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“Die Verheißung des Protevangeliums ist zwar durch den Kreuzestod Christi objektiv ein für allemal erfüllt, aber sie gewinnt ihre fortgehende subjektive Realisation innerhalb der Gemeinde Christi durch jeglichen Glaubenssieg derselben über den durch den Versöhnungstod gerichteten und überwundenen Satan.” (p. 700.) Philippi adds a sentence of Bengel: “Quaevis victoria fidei, novum dolorem affert Satanae.” “Every victory of faith, brings a new pain to Satan.”

Our thoughts also turn to Luther as we read v. 20:

“Mit unsrer Macht ist nichts getan,
Wir sind gar bald verloren;
Es streit für uns der rechte Mann,
Den Gott hat selbst erkoren.
Fragst du, wer der ist?
Er heißt Jesus Christ,
Der Herr Zebaoth,
Und ist kein andrer Gott.
Das Feld muss er behalten.”

Paul appropriately closes with a prayer: ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μεθ' ὑμῶν. “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

Walter A. Schumann.

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The Formation of the New Testament Canon

The history of the New Testament canon is that section of the historical discipline in theological study that endeavors to answer the question: “By what process did the 27 books contained in our New Testament — composed severally under various external conditions, at different times, and by a truly remarkable variety of individuals — in the course of about three centuries come to be regarded by the Christian Church as God’s inspired word of the New Covenant, an infallible norm of faith and conduct, worthy to be ranked as a *New Testament* beside the writings of the prophets of the *Old Testament*, and therefore suitable for reading in church and authoritative when appealed to in theological discussion?”

It must be clear at the outset that there is a fundamental

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difference between the study of canon and that of introduction to the various Biblical books. The latter (isagogics) has to do with the *actual* origin of the books of Scripture; it treats of matters of authorship, date, situation, contents, and the like. In other words, the introductionist has to tell us what the books of the Bible really *are*. The New Testament canonist has an altogether different task. He must follow the separate books of the New Testament through a veritable maze of conflicting opinions, of quotation and misquotation, of allusion and innuendo, of charitable exposition and vitriolic digression, of pros and cons, on the part of the early Church Fathers; he must continually interrogate his witnesses as to the extent of their New Testament canon, very much as did the Roman proconsul at Scili in Northern Africa, who on July 17, 180 A. D. asked the prisoners before him charged with the “crime” of Christianity: “What do you have in your church book-case?” To be sure the modern questioner will not always receive as lucid and direct a reply as did that Roman proconsul (“Our customary books — *i. e.*, the Gospels — and in addition the letters of that holy man, Paul”), but he is generally able to get a pretty fair picture of the state of opinion concerning the canon of the New Testament at any particular time. The history of the canon is then the history of opinion held by the church’s leaders concerning the right of the several New Testament books to be included in the collection of truly apostolic writings. For most of the New Testament books that opinion is an almost unanimous affirmative from the beginning on. A few that were accepted as canonical at an early date seem to have fallen under a cloud as time went on, and doubts concerning their canonicity were expressed; others officially appear as candidates for canonicity only at a later date (*i. e.*, though we know of their presence and use quite early, they are not mentioned by name until late) and are therefore marked as suspect by some and directly rejected by others. Therefore, the mere fact that a patristic writer fails to mention a certain book or perhaps even rejects it, is no argument against that book’s genuineness. Nor is its inclusion in some father’s canon an argument for its apostolicity. It isn’t only the modern church that is afflicted with cranks among its Biblical scholars.

The Origin and Character of the New Testament Writings

For the purpose of canon history it is important to bear in mind that, although the books of Scripture were all divinely given through the instrumentality of human agents, with the sole exception of the Revelation of John (1:19 "write the things which thou hast seen") the books of the New Testament were not so far as we know produced in response to any special revelation or command from God, but were rather *brought into being under the same general conditions as were those which prompted the oral preaching of the apostles*; that is to say: Christ had given his disciples the general command to preach his Word and make disciples of all nations (Mt. 28:19); he had promised to send them the power of the Holy Ghost, who should support them in their witnessing "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8); at Pentecost that Holy Spirit was given them in a very special degree; and this Spirit then prompted (*impulsus*) them, when the occasion was given, not only to oral preaching (Peter at Pentecost, Paul to the Athenians) but also to written composition (Peter to the churches of Asia Minor — I Peter; Paul to the church at Rome — Romans). Essentially therefore the apostles' written word is identical in authority with their spoken utterance; in both writing and speaking the Holy Ghost "taught them all things" and "brought all things to their remembrance whatsoever Jesus had said unto them" (John 14:26); when they wrote as well as when they spoke it was the divinely given Spirit of Truth who "guided them in all truth" (John 16:12) (*illuminatio*); they spoke *and wrote* "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (I Corinthians 2:13), so that of their written works as well as of their oral preaching that applies which Jesus said of his disciples in his prayer to his Father in Heaven (John 17:8); "I have given unto them *the words* (τὰ ῥήματα) which thou gavest me." These writings are then but the written statement of the content of their oral preaching and must till the end of time remain the immovable foundation of Christ's Church of the New Covenant, Ephesians 2:20-21: "Ye . . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy

temple in the Lord") and together with the revelation granted through the prophets of the Old Testament the one *canon* (measuring stick) of faith and conduct for Christ's church here upon earth.

