; German: *Schrift* to *Schriften*; French: *écriture* to *Écritures*. The plural more easily specifies the Christian scriptures, with an implication of the Bible as a collection of books.

<sup>13</sup>In the Hebrew tradition **Law** includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The second division **Prophets** includes: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Minor Prophets (single book). The third division **Writings** includes: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. This totals 24 books in the Hebrew Bible. In the Protestant Old Testament this same content is divided out into 39 books. “Christian bibles divide Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah and the Minor Prophets, bringing the total to 39.” [“Old Testament,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>14</sup>“The basic idea of the root *yārâ* is ‘to throw’ or ‘to cast’ with the strong sense of control by the subject. Lots were cast in regards to dividing the land among the various tribes (Josh 18:6). God cast the Egyptian army into the Red Sea (Ex 15:4; cf. Job 30:19). With stones it has the idea of placing them in a certain place; God laid the cornerstone of the world (Job 38:6) and Laban set up a heap of stones and a pillar as a witness between Jacob and himself to their covenant of peace (Gen 31:51f.). The three most frequent uses of this root deal with shooting arrows, sending rain and teaching.” John E. Hartley, “910 יָרָא” In *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 403.]

<sup>15</sup>“The Torah is the section of the Bible composed of the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The name Torah derives from Hebrew *tôrâ*, meaning ‘instruction.’ The work is also known as the Pentateuch, from Greek *penta-teuchos*, meaning a five-book work, and as the Five Books of Moses. It is also known in traditional Jewish circles by the Hebrew name *humaš*, which likewise is a form of the number five. It combines prose, poetry, and law in a chronological narrative spanning thousands of years. With the exception of a few words, it is written entirely in Hebrew. It holds a special place in relation to the other biblical books in that, first, the events it narrates are central to and assumed by most of the other books, and, second, many of these other books refer to it (e.g., Ezra 8:1–3) or allude to passages in it (e.g., Jonah 4:2). The Torah also has a special status in subsequent religious tradition, both because of the significance of the events narrated and because it contains the body of law that became normative in Judaism.” [Richard Elliott Friedman, “Torah (Pentateuch)” In vol. 6, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 605.]

<sup>16</sup>“The Bible preserves several significant collections of laws: the Decalogue, the Covenant Code, the Holiness Code, and the Deuteronomic laws. These collections, although not labeled as such by the ancient writers, have been identified as literary units by

lates the Hebrew תּוֹרָה (149x). The collective designation Law referring either to the legal codes as a collection or to the Pentateuch will be found in both the Prophets and the Writings sections of the Old Testament.

The word נְבִיא, *nābî*, is the primary Hebrew word for **prophet**.<sup>17</sup> In the singular, an individual prophet, or in the plural, a group of prophets. The shifting idea of a prophet is signaled by the shift from הָאָר, *rō'eh*, to נְבִיא, *nābî*, for the term prophet. First Samuel 9:9 signals this shift: .<sup>18</sup> The shift signals a move away from associating the moment of prophesying with an act of frenzy to the clear proclamation of God's message to His covenant people Israel.<sup>19</sup> In Jewish tradition this is further emphasized by dividing up the second section of Prophets into two subdivisions: the Former Prophets (*Nevi'im Rishonim* נְבִיאִים ראשונים) and the Latter Prophets (*Nevi'im Aharonim*, נְבִיאִים אחרונים). The Former Prophets contains Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings where the הָאָר, *rō'eh*, is mostly used to refer to the prophets, while the Latter Prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (a single book). Here נְבִיא, *nābî*, refers to a prophet while the rare use of הָאָר, *rō'eh*, refers to a seer who is distinct from a prophet. The ministry of Elijah seems to signal the shift in terminology and understood role of the prophet.<sup>20</sup>

But one should note that the plural נְבִיאִים, *nebi'im*, is never used inside the Old Testament to refer to a collection of documents later labeled the Prophets. Regarding the status of these documents their authority was not on the same level as the Law which occupied the highest level of God's demands on the Israelite people. modern scholars. Most, but not all of the formally stated biblical laws are found in these pentateuchal collections; and supplementary knowledge of biblical legal practices comes from narrative accounts and other, nonlegal books." [Samuel Greengus, "Law: Biblical and ANE Law" In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 242.]

<sup>17</sup>"The word 'prophet' most frequently translates the Heb word **nābî**'. This word is probably not of Hebrew origin; the Akk *nabītu* seems the closest cognate, although the title *nabû*, 'diviner' (?), is now attested at Mari. This probable loanword in Hebrew suggests that prophecy in Israel was not a phenomenon unrelated to ideas and practices outside Israel. Israelite prophecy can rather be understood as a concept and an activity that Israel shared with other cultures and peoples among whom the Israelites lived and experienced God.

"Other words are also used by the biblical tradition to describe persons who acted in the way that Israel saw its prophets behave. One passage claims that in former times the prophet (*nābî*) was known as a seer (*rō'eh*) (1 Sam 9:9). Two other terms also are occasionally used for the role: man of God (*'iš [hā] 'ēlōhîm*) and visionary (*hōzeh*)."

[John J. Schmitt, "Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy" In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 482.]

<sup>18</sup>"In v 9 an editor notes that people used to say, 'Let us go to the seer' when they went to inquire of God (inquiring of God may have replaced an earlier asking of God by Urim and Thummim. So Westermann) and that 'seer' (cf. vv 11 and 19) was the earlier name for 'prophet.' Seers are referred to in Isa 30:10 (cf. 28:7), and Samuel and Hanani of the time of Asa are designated seers by the Chronicler (1 Chr 9:22; 26:28; 29:29 and 2 Chr 16:7 and 10 respectively)." [Ralph W. Klein, vol. 10, *1 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 87.]

<sup>19</sup>"Divine inspiration was what made a person a prophet, and what caused the prophet to speak out, and what made others listen to the prophet as a legitimate spokesperson for the divine. For the early period, a favored conception is that 'the spirit of the Lord' speaks through the individual (e.g., 1 Sam 10:10; 1 Kgs 22:24). Later terminology preferred 'the word of the Lord came to' the person (e.g., Jer 1:2, 4; Ezek 1:3). The general idea remains: the prophet is the one who can speak in the name of God." [John J. Schmitt, "Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy" In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 482.]

<sup>20</sup>"None of the canonical prophets seems comfortable with being called a *nābî*' (cf. Amos 7:14). None of the canonical prophets seems to have been a popular success in the sense of having a large following. All the preexilic prophets have rather harsh things to say, and it is not surprising that they did not immediately win the hearts of all.

"That they do not call themselves *nābî*' or let others apply this term to them suggests that the term had connotations with which each of the prophets did not want to identify. Much scholarship claims that the word *nābî*' implies induced ecstasy, manic bizarreness, and irrational activity in general. Other studies have suggested that the professional aspect of prophecy is what Amos rejects in Amos 7:14. Yet another proposal is that the difference in terminology is mainly regional, Amos being from the South.

"It is in the narratives about the prophets that a prophet is called *nābî*' without any hesitation. A recent scholarly tendency has been to say that the narratives come from a time after the historical prophet. In this view, the narratives are better understood as legends about the person for the purpose of enhancing or clarifying the figure rather than as manifestations of the personality of the prophet. Many scholars today are far more reluctant than those of a generation or two ago to write a biography or even a personality assessment of a given prophet."

[John J. Schmitt, "Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy" In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 487.]

Daniel 9:2 is the only reference inside the Old Testament to a written copy of the orally delivered prophecies of Jeremiah.<sup>21</sup>

The inspiration of the prophets was centered on their orally speaking the words of the Lord to the people, and not on the writing down of those words. Jeremiah 36:1-32 provides direct confirmation of other texts signaling this with Baruch making the written record of the orally delivered words of the prophet:<sup>22</sup>

36:2, Take a scroll and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today.

36:4, Then Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the Lord that he had spoken to him.

36:16-18. 16 When they heard all the words, they turned to one another in alarm, and said to Baruch, "We certainly must report all these words to the king." 17 Then they questioned Baruch, "Tell us now, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?" 18 Baruch answered them, "He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll."

36:32. Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

Interestingly, the verification of the scrolls Baruch presented to the king's agents (vv.16-18) was not based on whether God inspired the writing of the scrolls. It was predicated solely on whether Baruch would vouch for having written down correctly the oral dictation of Jeremiah to him. Their interest was whether the written record correctly represented what Jeremiah had said in dictation to Baruch. Whether God stood behind these words or not did not matter to them.

It is in post-exilic Judaism and early Christianity that references to the written records of the prophets surface. This comes out of a trend after the Babylonian exile to move toward written documents regarded increasingly

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<sup>21</sup>**Dan. 9:1-2.** 1 In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in *the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah*, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.

"Beginning as it does, not with a dream or vision but with the text of scripture, chap. 9 comes nearer than any other passage in Daniel to being expository midrash, midrash which explicitly concerns itself with issues raised by a specific biblical passage, while still concerned—like all midrash—with questions that arise from the context in which scripture is being read. In taking the passage as a prophecy of events in the audience's day, the hermeneutic of Dan 9 corresponds to that which appears in pesharim such as 1QpHab\*, but the chapter does not use the term פשר, nor is the revelation in the peshar form (see chap. 2 Form). The angelic revelation offers illumination from the text which emerges from setting it in the context of other passages of scripture, as is often the case with midrashic study.

"The passage's 'text' is Jer 25:8–14 (cf. 29:10), which refers to the completing of seventy years of punishment for Judah's sin. Jeremiah's 'seventy years' was earlier taken up in Zech 1:12 (cf. 7:5; see E. Lipiński, "Recherches sur le Livre de Zacharie," VT 20 [1970] 35–42). There could be various ways of calculating the actual length of the desolation envisaged by Jeremiah. It could be dated from Judah's submission to Babylon in 605 B.C., from the invasion of 597, or from that of 587; it could be dated to Babylon's fall in 539, or to the completion of the temple rebuilding in 517 B.C. Clearly seventy actual years could thus be reckoned to have passed by Zechariah's time. This might encourage people to take as a precise calculation a figure that did not have this significance for Jeremiah. 2 Chr 36:20–23 nuances Zechariah's prophecy by understanding the seventy years in the light of Lev 25:1–7; 26:31–35, 43. The period of ruin and desolation comprises seventy years during which the land is uncultivated, to make up for the approximately 490 sabbathless years of the monarchic period. The 'Epistle of Jeremiah,' perhaps written soon after Alexander and taking Jer 29 as its jumping-off point, turns the seventy years into seven generations—280 years, according to the OT way of reckoning? (C. A. Moore, Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions [AB 44 (1977)] 334–35)."

[John E. Goldingay, vol. 30, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 231–32.]

<sup>22</sup>This same viewpoint is reflected in **2 Peter 1:20–21.** 20 First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God

20 τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται· 21 οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη προφητεία ποτέ, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.

The written record of the prophets reflects the orally spoken interpretation of the prophet given to him by God (v. 20). But it is in the speaking of the words of God orally that the Spirit of God moves in the ministry of the prophet, not in the writing down of his words -- normally done by someone else. The use of the Greek verb ἐλάλησαν for 'spoke' signals this unambiguously in the Greek for only human beings can λαλέω. Written documents such as scripture(s) can only λέγω. (cf. Mt. 26:54; Lk. 4:21; Jhn. 19:24, 37; Rom. 4:3, 9:17, 10:11; 11:2; Gal. 3:8, 4:30; 1 Tim. 5:18; Jas. 2:23; 4:5). The unfortunate use of the English verb 'speak' for both Greek verbs obscures what is being clearly said here. What Peter reflects here is consistent with the Old Testament and later Jewish perspective.

as ‘sacred scripture.’<sup>23</sup> What happens during this era is the compiling and editing of older written records of the prophets into a collection that is circulated together.<sup>24</sup>

The **Writings**, כְּתוּבִים, *Ketuvim* or *Kəṭûbîm*, comprises the third division of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>25</sup> “The Ketuvim are believed to have been written under the Ruach HaKodesh [רוח הקודש, holy spirit], but with one level less authority than that of prophecy.”<sup>26</sup> This reflects later Jewish perspectives. This collection of eleven documents in Hebrew came to be considered authoritative among Jews late at the beginning of the second century AD, although the books were in circulation by the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup>“A marked feature of the postexilic age is the growth of official or semiofficial versions of older writings, which gradually moved in the direction of becoming ‘Holy Scripture.’ Just as the Persian period saw the codification of the pentateuchal books to form the Torah, so at about the same time collections of prophetic oracles began to take on the character of sacred writings. At first perhaps these were revered by particular groups, but in due course they became part of the shared heritage of all Jews.

“It is usually thought that the Exile itself provided the initial impetus toward the collection and codification of prophetic writings. For one thing, the event itself had vindicated the predictions of the preexilic prophets and so turned them from objects of scorn into venerable figures whom God himself had shown to be in the right; for another, the separation of so many Jews from their homeland made the preservation of the national literature imperative if Jewish culture and religion were to survive.”

[John Barton, “Prophecy: Postexilic Hebrew Prophecy” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 494-95.]

<sup>24</sup>“The process by which the prophetic books were compiled was almost infinitely complex, but it involved at least three separate elements. **First**, the authentic utterances of the prophets were arranged in order, sometimes chronologically (so far as the editors could guess at what this might be), sometimes thematically or on a catchword principle. **Secondly**, narratives about the prophet, which might or might not be of any historical value, were added. In the case of some prophets, such as Amos, very little such material was available, but with others, notably Jeremiah, it was very extensive. And **thirdly**, further oracles which had no original connection with the prophet in question were appended or worked into the earlier collection, until the ordinary reader could no longer discern the difference. With a book such as Isaiah this third stage probably contributed the greater part of the book. Indeed, from chap. 40 onward we have at least two collections which had probably existed in a semifinished form under who knows what name before they were added to Isaiah 1–39. Whether the editors intended to assert that the prophet named in the book’s superscription had in fact delivered all these oracles himself remains wholly uncertain. Later generations certainly took this to be implied. Some of the additional oracles may very well be genuinely prophetic, in the sense that they were originally delivered by people who would have claimed for themselves the same kind of inspiration as those in whose names the present books appear. But others may have always been essentially the work of scribes, composing what they took to be plausible “prophetic” utterances in an endeavor to update or revise existing oracles. And it seems clear that the same sort of process operated with all the prophetic books; the words of late postexilic prophets, once uttered and remembered, became subject to just the same procedures of redaction, addition, and embellishment that had by then already produced something like the present form of older books, such as Amos or Hosea. Only the beginnings of a distinct “canon” of Scripture eventually set limits to this kind of editorial work, and ensured that from then on comment and interpretation would have to take the form of acknowledged commentary rather than changes to the text of the prophetic books themselves.” [John Barton, “Prophecy: Postexilic Hebrew Prophecy” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 495.]

<sup>25</sup>“The third section of the Jewish division of the Hebrew Bible meaning ‘writings’ (Heb *kəṭûbîm*), known also as the *Hagiographa* from the Greek term meaning ‘holy writings.’ This division includes the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles (Song of Solomon), Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1-2 Chronicles.” [“Kethubim” In vol. 4, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 31.]

<sup>26</sup>“Ketuvim,” wikipedia.org.

<sup>27</sup>“The Ketuvim is the last of the three portions of the Tanakh to have been accepted as Biblical canon. While the Torah may have been considered canon by Israel as early as the 5th century BCE and the Former and Latter Prophets were canonized by the 2nd century BCE, the Ketuvim was not a fixed canon until the 2nd century of the Common Era.<sup>5</sup>

“Evidence suggests, however, that the people of Israel were adding what would become the Ketuvim to their holy literature shortly after the canonization of the prophets. As early as 132 BCE we have references suggesting that the Ketuvim was starting to take shape, though it lacked a formal title.<sup>6</sup> We also know from references in the four Gospels as well as other books of the New Testament that many of these texts were both commonly known and counted as having some degree of religious authority early in the 1st century CE.

“Many scholars believe that the limits of the Ketuvim as canonized scripture were determined by the Council of Jamnia c. 90 CE. Indeed, *Against Apion*, the writing of Josephus in 95 CE, treated the text of the Hebrew Bible as a closed canon to which “... no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable...”<sup>7</sup> However, we know that for a long time following this date that the divine inspiration of Esther, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes was often under scrutiny.<sup>8</sup>”

[“Ketuvim,” wikipedia.org]

### 2.1.1.2 Greek Terms

When one considers Greek terms for Bible or scripture in the New Testament -- or in Jewish writings in Greek before the beginning of the second Christian century -- it is important to note that such terminology will always have in view the Old Testament at some stage of its development in Judaism. The New Testament as a collection of 27 authoritative documents is not going to come together in any established manner until the fourth Christian century.

Another important issue is how the 24 documents of the Jewish Bible turned into 39 documents in the Christian Old Testament.<sup>28</sup> The shift took place with the Septuagint beginning in the third century BCE.<sup>29</sup> The term Septuagint comes from the Latin *versio septuaginta interpretum*, meaning “translation of the seventy interpreters.” But this Latin title *Septuaginta* did not come into usage until the church father Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD). The existing manuscript tradition of the LXX -- as it is commonly referred to -- contained a translation of the Hebrew Bible along with several related texts into early Koine Greek. Originally created for Greek speaking Jews in the Diaspora, it fell out of favor in Jewish circles completely by the end of the first Christian century because of early Christian use of it almost universally as their Old Testament.<sup>30</sup> The expansion of the 24 Hebrew documents into 39 Greek documents was largely a pragmatic issue necessitated by the use of papyrus scrolls rather than parchments scrolls; these scrolls from papyrus were more limited in their capacity to hold written materials.

Additionally a rearrangement of the listing of this larger number of documents comes out of the LXX tradition. Instead of the threefold division in the Hebrew Old Testament, now from the LXX structure becomes Pentateuch (Gen. - Deut.); History (Joshua - Esther); Wisdom (Psalms - Job); and Prophets (Isaiah - Malachi). In modern translations the Major and Minor Prophets have been reversed in listing from that of the LXX tradition which listed the twelve minor prophets first. The addition of the OT Apocrypha by Roman Catholics and Orthodox traditions alters the sequence beginning with the History section.

Inside the New Testament, the Old Testament -- virtually always meaning the LXX version of it -- is referenced in a variety of ways.<sup>31</sup> The most common term is γραφή. The singular γραφή typically will refer to a scrip-

<sup>28</sup>For the time being we will lay aside the related issue of the inclusion of the OT Apocrypha documents in the LXX which were never included in the Hebrew Bible. These are the ‘extra’ books found in the Roman Catholic and various Orthodox Church versions of the Old Testament.

<sup>29</sup>For a helpful overview discussion see “Septuagint,” wikipedia.org.

“SEPTUAGINT. The most widely accepted designation for a diverse collection of Greek literature encompassing: (1) translations of the contents of the Hebrew Bible; (2) additions to some of its books; and (3) works written originally in Greek (or in some instances in Hebrew) but not included in the Hebrew canon. The word ‘Septuagint,’ (from Lat *septuaginta* = 70; hence the abbreviation LXX) derives from a story that 72 (other ancient sources mention 70 or 75) elders translated the Pentateuch into Greek; the term therefore applied originally only to those five books. That story is now acknowledged to be fictitious, yet the label persists by virtue of the tradition. The precise referent of the term Septuagint in modern discussions, and especially of “the Septuagint” is neither consistent nor clear.” [Melvin K. H. Peters, “Septuagint” In vol. 5, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1093.]

