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What is This?
The Bible Canon and the
Christian Doctrine of Inspiration*

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In forming the canon, the church acknowledged and established the Bible as the measure or standard of inspiration in the church, not as the totality of it. What concurs with canon is of like inspiration; what does not is not of God.

In Protestant thought the concepts of Bible canon and of inspiration are virtually synonymous. Thus the criteria and history of canonicity rightly have been inextricably related to the issue of biblical inspiration. Since the Reformation, Protestant doctrine on biblical inspiration has been a corollary consequent to the accepted circumstances of canonization, whether of Old Testament or of New. The purpose of this essay is not to question the doctrine that the Bible is inspired; that is a universal Christian doctrine. Nor is it to question the inter-relatedness of the history of the canon and the Christian doctrine of inspiration. It is rather to suggest that clarification in our understanding of canonical history entails concomitant and commensurate revision of the doctrine of inspiration.

Revisions in our understanding of the criteria and history of the Old and New Testament canons are in the wind. Indeed, a revision of the canonical history of the Christian Old Testament, put forth by this author a decade and a half ago, has gained substantial acceptance among biblical scholars, though as yet it is largely unknown in the church. In this revision it was shown that the

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Alexandrian or Septuagint canon had erroneously become the commonly accepted solution to the problem of how the Old Testament of the church came to differ in content from the Jewish canon of scriptures. Though it was already present in Augustine, an Alexandrian canon hypothesis was first proposed in modern times by John Ernest Grabe (1666-1711) and again independently by John Salomo Semler in his *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canons* (Halle: 1771). It was Semler’s formulation that came into general acceptance following the work of Abraham Kuenen which made it no longer possible to defend the closing of the Jewish canon by Ezra and the Great Synagogue. Until then the exclusion of the books Protestants call “Apocrypha” from their Old Testament had been Protestant dogma since Luther.

In his debates with Johann Maier of Eck at Leipzig in June and July of 1519, Martin Luther had backed himself into a difficult corner. His colleague at Wittenberg Andreas Bodenstein of Karlstadt had argued against Eck in 1518 that the text of the Bible was to be preferred above the authority of the church. A year later Luther continued this position in his debates at Leipzig. It was while debating the doctrine of purgatory that Luther was hoisted on his own petard. Eck confronted Luther with the text of II Maccabees 12:46, “Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” This text was the scriptural basis upon which the Roman church had largely based its doctrine of purgatory. Luther could neither avoid the reading nor deny that the church had accepted this book. Thus pressed, Luther launched into an argument of desperation. He denied the right of the church to decide matters of canonicity; canonicity, he argued, is determined only by the internal worth of a book. Moreover, while Luther recognized that the church used this and other books not included in the Jewish canon of scriptures, he argued that Jerome had denied canonical status to these books. Jerome held that only the books of the Jewish canon are canonical and so now did Luther. While recognizing the validity of Eck’s argument that Augustine and the tradition of the church

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accepted these books, Luther chose Jerome's position that the Jewish canon was the canon of Jesus and the apostles. Previously Luther had used and cited the books of the wider Christian usage, but the position he argued against Eck became hardened so that, following Jerome's example of segregating these books from the Old Testament in his Old Testament lists, Luther placed these books in a separate section following the Old Testament in his German translation of the Bible. He titled them "Apocrypha: these are not held to be equal to the sacred scriptures and yet are useful and good for reading." Most of the Protestant translations of the Bible into the languages of Europe followed Luther's lead, relegating the Apocrypha to a segregated section between the testaments. Until Kuenen, Luther's authority and his dependence on Jerome served as the Protestant dogmatic bulwark against all arguments and evidence for a larger Old Testament usage in the church. With Kuenen, however, that bulwark was breached; the case for a closed Jewish canon since Ezra was destroyed, and the Alexandrian canon hypothesis came to be generally accepted.