The impelling motive that prompted the individual New Testament writer will have varied from case to case; now it must be sought in the general needs and conditions of the church as a whole (Mark); now in the peculiar conditions prevailing in some local church or group of churches (Galatians, Corinthians). But for the bulk of the New Testament the following characterization would hold true: "The New Testament is the literary precipitate resulting from the impingement of the Christian movement upon the Gentile world." That too is why the language is Greek throughout.

The Earliest Collections as Steps in Canon-Making

The work of collecting some of the New Testament books into smaller and larger groups must have been begun early in the Apostolic Age. But again we can point to no direct command of God for such collecting. The external need of collecting the writings of the apostles must have grown out of the same situations as those were that called forth these writings in the first place. The church had had need of these writings of the apostles while the ambassadors of Christ yet lived; how much more would not the Church feel the need of these writings when the apostles had died? For in effect, in his writings the individual apostle lived and preached and admonished again.

The epistles sent by the apostles were read, we know, to the congregations to whom they were addressed. Paul gives explicit directions for such procedure Colossians 4:16 and I Thessalonians 5:27. But these early Christian congregations would not be satisfied to give such a letter but a single reading. The letters would be carefully preserved in the congregation's book-chest, like that of the Scilitan martyrs, to which we have already referred. And the treasured letter, we may be sure, was preserved not as a museum piece but in order that it might be read and studied time and time again. Deep in the second century Polycarp of Smyrna writes thus to the Philippian church (3:2): "Paul . . . being absent wrote unto you epistles, by which, if you pore over

them, you shall be able to be built up unto the faith which was given unto you."

It would furthermore be but in the very nature of things if neighboring congregations would exchange their apostolic letters, and if each congregation would copy the neighbor's letter and thus add it to its own church collection before returning the neighbor's letter to the recipient church. Paul himself had pointed the way for the making of such a local neighborly Pauline epistle corpus at Colossae and at Laodicea, for he had directed the Colossians and the Laodiceans to exchange his letters to them (Colossians 4:16). And eager as Paul's hearers had been to hear God's word from his lips ("when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" — I Thessalonians 2:13), how much more eager for every written word coming from the beloved pastor himself would they not be when word spread that Paul was a prisoner or had perhaps already been executed?

History does not record the names nor the place of residence of those Christians who were particularly zealous in the collection of the Apostolic writings. But *that* such work was done we do know: St. Peter himself knew a collection of Paul's letters (II Peter 3:16). Therefore we may be certain (so far as certainty is possible with any historical reconstruction) that the collection of the letters of Paul did not come about by their fortuitously drifting together as it were but rather as the result of conscious and energetic action on the part of some individual or group of individuals, perhaps of one of the leading apostolic congregations; Corinth, for instance. Names, dates, places — all escape us. So too does the immediate motive: was it the knowledge of the great apostle's death? was it a renewed interest in the life and work of the Apostle to the Gentiles awakened by Luke's publication of his two-volume work, *Luke-Acts*? If the latter, the Book of Acts would have provided a sufficient clue to lead the searcher to just those congregations that were in possession of the principal letters of Paul. However these things may have been, the greatest student of New Testament canon history (and that because he not only knew his subject from A to Z but also accepted the New Testament for that which it pretends to be) Theodor Zahn, concludes that in the 80's of the first century the 13 letters of Paul

accompanied by Hebrews were collected by the church at Corinth and made available to Christians everywhere. (II Peter 3:16 need not refer to such a church collection as posited here.) The individual inquirer may wish to quarrel with the date and place. But of this there can be no doubt: **Long before the first century was over someone somewhere** (but strategically located for purposes of dissemination) **brought together the extant writings of Paul, added by way of appendix as it were the Epistle to the Hebrews and made these writings available to the then rapidly expanding Christian world.** For we shall see that early in the second century the so-called "Apostolic Fathers" all have and reflect just these writings. Soon this early Pauline Corpus together with Luke's Acts is reflected in every Christian writer and is given the name: "The Apostle" (ὁ ἀπόστολος).

Early in the second century a similar Gospel corpus must have been made containing our canonical four Gospels. And this *collection* soon became known as "The Gospel" (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον). Hence we get our strange Greek designation for the separate Gospels: *κατὰ Μαθθαῖον*, etc. This *κατά* is distributive: the whole collection is "The Gospel"; one section is "the part by" Matthew, another, "the part by" Luke, and so on. The second century writers refer to the Gospel collection as "the four-fold Gospel" (τὸ τετράμορφον εὐαγγέλιον). The Didache of the early second century knows the *written Gospel* (N. B. *not* Gospels) as divine.

This then is the fundamental canon (Urkanon) of the church. *The Gospel* and *The Apostle*. We know so little about the early history of the remaining books of the New Testament (the so-called Catholic Epistles and John's Revelation) that it would be hazardous to make any statement whatsoever concerning their manner of approach to the canon. It does seem clear that the three epistles of John circulated as a Johannine Epistle Corpus from the first as we shall see. But — and this is what is important — when the disciples and hearers of the apostles begin writing (*i. e.*, just as soon as we have evidence for a New Testament canon at all) in language and in thought they reflect these remaining eight books of the New Testament as well, not in such a manner to be sure as would satisfy a scientist with a microscope or an engineer with a vernier caliper, but with

sufficient clarity so that we today who know and love the Lord Jesus as they did may be sure that they knew and valued these other writings, by Peter, James, John, and Jude, and trusted them as the very Word of God.