<sup>30</sup>One of the many complex challenges in modern LXX studies is the issue of text sources. Three modern printed text editions of the LXX are widely used today: *Septuaginta, Vetus Testamentum Graecum* (first published in 1931 and extensively updated); Rahlfs, A. 1935. *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (the most widely used critical text today); Brooke, A. E.; McLean, N.; and Thackeray, H. St. J., eds. 1906–1940. *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Text of Codex Vaticanus Supplemented from Other Uncial Manuscripts*. The Rahlfs text is more commonly used because of its extensive critical apparatus comparing readings from now existing ancient manuscript copies.

One must never forget that multiple text traditions of the LXX came into being very soon after the Pentateuch section first appeared in the third century BCE. When different NT writers quote passages in the OT they almost always used the version of the LXX available to each writer. Consequently, the same OT passage may not appear with the same wording when quoted by two or more NT writers, simply because they are using different versions of the LXX. Most modern LXX printed texts depend heavily upon the massive revisions done by Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Hesychius, and Lucian in the second through fourth centuries AD. Additionally Codex Vaticanus in the fourth century AD contains a copy of the LXX. Thus the importance of a ‘critical text’ where quick comparisons among the known manuscripts becomes clear. Most of the continuing research in this field is being carried out by The International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS), the ongoing body dedicated to research on the Septuagint.

<sup>31</sup>For a helpful listing of the OT quotes etc. inside the New Testament see “Septuagint Online: Table of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament, in English translation,” kalvesmaki.com English translations of NT quote (from AV), the LXX (Brenton text), and the Masoretic Hebrew text are provided.

ture passage in the Old Testament, while the plural αἱ γραφαί usually designates collectively all parts of the OT scripture, but the singular can also designate the OT scripture as a whole.<sup>32</sup> Paul uses γράμμα on rare occasions to refer to the written code of the Law.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, specific books of the Old Testament are sometimes referenced using either βιβλίον or βιβλος (= book meaning a scroll): e.g., Gal. 3:10; Heb. 9:19, 10:7; Lk. 3:4; 4:17, 20; 20:42; Mk. 12:26; Acts 1:20; 7:42. On several occasions the Hebrew divisions, especially the Law and the Prophets, will be the way the OT is referenced: Mt. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk. 16:16; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21b; Jhn. 1:45. The mentioning of the first two divisions normally implies the third division of the Writings. Just one place in the NT, Luke 24:44, references all three but with πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς. Of importance also is the formula expression with legal tones created with the passive voice of the verb or the participle from γράφω.<sup>34</sup> The technical tone created signals materials being cited

<sup>32</sup>γραφῆ, ἡς, ἡ (s. γράφω; Trag., Hdt.+) gener. that which is written: 'writing'.

1. a brief piece of writing, *writing* (γ.=piece of writing: Diod S 1, 91, 3 price-list; Maximus Tyr. 16, 1b indictment; GDI 4689, 49 and 58 [Messenia]; PHib 78, 18; 1 Ch 28:19; 1 Macc 14:27; Tat. 38, 1) Hv 2, 2, 1.

2. sacred scripture, in the NT exclusively so

a. ἡ γ. individual scripture passage (4 Macc 18:14; Philo, Rer. Div. Her. 266; Just., D. 65, 2 al.; Mel., P. 1, 3.—S. also Test-Napht 5:8 γραφή ἀγία of a written word of a divine sort outside the Bible) **Mk 12:10; 15:28 v.l.; Lk 4:21; J 13:18; 19:24, 36f; Ac 1:16; 8:35; Ro 11:2; 2 Ti 3:16; Js 2:8, 23; 1 Cl 23:3.**

b. scripture in its entirety

α. the pl. αἱ γραφαί designates collectively all the parts of Scripture: *the scriptures* (Philo, Fug. 4, Spec. Leg. 1, 214 αἱ ἱερὰ γ.; Rer. Div. Her. 106; 159; Jos., C. Ap. 2, 45 τ. τῶν ἱερῶν γραφῶν βίβλοις; Just., D. 68, 8; 137, 3 al.; Did., Gen. 70, 13: θεία γ.) **Mt 21:42; 22:29; 26:54; Mk 12:24; 14:49; Lk 24:27, 32, 45; J 5:39; Ac 17:2, 11; 18:24, 28; Ro 15:4; 2 Pt 3:16;** PtK 2 p. 15, 4; αἱ γ. τῶν προφητῶν the writings of the prophets **Mt 26:56** (cp. αἱ τῶν προφητῶν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων τοῦ Ἰησοῦ γ. Orig. C. Cels. 5, 5, 10). αἱ ἱερὰ γ. 1 Cl 45:2; 53:1 (s. Philo and Joseph. above); γ. ἄγια **Ro 1:2** (Just., D. 55, 3); προφητικαὶ **16:26** (Just., D. 85, 5 γ. προφητικῶν; on the absence of the art. in both Ro passages and **2 Pt 1:20** [β next] s. γράμμα 2c).

β. the sg. as designation of Scripture as a whole (Philo, Mos. 2, 84; EpArist 155; 168; cp. 1 Ch 15:15; 2 Ch 30:5, 18; Just., Mel; ἡ θεία γ. Theoph. Ant. 2, 10 [p. 122, 33]; Did., Gen. 71, 15) **Ac 8:32; J 20:9; 2 Pt 1:20** (s. βα above); εἶπεν ἡ γ. **J 7:38, 42; λέγει Ro 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; Gal 4:30; 1 Ti 5:18; Js 4:5;** 1 Cl 23:5; 34:6; 35:7; 42:5; 2 Cl 2:4; 6:8; 14:1f; B 4:7, 11; 5:4; 6:12; 13:2, also 16:5 in a quot. fr. En 89:56ff (Just., D. 123, 1 al.); περιέχει ἐν γ. 1 Pt 2:6; πεπλήρωται, ἐπληρώθη ἡ γ. **J 17:12;** cp. **19:28 v.l.;** πιστεύειν τῇ γ. **J 2:22;** οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γ. scripture cannot be set aside **10:35.** W. Scripture personified: προἰδοῦσα ἡ γ. scripture foresaw **Gal 3:8.** συνέκλεισεν ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν vs. **22.**—κατὰ τὴν γ. (w. ref. to a contract CPR I, 224, 6 [Dssm., NB 78=BS 112f]; PAmh 43, 13; 2 Ch 30:5; 35:4; 1 Esdr 1:4) **Js 2:8;** κατὰ τὰς γ. (BGU 136, 10 κατὰ γ. w. ref. to the laws) according to (the prophecy of) the holy scriptures **1 Cor 15:3f** (Just., D. 82, 4) ἄτερ γραφῆς without scriptural proof PtK 4 p. 16, 6.—JHänel, D. Schriftbegriff Jesu 1919, 13ff; Harnack, D. AT in d. paul. Briefen u. in d. paul. Gemeinden: SBBerlAk 1928, 124–41; OMichel, Pls u. s. Bibel 1929; HvanCampenhausen, D. Entstehung d. christl. Bibel '68. S. νόμος, end.—'Scripture' in the early Christian period always means the OT, and only after some passage of time was this term used in ref. to the writings of the NT. Quotation of the Gospels as such begins to make its appearance in Justin, but concern for literal accuracy is first to be found in Irenaeus. In general, the authors of our lit. quote the Gospels with as little care for precision as that exhibited e.g. by Maximus Tyr. in his citation of 'the ancients' (KDürr, Philol. Suppl. VIII 1900, 150f). The close acquaintance of Christians with Scripture has its parallels in the familiarity of the Greeks with Homer. Heraclit. Sto. I p. 2 ln. 3ff: ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας a child is trained on Homer and is to be occupied to the end of life with his epics.—DELG s.v. γράφω. M-M. EDNT. TW. Sv.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 206.]

<sup>33</sup>Of the literally correct form of the law **Ro 2:27** (BSchneider, CBQ 15, '53, 163–207, 'Book of the Law' in contrast to the more general referents for γράμματα and γραφή, s. esp. 188–91). Opp. spirit (cp. Pla., Gorg. 484a.—Heraclitus, Ep. 9, 2 opp. γ. ... θεός. Ps.-Archytas [IV B.C.] in Stob., Ecl. 4, 135 ed. Hense, IV p. 82, 21: νόμος ὁ μὲν ἔμψυχος βασιλεύς, ὁ δὲ ἄψυχος γράμμα=the law, if it is alive, is indeed king; but if it is lifeless, it is nothing but a letter.—Romualdus, Stud. Cath. 17, '41, 18–32) **Ro 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6.** [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 205-06.

<sup>34</sup>Esp. freq. is the perf. γέγραπται (abundantly attested as a legal expr.: Dssm., B 109f, NB 77f [BS 112ff, 249f]; Thieme 22. Cp. also 2 Esdr 20:35, 37; Job 42:17a; Jos., Vi. 342) as a formula introducing quotations fr. the OT (cp. Jos., C. Ap. 1, 154) **Mt 4:4, 6f, 10; 21:13; Mk 11:17; 14:27; Lk 4:8; 19:46.** ὡς γέγραπται (SIG 45, 44; Inschr. d. Asklepieion von Kos A, 14 ed. RHerzog, ARW 10, 1907, 401; Just., D. 56, 8; 86, 5 al.) **Mk 7:6.** καθὼς γέγραπται (SIG 736, 44 [92 B.C.]; CPR I, 154, 11; cp. 1 Esdr 3:9; Da 9:13 Theod.; 2 Ch 23:18) **Mk 1:2; Ac 15:15; Ro 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8;** 1 Cl 48:2 al. οὕτως γέγραπται 1 Cl 17:3. καθάπερ γέγραπται (PCauer, Delectus Inscr. 2 1883, 457, 50f [III B.C.]; IPergamon 251, 35 [II B.C.]; oft. in pap, e.g. PRev 29, 9 [258 B.C.] καθάπερ ἐν τ. νόμῳ γέγραπ.); as v.l. in **Ro 3:4; 9:13; 10:15;** and **11:8.** γέγραπται γάρ **12:19; 14:11; 1 Cor 1:19;** 1 Cl 36:3; 39:3; 46:2; 50:4, 6. γεγραμμένον ἐστίν **J 2:17; 6:31, 45; 10:34** (γεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ νόμῳ as 2 Esdr 18:14. Cp. Inschr. d. Asklepieion [s. above])

from a source viewed as authoritative.

## 2.1.2 Creeds and Confessions of Faith

**2.1.2.1 Definitions.** First, what is the difference between a creed and a confession of faith?<sup>35</sup> In content and format not much difference is present. The difference lies between how each is used in an organized group of Christians. As a rule, creeds are official statements of doctrinal belief that church leaders, denominational employees, and church members are required to adhere to as a condition of either employment and/or membership. They are intended to produce essential doctrinal conformity by members of the church group. On the other hand, confessions of faith historically are statements of doctrinal belief drawn up by churches and/or Christian groups primarily to communicate to those outside the group what this church or religious group believes. Adherence by those inside the group is voluntary and not a condition for membership or employment. The integrity of the individual is assumed to lead the person to sever ties with the church or group should he or she come to a point of serious disagreement with the confession of faith statement.

Second, both creeds and confessions are drawn up usually as essays with the supposed biblical foundation being given in scripture references, but without any exegesis of the biblical text. These differ from a catechism which is normally in the format of questions and answers, which may or may not give scripture references.

**2.1.2.2 Statements about the Bible.** Interestingly, the early church councils from which the foundations of creedal faith emerge do not speak of the Bible. This in large part because it was not a point of controversy. The doctrinal statements emerging from these councils through the middle ages were targeting specific doctrinal controversies, usually connected to some aspect of understanding the nature of Christ's being and work.

The first major council in western Christianity to include statements regarding the Bible was the Council of Trent convened in numerous sessions between 1545 and 1563 by different popes. The referencing of the Bible focused on three topics: "The decree was passed (fourth session) confirming that the deuterocanonical books were on a par with the other books of the canon (against Luther's placement of these books in the Apocrypha of his edition) and coordinating church tradition with the Scriptures as a rule of faith. The Vulgate translation was affirmed to be authoritative for the text of Scripture."<sup>36</sup> The first two points were the controversial ones, with which the Protestant reformers took strong exception. The OT Apocrypha was rejected as authoritative scripture by Luther, Calvin, and the other reformers of the 1500s. This largely on the grounds that these documents had never been a part of the Hebrew scriptures, and also because some objectionable RC doctrines such a purgatory were based on these writings.

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In. 9 τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς νόμοις; Just., D. 8, 4 τὰ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γ.; 57, 3 γ. ἐστίν, so also w. acc. and inf. 79, 2); 12:14. ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος (cp. 4 Km 23:24; 1 Ch 29:29; 2 Ch 16:11) 1 Cor 15:54. κατὰ τὸ γ. (SIG2 438, 13 and 84; SIG 955, 22f; 1016, 6 al.; PEleph 2, 13 [285 B.C.]; 2 Esdr 3:4; 18:15; cp. 1 Esdr 1:12; Bar 2:2) **2 Cor 4:13**. ἐγράφη **Ro 4:23**; **1 Cor 9:10**; **10:11**. W. a specif. ref. (4 Km 14:6; 2 Ch 23:18; 1 Esdr 1:12; Da 9:13; Just., D. 34, 6 and 8; 79, 4. Cp. Diod S 9, 30 ὡς γέγραπται ἐν τῷ περὶ διαδοχῆς βασιλέων=in the book of the succession of kings; Philod., Περὶ εὐσεβ. p. 61 Gomp. ἐν τοῖς ἀναφερομένοις εἰς Μουσαῖον γέγραπται; Ael. Aristid. 33 p. 618 D.: γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ [a peace treaty]; 34 p. 654): in the book of Psalms **Ac 1:20**; in the second Psalm **13:33**; in the book of the prophets **7:42**; in Isaiah **Mk 1:2** (cp. 2 Ch 32:32); in the Decalogue B 15:1. Also of non-canonical apocalypses: (Diod S 34+35, Fgm. 33, 2 ἐν τοῖς τῆς Σιβύλλης χρησιμοῖς εὐρέθῃ γεγραμμένον ὅτι κτλ.): Eldad and Modat Hv 2, 3, 4; Enoch B 4:3, cp. 16:6. Of dominical words 4:14; 14:6 (JFitzmyer, NTS 7, '60/61, 297–333). Pilate's official pronouncement bears the mark of administrative parlance: ὃ γέγραφα, γέγραφα what I have written I have written, i.e., it will not be changed (on the pf. cp. the expr. taken over fr. the Romans κέκρικα=I have decided once for all Epict. 2, 15, 5. Pilate's action means that Caesar has spoken, Dig. Just. 1, 19, 1. For the repetition of the same form of the pf. s. Gen 43:14; for the repetition of the word γ. see Aeschryon Iamb. [IV B.C.] 6, 9 [Diehl3, '52, fasc. 3, p. 122] ἔγραψεν ὅσσ' ἔγραψ'.) **J 19:22**. Cp. the solemn tone **Rv 5:1** (s. Ezk 2:10) βιβλίον γεγραμμένον ἔσωθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν a scroll covered w. writing inside and on the back.—W. acc. of pers. or thing (Bar 1:1; Tob 7:13 S; 1 Esdr 2:25 al.): write about someone or someth. ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς about whom Moses wrote **J 1:45**; of righteousness **Ro 10:5**. Also περί τινος (Diod S 2, 36, 3; 14, 96, 3; 1 Esdr 2:17; Esth 1:1p; 1 Macc 11:31) **Mt 26:24**; **Mk 14:21**; **J 5:46**; **Ac 13:29** (on ἐτέλεσαν τὰ γεγραμμένα cp. Diod S 14, 55, 1 and Just., D. 8, 4 ποιεῖν τὰ γεγρ.). ἐπί τινα w. reference to someone **Mk 9:12f**; ἐπί τι **J 12:16**. τὰ γεγραμμένα διὰ τ. προφητῶν τῷ υἱῷ τ. ἀνθρώπου **Lk 18:31** (on διὰ τ. π. cp. Esth 8:10 [= ὑπὸ 9:1]; the dat. designating the pers. written about is made easier to understand by ref. to 3 Macc 6:41; 1 Esdr 4:47). W. ὅτι foll. (cp. X., An. 2, 3, 1; Just., D. 49, 5 al.) **Mk 12:19**; **Ro 4:23**; **1 Cor 9:10**."

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 207.

<sup>35</sup>For an extensive listing of both see "Creeds of Christendom," at [creeds.net](http://creeds.net). Another helpful resource is "Creeds and Confessions," at [BibleStudyTools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/): <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/creeds-confessions/>

<sup>36</sup>"Concil of Trent: List of Decrees," [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)

Particularly Luther rejected the elevation of church tradition as the authoritative standard by which scripture was to be interpreted. He countered with the principle *sola scriptura*, the scriptures alone are the exclusive basis for belief and practice for Christians.

In the English speaking world, the Westminster Confession drawn up in 1646 for the Church of England stands as a fountain head for many individualized confessions among different Protestant groups including Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists.<sup>37</sup> Among Baptists, the Second London Baptist Confession in 1689 emerged.<sup>38</sup> Various Baptist groups and churches over the subsequent three hundred plus years have adopted

<sup>37</sup>“CHAPTER 1 - Of the Holy Scripture 1. ALTHOUGH the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as to leave men inexcusable, yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary unto salvation; therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased. 2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:” Following this is a listing of the books of the Old and New Testaments as found in Protestant Bibles today. [“The Westminster Confession,” BibleStudyTools.com]

38

## CHAPTER 1 OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Paragraph 1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience,<sup>1</sup> although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and His will which is necessary unto salvation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in diversified manners to reveal Himself, and to declare (that) His will unto His church;<sup>3</sup> and afterward for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan, and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scriptures to be most necessary, those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now completed.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Isa. 8:20; Luke 16:29,31; Eph. 2:20

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 1:19-21, 2:14,15; Psalm 19:1-3

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 1:1

<sup>4</sup> Prov. 22:19-21; Rom. 15:4; 2 Pet. 1:19,20

Paragraph 2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these: [following is a listing of the standard Old and New Testament books]

All of which are given by the inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. 3:16

Paragraph 3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon or rule of the Scripture, and, therefore, are of no authority to the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Luke 24:27,44; Rom. 3:2

Paragraph 4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 5:9

Paragraph 5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church of God to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scriptures; and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, and the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, and many other incomparable excellencies, and entire perfections thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20,27

Paragraph 6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit, or traditions of men.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word,<sup>10</sup> and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Gal. 1:8,9

<sup>10</sup> John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9-12

<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. 11:13,14; 1 Cor. 14:26,40

Paragraph 7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all;<sup>12</sup> yet those things which are nec-

confessions of faith, and most have included a section dealing with the Bible. Since our church is a member of the International Baptist Convention, we should be aware of the stance on the Bible taken by the convention, to which all member churches are expected to subscribe. In the “Summary of Basic Beliefs” adopted in 2008 by the convention in annual session, the following statement is set forth: “We believe... that the Bible is inspired by God and is the standard against which all Christian belief and behavior is measured.” In the constitution of the IBC Baptist Church of San José in the By Laws, Section 1: Doctrinal Statements of the IBC, the following is set forth in article I as the official confession of faith for the church and its membership:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17-19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11, 89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 6:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

The stance of our church is reflective of the Protestant heritage and of Baptist heritage over the past four hundred plus years of Baptist existence. The standard Protestant Bible comprises the sacred scriptures of the church. The Bible is regarded as sacred scriptures containing the revealed will of God for humanity.