While Protestant scholars came to accept the Alexandrian canon hypothesis as the explanation of how the early church came to use a wider collection of Jewish religious books than the Jewish list, that canon was treated with disdain. Hellenistic Judaism, it was argued, had produced an abortive, sectarian canon which was, therefore, without authority. The early church had made a mistake, being largely Gentile, in using this Hellenistic canon of diaspora Judaism. As late as 1962 Robert Henry Pfeiffer could still argue for a de facto Hebrew canon in Palestine

9. It is an anachronism to say, as often is done, that there are no quotations from the books of the Apocrypha in the New Testament. No collection of Apocrypha was in existence when the books of the New Testament were written. The books Protestant Christians call Apocrypha and Roman Catholics call deuterocanonical are the Jewish religious books that were included in the Christian Old Testament of the western church but that were not included in the Jewish canon of scriptures. Thus the Apocrypha was not a distinguishable group of writings until the Christian Old Testament of the west was being formed.
11. This segregation in Luther's translation of 1534, was preceded by Karlstadt in his De Canonicis Scripturis Libellus (1520), reprinted in Karl August Credner, Zur Geschichte des Kanons (Halle, Waisenhaus, 1817), pp. 316-412.
in the days of Jesus and the apostles, which canon was simply rubber-stamped at the Council of Jamnia about A.D. 90. Even Hans von Campenhausen's recently translated into English *The Formation of the Christian Bible* tacitly assumes this stance when he asserts that for more than a century the church and the synagogue used the same canon. However, the new circumstance is that we can no longer differentiate between Palestine as Hebrew and Alexandria as Greek in the matter of canon. Indeed, each of the bases upon which the Alexandrian canon hypothesis had been set have proven wrong. We now know that a significant number of diaspora Jews had settled in Palestine, Jews whose mother tongue was Greek, and that the Septuagint circulated in Palestine widely enough and long enough to have undergone a Palestinian revision. This apparently is the Greek text used by Justin. That Philo was unaware of the theory limiting inspiration to antiquity, from Moses to Ezra, is no indication of his separation from Palestinian Judaism since that theory is first encountered only in Josephus. Moreover, the law received special reverence throughout Judaism, in Palestine as well as in Alexandria, and in Alexandria the collections of Law and Prophets, and additional books not yet defined into a collection, were known not only by the translator of Sirach into Greek but also by Philo. Second Maccabees (15.9), like the Gospels and Paul, divides the scriptures into the Law and the Prophets. And we now know that not only the diaspora but Palestinian Judaism as well, beside the Law and the Prophets, used a wide, undifferentiated group of scriptures that included the later defined collections of the Writings, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, and other books known to us only by name (exclusive, of course, of post-A.D. 70 writings). Both the sectarian writings from Qumran and the early Christian writings of the New Testament reflect this wider usage. We are not now able to distinguish between the way in which the books of the later defined Jewish canon and those belonging to

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17. Ibid., pp. 88-91.
18. Ibid., pp. 91-94.
the wider group were used either at Qumran or in the early church. Thus we now know that there was neither an Alexandrian canon nor an early de facto Hebrew list closely paralleling the Jewish canon of circa A.D. 90. The church, arising in Judaism and becoming separated from it before the revolt against Rome in A.D. 66-70, received from Judaism the Law and the Prophets as closed collections and the wider, undifferentiated scriptures circulating in Judaism before A.D. 70 as its scriptures. But the church did not receive a canon; Judaism had not yet a canon to bequeath when the church arose and became separated from it. Only after A.D. 70 do we see movement in Judaism toward the narrowing of their scriptures until a canon, to which nothing could be added and nothing subtracted, was formed about A.D. 90. All subsequent Jewish lists attest to this canon by the uniformity of their contents.

Thus the church received “scriptures” from Judaism, but not a canon. And if we are to be able to write an accurate history of the canon in the church, we cannot continue to use the terms “scripture” and “canon” as synonyms, as has been the practice. This only leads to confusion. Rather, in describing the history of the canon these terms should be differentiated. My proposal is that the term “scripture” should be used to designate writings that are regarded as in some sense authoritative, and the term “canon” used to designate a closed collection of scripture to which nothing can be added, nothing subtracted.