So from the very first the Christians' appeal is to the written apostolic and prophetic Word, not to the authority of the bishop of Rome or to any other human authority. In fact the first Roman bishop who tried to be a pope, Victor, (c. 190 A. D.) failed miserably in the attempt. He tried to force the churches of Asia Minor to accept the date for Easter in vogue at Rome. Polycrates of Ephesus (Eusebius H. E. 5:24) replied to Victor and firmly and not-so-politely told Victor to mind his own business, denying the Roman's claim to infallibility or any right to dictate to other churches.

We have several times alluded to dissemination and distribution of these collections of New Testament books. Now distribution implies multiplication or production, or, in modern terms as applies to books — publication. We are not warranted in reading into the second century the conditions that prevailed several hundred years later when in the days of Ambrose and Eusebius (Eusebius H. E. 6:23) Christian libraries became regular Christian publishing houses, or societies for the propagation of Christian knowledge. Nor would it seem to be altogether scholarly to assume that the church of the second century went into the publishing business in the manner of the renowned publishers of Cicero, Horace, Pliny, and Martial at Rome: those famous ancient publishing houses of the Sosii, of Atticus, of Atrectus, of Trypho, Secundus, and Valerinus. To be sure there was a great amount of literary activity (*i. e.*, publication) in the pagan world during the first three centuries of the Christian era. In fact if we count the number of papyrus manuscripts of Greek authors written from the third century B. C. to the seventh century A. D. we find that the first three centuries of the Christian era saw produced more than twice as many of these "literary" papyri as the third, second, and first centuries B. C. and the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries A. D. *combined*. (762 as against a total of 362. U. of Wisconsin Studies, No. 9, Madison, 1923). These figures may not mean much but they at least bear witness to considerable pagan literary activity during the years of Christianity's

rise. The early Church lived in an atmosphere of publication. Again, the men who turned to Christianity during these years must have had considerable experience of publication and its products before their conversion. After the ex-magicians at Ephesus (Acts 19:19) had burnt their magical papyri rolls, Luke estimates the value of the destroyed books at \$10,000. There must have been several thousand *published* books thus burned. for private scrawls or unpublished manuscripts, be they actually in themselves or be they but deemed ever so valuable, have no commercial value declarable in dollars and cents.

So to be sure the early church carried on its work against a background of tremendous literary and publication activity on the part of the surrounding pagan world; but I want it clearly understood that I am not implying that this church made publication rather than evangelization by word of mouth its primary method of "making disciples of all men." I do not believe that the evidence warrants such a conclusion. And I say this in conscious opposition to a whole school of modern writers on the subject. But I am certain that the early church not only preached the Gospel and collected the known writings of the apostles at a very early date, but that it also published these works in its own way and in doing so adopted and very nearly monopolized, if it did not outright invent, a revolutionary development in book-making, the leaf-book (codex).

From early times the papyrus roll had been the only form of book. Vellum was occasionally employed, as recent finds at the newly excavated Roman fortress at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates prove, but papyrus was the standard writing material, and the roll its universally accepted form. Some Egyptian sacred texts are on rolls a hundred feet long or longer (133 feet the longest). But for practical purposes the roll rarely exceeded thirty-five feet. The height varied from ponderous tomes of *Schmoeker* proportions (19 inches high) to handy pocket rolls of five inches or less. A height of from nine to ten inches would be the normal size roll. Yet such an average 32 to 35 foot roll would obtain only one of the longer Gospels or a single book of Thucydides but no more (written on one side; cf. Ezekiel 2:10 "written within and without"). Aside from being cumbersome to handle and extremely perplexing when one sought a single pas-

sage in a work with whose entire content one was but imperfectly acquainted (here cf. Luke 4:17 Jesus opened the roll and found the place where it was written: Jesus *knew* the book of the prophet!), the papyrus roll could not contain all of "The Gospel" nor all of "The Apostle". So in the earliest days each book had its own history, and it would have been just as hard for the early Christians as it would be for us today to think of, let us say, the collected letters of Paul as a unity without actually being able ever to hold those collected letters in one's hands at one time. The nearest the ancients ever came to collecting papyrus rolls physically in order to show their consanguinity of content was when they placed rolls of related content into containers which on ancient representations of them look for all the world like minnow-buckets. Not a very enlightening arrangement!

Until quite recently it has been supposed that the papyrus roll continued in full use up to the early years of the fourth century and that it was then replaced by the vellum codex. But discoveries in Egypt have shown recently that not later than the early part of the second century the experiment was tried of using the codex form for papyrus. It seems that this, if not actually the invention of the early Christians, was at any rate largely employed by them; for though the roll continued as the popular format for works of pagan literature all through the second and third centuries, the vast majority of Christian writings are in codex form. So that (and let us again underscore divine providence as an element not only in the production but also in the preservation and distribution of these our most sacred writings) when the church had collected its New Testament into the groups we have come to know as the Four Gospel Corpus, the Pauline Letter Corpus, and the remaining writings (cf. the Old Testament Law, Prophets, Writings) it was now possible, though utterly unheard-of before, to contain each of these collections in a single papyrus leaf-book; and examples of such Pauline and Gospel codices of an early date have actually been found.