### **2.1.3 Christian scriptures in comparison to**

One very important way to understand a Christian view of the Bible is to compare it to the views of other religious groups to whatever writings they regard as sacred writings or sacred scripture. Out of this should come a sharpened focus on Christian perspectives about the Bible. The overview below is by no means exhaustive. Instead, it is summary in nature and intended as representative rather than comprehensive.

Attitudes toward sacred texts will differ greatly and range from such texts being kept secret from all but a select group of ‘scholars’ inside the religion to such texts being widely distributed both in original language and translation forms.<sup>39</sup> A few religions such as Islam regard only the original language text as sacred, while transla-

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essary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of ordinary means, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 2 Pet. 3:16

<sup>13</sup> Ps. 19:7; Psalm 119:130

Paragraph 8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old),<sup>14</sup> and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them.<sup>15</sup> But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have a right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read,<sup>16</sup> and search them,<sup>17</sup> therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come,<sup>18</sup> that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship Him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Rom. 3:2

<sup>15</sup> Isa. 8:20

<sup>16</sup> Acts 15:15

<sup>17</sup> John 5:39

<sup>18</sup> 1 Cor. 14:6,9,11,12,24,28

<sup>19</sup> Col. 3:16

Paragraph 9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which are not many, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16

Paragraph 10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit, into which Scripture so delivered, our faith is finally resolved.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 22:29, 31, 32; Eph. 2:20; Acts 28:23

[“The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 with Scripture Proofs,” reformed.org]

<sup>39</sup>“Attitudes to sacred texts differ. Some religions make written texts widely and freely available, while others hold that sacred secrets must remain hidden from all but the loyal and the initiate. Most religions promulgate policies defining the limits of the sacred

tions are not so considered.

### 2.1.3.1 Judaism

In modern Judaism some diversity of viewpoint exists across the different denominational groups of Judaism. But in general the following are regarded as sacred texts: The Tanakh (Hebrew scriptures) and the Talmud (the accumulated rabbinic interpretations of the Tanakh).<sup>40</sup> Inside the Tanakh, the most authoritative section is the Torah or Law (תּוֹרָה),<sup>41</sup> then the Prophets (*Nevi'im*, נְבִיאִים *Nəḇî'im*), and lastly the Writings (*Ketuvim* or *Kəṭûḇîm*, כְּתוּבִים). But the scribal interpretative traditions preserved in the Talmud (תַּלְמוּד) are also authoritative and regarded as divinely inspired sacred writings.<sup>42</sup> The idea of a canon of Hebrew scriptures is very complex, especially when the definition of 'canon' becomes a subset of 'authoritative' writings.<sup>43</sup> Canon implies an official list of authoritative writings regarded as sacred scripture. In the past the Council of Jamnia in the 90s of the first Christian century have been viewed as the beginning process of official canonization of the sacred writings of the Jews, but this is increasingly being called into serious question by Jewish and Christian scholars.

### 2.1.3.2 Islam

The central writing among the Islamic holy books is the Qur'an.<sup>44</sup> It is the most important of the four main documents: the Tawrat was given to Moses as the correct version of early history; the Zabur, given to David, texts and controlling or forbidding changes and additions. Some religions view their sacred texts as the "Word of God", often contending that the texts are inspired by God and as such not open to alteration. Translations of texts may receive official blessing, but an original sacred language often has de facto, absolute or exclusive paramountcy. Some religions make texts available free or in subsidized form; others require payment and the strict observance of copyright." ["Religious texts," wikipedia.org]

<sup>40</sup>“Rabbinic literature, in its broadest sense, can mean the entire spectrum of rabbinic writings throughout Jewish history. However, the term often refers specifically to literature from the Talmudic era, as opposed to medieval and modern rabbinic writing, and thus corresponds with the Hebrew term *Sifrut Hazal* (ספרות הז"ל; 'Literature [of our] sages [of] blessed memory,' where *Hazal* normally refers only to the sages of the Talmudic era). This more specific sense of 'Rabbinic literature' — referring to the Talmudim, Midrash (Hebrew: מדרש);, and related writings, but hardly ever to later texts — is how the term is generally intended when used in contemporary academic writing. On the other hand, the terms *meforshim* and *parshanim* (commentaries/commentators) almost always refer to later, post-Talmudic writers of Rabbinic glosses on Biblical and Talmudic texts." ["Rabbinic literature," wikipedia.org]

<sup>41</sup>One should note further distinctions in the term:

“In rabbinic literature the word Torah denotes both these five books, *Torah Shebichtav* (תורה שבכתב, “Torah that is written”), and an Oral Torah, *Torah Shebe'al Peh* (תורה שבעל פה, “Torah that is spoken”). The Oral Torah consists of the traditional interpretations and amplifications handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation and now embodied in the Talmud (תַּלְמוּד) and Midrash (מדרש).<sup>2</sup> The words of the Torah are written on a scroll by a sofer on parchment in Hebrew. A Torah portion must be read publicly at least once every three days, in the halachically prescribed tune, in the presence of a congregation,<sup>3</sup> which is the basis for Jewish communal life.

“According to religious tradition, all of the laws found in the Torah, both written and oral, were given by God to Moses, some of them at Mount Sinai and others at the Tabernacle, and all the teachings were written down by Moses, which resulted in the Torah we have today. According to a Midrash, the Torah was created prior to the creation of the world, and was used as the blueprint for Creation.<sup>4</sup> Most modern biblical scholars believe that the written books were a product of the Babylonian exilic period (c. 600 BCE) and that it was completed by the Persian period (c. 400 BCE).” ["Torah," Wikipedia.org]

<sup>42</sup>For a helpful overview see “Talmud,” wikipedia.org.

<sup>43</sup>“Rabbinic Judaism (Hebrew: יהדות רבנית) recognizes the twenty-four books of the Masoretic Text, commonly called the Tanakh (Hebrew: תנ"ך) or “Hebrew Bible.” Evidence suggests that the process of canonization occurred between 200 BC and 200 AD, indeed a popular position is that the Torah was canonized c. 400 BC, the Prophets c. 200 BC, and the Writings c. 100 AD<sup>5</sup> perhaps at a hypothetical Council of Jamnia — however, this position is increasingly criticised by modern scholars.” ["Biblical Canon," wikipedia.org]

<sup>44</sup>“Islamic holy books are the texts which Muslims believe were authored by God to various Prophets of Islam throughout the history of mankind. All these books, in Muslim belief, promulgated the code and laws of Islam. Muslims believe the Qur'an, the final holy scripture, was sent because all the previous holy books had been either corrupted or lost.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Islam speaks of respecting all the previous scriptures in their original forms. Belief in all the revealed books is an article of faith in Islam and a Muslim must believe that all the original scriptures of the prophets of Abrahamic monotheism were revealed by Allah. The four books are the Tawrat, Zabur, Injil and Quran. The Torat was sent to Musa (Moses), the Zabur was sent to Dawood (David), the Injil was sent to Isa (Jesus) and the Qur'an was sent to Muhammad.” ["Islamic holy books," wikipedia.org]

contains many of the Psalms; the Injil given to Jesus is a lost document preserved only in fragments in the four Christian gospels; the Qur'an was given to Muhammad. The Qur'an is composed of 114 chapters of verses.<sup>45</sup> The tradition is that Allah gave his words verbatim to Muhammad through the angel Jibril (=Gabriel). As the exact words of Allah they are to be regarded as completely holy and sacred. The term quran is understood to mean 'to recite' and thus as so stated in the document itself: "It is for Us to collect it and to recite it (qur'ānahu)" (Qur'an 75:17). Consequently the primary responsibility of devout Muslims is to memorize the original Arabic text and to recite it back to Allah in worship. Thus translations of the Qur'an into other languages are not regarded as sacred scripture, and thus not authoritative. In Islamic tradition the Qur'an contains the will of Allah for all of humanity and this must be understood and taught -- and enforced -- by the religious teachers of Islam. The main body of interpretive explanations of the Qur'an is the Tafsir which is regarded as authoritative interpretation of the Qur'an.

Immediately one notices significant differences of perspective by Muslims toward the Qur'an and by Christians toward the Bible. These focus on origin, role of original languages and translations, and method of understanding the contents.

### 2.1.3.3 Hinduism

Hindu religious writings distinguish between what is understood to be revealed (Shruti) and what is to be remembered (Smṛti). The first category is considered as sacred writings while those in the second category may or maybe be considered as sacred.<sup>46</sup> Consequently the Vedas come under the first category and represent the oldest and most sacred texts of Hinduism written in Vedic Sanskrit. These are grouped into four canonical collections of metrical material known as Saṃhitās. The Bhagavad Gita is mostly considered as Shruti and thus sacred as a 700 verse conversation between prince Arjuna and Krishna. The Upanishads are a collection of philosophical texts forming the theoretical foundations of Hinduism. Some of the very earliest are somewhat considered as Śruti literature although generally they are regarded more as Smṛti writings. The category of Yoga is one of the groupings of the Upanishads.

The Shruti or Śruti tradition for sacred writings among Hindus is built off the tradition of being writings that are "traditionally believed to be a direct revelation of the 'cosmic sound of truth' heard by ancient Rishis who then translated what was heard into something understandable by humans."<sup>47</sup> The strongest emphasis on divine origin of these writings is found in the Mimamsa tradition of Hinduism. Access to this category of sacred texts in the Sanskrit is granted only to trained monks<sup>48</sup> whose responsibility it is to teach Hindus the wisdom contained in these writings.

The mystical, pantheistic and polytheistic nature of Hinduism creates a mindset utterly different from Christianity. Consequently the origins of sacred writings are perceived very differently. The religion itself is a core philosophy of living with a thin covering of religion across the surface. Thus sacred writings are perceived more as sources of ancient wisdom to profit from than as expressions of divinely established laws that govern the world.

### 2.1.3.4 Buddhism

Often the sacred texts of Buddhism are falsely categorized by western scholars into scripture, canonical

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<sup>45</sup>“The Quran is composed of verses (Ayat) that make up 114 chapters (*suras*) of unequal length which are classified either as Meccan (مكيّات) or Medinan (مدينيّات) depending upon the place and time of their claimed revelation.<sup>7</sup> Muslims believe the Quran to be verbally revealed through angel Jibrīl (Gabriel) from God to Muhammad gradually over a period of approximately 23 years beginning on 22 December 609 CE,<sup>8</sup> when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632 CE, the year of his death.<sup>1 9 10</sup>” [“Quran,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>46</sup>“Hindu literature can be divided into two categories: Shruti—that which is revealed and Smṛiti—that which is remembered. The Vedas constituting the former category are considered sacred scripture. Later texts like the various shastras and the itihāsas form Smṛti. Holding an ambiguous position between the Upanishads of the Vedas and the epics, the Bhagavad Gita is considered to be revered scripture by most Hindus today. All Shruti scriptures are composed in Sanskrit. Much of the morphology inherent in the learning of Sanskrit is inextricably linked to study of the Vedas and other early texts.” [“Hindu texts,” wikipedia.org]

For a complete list of Hindu scriptures see “List of Hindu scriptures,” wikipedia.org.

<sup>47</sup>“Śruti,” wikipedia.org

<sup>48</sup>Monks are trained in one of the **Schools of Vedānta** which have various branches and sub-traditions.

scripture etc. The religious writings of Buddhism are correctly grouped between *Buddhavacana* and other texts.<sup>49</sup> Thus the sacred texts of Buddhavacana assume to be the historical words of Buddha. The problem is the different Buddhist traditions have different sets of these sacred texts: the Pali Canon in Theravada Buddhism, the Taishō Tripiṭaka of the Chinese Buddhist canon in East Asia; and the Kangyur of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>50</sup> The label sacred writings does not depend on a concept of divine inspiration; rather it is based on established connection to Buddha as the founder of the religious movement. One can sense clearly that the absence of deity as God in Christian tradition has a profound shape on the understanding of the sacred writings of the religion.

### 2.1.3.5 Christian sects

Most Christian sects (or cults in the older terminology) will differ from historic Christianity about sacred writings usually at the point of what is considered sacred writings or scripture. Usually the difference originates in the issue of a closed canon of scripture or an open canon of scripture. Although it has some affinities with the Roman Catholic *regula fidei*, Rule of Faith, where the magisterium of official teaching of the RC church becomes the exclusive standard by which scripture must be interpreted and understood by Catholics. But there are significant differences and usually a quite different rationale for justifying the elevation of other writings to the status of authoritative sacred writings.

Many times cult groups will take similar stances toward scriptures as to Christians. For example, Mormons tend to elevate the King James Version of the Bible to central status as scripture. But in the belief of an 'open canon,' divine revelation did not end with the apostles, added to their list of sacred scriptures are the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.<sup>51</sup> Additionally their so-called 'apostles' of the church are capable of uttering the words of God in their tradition. Consequently from these sources come most of the strange beliefs that contradict historic Christian understanding of the Bible, and thus push them into a non-Christian religious sect.

Jehovah's Witnesses differ from Mormons in that they accept the Christian Bible, preferably their translation of it called the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, as the final authority of sacred scriptures. But the catch is that the Governing Body, functioning in a 'theocratic governmental' system, determines the correct interpretation of the scripture for the membership. This group of seven to fifteen individuals based in Brooklyn,

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<sup>49</sup>“Buddhist texts can be categorized in a number of ways. The Western terms ‘scripture’ and ‘canonical’ are applied to Buddhism in inconsistent ways by Western scholars: for example, one authority<sup>1</sup> refers to ‘scriptures and other canonical texts’, while another<sup>2</sup> says that scriptures can be categorized into canonical, commentarial and pseudo-canonical. A rather more definite division is that between Buddhavacana (the Word of the Buddha) and other texts.” [“Buddhist texts,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>50</sup>“According to Donald Lopez, criteria for determining what should be considered *buddhavacana* was developed at an early stage, and that the early formulations do not suggest that the Dharma is limited to what was spoken by the historical Buddha.<sup>3</sup> The *Mahāsāṃghika* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* considered both the Buddha’s discourses, as well those of the Buddha’s disciples, to be *buddhavacana*.<sup>4</sup> A number of different beings such as buddhas, disciples of the buddha, ṛṣis, and devas were considered capable to transmitting *buddhavacana*.<sup>5</sup> The content of such a discourse was then to be collated with the *sūtras*, compared with the *Vinaya*, and evaluated against the nature of the *Dharma*.<sup>6,7</sup> These texts may then be certified as true buddhavacana by a buddha, a saṃgha, a small group of elders, or one knowledgeable elder.” [“Buddhist texts,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>51</sup>The standard works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) consists of several books that constitute its open scriptural canon, and include the following:

- The King James Version of the Bible<sup>51</sup> — without the Apocrypha
- The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ
- The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- The Pearl of Great Price

The Pearl of Great Price contains five sections: “Selections from the Book of Moses”, “The Book of Abraham”, “Joseph Smith—Matthew”, “Joseph Smith—History” and “The Articles of Faith”. The Book of Moses and Joseph Smith—Matthew are portions of the Book of Genesis and the Book of Matthew (respectively) from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

The manuscripts of the unfinished Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST) state that “the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture.”[52] However, it is still printed in every version of the King James Bible published by the church.

The Standard Works are printed and distributed by the LDS church in a single binding called a “Quadruple Combination” or a set of two books, with the Bible in one binding, and the other three books in a second binding called a “Triple Combination”. Current editions of the Standard Works include a bible dictionary, photographs, maps and gazetteer, topical guide, index, footnotes, cross references, excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible and other study aids.” [“Biblical canon,” wikipedia.org]

New York, supposedly possess special enlightenment enabling them to derive the official interpretation of scripture which is then set forth in their Watch Tower magazine. Consequently this publication assumes a status comparable to scripture as the source of proper doctrinal understanding for their members. It is their denial of the trinity and many other historic Christian beliefs that define them as a religious, non-Christian sect.

In regard to its sacred writings, Christianity stands in a unique position among major religions of the world. The origin of these writings are understood to ultimately go back to the God of this universe. But in communicating to us human beings He did not resort to some kind of magical sorcery. No golden plates! No special trip of an angel to some man! Over a long period of time God placed convictions in the hearts of a wide number of people that provided directions and guidance for them to put into human words the ideas of God. He worked through two very different cultures and three different languages in order to accomplish this. Thus in the Christian Bible we encounter the ideas of God written in human words. Because God's ideas are the bottom line rather than human words, the Christian Bible remains Bible and sacred scripture when being translated into a whole host of different languages. The interpretation of these human words in the native language of the Christian reader then must take into account the historical setting of the original writing along with the literary manner of communicating ideas current at the time of writing. And both these aspects in the world of the Christian reader also play a role in the correct grasping of the divine ideas expressed through the human words. In 1980 the British professor Anthony Thiselton published *The Two Horizons. New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description*. Its loud call to biblical interpreters was to pay equally close attention to the world of the Bible reader as we pay to the world of the Bible writer.<sup>52</sup> Grasping of the ideas expressed in scripture takes place correctly only when the two horizons of then and now meet in a way to create sense and understanding. His point was not a new one among modern biblical scholars but it was a reminder that biblical hermeneutics must remain a balanced process ultimately leading to religious understanding of a religious text -- something often neglected or forgotten in much of the twentieth century. Reading the Bible is not satisfying one's curiosity about the ancient past. Nor is it ever to be the use of an ancient book to justify preconceived notions about religion today.

Learning to analyze the first horizon of the past world of the biblical writers is our main objective in this study. But a secondary objective is to learn much more about your own world as a Bible reader. We will not attempt the detailed philosophically structured analysis that Thiselton proposed, but hopefully by focusing in on how to understand the ancient world you will become more sensitive to the world around you and how it grasps meaning.

## 2.2 Idea of Inspiration

When the term inspiration comes into the discussion regarding sacred writings, the term moves from the popular definition of "the quality or state of being inspired" to a more technical definition: "a divine influence or action on a person believed to qualify him or her to receive and communicate sacred revelation."<sup>53</sup> The verb 'inspire' first surfaces in the fourteenth century from the "Middle English *enspire*, from Old French *inspirer*, from Latin *inspirare* 'breathe or blow into'" (COED). The key picture here regarding inspiration and scripture is the idea of 'breathing into.' This becomes a major barrier in understanding how God is connected to the Bible.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.2.1 Biblical Terminology

Contra the Vulgate's *divinitus inspirata* to translate θεόπνευστος in 2 Tim. 3:16, as though the Scripture was in-spired, the Greek term underscores the out-breathing, exhaling. God did not breathe his word into the minds of the human authors. Rather, that which they wrote was the **ex**-pression of God. The aspect of divine

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<sup>52</sup>For a helpful critique in book review format see Craig G. Bartholomew, "Three Horizons: Hermeneutics from the Other End -- An Evaluation of Anthony Thiselton's Hermeneutic Proposals," at biblestudies.org.uk. It is somewhat technical but still is useful.

<sup>53</sup>Quotes taken from Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary online: "Inspiration," merriam-webster.com.