When the church became aware that the Jews had a canon, that the Jews employed only a restricted number of the scriptures the church had received from Judaism, the church sensed the a priori claim of Judaism to know what the canon was. This awareness is first noticed in Melito (c. A.D. 170) and then with increasing vividness in and following Origen. Caught between the anvil of church usage—

26. Sundberg, op. cit., pp. 129-69. Terms such as “open canon” and “flexible canon” confuse the issue, enabling us to suppose that what we now mean by “canon” was in existence before a canon was actually formed.
Justin’s comment to Trypho, “not your scriptures but ours,” was characteristic of the church—and the hammer of the a priori claim of Judaism to know what the canon was, the church was forced to define the content of her Old Testament for herself. Initially I attempted to describe this process with considerable tentativeness. The want of challenge in the interim decade and a half tends towards squatter’s-rights confidence. In the East, where Jewish influence was most felt, the Jewish canonical list was most closely followed. There the church included in its Old Testament only those books outside the Jewish canonical list for which they knew a tradition of authorship relating the book to an author of the Jewish list. Thus I Esdras was associated with Ezra-Nehemiah, Baruch and the Epistle (of Jeremy) with Jeremiah, and Daniel and Esther were used in their expanded Greek forms. The eastern Old Testament canon appears to have reached a common ground about the middle of the fourth century. Books most dearly loved but thus excluded from the Old Testament, such as Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom of Solomon, thereafter sometimes came to appear in not yet so sharply defined New Testament lists dating subsequent to that time.

In the West, not only books thus agglomerated under authors of the Jewish list but books for which there is evidence that they continued to circulate in Judaism after A.D. 90 were also included: Maccabees, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, Judith, Tobit. With them the list of the Apocrypha is completed, that is, the books included in the Old Testament canon of the Western church but not included in the Jewish canon. The Old Testament canonical list was substantially settled in the West with the councils in North Africa at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries.
The Apocrypha has been on the losing side of the Protestant struggle with its Old Testament. But now the issue is raised again. That question is not only a matter of so and so many books. It now can be seen as much more a question of the Christian doctrine of inspiration. The historical circumstance is now unequivocal: In a time when access to the relevant historical material and methodology was unavailable, Luther appealed to a theory propounded by Jerome with respect to the Jewish canon that we now know was wrong. Furthermore, it is evident that Luther’s rubric that “Scripture is its own attester” is a camouflage statement. It seems to place the criteria of canonicity upon the internal self-witness of a writing to its own worth; whereas, in fact, the judgment is made by the person arguing the case. Canonicity is thus made to depend entirely upon subjective judgment. If canonicity is thus to be determined, then, as Howorth has said, “everyone must in fact either become an infallible pope to himself or else accept Luther as an infallible pope.”

Beginning with our earliest Christian documents, the letters of Paul, a consistent Christian teaching has been that the inspiration that enlightened Judaism through Moses and the Prophets was now poured out upon the church. Paul argued that the meaningful ancestry of Abraham was a spiritual ancestry of faith, in which ancestry Christians now stand as inheritors. The first fruit of that faith is the Spirit which inspired and enlivened the subsequent life of the church. I know of no one who questions but that the inheritance of the church was from pre-A.D. 70 Judaism. But that was Judaism without a canon. The church inherited scriptures from Judaism but not a canon, the Jewish canon not being defined until about A.D. 90. Thus, in view of the Christian doctrine of inspiration, it is no longer possible for Protestant Christians to argue for the validity of the Jewish canon for the Christian Old Testament; we now know that the Jewish canon was not the scriptures of Jesus and the apostles. Thus Protestant Christianity, in maintaining its practice of limiting its Old Testament to the Jewish canon, controverts the teaching of its own New Testament scriptures that the Spirit of God is to be found in the church. It is evident that both in content and doctrine, Protestantism, in its view of Old Testament canon, has broken away from its spiritual heritage. If Protestant Christianity is to continue its custom of restrict-


33. Rom. 5:5; 7:6; 8:1-17, 23.

34. Sundberg, “The Prot. OT Canon,” pp. 200-03.
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ing its Old Testament to the Jewish canon, an entirely new rationale and doctrine of canon will have to be described. But any Christian doctrine of canonization that takes seriously the Christian doctrine of inspiration will lead ultimately to the Christian Old Testament as defined in the Western church since that Western church is our spiritual lineage.