From an early date certain writings (gospel, acts, apocalypses) began to appear which pretended to be of apostolic origin though actually they were non-apostolic and frequently even of heretical origin (Docetic, Gnostic). Paul himself had to contend with such forgeries: in II Thessalonians he reveals that the Thessalonians have been disturbed by such a spurious letter in their attitude

toward the return of Christ to judgment (2:2-3); he therefore attests the genuineness of this his letter to them by his signature (3:17). And here he draws special attention to this signature ("so I write") as compared with his simple "The salutation by the hand of me Paul" of Colossians 4:18. Obviously the church at Colossae had been subjected to such attempts at swindling likewise. First Corinthians (16:21) is likewise authenticated by this autograph signature.

In fine, the early church was flooded with a deluge of apocryphal literature; there were gospels: according to the Hebrews, of the Ebionites, according to the Egyptians, of Philip, of Matthias, of Peter, of Thomas, and a Preaching of Peter; there were other gospels aside from these whose names are no longer known but of which fragments in Greek, Coptic, and Ethiopic have turned up in recent years; there were the infancy gospels like those of James and Thomas (all pseudonymous of course) which elaborated by means of mythical and fictitious additions the simple and noble canonical narrative of the conception, birth, and youth of our Savior; then there were "gospels" retelling (and generally with a strong heretical coloring) the passion story (Gospel of Peter, Acts of Pilate, Gospel of Bartholomew), there were "acts" ostensibly of John, Paul, Peter, Andrew, and Thomas; there were apocryphal epistles and epistle collections, like the Letters of Christ and Abgar, and the correspondence of Paul and Seneca, and there was a whole raft of apocalypses (Peter, Paul, Thomas, the Virgin Mary, Stephen). Some of this apocryphal New Testament literature seems to have been merely Christian romance, *i. e.* fiction using the apostles as its chief characters and depending on a universal interest in the love-story motif, and on an inclination toward tales of adventure and of the marvelous for a wide reading circle (Paul and Thekla, infancy gospels with their tales of the boy Jesus, "Peter" in his "Acts" making a dried herring swim, animals like Balaam's ass frequently speaking). But the bulk of this material is something other than more or less innocent fooling; it is obviously tendentious and relies on the methods of fiction to get across its heretical doctrines ("John" in his "Acts" reports: "When I sat at meat he would take me upon his own breast; and sometimes his breast was felt of me to be smooth and tender, and sometimes hard like unto stones." Again:

"And oftentimes when I walked with him, I desired to see the print of his foot, whether it appeared on the earth; for I saw him as it were lifting himself up from the earth; and I never saw it." Or — John reports that at noon on Good Friday Jesus appeared to him in a cave on the Mount of Olives and explained that to the crowd below only he appeared to be crucified. The Gospel of Peter has Jesus say on the cross: "My, my power, thou hast forsaken me.") Also, much of this material is outright pornography. Still, this apocryphal literature must have had a tremendous vogue as the many papyrus finds of it prove. A number of Christian writers reflect a knowledge of one or the other of these apocryphal works; a few take this or that work seriously, but there can be no better evidence for the nicety of judgment and the clarity of vision of the early Church as a whole than the fact that the vast majority of these works were never considered for the canon at all, and those few that did slip into a position of candidacy under the aegis of some church leader who had a weakness for that sort of thing were, though tolerated at the fringe of the canon for some time, promptly branded by the church as a whole as disputed and therefore unreliable as a norm in faith and conduct.

If you would permit it, I should like to conclude my discussion of the formation of the New Testament canon right here. So far as we are concerned, the New Testament canon has been described to its completion. But you will naturally object that I really have not yet begun to describe the New Testament canon formation at all, that I have not yet said a thing about Marcion, Heracleon, or Basilides, of Hippolytus, Autolytus, or the Canon Muratori, that I have not yet uttered a single one of those outlandish names that we have all come to consider a necessary evil in New Testament canon study. In view of what we generally understand by the study of the canon such a complaint would be entirely justified. However, before I continue with a brief résumé of the New Testament canon at stated intervals from the Apostolic Fathers down to just before 400 A. D., I should like to pause for a moment to criticize our general attitude toward study of the canon. We often take the position that this is a "pretty ticklish subject"; sometimes we feel toward the student of the canon as some persons feel toward the student of New Testament textual

criticism: that he is exposing himself to too much factual knowledge and is thereby endangering his faith; as though in these matters the strategy of the ostrich were after all the best policy! In these two matters, textual criticism and canon history, I firmly believe that we fundamental Lutheran Christians have often unwittingly (yet none the less actually) allowed the unbelieving critic to jockey us into a position where we tacitly permit him to conduct our research for us on his own terms, and while withholding assent to all *his* conclusions, we still have no positive convictions of our *own*. Why? Because the negative critic has told us so often and so long that there are so and so many textual variants in the New Testament text, and that the church fathers have such a variety of opinion on the constituency of the New Testament canon that we have an understandable timidity about approaching these subjects and have let the unbeliever at least dictate our major attitudes on these subjects to us. What the critic is careful to pass over in silence is the one important point that we know hundreds of times (this is no figure of speech but a cold mathematical statement) more about what the apostles of Jesus Christ actually said than we know about the text of *any ancient author*. Still, I have yet to meet the student of the classics who is tearing his hair because he cannot be sure precisely what Thucydides or Pindar said on a certain occasion. The case of the canon is a similar one: the critics would have us believe that the making of the canon was a veritable Battle of the Bible from the beginning, with the separate books now in and now out of the canon, so that in the Darwinian sense the New Testament today is but a case of the survival of the fittest for battle, not necessarily of the genuine, the apostolic, the best.