The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* adds to this helpful insight. To inspire is "fill with the urge or ability to do or feel something." And inspiration at the popular meaning is "the process or quality of being inspired: • a person or thing that inspires or • the divine influence supposed to have led to the writing of the Bible." [Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)]

<sup>54</sup>For a more detailed examination of these concepts see two articles I wrote for the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Garland Press): "Revelation" in 1987 and "Inspiration" in 1996. What I am presenting here is a summation of those two articles with additional insights acquired over the past two decades. Also see "Published Articles and Book Chapters," at cranfordville.com.

inspiration consistently through the Old and New Testaments focuses attention on the servant of the Lord orally speaking God's ideas. Inspiration is never attached to the writing of the documents in the biblical era; only in subsequent times was this done.

### 2.2.1.1 Hebrew Terminology

The three Hebrew words somewhat related to the English word 'inspire' all focus on the popular idea of the English word to generate an emotion in another person, mostly fear or terror. The word נָתַן, *ntn*, means to give but is translated 'to inspire' by the NRSV in Exodus 35:34.<sup>55</sup> The language here is that God filled Bezalel 'with his spirit' and this gave Bezalel exceptional skills to design and build things, along with the ability to teach others this skill. In Psalm 76:12, יָרָא, *yārē*, meaning to fear, is translated by the NRSV as 'inspire fear': "who cuts off the spirit of princes, who *inspires fear* in the kings of the earth." Similarly, in Isaiah 47:12 the NRSV translates אָרַשׁ, *'āraṣ*, meaning to be terrified as 'inspire terror' with the taunting words of Isaiah to the sinful nation: "Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you *may inspire terror*." None of these words connect to the idea of the inspiration of the Bible.

The expression "Thus says the Lord..." with some 400 instances connects to the idea of inspiration but when the prophet is orally delivering the message of God to the Israelite people. Jeremiah 1:1-10 is representative and illustrative.<sup>56</sup> The first three verses constitute a standard preface to a prophetic book in the OT.<sup>57</sup> Verse nine is particularly instructive: "Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth'." The book is introduced as the words of the prophet that have been written

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<sup>55</sup>Exod. 35:30-35. 30 Then Moses said to the Israelites: See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; 31 he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, 32 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 33 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. 34 And *he has inspired him to teach*, both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. 35 He has filled them with skill to do every kind of work done by an artisan or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen, or by a weaver — by any sort of artisan or skilled designer.

<sup>56</sup>Jeremiah 1:1-10. 1 *The words of Jeremiah* son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, 2 to whom *the word of the Lord* came in the days of King Josiah son of Amon of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. 4 Now *the word of the Lord came to me saying*, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." 6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." 7 But *the Lord said to me*, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord." 9 *Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth.* 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

<sup>57</sup>"The opening three verses of the Book of Jeremiah may be entitled loosely a preface. With respect to modern conventions in the production of books, they fall somewhere between the title page and the preface, being longer than the title page (though incorporating the title) and shorter than many modern prefaces.

"Within the biblical prophetic books, there are certain common elements in all such prefaces; there are degrees of variation between them, however, and they are not structured rigidly but adapt the general framework to the particular character of the book. In general terms, the four following elements may be present in a preface to a prophetic book: (i) the specification that it contains a word or vision from the Lord (thereby defining the substance as prophecy); (ii) the name of the person or prophet through whom the word was delivered; (iii) the time and place at which the word was given, or the period during which the prophet ministered; and (iv) the subject or theme of the prophetic word. Of these four points, the first two are common to all the prophetic books, though they may occur with more or less specific detail (possibly the only exception being Malachi, which may provide the title, not the name, of the prophet). The occurrence of the latter two elements, namely chronology and subject matter, varies considerably from one prophetic book to another. The preface to Jeremiah contains three of the four conventional elements. (i) The book is entitled 'the Words of Jeremiah' (1:1), though it is specified that it was the Lord's word which came to him (1:2). (ii) The person through whom the word was delivered is specified in more detail than is the case with some prophetic books; we are provided with his name, his father's name and profession, and the place in which his family lived. (iii) The historical period is specified from three perspectives, namely the regnal year in which the prophetic ministry began (1:2), the reigns of the kings through which it continued, and the approximate close of the prophetic ministry (1:3). (iv) No specific information is provided as to the subject matter of the divine word, as is done in some other prophetic prefaces (e.g., Isa 1:1; Amos 1:1)."

[Peter C. Craigie, vol. 26, *Jeremiah 1–25*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1-2.]

down,<sup>58</sup> but the inspiration aspect comes with the speaking of the prophet.<sup>59</sup> God with His hand put His words into the mouth of the prophet who initially felt incapable of speaking in behalf of God.

In delivering the Torah to Moses, the biblical text stresses the oral communication of God directly to Moses: “Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites:...” (Exod. 19:3). The giving of the Decalogue by God to Moses is depicted in Exod. 20:1 as “Then God spoke all these words:...” Later Exod. 24:3-4a describes: “3 Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ 4 And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord.” Then after worshiping at an altar set up verse seven asserts: “Then he took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient’.” The move from orally delivered words to written words being read to the people assumes that Moses carefully recorded what God had spoken to him earlier and that he delivered orally to them beforehand as well. Now the reading of the written words took place in a formal gathering of the people to which the people officially pledged to obey.

At the end of the conversations between God and Moses on the mountain, Exod. 31:18 declares: “When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.” These two stone tablets contained only the Decalogue, that is, the Ten Words of God chiseled on stone by God Himself. Exod 32:15-16 further describes these stones: “15 Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the covenant in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, written on the front and on the back. 16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.” Nothing is stated directly but the assumption is that God wrote in Hebrew rather than in some mystical heavenly language. When Moses saw the iniquity of the people at the base of Mt. Sinai, verse 19 says, “Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.” Later the primary manner of God communicating with Moses is stated as “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” (Exod. 33:11).

After a spiritual renewal of Moses, new tablets were prepared only differently this time (Exod 34:1-7):

1 The Lord said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you broke. 2 Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to me, on the top of the mountain. 3 No one shall come up with you, and do not let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; and do not let flocks or herds graze in front of that mountain.” 4 So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the former ones; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tablets of stone. 5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, “The Lord.” 6 The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Then in vv. 27-28, Moses is instructed:

27 The Lord said to Moses: Write these words; in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28 He was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

The two tablets again contained only the Decalogue, but it signified the entire legal code that had been orally spoken to Moses by God. These were stone tablets like the first set, and the permanence symbolized by being written on stone underscored the more important factor of the Law of God given by God directly to Moses orally

<sup>58</sup>Interestingly the Hebrew דְבַר־יְהוָה, words of Jeremiah, are rendered τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ ὃ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ Ἰερεμίαν, the orally spoken word of God which was given to Jeremiah, in the LXX. The τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ here stands in contrast to λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, word of God, in verse two which renders דְבַר־יְהוָה. The Hebrew shifts from the plural in verse one to the singular in verse two, in order to distinguish the written words of Jeremiah from the message of God given to the prophet to deliver. The LXX picks up on this while emphasizing that ultimately these words or word comes from God to the prophet who delivered them orally to the prophet.

<sup>59</sup>“The narrative then states that the Lord stretched out his hand and touched Jeremiah’s mouth; although up to this point the call narrative has been presented strictly as dialogue, these words may indicate a visionary quality to the experience of vocation. In Isaiah’s visionary experience of vocation, his lips were touched with a burning coal as a symbol of cleansing (Isa 6:6-7). In this context, however, the divine touch does not symbolize cleansing but rather the imparting of the divine word: “Look, I have put my words in your mouth” (v 9). As Ezekiel, in his visionary experience, ate the scroll (3:1-3) and thus made the divine word a part of his very being, so too the divine word becomes a part of Jeremiah’s being. This divine act, the implanting of the prophetic word, renders useless Jeremiah’s claimed incapacity to speak.” [Peter C. Craigie, vol. 26, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 11.]

and then orally delivered to the people. Over time the details would be recorded on leather parchment in scroll form and would include the three separate legal code systems contained in Exodus through Deuteronomy.

Inspiration, that is, the nearest idea to this, *God said*, (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה) centers not on the writing process but on the oral speech aspect. The Hebrew verb אמר stresses simple acts of speaking in the sense of making something known with special emphasis on throwing light on something so that it becomes visible.

### 2.2.1.2 Hebrew Concepts

What we notice in the way the Torah was delivered by God to Moses is also described regarding the prophets in the example of Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch. Jeremiah 36 is the only glimpse into the process of moving from the orally spoken words of the prophet to the written record of those words. Here Jeremiah instructs Baruch to write down on a scroll all of the orally delivered prophecies given to Jeremiah from the Lord (vv 1-2). What Baruch wrote came through dictation from Jeremiah (v. 4). Once this project was done, Baruch was instructed to read these written words in the temple to the people, since the prophet was no longer permitted to attend the temple (vv. 5-7). This Baruch did (vv. 8-13), and the high government officials requested a reading as well (vv. 14-20). Baruch left the scroll with them and went into hiding at their advice. Jehoiakim the king when the scroll was read to him systematically shredded the scroll and burnt it (vv. 21-26). Subsequently, Jeremiah and Baruch now in hiding, were instructed by God to prepare a second scroll, which they did (vv. 27-32). This scroll contained “many similar words” in addition to those recorded on the first scroll. One would assume from v. 2 that it contained much of what is recorded in the book of Jeremiah: “all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and Judah and all the nations, from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiah until today.” Since this event took place well in advance of Jeremiah’s death and final ministry, it would not contain all that is in the biblical document.

From this quick survey hopefully it becomes clear that later concepts of inspiration of the written records of the documents of the Old Testament are not found at all inside the biblical text. The spokesmen of God from Moses on through the end of the Old Testament were focused on orally delivering to God’s people the message that God had delivered to them in direct conversation, dreams, visions etc. Any later attaching a concept of inspiration to the writers -- almost all are anonymous simply because they are not named as writers of any document in the biblical texts -- represents a huge assumption that is clearly out of character with the few glimpses of the writing process described inside the Old Testament. The closest expression of accuracy of a written record of God’s word comes when the king’s officials quizzed Baruch about the origin of the scroll:

17 Then they questioned Baruch, “Tell us now, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?” 18 Baruch answered them, “He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the scroll.”

But their concern was focused solely on these being Jeremiah’s words rather than God’s words. Whether or not God had anything to do with the contents of the scroll was beside the point. They wanted to be sure the words on the scroll were clearly linked to the prophet who would then be held accountable for them by the king, who clearly rejected any idea that these words came from God.

The perspective emerging from inside the Old Testament that the written record correctly reflects what had been spoken to the people by the servant who received them from God is that the writing process and the integrity of the written words depended not on God guaranteeing this, but instead on the integrity and character of the spokesman and any scribe involved in the writing process. The ‘dictation’ going on at this point was not from God to his spokesman, but from the spokesman to the scribe. Thus the written Hebrew text as the message of God is based on the integrity of the human writing process to correctly record what God had earlier given to the spokesman for oral delivery. Both the human and the divine are involved in the communication act but in very different ways. God inspires the prophet to speak, he then after speaking receives instructions from God to write which assignment in turn is handed over to his scribe.

Why such a powerful stress on orality? One would need to know that the spirit of God, רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (= LXX, πνεῦμα θεοῦ) is God’s breath used in speaking words. The Hebrew רוּחַ, *rûah*, captures spirit, breath, and wind into a single expression. This is reproduced in both the LXX of the OT and in the NT as πνεῦμα, *pneuma*. The breath that forms audible words originates from deep inside a person and thus signifies qualities and traits that are the core essence of the individual. When God ‘blows His breath’ on to a spokesman in audible words it is not just that the spokesman is able to mentally comprehend meaning attached to the sounds of that breath. It is the essence and power of God Himself being ‘blown’ on to the individual in order to equip him to carry out the mission of delivering those words by his human breath to God’s people. The Old Testament never labels this inspiration, because the term does not communicate the core concept present in God speaking. God is not inhaling, but

exhaling His breath, which in turn enables the spokesman to ‘exhale’ those words in the empowerment of God. The fixation of the written expression was often seen then as taking the ‘life’ out of the words because they possessed no breath of their own. Only when the written words were read orally could the ‘breath’ be recaptured so that God’s words regained the spiritual dynamic originally embedded in the orally given words that were turned into written words.<sup>60</sup>

### 2.2.1.3 New Testament Terminology

As noted in the above discussion on scripture terminology in the NT (topic 2.1.1.2 above), the references to sacred scriptures throughout the New Testament are referencing either the Old Testament collectively or a particular passage inside the Old Testament. Thus terminology referring to scripture found in the NT will be talking about the Jewish scriptures of the OT. The historical reality is that the New Testament as a collection of writings regarded as authoritative did not come into existence until some centuries after the apostolic era.

Actually, the documents contained in the New Testament were written during the second half of the first century. Paul’s writings from about 49/50 AD to 64/65 AD; Peter’s in the early to mid 60s; Hebrews, James, and Jude in the 50s to mid 60s. The three synoptic gospels from the late 60s to the early 80s, along with Acts in the 70s tied on to the writing of the third gospel. The writings of the apostle John -- the gospel, letters, and Revelation -- come in the 90s. Thus references to written scripture inside these documents cannot historically be referring to anything other than the Old Testament. The last two to four decades of the first Christian century probably saw early collections of some of these documents start being circulated, but no evidential proof of this exists anywhere. The earliest documented signals of this process from a few of the church fathers reference what was going on in the early decades of the second century and not prior to that.

### 2.2.1.4 New Testament Concepts

When discussions of the ‘inspiration’ of the New Testament surface among modern writers, two scriptures will normally be appealed to. Both 2 Timothy 3:14-16 and 2 Peter 1:16-21 speak to how God was involved in communicating His message to His people. But the references here to written materials regarded as sacred are clearly targeting the Old Testament scriptures. A close examination of both passages first of all reveals how consistent early Christianity was with the concepts of God speaking to His spokesmen to deliver His message we observed in the Old Testament. God gave His revelation to spiritual leaders directly in communicating with them orally in dreams, visions etc. Out of that came convictions to put what was received down in written form. A consciousness of ‘being under inspiration’ never entered their minds. But passionate convictions that what they did write, or dictate to others doing the writing, represented the will of God were deep and lasting.

**First.** Second Timothy 3:14-16 needs to be examined. Within the framework of traditional understanding, this letter was written to Timothy while still serving the Christian community at Ephesus as a missionary advisor in a time period of 63 to 65 AD, shortly before Paul’s martyrdom at the hands of Nero in 64 to 65 AD. This is the final writing of the apostle Paul before his death, which he senses is coming soon. In the larger pericope of 3:10-17, Paul gives Timothy a pep talk encouraging him to “continue in what you have learned and firmly believed,” (v. 14b; Σὺ δὲ μένε ἐν οἷς ἔμαθες καὶ ἐπιστώθης).

Paul alludes to the sources of that religious understanding that led to faith commitment by Timothy: “knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (εἰδῶς παρὰ τίνων ἔμαθες, 15 καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ βρέφους [τὰ] ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας, τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίσει εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). In the larger context of this letter the mentioned sources of this understanding focus at minimum on Timothy’s mother and grandmother, as well as the apostle Paul himself.<sup>61</sup> In the appeal to Timothy’s early childhood (ἀπὸ βρέφους), the foundation of religious

<sup>60</sup>As an almost humorous side-note: the Exodus 33:11 declaration, “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend”, carries with it a minimum ‘body space’ distance between Moses and God with the expression “face to face.” In the ancient near eastern culture, conversations between close friends meant they were close enough to one another to feel the breath of the other person as they spoke. In that not overly hygienic world, one would wonder about the smell of their breath up close like that.

<sup>61</sup>“Paul cites two sources of Timothy’s confidence. The first is the character of those who taught him. In light of the fact that τίνων, ‘whom,’ is plural, that Paul has already made reference to Timothy’s spiritual heritage that includes his mother and grandmother (1:5), and that Paul will next refer to Timothy’s childhood (3:15), it may be assumed that among these teachers are his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois. Because of Timothy and Paul’s relationship, and in light of Paul’s previous appeal to their joint experiences (3:10–11), Paul is also including himself among Timothy’s teachers. The time frame, therefore, includes not only childhood (from fam-

instruction for Timothy was the sacred writings, τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, an expression only found here in the New Testament<sup>62</sup> but out of the LXX pattern of usage unquestionably referring to the Old Testament scriptures being regarded as sacred writings.<sup>63</sup> These writings were the religious foundation of the instruction given to Timothy by his mother and grandmother in his childhood. As taught to him they prepared him to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord in his youth.

If one carefully studies the content and approach to the preaching of the Gospel in the book of Acts and supplemented by the writings of Paul, it is clear that the believability of this Gospel message depended upon it clearly explaining the Hebrew scriptures as pointing to Christ and His work of atonement on the cross. Beginning with Peter's sermon in Acts two through Paul's sermons to synagogue audiences in Acts 12 through 28, the role of the Old Testament as the scriptural basis of the Gospel message is clear.<sup>64</sup>

In verse fifteen the phrase τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, sacred writings, in the plural clearly designates the OT scriptures inclusively as a general reference. The shift to the singular with πᾶσα γραφή, every scripture, in verse sixteen most naturally underscores the individual passages of the OT text used by Christian teachers as the foundation for Gospel teaching.<sup>65</sup> One of the debated issues of this phrase is: Does πᾶσα mean 'every' or 'all'? Technically either is possible, but contextually 'every' is much preferred. This simply because the flow of context more naturally moves from the general inclusive reference to scripture, τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, in v. 15 to the emphatic affirmation of the usefulness of every single one of those passages in the scripture used by early Christians to point to the Gospel message in Christ.

Both the OT in its entirety and particularity then is what? First, Paul says it is θεόπνευστος, "God breathed."<sup>66</sup> That is, the OT originates from God's breath. The OT picture of God's communicating to His spokes-

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ily) but also young adult (from Paul) learning. Basing the reliability of the gospel message partly on the character of one's teachers is the positive counterpart to Paul's critique of the heresy based on the opponents' illicit behavior." [William D. Mounce, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 563.]

<sup>62</sup>Paul will use the singular γράμμα (literally, a letter of the alphabet of written characters forming a piece of writing) to refer to the Law in Rom. 2:29; 7:6; and 2 Cor. 3:6, as a lifeless written code.

<sup>63</sup>The adjective for 'sacred' ἱερὰ, is added to γραφαῖς by Paul and Peter to express a closely connected concept, 'sacred writings,' ἐν ἱεραῖς γραφαῖς, for the Old Testament in Rom. 1:2, 16:26, and 2 Pet. 1:20.

"ἱερός, 'sacred' (cf. with βιβλος, 'book, scroll': 2 Macc 8:23; 1 Clem. 43:1; with γραφαί, 'writings': 1 Clem. 45:2; 53:1), and γράμμα, 'writing' (Rom 2:27, 29; 7:6; cf. 2 Cor 3:6), can be used in connection with the OT." [William D. Mounce, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 563.]

<sup>64</sup>Thus any suggestion that either τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, *sacred writings*, in v. 15 or its equivalent πᾶσα γραφή, *every scripture*, in v. 16 could imply something other than, or more than, the Old Testament must be vigorously rejected as contradicted by the context, as well as the standard meanings attached to these and related terms throughout the New Testament.

That any NT scholar would say what Bill Mounce did seems ludicrous to me: "While issues of faith and the message about a coming Messiah are part of the OT, it seems doubtful that Paul would say that the OT by itself could instruct Timothy in a salvation that was by faith in Christ Jesus; this would be anachronistic." [William D. Mounce, vol. 46, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 564.] Such reflects gross ignorance of the content of the book of Acts, not to mention the role of the OT in Matthew's gospel and many statements in Paul's own writings. Additionally, Paul did not say to Timothy here that the OT by itself led to Timothy's conversion. His mother's, grandmother's, and Paul's own interpretative understanding of the OT text is what Paul says here. Instead, what he indicates is that the OT text properly understood accomplished this. But the sacred text as the foundation for this Gospel perspective is central to Paul's point.