At the beginning of this essay I said that the winds of revision are being felt also in the history of the New Testament canon. When the process of modern historiography began to be applied in biblical studies, one of its more comforting contributions was the demonstration of an early core New Testament, relatable to apostles, apostolic men, and the hearers of apostolic men. This brought us down only to the times of Irenaeus. And the church, since the canonical histories of Brooke Foss Westcott and Adolf von Harnack has been confident that the bulk of the New Testament writings—a core New Testament—were already recognized as canonical by the end of the second century. All that remained for subsequent time was the mopping-up exercise. Both Henneche and Cullmann have stated the assurance felt all around that this history of the New Testament canon is one of the more assured results of New Testament scholarship.

Now that assured result is also being brought under question. The foundational criteria for New Testament canon in modern studies has been authority like that of the Old Testament. In the latest major history of the New Testament canon, Von Campenhausen puts the matter thus:

To make my own position clear, [he says,] by the beginnings of the canon I do not understand the emergence and dissemination, nor even the ecclesiastical use and influence of what were later the canonical writings. One can, in my view, speak of a 'canon' only where of set purpose such a document or group of documents is given a special, normative position, by virtue of which it takes its place alongside the existing Old Testament 'scriptures.'

However, our present circumstance is, as I have discussed above, that we now know that the church had no Old Testament canon until mid-fourth century in


36. Das Neue Testament um das Jahr 200 (Freiburg I. B., J. C. B. Mohr, 1889); idem, Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments und die wichtigsten Folgen den neuen Schöpfung, Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament, 6 (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1914).


the East and until the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century in the West. Thus, when Christian writings came to be used in the church with like authority to that of the scriptures inherited from Judaism, we are able to say that we have Christian scriptures but not Christian canon.  

Similarly, the corollary to the "parallel to the Old Testament" standard for canon, that the introductory formulas, "as it was written (gegraptaи) and "the scripture" (hē graphē), have come unstuck. In 1948, John Lawson noticed that Irenaeus uses "the scripture" of writings that are definitely not scripture;  

Richard Patrick Crosland Hanson has shown that the same is true for Origen. And in my 1968 article, "Towards a Revised History of the New Testament Canon," I have shown that a case that these formulas designate canon cannot be derived from the New Testament materials, as had previously been held.  

The second step in the traditional development of a so-called core New Testament by the end of the second century has been based on the fourfold Gospel collection and the New Testament list of Canon Muratori together with the usage of Irenaeus and Tertullian. Scholars, such as Caspar René Gregory, Alexander Souter, and Robert McQueen Grant, have seen in Tatian's use of our four Gospels evidence that these four Gospels were already regarded as canonical in Tatian's day. However, Tatian used our four Gospels in constructing his Diatessaron in a way similar to that in which Mark was used by the authors of Matthew and Luke in writing those Gospels, that is, as resource materials. No one has argued that the Gospel according to Mark was already canonical when Matthew and Luke were written since it was used as a source by the authors of these Gospels. Moreover, Gilles Quispel has attractively argued that Tatian's Diatessaron was actually composed from five gospels, the fifth being the Gospel of...
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the Hebrews. These considerations and the fact that the Diatessaron was "the gospel" for three centuries in the Eastern church speak against the presumed canonical status of the Four when Diatessaron was written. Similarly, Jürgen Regul has shown that the old Latin prologues to the Gospels cannot be used to support an early canonization of the Four Gospels.