I furthermore firmly believe that the best way to combat that evil is to approach the story of the canon not from the *negative* point of view of the raging controversies of the third and fourth centuries, but from the *positive* side of the early collections of Gospel and Apostle, of emphasis on the great facts we do know positively and not of stress on those details on which there may have been some doubt in the past. To be sure, we cannot make these matters as clear as the multiplication table. The historical data are lacking for that. And to the unbeliever anything we say will be but begging the question anyway. Nor will we take

away a jot of the divinity of Scripture by such an approach: the divine mystery of inspiration must remain just that. But when words are written with reed and ink on papyrus and when books are physically handed from man to man, these things are phenomena in the world of men and justifiable subjects for historical study. Nor will such study lessen the glory due divine providence: it can but heighten that glory by making clear how here too the Almighty has used the things of men to effect the purposes of God. — But to return to the canon:

To be sure from time to time doubts were expressed about the genuineness of this or that book. The reasons given were dogmatical or historical. Sometimes the objector was misinformed; sometimes his own theological position was not beyond reproach. But we shall see that these objections were but minor jogs in the straight road that eventually led to the full recognition of the twenty-seven book canon as we know it today.

The New Testament Canon as Revealed at Stated Periods

I. *The Time of the Apostolic Fathers; The Age of Reflection*

The term "Apostolic Fathers" is a modern word used to designate as a group the following earliest Christian writers and writings outside the apostolic circle itself:

Clement of Rome, one of the earliest of Roman bishops, presumably the Clement mentioned Philippians 4:3 as Paul's follower, though this is by no means certain. About 96 A. D. he addressed a letter to the Church at Corinth in the name of the Roman congregation.

Barnabas wrote his letter perhaps about 120 A. D. The "letter" is rather a homily in the Alexandrian manner and was itself regarded as scripture by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. But the work cannot be by Barnabas, the companion of Paul.

Papias, says Irenaeus, was a companion of Polycarp and a hearer of John. He was the bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia in the reign of Trajan (98-117).

Epistle to Diognetus. About 130 an anonymous Christian writes this letter to Diognetus a pagan in response to the latter's question what Christianity is. Its sixth chapter is deservedly famous. It begins: "What the soul is in the body, that the Christians are in the world." It breathes the spirit of Paul and knows the Gospels as the real revelation of God.

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, c. 107-117, was taken to martyrdom at Rome and on the way wrote the seven letters for which he is famous.

Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, had in his youth been the disciple of John at Ephesus and fellow-disciple of Papias there.

The Shepherd of Hermas is a sort of apocalypse and may well be the work of the Hermas mentioned Romans 16:14, though the Canon Muratori denies this. If actually by Hermas, the work dates not long after the year 100.

The Teaching of the Lord by the Twelve Apostles (The Didache) is our earliest example of the church manual. Its date is about 110 A. D. It echoes Matthew very palpably as well as several New Testament epistles (I Corinthians, II Thessalonians, I and II Peter, Hebrews, Jude) and knows the written Gospel as divine. It was published in 1883 and has thrown a great deal of strange and interesting light over the simple organization, faith, and worship of the early Christian communities. Its provenance is unknown.

A careful study of the text of these writers has convinced the essayist that the Apostolic Fathers knew and used the New Testament as it is constituted today. They quote and allude directly only on a few occasions (*Barnabas* 4:14 quotes Matthew 22:14 as *scripture*; *Polycarp Philippians* 12:1 quotes *Ephesians* 4:26 as *scripture* in a way that proves that to him Old Testament and Paul's letters are on the same level as inspired writings.) The four Gospels are quoted and alluded to abundantly, not by name to be sure, but by text. Separate writers have favorite Gospels: thus — the *Didache* and *Ignatius* seem to have a great preference for Matthew, but that is readily understandable. The Acts and the Pauline corpus are repeatedly reflected, and it is certainly a mere chance that *Colossians* and *Philemon* so far as I can see are nowhere alluded to. But the Pastoral Epistles are the very stock in trade of *Polycarp* of Smyrna and of *Ignatius* of Antioch; *Hebrews* is practically the framework of *Clement's* Letter to the Corinthian Church; I and II Peter are known to the *Didache* and II Peter seems to have been a great favorite with *Hermas* (he uses it in his argument no fewer than four times). *Hermas* (*Mand. XI*, 9) and *Polycarp* (4:3) both allude to *James* 2:1 in such a way as to prove that they know the epistle; *Didache* 2:7 must have *Jude* 22 as its background. *Papias* knew the