<sup>65</sup>"The New Testament use of the Old Testament is a topic in New Testament Studies where scholars study why NT authors quoted various OT passages. It is an important issue within the study of the interpretation of the Bible, especially in the area of messianic prophecies concerning Jesus. 'The fourth edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek Testament (1993) lists 343 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament, as well as no fewer than 2,309 allusions and verbal parallels. The books most used are Psalms (79 quotations, 333 allusions), and Isaiah (66 quotations, 348 allusions). In the Book of Revelation, there are no formal quotations at all, but no fewer than 620 allusions.'<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, 'the OT is quoted or alluded to in every NT writing except Philemon and 2 and 3 John.'<sup>2</sup>" ["New Testament use of the Old Testament," Theopedia.org]

<sup>66</sup>The NIV and related translations is one of the very few in the English Bible to break the strangle hold on English translation established by the Latin Vulgate's use of inspirata for θεόπνευστος: omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata. The NIV renders θεόπνευστος by the much more accurate God-breathed: "All Scripture is God-breathed..."

man through orally spoken words stands behind this very rarely existing word in ancient Greek.<sup>67</sup> The breath of God, that is, His Spirit, blows into the mind of the spokesman God's ideas which then can be spoken in behalf of the Lord, and perhaps later put into written expression. This blowing of the Spirit was sometimes in the Jewish literature compared to the air flowing through the flute enabling the player to make the sounds of the instrument.

But the basic aspect of θεόπνευστος is the blowing out, rather than the blowing into. Thus the fundamental point of Paul's use of the term is to assert that the writings of the Old Testament ultimately have their origin in God, and thus reflect the will of God.<sup>68</sup> It is this quality that gives scripture its usefulness that Paul goes on to describe in the quality of ὠφέλιμος, "profitable."<sup>69</sup> Absolutely no implication about how God does this is implied in the term against the related backdrop.<sup>70</sup> The term is an affirmation of origin, not a term defining methodology.

The profitability of the OT scriptures is defined in four categories: πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἐλεγμὸν, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, *for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*<sup>71</sup> Thus the OT scriptures provide an authoritative basis for shaping who we are -- and become -- as

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<sup>67</sup>The adjective θεόπνευστος, ον is only found here in the entire NT. It appears very rarely in ancient literature as well, with many of the instances coming well after the first Christian century. Although Paul did not create a new Greek word -- as was commonly done in the ancient world -- he seems to have searched around for a very seldom used word in order to express his very Jewish idea in Greek. Why would he need to do that? The answer comes clearly and with disgusting insights when the Greek idea of inspiration current during this time is explored. The Greek equivalent of the Latin *inspirata* is ἐπίπνοια, a word never used in the NT. With Plato and most of the other classical Greek philosophers ἐπίπνοια refers to divine inspiration. When a deity blew hard (πνέω) his/her breath=spirit into an individual it produced a state of ἔκστασις or μανία, ecstasy. Individuals in such a state became more courageous soldiers, better skilled carpenters etc. In regard to speaking or writing actions coming out of this state came four categories of expressions: poetry, Manticism (Apollonian inspiration connected to glossolalia), mysticism, and eroticism. Many of the myths explaining how such took place are grossly sexually oriented in highly repugnant ways. The moment of sexual climax was considered one of the best avenues of inspiration.

What becomes clear with a study of the Greek background of inspiration is that the NT writers using Greek studiously avoided as much of the Greek terminology as possible in order to avoid implying any of the Greek traditions in the understanding of how God communicated His ideas to His spokesmen in the Jewish and Christian religious traditions. This almost never used Greek word θεόπνευστος provided the apostle a Greek word to communicate his idea that was not heavily loaded with the false baggage of the Greek tradition of manic inspiration.

For an extremely important although extremely technical analysis of this Greek tradition in connection to both the LXX, the Greek NT, and the early Greek church fathers, see Hermann Kleinknecht, "πνεῦμα, πνευματικός, πνέω, ἐμπνέω, πνοή, ἐκπνέω, θεόπνευστος," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 6:332ff.

<sup>68</sup>The concept here is basically equivalent to Jesus' statement in John 10:35 where ἡ γραφή, *the scripture*, is equated with ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, *the Word of God*. The expression ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ literally is the word that God spoke, and has subsequently been put into written form.

<sup>69</sup>One should note that some early versions (it vg<sup>cl</sup> sy<sup>p</sup>; Ambst) translate a text without καὶ. The impact of this on the statement flows in this direction: "every God-breathed scripture is profitable for...". Although this English translation leaves the impression of the assumption of some scriptures not being God-breathed, this is due to the English and not to the Greek. The change simply highlights greater attention on the profitability of the scripture.

<sup>70</sup>"On the other hand, it may be asserted that 2 Tm. 3:16 is not using a specific term from the world of enthusiasm (→ 358, 38 ff.) nor referring to any particular theory thereanent." [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 6:454.]

<sup>71</sup>"Scripture is useful, first, for διδασκαλία (see 1 Tim. 1:10) in the sense of 'instruction,' 'teaching.' That is to say, scripture instructs one by means of its content (cf. NEB: 'teaching the truth'). Similarly, Rom. 15:4 says of the scriptures (pl. γραφαί) that 'whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction.' There Paul makes a hermeneutical generalization to indicate to his readers why he is quoting a particular passage of scripture and applying its general truth to them. This is a practice that he, along with other writers of the NT and Jesus and the apostles in their preaching and teaching, followed regularly, as is evidenced by the large number of OT quotations and allusions in the NT (see also 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Tim. 5:18, the latter referring to both Dt. 25:4 and a saying of Jesus as γραφή; Michel, Paulus und seine Bibel; Ellis, Paul's Use of the OT). It is this sense of the purpose of scripture that Paul is expressing in the four phrases here (cf. further his practice in Acts 17:2).

"Second is ἐλεγμὸν (a NT hapax that appears in the LXX), used here in the sense of 'reproof' or 'rebuke.' If the four purposes of scripture listed here are reflected in the four duties in 4:2 ('preach the word ... reprove, rebuke, exhort'), then this hapax is elucidated by ἐλέγχω there. NEB paraphrases with 'refuting error' (TEV: 'rebuking error'). Third is ἐπανόρθωσιν (a NT hapax; cf. ἐπιδιορθόω in Tit. 1:5), which is used in the sense of 'correcting' or 'setting right' (LSJM; see also Spicq), most likely with reference to conduct, as it

a person belonging to God. Note the strong emphasis on shaping behavior here. The objective stated in verse seventeen defines the goal of this molding influence of the scriptures: ἵνα ἄρτιος ᾦ ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος, πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρητισμένος, *so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.* From the language of the text this lays the foundation for Paul's solemn charge to Timothy in 4:1-2 to incorporate these very qualities into his work with fellow believers at Ephesus.

Thus what Paul claims for the OT scriptures in 2 Tim. 3:14-17 is that they have their origin in God and are saturated with the very breath of God. This gives them profitability for molding and shaping the way we as followers of God live in order to prepare us for service to God.

**Second.** In 2 Peter 1:16-21 unquestionably focuses on the OT scriptures, and in particular on the prophets of the OT. The climatic statement in v. 21 comes as a part of the pericope of vv. 16-21. The point being made is that Peter in preaching τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν, *the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ*, he did not base expectation of this eschatological coming of Christ on σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις, *cleverly devised myths*.<sup>72</sup> Instead, this message came from τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, *the prophetic message*, of the Old Testament. Jesus transfiguration before Peter, James, and John (cf. Matt. 17:1-13 // Mk. 9:2-13 // Lk. 9:28-36) became the 'eye witness' confirmation (βεβαιότερον<sup>73</sup>) of the validity of this prophetic message in Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah (Law and Prophets<sup>74</sup>). But the absolute clincher of validation (cf. vv. 18-19) was the divine voice saying, ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου οὗτός ἐστιν εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."*<sup>75</sup> In very picturesque language Peter commends τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, *the prophetic message*, to

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sometimes was in extra-biblical literature (see BAGD for references; for the papyri see MM; for a different perspective see H. Preisker, TDNT V, 450f.).

"Fourth is παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ. παιδεία (also in Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5, 7, 8, 11) is used in the sense of 'training, instruction' (cf. G. Bertram, TDNT V, 596–625, especially 624f.). The training in view here is training 'in righteousness,' i.e., it 'is designed to produce conduct whereby δικαιοσύνη is actualised' (Bertram, 624, quoting Wohlenberg). δικαιοσύνη (see 1 Tim. 6:11), 'righteousness, uprightness,' is used here in the sense of 'right conduct' (G. Schrenk, TDNT II, 210; similarly in 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; Rom. 6:13; 9:20a; 14:17; Eph. 5:9)."

[George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 449.]

<sup>72</sup>"Myth,' while it can mean 'story' as distinguished from logos or argument, often has the polemical connotation of something untrue or unseemly (C. K. Barrett, "Myth and the New Testament. The Greek Word mythos," ExpT 68 [1957]: 345–48). Rationalist thinkers in the ancient world commonly criticized the stories of fantastic postmortem punishments in the underworld as myths fabricated for moral and social control of naive people (see Epictetus, "Against Epicureans and Academics," 2.20.23; Sextus Empiricus, Adv. Phy. 1.53–54; Oenomaeus of Gadara in Eusebius, Prep. Evan. 5.21; Lucretius R.N. 3.978–1023; Philo, Det. 72–73). Diodorus of Sicily sums it up well: "For it is true that the myths (mythologia) which are related about Hades, in spite of the fact that their subject-matter is fictitious (peplasmēnēn hypothēsēn), contribute greatly to fostering piety (eusebeian) and justice (dikaiosynēn) among men" (1.2.2).

"The negative connotation of myth here is accentuated by its description as something 'cleverly concocted' (G. Stählin, "Mythos," TDNT 4.789–90). Sophizō conveys the sense of deception (Barn. 9:4; Josephus, B.J. 4.103; 5.452) or lying (Philo, Mut. 240), and so indicates that the myths or stories are of human origin for purposes of deception (Plutarch, Defect. 431A). It was a typical slander to label stories, both Greek and Jewish, as humanly concocted or fabricated (plasteō, plastos)."

[Jerome H. Neyrey, vol. 37C, *2 Peter; Jude: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 175.]

<sup>73</sup>"But what specifically confirms a prophecy? Philo indicates that prophecies are confirmed in two ways. As noted above, prophecies have eyewitnesses to them which prove them to be authentic (Det. 124; Migr. 139; Heres 4; Sp. Leg. 1.273, 341; 4.32). No testimony is so certain as personal experience (Ebr. 97–98; Cong. 73; Mos. 2.280). Prophecies which have God as witness are the most confirmed of all (Migr. 115; Somn. 2.22)." [Jerome H. Neyrey, vol. 37C, *2 Peter; Jude: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 180.]

<sup>74</sup>When Elijah comes into view especially Peter is functioning out of his Jewish heritage that same Elijah as symbolic of all of the prophets of Israel. Additionally, Moses is even identified as a prophet in that tradition, thus τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον encompasses the OT scriptures from the vantage point of pointing to the coming of the Messiah to the covenant people of God.

<sup>75</sup>Compare Peter's recounting of this divine voice to the three Gospel accounts, all written after Second Peter:

**2 Peter. 1:17b**, ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου οὗτός ἐστιν εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα,

**Matt. 17:5b**, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ.

**Mark 9:7b**, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ.

his Christian readers as a *λύχνω φαίνοντι ἐν αὐχμηρῷ τόπῳ*, *shining lamp in a dark place*. Thus the OT scriptures can provide critical understanding about the coming of Jesus as the Messiah.

The reasons (vv. 20-21) for this insight comes from the nature of *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς*, *every prophecy of scripture*. The *τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον*, *prophetic message*, now becomes *γραφῆς*, *written scripture*, containing prophecies about the promised Messiah. In true Jewish fashion Peter understands these prophecies to have been delivered first orally and then subsequently recorded as sacred writings for later generations. The first validating reason for the trustworthiness of these prophecies is that none of them *ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*, *originate from one's own interpretation*.<sup>76</sup> That is, the individual prophet cannot create a legitimate divine message out of his own head and it serve his own purposes. This meaning is re-enforced by the next statement: *οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη προφητεία ποτέ*, *for prophecy never arises by the will of a person*. Obviously from the context Peter is alluding to the prophecies in the OT scriptures.

Second, *ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι*, *but individuals spoke from God as they were being carried by the Holy Spirit*. Note here the use of *ἐλάλησαν* which defines oral speaking only. This view of Peter reflects clearly the OT heritage that the orally given prophecies were prompted by God and the prophet's speaking was guided by the Holy Spirit. Again the focus is on the oral delivery of the Messianic prophecies that were subsequently recorded in written form correct to their oral delivery. The role of the Spirit of God is here specified as *ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι*, *being carried by the Holy Spirit*. The divine spirit did not take over control of the prophet thus making him a robotic mouthpiece of God.<sup>77</sup> The sense of the participle here is to give support and direction to the prophet as he delivers God's message to the people. This divine origin of prophecies then becomes an important validation of them as expressing God's desires.

Thus again Peter in this text affirms pretty much the same thing that Paul affirmed to Timothy: the OT scripture expresses in written record the message of God to His people. Thus what is found in scripture ultimately originates with God as expressing His will.

## 2.2.2 History of Understanding

The history of understanding the idea of the inspiration of scripture, including both testaments, is a patchwork quilt story of hits and misses. The era of the church fathers saw a complete reinterpretation of the developing collection of writings being regarded as sacred scriptures along with the Hebrew scriptures. Mostly this re-interpretation was framed solely by Greek thinking, especially the philosophy of Plato, and tended to lose sight completely of the Jewish heritage of the NT writers. The Old Testament even was reinterpreted heavily under the influence of the first century BCE Jewish but Greek writing philosopher Philo who had severely 'grecianized' the OT in term of Greek philosophical categories. The Greek mantic idea of inspiration came to dominate the thinking of most of the church fathers. The modern era tends to follow this lead but with the layering of early, rigid German rationalism across the top of it. The result was the creation of controversy over controversy eventually leading to a growing denial of inspiration by dominate segments of Christianity.

The recovery of a truly biblical understanding of how God is involved in the writing of scripture without all

**Luke 9:35b**, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἐκλελεγμένος, αὐτοῦ ἀκούετε.

Not a single one of the four quotes of the heavenly voice are exactly the same in wording. Yet all four present the same essential idea communicated by the voice coming out of the clouds to these three disciples. Interestingly, Peter's recounting is closer to that of Matthew, and yet is still different from it. The irony here is the close association of the Gospel of Mark with Peter in early church tradition. An illustration of the focus on ideas rather than words by the NT writers.

<sup>76</sup>“Implied in the argument in 1:19–21 is the value put in the ancient Mediterranean culture on being a group-oriented person rather than an individualist. This general social science scenario necessary for interpreting the cultural world of the NT was sketched in the general introduction. Here we can see its importance. Among others, Plutarch comments on the phenomenon of ‘tribes of wandering soothsayers and rogues’ who made up oracles and pandered to the crowds (Pyth. 407C). Such unattached people acted independently of any shrine or fixed tradition; they acted on their own and for their own benefit. Paul, on the other hand, commends prophecy because it serves the group and builds it up (1 Cor 14:3, 5, 12, 26). Speakers in tongues are idiosyncratic, building up only themselves (14:4), and thus not fitting into the ideal of a group-oriented person. Thus one cultural factor in the giving and understanding of prophecy was the way in which it functioned in the building up of the life of the group. Prophecies about the parousia and God's judgment lead to holiness, and so benefit the group. Not so ‘promises of freedom’ (2:19).” [Jerome H. Neyrey, vol. 37C, 2 *Peter, Jude: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 181-82.]

<sup>77</sup>Peter clearly rejects here the Greek mantic idea of ecstasy in prophesying, in favor of the Jewish heritage seen in the giving of the Law to Moses and of providing the prophets with God's message to Israel. See topics 2.1.1.1 and 2.2.1.1.

the post-enlightenment baggage with its Greek philosophical foundation is key to regaining a solid appreciation for what God has given us as the Bible.

### 2.2.2.1 Up to Modern Era

The period of the church fathers from the second century to just before the middle ages reflects changing thinking on several fronts. With the almost complete Gentile orientation of Christianity at the beginning of the second century, the leaders -- and thinkers -- of the Christian movement increasingly come into Christianity out of backgrounds of heavy training and orientation in Greek and Roman philosophy with these very different ways of thinking and perceiving reality. The Jewish perspectives reflected in the Old Testament itself are virtually lost sight of completely. The immense influence of the Jewish but very Greek thinking philosopher Philo provides a key through his allegorizing method of interpreting the Old Testament texts for them to deeply 'grecianize' the Old Testament.<sup>78</sup> Philo had done this by adopting the Greek mantic view of inspiration as the basis for finding the supposed 'deeper, spiritual' meanings of the OT texts completely detached from the surface level meaning of the words of the text.

Most of the church fathers bought into his methodology with the Old Testament and then proceed to produce a bizarre bundle of supposed 'Christian interpretations' of the Old Testament, along with doing much the same thing to the developing collection of NT documents increasingly regarded as scripture as well. Augustine's dictum, *Scriptura Sancta in nulla parte discordat* (Serm. 82.9, PL 38:510), typifies this approach. The scriptures possess meanings at multiple levels with the highest level being the 'spiritual' one at level four or five. Whether this supposed 'deeper' meaning had any connection to the surface level meaning of the words was largely irrelevant. Often this supposed secret meaning was available only to the select few miraculously enabled to understand it, as was the central point of the Gnostic heresy of the second and third centuries. But many of the so-called orthodox church fathers adopted views similar to that of the Gnostics.

All of this largely depended on the adoption of the Greek mantic view of inspiration whereby the scripture writer entered into some kind of trance making him only the 'pencil' for God to do the writing with. Unquestionably this manner of thinking is soundly rejected both by the Old Testament and the New Testament view of God's involvement in the composition of sacred writings. But such twisted thinking was the price the church fathers paid into order to read their own biased understandings back into the scripture text and then to promote those views to the people of their day within the framework of the Greco-Roman cultural mind.

### 2.2.2.2 Modern Era Perspectives

The modern understanding of inspiration, where discussed, largely builds on many of the views of the church fathers, but with the added layer of European rationalism coupled with the revival of Aristotle's philosophical system by the Roman Catholic scholar Thomas of Aquinas. The very rigid views of rationalism<sup>79</sup> espoused by John Locke in the British empirical methods along with the introduction of mathematical methods into philosophy by continental philosophers such as Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza impacted much of the thinking about inspiration by reducing it down to a rather mechanical process. The writer's own mind and personality is submerged into the 'mind of God' so that the final written product is God's mind rather than any individual's thought.

The impact of Aquinas' revival of Aristotle's philosophy on inspiration was substantial. Aristotle had taught that truth, ἡ ἀλήθεια, was fundamental an abstraction, an idea. At the heart of this idea lay the contention that

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<sup>78</sup>“Allegorical interpretation is an interpretive method which assumes that the Bible has various levels of meaning and tends to focus on the spiritual sense (which comprises the allegorical sense, the moral (or tropological) sense, and the anagogical sense) as opposed to the literal sense of scripture. It is sometimes referred to as the Quadriga, a reference to the Roman Quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses.