Revelation of John as an inspired apostolic writing; in fact, that is just the reason why Eusebius, the great opponent of the Apocalypse, does not hesitate to reject Papias' excellent witness to the early state of the New Testament canon, on the ground that Papias is too *dense* to be taken seriously. (Note: Papias' theological views are Eusebius' reason for disqualifying him as a legitimate witness.) Both Papias and Polycarp use I John, and Polycarp treats I and II John as though he regarded them as *one epistle* (he conflates I John 4:2f. with II John 7 — Polycarp 7:1). It would seem to be a safe and fair assumption that these three little epistles circulated as a corpus from the start, so that he who has any one may be assumed to have all three. At any rate, the early writers often regarded the three as forming one letter; Irenaeus quotes II John 7:8 and I John 4:1-2 as from "The Letter of John", and there is no valid reason for supposing that any one of the three ever circulated without the others before the Peshitto Syriac canon of A. D. 411 (it accepted only three Catholic epistles, I John, I Peter, James).

We must not fail to quote one instance where archaeology has given factual evidence for the use before 150 A. D. of the four-fold Gospel in Egypt. In 1935 Bell and Skeat published in London a little work entitled "The Fragments of an Unknown Gospel". The document here published consists of two leaves (4 pages) plus a fragment of another from a papyrus codex whose date the leading palaeographers put no later than 150 A. D. The "gospel" seems to be a gospel harmony (and certainly not apocryphal). But what is important is that the words and phrases of all four canonical Gospels are interwoven to produce this harmony: John 5 and 9; Matthew 8:2-3; 22-16; Mark 1:40-42; 12:14; Luke 5:12-13; 20:2). Proof sufficient that early in the second century the canonical Four Gospels were *the basis* for the life of our Lord in far-off Egypt.

II. *The Age of Increasing Clarity of Reference; The Time of the Apologists and of the Growth of the Sects*

In the days of the Apostolic Fathers the writers of the church had and rejoiced in the possession of the sacred apostolic word. There was no need of talking much *about* that revealed word — the Word itself was the all-important thing. In this word the men just discussed lived and moved and had their being. But

soon conditions in the world and in the church itself were shaped in such a way that it became necessary for the church to talk *about* its sacred writings as books and as the writings of individual apostolic men. The reasons for this were twofold:

First, the church undertook to defend itself against the attacks of the Jews and of the Roman state. It had to prove its right to exist on the one hand on the basis of its claim that in the work of Christ that which the prophets had spoken but came to a divinely-ordained consummation, and on the other hand on the basis that it, the church, was not a revolutionary society nor a new sect, but a religion as old as the oldest and therefore entitled to the tolerance and protection of Roman law. Naturally its claims against both Jew and Roman state would be based upon the words of New Testament scripture, about which body of writings obviously certain statements would now have to be made.

Secondly, on the periphery of the church there now arose the sects (Gnostics, Montanists, Marcionites) which denied the truths taught by historical Christianity and appealed each to its own allegedly genuine body of "scripture" for proof that it was right and that the church was wrong. Naturally the protagonists of the church would fight the vagaries of the sectarians by appeals to genuine apostolic tradition. Hence arose the need of declaring what was and what was not that genuine apostolic tradition, especially since the heretics produced works of their own and claimed divine authority for these.

Justin called "the Martyr" (†165) had been a philosopher at Rome. He had travelled widely (born at Shechem — scene of *Dialogue* laid at Ephesus — major activity at Rome) and was one of the most learned men of his day. He knows the "memoirs of the apostles which are called gospels" and means our canonical Four. To be sure he supplements these with vivid data out of the still living oral tradition, as when he has Jesus born in a cave (*Dialogue* 78:5) and mentions the "yokes and plows" the Lord made while a carpenter at Nazareth (*Dialogue* 88:8). He once speaks of "the memoirs of Peter" but as we read on we perceive that he means our canonical Mark (3:17; *Dialogue* 106:3). He knows the story of Pentecost from Acts (*Apology* 50:12). In language and in thought he reflects every one of Paul's letters except Philemon (*e. g.* *Apology* 10:4, cf. Phil: 2:13). He reflects Hebrews nineteen times. He nowhere mentions Paul by name.

perhaps intentionally, so as to avoid even the suspicion that he leans toward the heresy of Marcion who had tried to remake Christianity by excluding everything from the church and its New Testament that was not Paul's or Pauline (Marcion's canon: Paul's epistles and a truncated Luke). First Peter Justin knows well, but I can find no reference to II Peter or to Jude. But James is in his canon (Jas. 1:15: Dialogue 100:5), and the Revelation (Dialogue 81:5) is to him a work of "John, one of the apostles of Christ", and Justin quotes it as an authority on a level with the saying of the Lord Luke 20:35f. This is the canon too of the other apologists. Tatian, the pupil of Justin who became the founder of the heretical Encratite sect, wrote an apology in which he frequently quotes the Gospel of John verbatim. He was also responsible for a gospel harmony (the Diatessaron) which became the standard Gospel text of the church in Syria, supplanting the separate gospels. But the fact that Tatian was able to make his harmony of these Four and have it accepted by the church proves that the Four canonical Gospels were authoritative to the church.

During this period then the church is speaking of its apostolic books in increasingly explicit terms. As yet it has drawn up *no canon*. But a heretic, Marcion, was the first to do just that for his sect. He boldly created a "gospel" and "apostle" of his own, and excluded all others. So we shall find that in the next age to be considered the church too took steps to make clear just what its canon contained. This became increasingly necessary because of the rapid spread of the Montanist movement with its Pentecostal-like excrescences.

III. *The Age of Explicit Statement of the Canon*

By the above caption for a discussion of the years just preceding the year 200, we do not mean to imply that by now all the church accepted the same books in its New Testament. Far from it. That did not come till two hundred years later. There were still many local differences which we can but sample, not describe. In the previous discussion we have looked about for evidence that the several books were accepted as scripture *somewhere* and we have seen that they all were. But that is not the same as saying that *all* were accepted *everywhere*. This they most certainly were not. Rome steadily refused to accept Hebrews, and the East

continued to show uneasiness about the Revelation of John. But now in various parts of the church men did begin to come out boldly and say: "such and such is the canon — nothing else!" Thus Irenaeus of Lyons in Gaul, the pupil of Polycarp, the pupil of John, undertakes to prove that there could have been only four Gospels, no more, no less, for are there not four quarters of the heavens, and did not God make exactly four covenants with men (those of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ)? Irenaeus is likewise explicit on the Letters of Paul, the Acts, and on the Revelation.

Contemporary with Irenaeus some unknown writer, perhaps from Rome, drew up in Greek a list of the books which he or his church accepted as genuine. His work has disappeared. What we have of him is a fragmentary copy of an atrociously spelled manuscript of an abominable Latin translation of the Greek original. It was first published by the librarian Muratori at Milan not as an item of interest to Biblical scholars but to show students of the classics how bad Medieval Latin could be. For the *Canon Muratori* has been the despair of everyone who has tried to read and expound it from end to end. But for our purposes it is extremely important not so much for what it contains as for evidence that the church is now finally establishing a set canon of New Testament scripture. The Canon Muratori names all New Testament books except James and possibly Hebrews.

IV. *The Age of Criticism*

With the advent of the Christian *scholars* Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius, the practical criticism that must have been exercised before the Canon Muratori could be written or before Irenaeus could utter his famous pronouncement on the Gospels now entered the literary field, and the right to inclusion in the canon was discussed from every possible angle for all the New Testament books. The one criterion of this criticism was: *is the book apostolic?* Apostolicity was considered proved if the following conditions were met:

1. the recipient (individual or congregation) had to be able to vouch for its genuineness;
2. the chief congregations founded by the apostles or nearly associated with them had to accept the book;
3. the book had to receive general assent;

4. the doctrine of the book in question had to agree with that of the undisputed genuine books of Scripture.

As a result of this criticism Hebrews, Second Peter, Second and Third John, James, Jude, and the Revelation came to be classed among the "doubtful" books, both as opposed to the "accepted" books and as opposed to the "rejected" (those whose non-apostolicity was beyond question). Let us note carefully that a "doubtful" book was not necessarily rejected by the writer who uses this term of it. More often than not the writer himself accepts the book in question, but by classifying it as "doubtful" he is merely being honest enough to say that, although he accepts it, there are others who do not.

Clement of Alexandria does not leave us with a very clear canonical picture. He has a number of definite notions: he thinks Hebrews is a Hebrew writing by Paul translated into Greek by Luke. But Clement is a typical Alexandrian in admitting just as much as possible into his canon (cf. the Alexandrian liberality with regard to the LXX canon). His list would include the Apostolic Fathers Barnabas and Clement of Rome as well as three apocalypses: those of Hermas (the Shepherd) and Peter in addition to the canonical Johannine Revelation. (Clement I and II are in the Alexandrian manuscript of the Bible: Codex A.)

With Origen we know precisely what we are about: he investigated and analyzed and then made two lists of books:

List I: books all accepted (*ὁμολογούμενα*).

List II: books some rejected but he accepted (*ἀντιλεγόμενα*.) Origen's own canon is therefore his List I plus List II. Into List I (*homologoumena*) went: Four Gospels, Acts, Fourteen Letters of Paul (Origen included Hebrews as Paul's and put it into this list despite the fact that he must have known that the letter was not fully acknowledged in the West. No doubt he felt justified in placing it on the undisputed list since so far as he could see there ought to be no question about it), First Peter, First John, The Revelation of John — twenty-two books in all. His List II (*antilegomena*) read: James (Origen is the first writer to mention the book by name though we have seen that it was known and used early in the second century), II Peter, II and III John, Jude, Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas — seven books in all. Accordingly Origen's canon has twenty-nine books

(those *he* accepted): 4 Gospels, Acts, 14 letters of Paul, 8 Catholic epistles, and 2 apocalypses: Barnabas as Catholic epistle and the Shepherd as apocalypse are added to our 27 book canon, and this is precisely the canon of the Codex Sinaiticus. But Origen is an Alexandrian. His contemporary, Hippolytus, the last Greek Father in Rome (c. 235) rejects Barnabas and all but *one* apocalypse (John's) but also the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hippolytus, we note, is characteristic of the Roman tendency.