“The Quadriga is often explained through a Latin rhyme: *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia*. In English: The Literal teaches deeds, what you believe Allegory, Moral how you act, where you are going anagogical.”  
[“Allegorical interpretation,” wikipedia.org]

Philo had discovered this way of approaching ancient texts in Alexandria Egypt among the Greeks who developed and used the methodology in order to 'modernize' five plus centuries later the earlier texts of Homer and a few other early Greek teachers. Some of Philo's conclusions are absolutely bizarre, such as his conclusion that the Law of Moses was divinely revealed to and understood by the Greek philosopher Plato. Philo's passionate goal was to legitimize the Jewish religion as on an equal par with classical Greek philosophy. By supposedly tracing both back to God he felt that this was accomplished.

<sup>79</sup>See the helpful article “Rationalism,” wikipedia.org for some background understanding of this system of thinking.

something is true when its internal components are consistent with one another. Further confirmation comes when the idea appears to be consistent with observed 'facts' in the material world. With the extensive claim of the Gospel being Truth in the New Testament this foreign Greek philosophical idea was read back into the Bible, completely ignorant of the obviously Hebrew understanding of Truth plainly asserted in passages like John 14:6. This Greek definition of truth was more compatible with the mechanical views of rationalistic based inspiration.

One of the huge impacts of bundling the package in this manner was to shift the point of inspiration to becoming the validation of the scientific and factual accuracy of every word in the Bible. If these are God's precise words, then the words of the Bible are absolutely, factually correct because God doesn't ever lie, that is, say something factually incorrect. The huge influence of the scientific method of investigation pushed the western world into a pre-occupation with establishing everything as factually correct. If anything couldn't be so validated, it was a lie, and at best was highly suspect.

It is out of this way of thinking in the post-enlightenment western world that the huge battles over the inspiration of the Bible have been fought during the past three to four hundred years. The coming together of various streams of Enlightenment ways of thinking have combined to create an impossible dilemma regarding the inspiration of scriptures. Obviously just a casual reading of scripture reflects clearly the very human personalities of those responsible for writing the documents of the Bible. Just within the New Testament itself, comparisons of the double and triple tradition materials in the synoptic gospels highlights the often enormously different -- and occasionally contradicting -- ways of describing the same event or teaching of Jesus. Add to that how the New Testament writers make use of citations and allusions to the Old Testament unquestionably reflects their focus on ideas in the Old Testament with little concern for the precise words in the Hebrew Bible. Just the fact of the overwhelming use of the LXX, a Greek translation tradition often very loosely paraphrasing the Hebrew text, challenges this rigid Enlightenment based view of inspiration. But these dynamics are but the tip of the iceberg in this matter.

The very unfortunate consequence increasingly for the past hundred or so years has been the polarizing of attitudes into warring camps taking pot shots at one another. On one side are those heavily influenced by this thinking who focus almost solely on the 'human side' of the composition of scripture to the neglect or denial of inspiration of the Bible at all. But on the opposite side are those, working off the same set of Enlightenment assumptions but with opposite conclusions, who so stress the divine side of the inspiration process so defined generally in common with their opponents that it becomes difficult to acknowledge the human side of the scripture composition process. Thus the nature of the Bible becomes the battle ground for theological warfare.

One of the impacts of this warfare is that most people outside the intensely conservative side of Protestantism have little regard for the Bible. It plays less and less a role in shaping the way they live day to day, whether they are professing Christians or not. One of the 'swords' of the vigorous opponents of Christianity is the contention that the Bible is full of errors and thus not to be trusted in anything that it claims. Because so many inside Christianity have little understanding of the sources of such reasoning, their defense of the Bible is to go some extreme lengths to defend its 'factual' accuracy, not only for religious views, but for scientific views and other aspects of modern thinking. These 'truth claims' for the Bible then tend to be ridiculed and mocked by folks in society generally. And the wars continue on!

### **2.2.3 A Perspective on Inspiration**

In my own spiritual pilgrimage of growing up in a conservative but not fundamentalist Baptist tradition in west Texas, I became familiar with these wars during my college days of the early 1960s. Then they were carried out in the huge 'anti-establishment' mentality of the Anti-Vietnam War protest years of the 60s and early 70s. Fortunately in both college and seminary studies I had wise and perceptive professors who saw the hugely negative consequences of these wars, but unfortunately did not have deep insight in how these wars originated. Their option was to affirm the authority of scripture functionally by the power of the Gospel to change the lives of sinners. This pragmatic approach that I received from them served me well by instilling in me a deep love for the Bible but at a same time a huge distaste for trying to 'prove the Bible.'

God used that heritage from these professors to help shape a forty year professional career around teaching the Bible to students and church members. It anchored me on to scriptures until He could begin opening my eyes in the 80s and 90s to why all these battles over the Bible were being fought.<sup>80</sup> Being a New Testament

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<sup>80</sup>The publication of *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell in 1978 so typifies the awful dynamics surrounding this warfare during the 70s and 80s.

professor in the largest Southern Baptist seminary -- and also by far the largest evangelical seminary in North America -- at that time made escaping these wars impossible. I witnessed time and time again this rigidly conservative viewpoint turning the Bible into a billy club to beat people into submission to their system of doctrines while at the same time completely ignoring the teachings of the Bible on ministry and compassion to others. Their disgusting hypocrisy stiffened my determination to not sacrifice a healthy love for God's Word just to confirm to their demands. Involvement in numerous professional societies of biblical scholars both regionally and nationally exposed me to many scholars on the extreme opposite end of this warfare. Although friendships with many were established, I clearly observed much of the same rigidity and elitism in them as with those on the other side of the issue.

It was largely through year long sabbatical leaves from my responsibilities at the seminary in Texas to study with world class New Testament scholars in Germany, and to establish friendships with a wide range of biblical scholars across Europe and the UK that I began to realize there is a better way to come at this idea of the inspiration of the Bible.

The starting point in that marvelous discovery was John 14:6 where Jesus declares that He is Truth. Not about truth, not validating truth, but Truth itself. Truth in this setting is not an abstract idea, it is a person. Out of this over the past quarter of a century has come increasingly the discovery of how God has been involved in the composition of scripture and thus why He as preserved it over the centuries in the way that history records. The invitation in the late 1980s to write two major articles on Inspiration and Revelation for the very important two volume Encyclopedia of Early Christianity helped to crystallize this understanding profoundly.

Through the discovery in much deeper ways by study of the biblical texts and of church history, the picture of the Jewish understanding, set forth rather clearly inside the Old Testament and then followed by the writers of the New Testament in their adopting Jesus' views, became clear to me. I began to realize that this understanding enables one to affirm genuinely a 'high view of scripture' and at the same time clearly and genuinely acknowledge the human side of the composition of scripture. Inspiration is not an either or choice; it is a both and issue. Additionally, when so understood as the breath of God shaped into human words by human writers the continuing power of the scripture to transform lives is clear. The writer of Hebrews said in 4:12-13,

12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

12 Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διίκνούμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἄρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν, καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας· 13 καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανῆς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ γυμνὰ καὶ τετραχρηλισμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος.

Obviously the writer means the message that God speaks is both alive and animated because God is speaking it. It is those qualities of Ζῶν and ἐνεργῆς, *living* and *animated*, that result from God speaking. No wonder what God says to us through the Gospel and in sacred scripture cuts right down to our very core existence exposing exactly who we are before a holy God. A Bible that works like that is what I need; I have no interest in a Bible as a club for beating others into conformity to my views on religion. Although interesting history, the Bible I need should have the presence of God standing behind it. A billy club is life destroying, not life building. A history book doesn't get me ready to meet God in judgment. The world needs scripture understood in the Jewish heritage of the Hebrews' writer in order to experience life transformation that prepares us to meet God in final judgment. Its no wonder that the writer immediately goes on (vv. 14-16) to speak of Jesus as the great high priest who can stand between us and God to effect this transformation.

This is the Bible that God has given us. His breath embedded into it gives it life changing power. And as Paul clearly affirmed to Timothy it is profitable for shaping our lives in service to God.

### 2.3 Concept of Canonization

The term 'canonization' does not refer to manufacturing canons for military use! Instead, it refers to the development of a list of authoritative writings that a religious group designates as sacred scriptures. The English word 'canon'<sup>81</sup> comes from the Greek word κανὼν with the meaning of rule or standard.<sup>82</sup> Although the term had

<sup>81</sup>Spanish: Canon de las escrituras;

<sup>82</sup>κανὼν, ὄνος, ὁ (Hom. et al.; ins, pap, LXX; TestNapht 2:3. For the mngs. of the word [primarily 'straight rod'] s. TZahn, Grundriss d. Gesch. d. ntl. Kanons 2 1904, 1ff; HOppel, KANQN: Philol. Suppl. 30, 4, '37; LWenger, Canon: SBWienAk 220, 2, '42)

many different uses in ancient Greek, in the centuries after the apostolic era the term came also to refer to the list of authoritative scriptures.<sup>83</sup>

### 2.3.1 The Idea of Canon

The process of canonization took very different directions regarding both the Old and New Testaments for Christians. Additionally the process inside Judaism was significantly different than that for Christians. Some attention will be given to each of these streams of development.

One of the foundational challenges is that the formal idea of a canon of the Bible implies some sort of official decision by a particular religious group formally stating the group's position on which documents are considered sacred. Neither in either Judaism nor Christianity have such decisions been made until modern times. To be sure, various individuals in Christianity proposed canon lists from the third century AD onward, and a few church councils representing some geographical regions of Christianity during the Roman empire gave some consideration to the issue. But the first official canon list by the Roman Catholic Church comes at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Various Protestant denominations have included canon lists in either their creed or confession of faith statements. The Westminster Confession of Faith in 1643 has played a very important role for various Protestant groups in the English speaking world and beyond with its inclusion of a canon list for the Bible.

How then can one discuss the history of the canon of the Bible prior to modern times? The discussion historically will center on the Old Testament issues beginning perhaps at 400 BCE but more likely around 200 BCE and extending only to the end of 200 AD. But this is mainly the Jewish side of the story. The Christian side of the story regarding the Old Testament begins with the first century extensive use of the LXX during the apostolic era and continues down through the fourth or fifth centuries AD. Regarding the New Testament the Christian story is primarily from the end of the first century through the fifth century. The picture inside Christianity is focused on emerging variations of perspectives during this period of time by individuals and regional oriented Christian

the mngs. found in our lit. are

**1. a means to determine the quality of someth., rule, standard** (Eur., Hec. 602; Demosth. 18, 296; Aeschin., In Ctesiph. 66; Sext. Emp., Log. 2, 3; Ps.-Plut., Consol. ad Ap. 103a; Epict., index Sch.; Lucian, Pisc. 30; UPZ 110, 58 [164 B.C.]; PLond I, 130, 12 p. 133 [I/II A.D.]; 4 Macc 7:21; EpArist 2; Philo; Jos., Ant. 10, 49, C. Ap. 2, 174; TestNapht 2:3) τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχεῖν **Gal 6:16; Phil 3:16** v.l.; ἔλθωμεν ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς παραδόσεως ἡμῶν κανόνα 1 Cl 7:2 (cp. Epict. 1, 28, 28 ἔλθωμεν ἐπὶ τοὺς κανόνας; τὸν κ. ἀληθείας ... , ὃν διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἴληφεν Iren. 1, 9, 4 [Harv. I 88, 1]).

**2. set of directions or formulation for an activity, assignment, formulation** for public service (s. λειτουργία 1; ins New Docs 1, p. 37, ln. 29 κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην ἔταξα κανόνα τῶν ὑπηρεσιῶν 'I have promulgated in the individual cities and villages a schedule of what I judge desirable to be supplied' [tr. Horsley]) ἐν τῷ κανόνι τῆς ὑποταγῆς ὑπάρχειν 1 Cl 1:3. παρεκβαίνειν τὸν ὀρισμένον τῆς λειτουργίας κανόνα 41:1. Sim. of the mission assignment given to Paul, which included directions about geographical area **2 Cor 10:13, 15f** (s. FStrange, BA 46, '83, 167f; AdeOliveira, Die Diakonie der Gerechtigkeit und der Versöhnung in der Apologie des 2. Korintherbriefes '90, 141–42, n. 306: κ. signifies the apostle's mission assignment). Others (incl. NRSV, REB) emphasize the geographical component and render sphere (of action), province, limit.

**3. In the second century in the Christian church κ. came to stand for revealed truth, rule of faith** (Zahn, RE VI 683ff.— Cp. Philo, Leg. All. 3, 233 ὁ διαφθεῖρων τὸν ὑγιῆ κανόνα τῆς ἀληθείας; Synes., Ad. Paeon. 4 p. 310d τῆς ἀληθείας κανὼν of mathematics; Hippol., Ref. 10, 5, 2). ἐκκλησιαστικὸς καὶ καθολικὸς κ. EpilMosq 2. ᾧ παρέλαβε κανόνι by the rule that the person has received AcPICor 2:36.—The use of κανὼν as 'list' in ref. to the canonical scriptures, as well as in the sense of '(synodical-) canon', is late.— RGG3 III, 1116–22. TRE XVII '88, 562–70. New Docs 2, 88f. DELG (lit.). M-M. TW. Sv.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, A *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 507-08.]

<sup>83</sup>The wikipedia organization contains a number of very helpful articles on this topic. Included among them are "Biblical Canon" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon\\_of\\_Scripture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_of_Scripture)); "Development of the Hebrew Canon" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development\\_of\\_the\\_Hebrew\\_Bible\\_canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Hebrew_Bible_canon)); "Development of the Old Testament canon" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development\\_of\\_the\\_Old\\_Testament\\_canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Old_Testament_canon)); "Samaritan Pentateuch" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan\\_Torah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_Torah)); "Development of the Christian biblical canon" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development\\_of\\_the\\_Christian\\_biblical\\_canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Christian_biblical_canon)); "Christian biblical canons" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_biblical\\_canons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_biblical_canons)); "Development of the New Testament canon" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development\\_of\\_the\\_New\\_Testament\\_canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_New_Testament_canon)). Also see the Spanish "Canon biblico" ([http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon\\_b%C3%ADblico](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_b%C3%ADblico)). The German, "Bibelkanon" (<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibelkanon>). The French "Canon (Bible)" ([http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon\\_%28Bible%29](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_%28Bible%29)). The Spanish and French articles will reflect mostly a Roman Catholic perspective, especially on the Old Testament.

These articles seek to cover the aspect of canonization from both the Jewish and Christian perspectives of the Old Testament, and then the Christian perspective on the New Testament. Start with the "Biblical Canon" article, then move to the "Development of ---" articles. The remainder will supplement various aspects.

groups.

Then there is the matter of confusing terminology. A maize of confusing terms are often carelessly used in such histories and discussions. If an ancient document is 'authoritative' does that mean it is 'canonical'? Often the assumption is yes, but the Christian discussions of the church fathers clearly indicate no. If a document is listed as 'sacred writing' is it canonical. Again the answer from the early church discussions is no. But such fluidity of terminology in both the Greek and Latin church fathers in the second through eighth centuries should not be surprising. This is a period where Christian is establishing a view point of sacred scriptures, and where a large number of documents were being used as authoritative expressions of Christian belief way beyond the 27 documents that ended up in the canon of the New Testament. Even the status of the 27 documents reflects uncertainty over the inclusion or exclusion of several of these documents, especially up to the end of the fourth century.

In this discussion, I will use 'sacred writings' and 'scripture' to mean pretty much the same thing. But the terms 'authoritative writings' and 'canonical writings' are not interchangeable expressions. Neither are either of these terms necessarily interchangeable with either 'sacred writings' or 'scripture.' In Judaism terms for 'canonical' virtually never appear in either Hebrew or the Tannaitic Aramaic of the rabbis. Concepts of canon emerge clearly in Judaism only in the modern era. In the infrequent discussions of sacred writings among the church fathers, authoritative writings surface but do not necessarily imply sacred scripture. This because early Christianity distinguished varying levels of authority for different writings. One can then understand easily the difficulty of correctly describing the process of adopting specific writings as sacred scripture in early Christianity. Varying and often conflicting dynamics were pushing different groups of Christians to different conclusions. That a general consensus on 27 documents for a New Testament could be reached by the vast majority of Christians by the early 400s is in itself something of a miracle, which I consider as a sign of God's providential guiding of this process to His desired outcome.

### 2.3.2 The Hebrew Canon of Scriptures

For Jews this phrase means the establishment of the Tanakh.<sup>84</sup> Additionally among Jews two stages are important. First the general establishment of the content of the documents, normally labeled 'the textual basis of the canon,' and then the vocalized / pointed text of the Hebrew scriptures called the Masoretic text. Since its production in the middle ages, this has been the authoritative scriptures for all branches of Judaism. Increasingly it stands as authoritative for most Protestant oriented Bible translations of the Old Testament.

For Christian groups, however, the production of the Septuagint in the third century BCE gave a different twist. Because of the widespread Christian use of this Greek translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament along with other ancient Jewish writings, its role as authoritative scriptures of the Old Testament has been acknowledged among different Christian groups since early in Christian history.

When the church father Jerome began to translate the Christian Bible of the Old and New Testaments into Latin (382 - 405 AD) for western Christianity, he drew heavily upon the Greek text of the LXX for his translation of it into Latin, while working primarily from the Hebrew OT texts he had access to. For the arrangement of the content and sequential listing and grouping Jerome chose to follow the pattern of the LXX rather than the Hebrew texts. Thus the 24 'books' of the Hebrew text were expanded into 39 books following the LXX pattern. He also included the additional books in the LXX, calling them the apocrypha. He did not consider them to be authoritative, but included them by request of his church superiors. The New Testament portion of the Latin Vulgate largely followed the widely established pattern of listing and sequence set forth in 367 AD by Athanasius of Alexandria in an Easter letter defining the status of various documents widely used in Christian circles. He wrote of the canonical status of the 27 documents we now have in the NT. Jerome adopted the views of Athanasius for his translation of the New Testament. Coming out of this project was the Latin Vulgate Bible, which has served as the Bible for western Christianity soon after 405 when it was finished to the present as the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. Jerome's inclusion of the apocrypha documents legitimized them for official

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<sup>84</sup>“The Tanakh (Hebrew: תנ"ך pronounced [ta'naχ] or [tə'nax]; also Tenakh, Tenak, Tanach) is a name used in Judaism for the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The Tanakh is also known as the Masoretic Text or the *Miqra*. The name is an acronym formed from the initial Hebrew letters of the Masoretic Text's three traditional subdivisions: The Torah ('Teaching', also known as the Five Books of Moses), Nevi'im ('Prophets') and Ketuvim ('Writings') — hence TaNaKh. The name 'Miqra' (מִקְרָא), meaning 'that which is read', is an alternative Hebrew term for the Tanakh. The books of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) were relayed with an accompanying oral tradition passed on by each generation, called the Oral Torah.” [“Tanakh,” wikipedia.org]

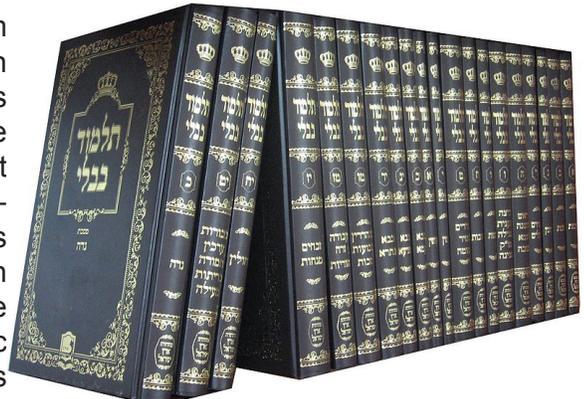
inclusion as sacred scripture in the RC Old Testament. Eastern Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, developed its own versions of the apocrypha from different text traditions of the LXX which are today reflected in differing canons of the Old Testament among the various branches of Orthodox Christianity.<sup>85</sup>

### 2.3.2.1 History of Process

Among Jewish people, the process of adopting authoritative scriptures took place between 400 BCE and 200 AD. The three-fold division of the Hebrew Bible played an important role with the Torah portion achieving stable form and acceptance as authoritative around 400 BCE, while the Prophets section reached that level around 200 BCE, and the Writings around 200 AD.<sup>86</sup> The beginnings or Rabbinic Judaism toward the end of the first Christian century began a Jewish focus on written materials considered as sacred scripture. With the destruction of Herod's temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, major shifts in Jewish religious practice and understanding began. Religious life no longer centered in offering sacrifices in the temple; a new focus on sacred writings and how to apply them to this new 'temple-less' situation was begun. The Jewish rabbi emerged from the previous Jewish scribe tradition.