Somewhere near the middle of the third century Dionysius the Great of Alexandria published a work on the Revelation of John. In opposition to Origen, he denied the book to the Apostle John. The next great figure in canon history, Eusebius the Church Historian, was a great admirer both of Origen and of Dionysius. In his canon he included the twenty-two acknowledged books of Origen but admitted the Revelation only on the proviso: "if it seem proper." This he did out of respect for Origen who had included the book in his "undisputed" list. To these 22 books Eusebius added as accepted by himself: James, Jude, II Peter, and II and III John. This is precisely our canon if we overlook Eusebius' very personal feeling about the Apocalypse. Eusebius also made a list of books he rejected: the Acts of Paul, Hermas, Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, Didache, and the Revelation of John "if it seem proper." Eusebius' respect for Dionysius certainly is responsible for the inclusion of the last-named here just as his respect for Origen was responsible for its inclusion in his first list.

V. *The Settled Canon*

Athanasius became bishop of Alexandria in 326. His episcopate of nearly fifty years was broken by intervals of banishment and expulsion. He traveled to Constantinople and to Rome: he was banished to Gaul, visited Belgium, and took refuge in Upper Egypt. In one way or another he saw the world, and saw it as one of its leading figures (Council of Nicaea). As a result he knew the Christian world, East, West, North, and South, as few men did.

In the year 367 he devoted his annual Easter letter to the churches of his diocese to the books of scripture. In this letter then he is reflecting the general opinion of all Christendom (of course not of the heretical sects). He lists the books of the New

Testament. They are those of the Eusebian list minus the disability afflicted upon the Revelation by Eusebius (the 27 books of our canon). For by that day honest, well-informed, and devout Christians everywhere were officially acknowledging those books as apostolic Scripture which the Apostolic Fathers early in the second century knew and used as such. The East that had followed Eusebius had withdrawn its opposition to the Apocalypse; Rome now fully accepted Hebrews. Certainly there had been honest differences of opinion among those who dealt with the New Testament canon as such; and this for reasons we can all respect: differences of temperament, training, background; honest convictions arising from scholarly research; devotion to an admired teacher or to a beloved church.

But if this essay has any value at all it should impress this one thought: Before the fourth century was out Christians everywhere accepted precisely those books as infallible apostolic word which the church's first leaders of whom we have any knowledge were already accepting when the second century was just getting under way. Both groups were bound in their consciences to believe that of these the Lord Jesus Christ was saying again with pointed emphasis:

"He that heareth these heareth Me."

Blume.

Second Sunday in Advent

TEXT: LUKE 12, 35-48

In the Lord Jesus Christ dearly Beloved!

Joy and earnestness are two entirely different moods. Can they possibly exist side by side in the same person, and is the one compatible with the other? And do they actually exist side by side? In very many people they do not. These are the children of the world, the unconverted. Their joy is of such a nature that sincere earnestness cannot exist in their heart at the same time. When the unconverted man is once deeply enmeshed in worldly joy, he is giddy and foolish and devoid of all earnestness. The Christian presents a different case. The first Advent Sunday summons him to joy and ushers him into a sweet season of joy: the Advent Season lasting till Christmas. And today this second Advent Sunday comes to him with a summons to a thorough-going earnestness. But a Christian can follow both summons, the one to joy as well as the one to earnestness, at one and the same time, nor is his Advent joy dampened in any way because of this earnestness. This leads us to the subject we shall consider on the basis of our text:

ADVENT SPELLS EARNESTNESS

Let us consider:

1. The evidence of this earnestness in a Christian;
2. The source of his earnestness;
3. Things that conflict with such earnestness.

I

The evidence of this earnestness.

How does the earnestness of Advent evidence itself? In this, first, that a Christian makes it his concern to be the kind of man that the Lord Jesus would find him at His final advent on the Last Day, i. e. watching. That is a figurative expression taken from the parable which the Lord Jesus here employs. He compares Himself with a lord who comes from the wedding as the bridegroom, and the Christians He compares with the servants of the lord who watch and wait for the lord, in order to open unto him immediately upon his arrival. Then we are told in greater detail — still in the language of the parable — what goes to make up such watching and waiting. Two features are given: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." We gain an understanding of these words from a study of Jewish customs, particularly those regarding weddings, upon which the Savior bases His parable. If a servant did not gather in his garment with his loin-girdle, the garment would hinder him in walking and at his work; he could not, for instance, get up quickly and perform his tasks. He was not ready and prepared to be on his way. Then "Let your loins be girded about" means: be ready and prepared to set out, so that nothing may detain or hinder you. — Now what is this about lights? They are to be burning? Again the reference is to wedding customs. The servants would go out to meet the returning lord and bridegroom with torches or lights, and in this festive way they conducted him into his own house. These are the two things that make up the watching and waiting of the servants.

What is the spiritual meaning of this? That is not hard to answer. We Christians are to watch and wait for the heavenly Bridegroom, Christ, Who on the Last Day will come from the wedding, i. e. from the wedding arranged in heaven and prepared for all eternity, the wedding which spells nothing but eternal glory for the Church of God and Christ. But just how are we to watch and wait for Him? First, by having our loins girded about in a spiritual sense. That means: Spiritually nothing is to hinder or detain us; we are to be ready and prepared to set out to meet the Lord. This earth with its treasures, its affairs, and its pleasures is not to have such a firm grip upon us, that it takes us a long time to pull ourselves together, tear ourselves away from it, leave all and go out to meet the Lord — and that we by such delay miss the right time for opening unto Him and receiving Him. It is quite clear, to put it briefly, that this being