Gradually the written Torah as the center of documents containing the several centuries old scribal interpretive traditions began to appear in stages leading to the Talmud by the fifth century AD. The accumulation of these interpretive traditions (mostly in oral form) ceased around 200 AD. First came the Jerusalem Talmud (around 350 AD) and the longer version, the Babylonian Talmud (375 to 427 AD). All of this stands as authoritative writings among Jews. But the core center is the written Hebrew text of the Torah portion of the Hebrew scriptures, and it stands as the highest authority. The scribal comments surround the text in a variety of differing versions of Aramaic. The much shorter Jerusalem Talmud is written in an extremely complex version of western Aramaic which most Jewish rabbis today can hardly read. The longer and more complete Babylonian Talmud which is written in a form of Aramaic common in the eastern fertile crescent region. A variety of factors gradually led this Talmud to gain dominance among Jews so that by the middle ages virtually every branch of Judaism considered it to be their authoritative scripture. Consequently no branch of modern Judaism has bothered to officially adopt a canon list of the OT scriptures, since the Masoretic text of the Hebrew is what is found in the Babylonian Talmud today. Scriptural authority centers in the Talmud, rather than in the Old Testament scriptures, with the Hebrew text contained in it. The most binding authority remains the Torah with

The first page of the Vilna Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berachot, folio 2a.



A complete set of the Babylonian Talmud containing around 12,800 pages minus introductory materials.

<sup>85</sup>For a helpful charting of all this see “Canon of Scripture: Canons of various Christian traditions,” wikipedia.org.

<sup>86</sup>A growing trend today among both Jewish and Christian scholars is to see the time-line of canonization extending from 200 BCE to 200 AD, rather than reaching back to 400 BCE for the Torah. One of the controversial issues is the role of the supposed Council of Jamnia around 90 AD: “The theory that the Jewish Canon was closed at a Council of Jamnia about 90 CE was first proposed by Heinrich Graetz in 1871 and became a consensus. W. M. Christie was the first to dispute this popular theory in the July 1925 edition of the Journal of Theological Studies in an article entitled The Jamnia Period in Jewish History. Next, Jack P. Lewis wrote a critique of the popular consensus in the April 1964 edition of the Journal of Bible and Religion entitled What Do We Mean by Jabneh? Raymond E. Brown largely supported Lewis in his review published in Jerome Bible Commentary (JBC) 1968 which also appears in the New Jerome Bible Commentary of 1990. Sid Z. Leiman made an independent challenge for his University of Pennsylvania thesis published later as a book in 1976. Other scholars have since joined in such that today the theory is largely discredited.” [“Development of the Hebrew Canon,” wikipedia.org]

lesser authority granted to the Prophets and Writings, and still less to the rabbinic interpretive traditions. But all of it is considered authoritative scripture, and thus binding on Jews.

The impact of the Babylonian Talmud with some minor editing and additions after the early 400s was to bring Jewish sacred writings into a fixed state, that sometimes is labeled the closing of the Jewish canon (although this terminology can be misleading). The text of the Babylonian Talmud became fixed in content by 700 AD. With the era of a printed Talmud beginning in 1523 with the Bomberg Talmud edition of the Babylonian Talmud, the issue from then on has been evaluation of earlier hand written copies of Talmudic texts in order to produce a completely mistake free (typos etc.) and properly 'pointed' text of the Talmud. In the last two hundred years approximately, translations of the Talmud have been made into different European languages in order to make the text more accessible to Jewish people generally.

The Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament traveled a different path from that in Judaism. A major shift came when apostolic Christianity turned mostly to the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures more so than to the Hebrew texts because of the dominance of Koine Greek by the writing of the NT documents in the second half of the first Christian century. Jesus and Jewish Christians in Palestine continued using the Hebrew texts, but elsewhere the Septuagint, the LXX, became the Bible of early Christians. This adoption of the LXX by Christians led to the demise of it among Jews during the second century. The role of the LXX was cemented into Christian understanding of the Old Testament with the impact of Jerome's Latin translation of the Old Testament -- largely from the Hebrew texts but following the format and inclusiveness of the LXX -- into the Vulgate. This translation of both the Old and New Testaments quickly became the Bible of western Christianity and after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century is the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. The continued use of the Greek language in eastern Christianity moved this segment to turn to the LXX as the official version of the Old Testament scriptures. Most of the modern ethnic branches of Eastern Orthodox Christianity have developed their translations of the Old Testament from the established LXX version of the eastern church.

With the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s came the question over which documents properly belonged in the Christian Old Testament. Luther along with the other reformers rejected the inclusion of the documents labeled Apocrypha in favor of the content of the documents matching those of Judaism but retaining the book division etc. found in the LXX.<sup>87</sup> Most all of Protestantism, outside the Church of England, do not consider these documents to be sacred scripture.<sup>88</sup>

A more recent issue has arisen during the era of modern Bible translations over the past century. This centers on the appropriate use of Old Testament texts for producing a modern language translation of the OT scriptures. Simplistically one might think that the original Hebrew text would automatically be the standard. In reality, the dynamics are much more complex. The lingering huge impact of the Latin Vulgate not only in Roman Catholic circles, but in Protestant circles, has produced the functional reality that any modern language translation departing very much from the Vulgate will instantly be suspect. Most Protestant Bible readers today do not realize this but the reality remains very strong. With the English Bible as the example, all of the early translations of the English Bible from Tyndale through the King James Version in the early 1600s were overwhelmingly translations of the Latin Vulgate. Significant departure from the Vulgate would have brought immediate rejection of the English translation by both church leaders and the people in general.

But with the shifts in Bible translation at the end of the 1900s along with biblical archeology's increasing discovery of manuscripts that called into question the accuracy of both the Vulgate and the translations based on it including the KJV, a push to go back to the Hebrew of the Old Testament has flourished. But the earliest Hebrew text available is the Masoretic text of the middle ages that is universally used in Judaism. Add to that is

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<sup>87</sup>“The intertestamental books, largely written during the intertestamental period, are called the Biblical apocrypha (‘hidden things’) by Protestants, the deuteroconon (‘second canon’) by Catholics, and the deuteroconon or anagignoskomena (‘worthy of reading’) by Orthodox. These are works recognized by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox Churches as being part of scripture (and thus deuterocononical rather than apocryphal), but Protestants do not recognize them as divinely inspired. Many other Christians recognize them as good, but not on the level of the other books of the Bible. Anglicanism considers the apocrypha to be “read for example of life” but not used “to establish any doctrine”.<sup>6</sup> Luther made a parallel statement in calling them: ‘not considered equal to the Holy Scriptures, but are useful and good to read.’” [“Books of the Bible,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>88</sup>One side note about terminology. The modern use of the term Apocrypha (or OT Apocrypha) will reflect a Protestant label for these documents carrying with it a rejection of them as sacred scripture. But the alternative term, Deuterocononical Books, reflects a Roman Catholic view implying canonical status in the Old Testament for these documents. Both terms refer to the identical set of documents but reflect opposite views about the canonical status of the documents.

the large number of Hebrew words whose meaning is uncertain, and can only be estimated from how both the LXX and then the Vulgate translated them. Consequently prior to the last fifty years modern western language translations of the Old Testament have utilized a combination of analysis of the Masoretic Hebrew text supplemented by consulting both the LXX text traditions and the Vulgate. The trend increasingly more recently has been a gravitation toward dominant use of the Masoretic Hebrew text for translating the Old Testament.

### 2.3.2.2 Arrangement of the Documents in Hebrew Bible

Although alluded to already in several places, I want to call attention to the material -- virtually the same content in both the Tanakh of Judaism and the Protestant Old Testament -- is arranged very differently. In the Tanakh the threefold division of Torah, Prophets, and Writings groups twenty four documents. The Torah is the only place where grouping and book listing is the same. In the Tanakh, Joshua through the Minor Prophets are grouped into eight books with Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings labeled as the Former Prophets, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the book of the Twelve Minor Prophets labeled as the Latter Prophets. In the third division of the Writings, the poetic books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Job are grouped together. These are followed by the Hamesh Megillot (the five scrolls) containing the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamantations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The last section without any formal label contains three documents: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (1 document), and Chronicles.

The arrangement of the content in the Protestant Old Testament expands the 24 documents into 39 documents, and significantly re-sequences them into a different set of categories. The Law remains the same as with the Tanakh. But after Law comes History (Joshua through Esther); then Wisdom (Job through Song of Solomon). Finally are the Prophets subdivided into Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel) and Minor Prophets (Hosea through Malachi). This reordering of sections along with expansion of content into 39 documents came overwhelmingly from the Septuagint with some minor variations created by Jerome in the Latin Vulgate. The addition of the Apocrypha materials by Roman Catholics will add Tobit, Judith, and 1-2 Maccabees to the History section; Wisdom (of Solomon) and Sirach to the Wisdom section; and Baruch to the Major Prophets section.<sup>89</sup> This creates 46 books in the RC Old Testament canon. The canon lists of different Eastern Orthodox churches stretches this to as many as 51 books because of a different views about the Apocrypha.

### 2.3.2.3 A Jewish Theology of Scripture

The Judaism after the second-temple period (70 AD) employed a variety of terms to refer to their sacred writings.<sup>90</sup> The fluidity of usage to specify the Torah, to Bible, to Talmud as authoritative and binding reflects the distinctive views of scripture among Jews. The most binding part is the Torah of the Bible. The other two divisions

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<sup>89</sup>One trend emerging in more recent modern western language translations is to produce both a Roman Catholic translation and a Protestant translation of the Bible. And within Protestantism to create an alternative version containing the Apocrypha listed together between the Old and New Testament sections. The interesting irony is that this recent trend is picking up again the tradition established in 1611 by the King James Version with contained the Apocrypha in a separate section for the first century or so of its existence.

<sup>90</sup>“The same is true of terms used in Judaism where the word ‘books’ (*sēpārîm*) meant sacred writings but without precise definition (Dan 9:2; Mishnah, etc.). The term ‘holy books’ (*siprê haqqōdeš*), used in medieval commentaries, was also indefinite in reference in that it was used to refer to all Jewish religious literature. In the Greek prologue to Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira), which was translated (traditionally 132 B.C.E.) by the grandson of the author, the phrases ‘the other books of our fathers’ and ‘the rest of the books’ are also indefinite in reference. In Tannaitic times the term ‘outside books’ (*sēpārîm hîtzōnîm*) was coined to refer to books not in the Jewish canon (Sanh. 10:1), but even then it was used mainly to refer to non-Jewish or nonrabbinic literature, not specifically to refer to Jewish writing outside the Jewish Bible.

“More precise in designation, though not content, is the word *miqrā*’ (‘reading’; see Arabic *qur’an*) referring to Scripture and based on the custom of reading aloud for the assembled faithful in a dominantly oral culture, continued today as oral lectionary readings in most worship services Jewish and Christian; it was and is frequently used to indicate Scripture, as against Mishnah, Midrash, or other Jewish literature.

“Another term, ‘holy writings’ (*kitbê haqqōdeš*), is used to refer to holy or inspired writings but not exclusively to the Bible (Šabb. 16:1; B. Bat. 1: end; t. Beša 4 [Blau JEnc, 141]), another indication of the necessity to distinguish between ‘inspired’ and ‘canonical’ (Leiman 1976: 127; Metzger 1987: 254–57); the term is reflected in Greek in Rom 1:2; John 5:47; 2 Tim 3:15–16; Ant 1.13; 10.63; etc.”

[James A. Sanders, “Canon: Hebrew Bible” In vol. 1, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 838.]

of the Bible come next in authority, and are followed by the rabbinical traditions that comprise the Talmud. But the term sacred writings or books can be used of all these. Plus in modern Judaism -- a somewhat in the Judaism of Jesus' day -- different groups place different levels of authority on the materials beyond the Torah. The Sadducees of Jesus day gave binding authority only to the Torah and are followed today by Samaritan Jews who acknowledge only their version of the Hebrew Torah as sacred scripture. The three main branches of modern Judaism -- Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform -- follow generally the traditions of rabbinic Judaism but Orthodox on the very conservative side will value the Talmud sections more as equal authority, while Reform Judaism on the opposite end of the theological spectrum will value the Torah much higher than the other materials.

#### **2.3.2.4 A Christian Theology of the Old Testament**

Inside Christianity differing views of the role of the Old Testament will be found. From the apostolic Christianity of the first century, which considered the Old Testament as their Bible, to the Protestant Reformation the Old Testament was considered sacred scripture along side the New Testament. How to make it apply to Christians became the challenge of this era. Both eastern and western Christianity approached this in various ways. The sacrificial system of the Torah was spiritualized into the Roman Catholic mass through the sacramental system. The approaching of the Old Testament texts through the allegorizing of these texts to find the supposed deeper 'spiritual meaning' led to some strange conclusions about the ideas in the Old Testament.

With Martin Luther came a new issue regarding the Old Testament. In his reading of Paul in Galatians and Romans he saw a fundamental tension between the grace of the new covenant and the law of the old covenant. He saw Roman Catholicism as on the Law side while he felt the grace side to be the only legitimate view. This played a role in his adamant rejection of the RC use of the apocrypha, but also left him pondering just how the Old Testament fit into Christian belief and practice. He valued the Old Testament highly but could only approach it with 'Christological glasses' that found Christ in most every passage of the Old Testament. It always provided the Law background pushing us to the grace of Christ. This necessity of treating the Old Testament came out of his *sola scriptura* contention of scripture as the exclusive basis for belief and practice as Christians.

Out of this wrestling with the Old Testament has come a variety of views about the role of the Old Testament, ranging all the way to excessive spiritualizing every text to find the gospel contained to the other extreme first expressed in the second century AD by Marcion who totally rejected the Old Testament and the "God of war in the Old Testament." Few modern Christian groups take such an extreme view as did Marcion but some get close to it through neglect of the Old Testament in their teaching of the Bible and doctrinal declarations. The vast majority of Christians today affirm the Old Testament in the Protestant canon as sacred scripture. But most are puzzled at times with just how it should function for Christians living under God's grace.

#### **2.3.3 A Christian Canon of Scriptures**

Christian views of the nature of scripture vary considerably across both time and denominational groups. A couple of points have universal agreement. First, that an Old and New Testament section together comprises the Bible for Christians. Second, the Law of Moses is the first section of the Old Testament. After these two points diversity of viewpoint begins.

In regard to the New Testament section the great majority of Christian groups agree that the 27 documents traditionally listed in the canon of the New Testament represent the completed revelation of God through Jesus Christ. This listing first appeared in 367 AD in the Easter letter of Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria Egypt. The influence of Athanasius in eastern Christianity coupled with the impact of Jerome's Latin Vulgate in western Christianity pretty much closed the issue of the canon of the New Testament. The Christian groups with a different canon list for the New Testament are the Slavonic, Armenian and Ethiopian traditions, all a part of Orthodox Christianity. The alternative listing excludes 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation, leaving 22 documents.<sup>91</sup>

With Martin Luther came another variation from this listing based in part on the patterns reflected in the church fathers of Origen (3rd century) and Eusebius (early 4th century). This is the issue of a 'canon within the canon.' Luther had serious reservations regarding the inspiration of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation. He did not deny divine inspiration to these documents, but felt that they did not center on the Gospel of Christ as did

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<sup>91</sup>A variation from this is the Syriac Orthodox Church. The Peshitta, the Syriac translation of the Bible dates back to at least the fifth century AD and probably was in use much earlier. The early Peshitta tradition excluded these documents, but modern updates in more current forms of Syriac include them in their translations. But the traditional Syriac Lexical readings still do not include them.

the other 23 documents. Consequently he adopted a modified version used by Origen and Eusebius separating out documents considered unquestionably to be sacred scriptures and others for which divided opinion about their authority existed. Luther considered the 23 documents to be fully canonical and authoritative, but these four documents to be of a secondary level of authority. This was somewhat consistent with Jewish tradition of assigning the highest level of authority to the Torah, but lesser levels of authority to the Prophets and Writings sections of the Hebrew scriptures. These four documents remained 'bundled together' in an appendix status in the Luther Bibel until the 1903 revision which re-sequenced them to the broader Christian pattern.

Interestingly not until the modern era do various Christian groups through their official confessions of faith begin adopting an official canon listing of sacred scriptures.<sup>92</sup> The Roman Catholics were the first with the Council of Trent in the late 1500s. This was followed by several of the Protestant groups making statements containing a canon of scriptures list. Most importantly the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1647 which has influenced any number of Protestant groups. Interestingly, the one major Christian group yet to publish a canon list in any of its official doctrinal statements are the various branches of the Lutheran Church. The one major division of Christianity, the Eastern Orthodox churches, have generally felt little need to publish any official canon listing of scriptures.

One final issue of more recent significance is the issue of a closed or open canon. The groups publishing an official canon list, which is more than 80% of all Christian groups, express by their published list a closed canon viewpoint. That is, the documents listed officially are considered to exclusively comprise all the sacred scriptures viewed as inspired of God, and containing divine revelation. No other religious document, either ancient or modern, has legitimate claim to being sacred scripture. It may exert influence and possess some authority, but it can make no genuine claim to divine inspiration or to being sacred scripture. The general consensus of this perspective is that divine revelation was completed with the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation. Religious writings afterwards may have some authority but not as sacred scripture. Within the framework of traditional authorship views, this means that the era of God giving divine revelation is confined to the era of Jesus and the apostles in the first Christian century. Everything written subsequently is an attempt to understand that completed revelation of God in sacred scriptures.

But numerous cultist groups on the very fringe of Christianity, such as Mormonism, Christian Scientists etc. take the opposite view of an open canon. This is the only way to justify the adding of documents such as the Book of Mormon to the category of sacred writings possessing authority levels matching or even surpassing that of the Bible. Logically and sociologically such represents a self-serving posture to legitimize the cult founder or leaders, whose teachings are in direct conflict with those of the Christian Bible. Historically these groups represent serious departures from mainstream Christian traditions whose affirmations of both the Bible and the major creedal statements of the early church such as the Apostles' Creed stand in uniform agreement with one another. What puts such groups outside the boundaries of legitimate Christianity is their doctrines, their history, their ecclesiology, along with numerous other traits.

### **2.3.3.1 History of the Process for the New Testament**

In spite of large gaps of time without specific data documenting the process, the general picture that emerges from the time of the original writing of the 27 documents (around 50 to 100 AD) is that quickly copies of these writings began to be made after being first delivered to their initial reading audience. This began with the writings of the apostle Paul and by the end of the first century the last document was composed and began its circulation. These targeted readerships geographically extended from the Italian peninsula eastward around to northern Palestine. The Greek provinces of Achaia and Macedonia and Asia (in modern Turkey) received the greatest number of these documents initially.

How many collections, how extensive the collections were, just how far they were circulated is unknown until well into the last decades of the second century.<sup>93</sup> The picture begins to flesh itself out by the end of the sec-

<sup>92</sup>“Thus, some claim that, from the 4th century, there existed unanimity in the West concerning the New Testament canon (as it is today),<sup>21</sup> and that, by the 5th century, the Eastern Church, with a few exceptions, had come to accept the Book of Revelation and thus had come into harmony on the matter of the canon.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, full dogmatic articulations of the canon were not made until the Canon of Trent of 1546 for Roman Catholicism,<sup>2</sup> the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 for the Church of England, the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 for Calvinism, and the Synod of Jerusalem of 1672 for the Greek Orthodox.” [“Development of the New Testament Canon,” wikipedia, org]

<sup>93</sup>“The NT canon also has an uneven and complex history. Each of the books of our presently accepted NT achieved early rec-

ond century with scattered references from church fathers such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen et als.<sup>94</sup> Origen around 200 is the first church father to include any detailed discussion of this topic. The picture that emerges from Origen to Eusebius in the early 300s is a movement beginning with the collection of Paul's writings,<sup>95</sup> followed by the collection of the four gospels, being copied and circulated together by the end of the first century. The Acts of the Apostles came into this collection as a bridge between the gospels and the apostles.<sup>96</sup> Sometime at least in the second century other 'apostles' beyond Paul were added. At first this collection included only Peter, John, and possibly James. The so-called general letters were based on a trinitarian symbol of three documents. Only toward the end of the canonization process was this section expanded to seven documents based on the symbolism of the number seven for completeness. Revelation comes into canonical acceptance also toward the end of the process in the 300s. The Easter letter of Athanasius in 367 lists the 27 documents but not in the same sequence as found today.<sup>97</sup>

Indications are fairly clear that all 27 documents were known and used to some extent early on by the beginning of the second century. But references from the Muratorian fragment -- usually dated in the Greek original from around 170 AD -- suggest that divided opinion about James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, and Revelation

ognition in some circles, but no canonical lists appear before around A.D. 150, when the heretic Marcion proclaimed a canon consisting of his version of Luke and ten Letters of Paul. By the end of the century, more inclusive lists of authoritative NT writings were advanced, e.g., the Muratorian Canon (listing at least twenty-two of our present twenty-seven), Irenaeus, a bishop of Lyon in the mid-second century A.D. (clearly naming twenty-one), and Tertullian, a North African presbyter of the same period (twenty-two). The inclusion of Revelation was a matter of considerable disagreement. The second and third Letters of John, 2 Peter, and Jude were often not included, and Hebrews was sometimes omitted. At the same time, writings not found presently in our canon of twenty-seven were sometimes cited. The twenty-seven-book Latin Vulgate (Vg.) of Jerome (late fourth century) exerted considerable influence upon what books were generally recognized; moreover, provincial church councils held at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) recognized a twenty-seven-book NT canon. Unanimity in the Western church was not fully achieved, but the twenty-seven-book canon was predominant. In the east, the Syrian church achieved a twenty-two-book canon by the fifth century, although later christological controversies created division, resulting in some erosion of the fifth-century consensus." [Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 111-12.]

<sup>94</sup>The one NT text sometimes cited in these discussions is **2 Peter 15b-16**. "So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do *the other scriptures*." και ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν, 16 ὡς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς λαλῶν ἐν αὐταῖς περὶ τούτων, ἐν αἷς ἐστὶν δυσνόητά τινα, ἃ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι στρεβλοῦσιν ὡς *καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς* πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν.

The phrase at the end of verse 16, ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς, is often taken to imply that Peter acknowledges Paul's writings as scripture (γραφὰς). Mostly when this view is taken it is seen as clear proof that Peter had nothing to do with this document and that 2 Peter is reflecting a mid-second century viewpoint. But the syntax of the Greek sentence does not necessarily imply that Paul's writings are to be grouped as scripture along with the Old Testament. Much more likely, Peter was specifying two categories, Paul's writings that he know about and secondly the Old Testament scriptures -- both of which were being twisted into sources of false teaching.

<sup>95</sup>"The oldest surviving copy of the Pauline corpus is the Chester Beatty manuscript P<sup>46</sup>, written about AD 200. Of this codex 86 folios are extant out of an original 104." [F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 130.]

<sup>96</sup>"The gospel collection was authoritative because it preserved the words of Jesus, than whom the church knew no higher authority. The Pauline collection was authoritative because it preserved the teaching of one whose authority as the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles was acknowledged (except by those who refused to recognize his commission) as second only to the Lord's. The bringing together of these two collections into something approximating the New Testament as we know it was facilitated by another document which linked the one to the other. This document was the Acts of the Apostles, which had been severed from its natural companion, the Gospel of Luke, when that gospel was incorporated in the fourfold collection. Acts had thereafter to play a part of its own, and an important part it proved to be.<sup>59</sup> 'A canon which comprised only the four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles', said Harnack, 'would have been at best an edifice of two wings without the central structure, and therefore incomplete and uninhabitable.'<sup>60</sup>" [F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 132-33.]

<sup>97</sup>"Again it is not tedious to speak of the [books] of the New Testament. These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John." ["Letter XXXIX, Athanasius," CCEL.org]

existed across Christianity. This is confirmed in greater detail in the discussions of Origen (early 200s) and Eusebius (early 300s). In addition some other writings, such as the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Acts of Paul, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Didache, fell into this middle category of disputed writings (τὰ ἀντιλεγόμενα) indicating that some accepted them but others did not. Most of the so-called NT Apocrypha writings, mainly Gnostic in belief system, fell into the third category of clearly rejected writings. Of course these perspectives reflect the traditional orthodox (vs. heretical) views of Christianity in the second through the eighth centuries. The splinter groups outside the mainstream tended to have their own versions of writings falsely attributed to Christian leaders in the first century.

The primary things mainstream Christianity during the era of the church fathers looked for in writings claiming some kind of authority was the apostolic origin of the document and the functional product produced in the lives of those following the teachings contained in the document. Could the document be traced back to one of the Twelve or to Paul or not. This could even be indirect connections such as Luke and Mark in their associations with Paul and Peter. Secondly, and very importantly, were the beliefs set forth in the document consistent with what was traditionally understood to have been taught by Jesus and these apostles? The so-called *regula fidei*, or Rule of Faith, played an increasing role here. But this was not just doctrinal consistency that was at stake. Also, and in some ways more importantly, the inspiration of a document was understood to mean in part that the document contained the breath of God, and that when read and followed the document would lead to a genuinely healthy spiritual life. If it didn't, this was clear indication that God had nothing to do with the document, and thus it should be rejected. Such an evaluation system is rather 'messy' from a modern perspective and seems inexact. But over time it proved to bring to the surface the documents that genuinely belonged in the canon as sacred writings, and also exposed those that did not belong. Theologically this reflects the providential guidance of God over this process in bringing into being the documents of the New Testament that He had chosen for Christians to study and to follow as sacred scripture.

Thus by 400 AD, the vast majority of Christians in the ancient world acknowledged and were using the 27 documents we have in our New Testament as sacred scriptures.

### 2.3.3.2 Arrangement of the Documents in the New Testament

Just as the documents of the Old Testament are grouped by categories mostly literary in nature, so are the 27 documents of the New Testament. The sequential listing of individual books in the NT varied from time to time until achieving the present listing order late in the ancient era.<sup>98</sup>

First comes the gospels that contain the story of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. The earliest reference to these documents (clearly Matthew, Mark, and Luke) by Justin Martyr in the mid second century used the term 'memoirs of the apostles' since not until later toward 200 AD did the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον for gospel take on the addition meaning of 'gospel writing' beyond its definition inside the NT as the orally preached message of salvation in Christ.

After gospels comes the history of the beginning of the Christian movement from approximately 30 to 60 AD, called the Acts of the Apostles. This document was written clearly within the framework of first century Greco-Roman writing of history and actually centers on only two leaders, Peter and Paul.

The third section of letters is further subdivided into the letters of Paul and the general (=catholic) letters. The sequential listing of the 13 letters of Paul and 7 documents of the general letters is pragmatically based on descending length from the longest (Romans and James) down to the shortest (Philemon and Jude). Where two documents are addressed to the same individual or group the length of the first one determines the position for all. Thus 1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, 1-2 Peter, and 1-3 John are kept together. Hebrews has its own controversial history<sup>99</sup> and eventually landed in the position just following Paul's letters and prior to

<sup>98</sup>“The order in which the books of the New Testament appear differs between some collections and ecclesiastical traditions. In the Latin West, prior to the Vulgate (an early 5th-century Latin version of the Bible), the four Gospels were arranged in the following order: Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark.<sup>16</sup> The Syriac Peshitta places the major General epistles (James, 1 Peter, and 1 John) immediately after Acts and before the Pauline epistles. The order of an early edition of the letters of Paul is based on the size of the letters: longest to shortest, though keeping 1 and 2 Corinthians and 1 and 2 Thessalonians together. The Pastoral epistles were apparently not part of the *Corpus Paulinum* in which this order originated and were later inserted after 2 Thessalonians and before Philemon. Hebrews was variously incorporated into the *Corpus Paulinum* either after 2 Thessalonians, after Philemon (i.e. at the very end), or after Romans.” [“New Testament,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>99</sup>“In the 3rd century, Origen wrote of the letter, ‘Men of old have handed it down as Paul’s, but who wrote the Epistle God only

the general letters. This reflects some later association with Paul but not a full affirmation of pauline authorship, otherwise it would have been list after Romans and before First Corinthians because of its length. The general letters section began with a trinitarian based three document listing and then was expanded to the symbolically significant seven documents as authorship uncertainties over 2 Peter, Jude, and 2-3 John.

The final section is that of apocalypse containing only the Book of Revelation, with its own controversial history. This uncertainty over authorship and also of contents made many slow to accept it into the canon. And for some Orthodox branches of eastern Christianity it has never been accepted as sacred scripture.

The picture that has hopefully emerged through this discussion is the practical manner in which the Bible has come into being. Clearly it is a human book with human authors having done the writing of it in very real human languages. That makes the study of this aspect of composition absolutely essential. But beyond this it is sacred scripture with God standing behind it and in it. Christian experience over time has established this clearly. Ultimately, it discloses to us the will of God for our lives on a day to day basis. This divine aspect did not override the human dimension but rather gives the Bible the enduring quality making it essential for religious faith and commitment in every age. Our study of scripture is ultimately seeking this goal of grasping God's will for our life. But the only way to get to this objective with the help of the Holy Spirit is to grasp the minds of those who put this writing into human words for the people of their day and time. We turn then to the best possible devices available for grasping the minds of the human writers of the Bible. And along the process of analyzing and drawing conclusions on this we will discover that embedded 'breath of God' in scripture that brings it alive and makes it dynamic for our experience today.

## CONCLUSION

### 2.4 Application to Third John

Third John is an exceeding short document so far as writings go. Connecting it to the content of chapter two concerning the origin of scriptures raises several important question. I want to group these under the two central topics of this chapter: sacred scripture and canonicity.<sup>100</sup>

#### 2.4.1 What implications for 3 John are present in the idea of inspiration?

- 1) In light of the discussion on inspiration in topic 2.2, describe in your own words how the human writer and the Spirit of God were involved in the process of creating this letter.
- 2) What would be an appropriate label for this document? And why? Distinguish between terms used in the New Testament and by the church fathers after the second century.

ἡ γραφή (writing, scripture):

ἡ ἐπιστολή (letter):

βιβλίον (book = scroll):

τὰ ἱερά γράμματα (sacred writings):

#### 2.4.2 How does 3 John fit into the canon of the New Testament?

- 3) Third John had a difficult time gaining acceptance into the canon of New Testament scriptures. Why?
- 4) Who is Ὁ πρεσβύτερος, *The Elder*, who identifies himself as the sender of this document?
- 5) What section of the New Testament is this document located in? Why?

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knows.” [“New Testament,” wikipedia.org]

<sup>100</sup>List of online sites for answering the questions posed in the Learning Activities:

*Third Epistle of John* at wikipedia.org: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third\\_Epistle\\_of\\_John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Epistle_of_John)

*John, Third Epistle of* at Easton's Bible Dictionary: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/eastons-bible-dictionary/john-third-epistle-of.html>

*Third Epistle of John* at Theopedia.com: [http://www.theopedia.com/Third\\_Epistle\\_of\\_John](http://www.theopedia.com/Third_Epistle_of_John)

*3 John* at Early Christian Writings: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/3john.html>

Also use the quotes at the end of this chapter:

John William Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*, Completely rev. and updated. (Oxford: Lion Publishing plc, 2000), 457.

We cannot consider 1 John independently from the other letters of John, and John's Gospel. 2 and 3 John are related very closely to 1 John, though they are quite a different type of literature. Unlike 1 John, they are short, personal letters, one addressed to a church and the other to an individual called Gaius. Their author calls himself 'the Elder', and in 2 John he warns his readers against wandering teachers 'who do not acknowledge that Jesus Christ came as a human being' (2 John 7–11). He was concerned that these people should not be welcomed into the Christian community, and because of this many scholars think that 2 John must have been written before 1 John, as 1 John envisages a situation in which the heretics had already been excluded from the church (1 John 2:19).

3 John advises Gaius about a man by the name of Diotrephes, who was engaged in a power struggle for control of the church, in relation to which 'the Elder' says that he intends to pay a short visit to correct 'the terrible things he says about us and the lies he tells' (3 John 9–10). The situation envisaged in 3 John seems to reflect a stage when new patterns of church government were beginning to emerge. As the apostles and their representatives died, the corporate leadership of the earliest churches began to disappear, and new leaders were trying to assert themselves in a process which eventually led to the formal appointment of just one authoritative leader in each local church. Perhaps 'the Elder' represented the older form of church organization, and that might explain his concern about the emergence of just one person claiming to be the church's leader. In the second century, anyone with the title of 'Elder' would himself have been a part of the organized hierarchy of the church, though the writer of these letters clearly does not belong in that context. He was obviously highly respected by his readers, but he does not seem to have had absolute authority over them as he can only appeal to them to do what he believed to be right.

The majority of scholars believe that 'the Elder' who wrote 2 and 3 John also wrote 1 John, for there are many connections between the three letters in vocabulary and style, and certain statements in 2 and 3 John seem to presuppose some knowledge of the issues dealt with in the first letter. If it was possible to decide the identity of 'the Elder', we could presumably, therefore, identify the writer of all three letters.

But this is easier said than done. Guidance has often been sought in a statement attributed to Papias, who is quoted by Eusebius as having written in his *Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord*, 'If ever anyone came who had followed the elders, I inquired into the words of the elders, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, had said, and what Aristion and the elder John, the Lord's disciples, were saying.' Eusebius goes on to observe that 'It is here worth noting that he twice counts the name of John, and reckons the first John with ... the other Apostles ... but places the second with the others outside the number of the apostles ... This confirms the truth of the story of those who have said that there were two of the same name in Asia, and that there are two tombs at Ephesus both still called John's' (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III.39.4–6).

If the 'elder John' to whom Eusebius refers was the same person as 'the Elder' who wrote 2 and 3 John, then presumably this second-generation Christian was also the author of 1 John (and perhaps had some connection with the writing of John's Gospel). But Papias' statement is itself too ambiguous to provide much guidance, for he also appears to call the disciples themselves 'elders', and Eusebius might therefore have been wrong to infer that Papias was actually referring to two different people called John. In addition, this whole argument assumes that Papias had access to reliable information. But we must treat these statements with caution, especially when we only have secondhand knowledge of what Papias actually wrote. As far as the writings of John are concerned, it is more helpful to begin with the documents themselves.

There is a certain amount of debate about the precise relationship

between 1, 2 and 3 John, and John's Gospel. There are considerable and close similarities between the gospel and 1 John. Both use the same language in the same way, and distinctive expressions such as the contrasts between light and darkness, life and death, truth and error, and the emphasis on love (not to mention the description of Jesus as the Word or Logos) are all found in both gospel and letter. Both of them also use the same techniques for conveying their message, initially stating an idea in a simple and easily remembered way, and then examining its implications from a number of different angles.

But there are also a number of differences. 1 John has a more restricted vocabulary than the gospel, and its emphasis is also slightly different at some points. For instance, while the gospel lays most emphasis on the present experience of the Christian (so-called 'realized eschatology'), the letter has much more emphasis on the future hope. The letter also has a stronger emphasis on the church and its sacraments, though of course these things are not entirely absent from the gospel.

It has been proposed that the gospel was edited by the writer of the letter, to bring it into line with his own thinking on these points. There is certainly some evidence that the gospel contains the work of more than one person, but it is unlikely that the original form of the gospel has been revised by someone who found it theologically unacceptable. An attractive explanation of the complex connections between the various books connected with the name of John is to be found in the suggestion that there was in Ephesus a 'school' of Christian thinking associated with and growing out of the work of John, the disciple of Jesus. He served as the theological mentor of a whole group of Christians, and was the source of the information contained in the fourth gospel (see John 21:24), but the literature as we know it now was the product of this 'school' rather than of just one individual.

In dealing with John's Gospel it was suggested that it could have been first written in what might be called a 'Palestinian edition' and, if so, then the gospel would possibly be the first of these books to have been edited and reissued from the school in Ephesus. Perhaps its message was subsequently misunderstood and misapplied by its new readers. In a Jewish context, the contrasts between darkness and light, truth and error, life and death were all ethical contrasts, whereas the same terms had always been used by Greek thinkers to describe the cosmological distinction between the divine world of spirit, in which God lives, and the evil world of matter, where we live. Some Greek readers of the gospel could easily have been misled by these terms, and that misunderstanding ultimately led them to the position adopted by the Docetists. The way the gospel emphasizes the present reality of the resurrection in the life of Christian believers would also lend colour to such speculations.

In response to this growing threat, 'the Elder' (presumably a prominent member of the Johannine school, if not John himself) wrote 2 John to warn against such false teaching. But things went from bad to worse, the false teachers broke away from the church to form their own sect, and 1 John was written as a more theological response to the problem. Not only was the Docetic view of Jesus challenged, but it was now emphasized that the resurrection hope was very much something tangible and future, and not just a part of the present spiritual experience of Christians.

If anything like this reconstruction is correct, the date we give to these letters will depend on the date assigned to the gospel. The kind of teaching opposed in 1 John is certainly more advanced than that encountered by Paul in Corinth. There is a clear idea of 'heresy' in 1 John, but it is not as complex or as well developed as we find in the second century. Since the heretics opposed in 1 John seem to have a number of features in common with those mentioned in Revelation, a date sometime towards the end of the first century is perhaps the nearest guess we can make.