Two stunning developments have arisen with respect to Canon Muratori. Canon Muratori is a Latin list of New Testament books that was found by Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, being contained in a codex dating from the eighth or possibly seventh century, which codex belonged previously to Columbian's Monastery at Bobio. The canon is fragmentary since the beginning is lost and the end is abrupt, showing that it was copied from a mutilated and presumably ancient exemplar. Also, some bits of the Muratorian canon have been found in four eleventh or twelfth century manuscripts of St. Paul's epistles at Monte Casino. A Greek original was suggested by Muratori when he first published the list in 1740. The Monte Casino fragments and Julio Campos' demonstration that the Latin text of the list discloses close acquaintance with the Vulgate confirm Muratori's widely accepted suggestion. The fragment has been dated as early as the middle of the second century but is now commonly dated in the last decades of that century and placed in Rome. In our time Canon Muratori has been the handsome key-stone to the "core New Testament by the end of the second century" hypothesis. As the history of the New Testament canon has been constructed, the Muratorian list at the end of the second century was followed by a list by Origen in the third century, preserved in Eusebius, bridging the gap to the multiple lists of the fourth century, thus presenting a plausible, coherent history.

One stunning shock to this coherent history is that Hanson has shown that Origen neither had a New Testament list nor a concept of a New Testament canon. Eusebius made Origen's list for him. (It should be noticed that Eusebius also constructed a rudimentary New Testament canon for Irenaeus.) The list Eusebius gives for Origen he has collected from four separate writings of Origen's which, in their original contexts, refer not to a canonical list but to col-

52. H.E. 6.25.3-14.
lections. Origen certainly knows the letters of Paul, but he gives only a sketchy list (which actually commences with Ephesians!). What Hanson has not noticed is that in thus destroying a canonical list for Origen, Canon Muratori as commonly dated is left without a parallel for nearly a century and a half. If Canon Muratori indeed is to be dated from the end of the second century, then it is an isolated list, created before there was any interest in the church for such, and done in a corner where, beyond its chance preservation, it left no discernible impact upon the church for more than a century. Thus, in no way could Canon Muratori have played the important role in the history of New Testament canonization that has been ascribed to it.

The other shock to the established place of Canon Muratori is that its early date and Roman provenance have come into question, the fourth century and the Eastern church being suggested as preferable. The case is too long to detail here; I give only a brief summary. As to place of writing: the meaning of the term urbs (city) as Rome in line 38 does not depend upon the place of writing of the fragment, but upon the place designated in Acts 28:30f., and Romans 15:24, 28 to which the Muratori passage refers. Hugo Koch has shown that the term catholica (ecclesia) could not have the restricted meaning “Rome,” since Cyprian, in the third century, uses the term in writing to bishops of other than the Roman see when referring to their individual bishoprics and uses catholicae (ecclesiae) when more than one bishopric is involved. With this the case for locating the list in Rome is lost. As to date: traditionally this has been based on what proves to be a dogmatic interpretation of what the list has to say about the Shepherd of Hermas, especially the phrase nuperrime temporibus nostris. This phrase has been translated “very recently, in our own time,” taking nuperrime as a diminished superlative, and interpreted to mean within a generation of Pius of Rome. However, another viable translation is, “most recently,” with reference to the previously named books, “in our own time,” that is, not apostolic times. Here a close parallel is had in Irenaeus, who, in discussing the time of writing of the Book of Revelation, says, “For it was not seen long ago, but almost in our

56. Contra Celsum 3.20: Eph., Col, Thess., Phil, Rom. Above, in 3.19 there is a quotation from I Cor. but that letter is not named in the list and the introduction to the list follows this quotation.
own generation, at the end of Domition's reign (oude gar pro pollou chronou heōpathē. alla schedon epi tēs hēmeteras geneas, pros tō telei tēs Dometiamou archēs). Thus, since the meaning of this phrase is equivocal, it cannot be used in a determinative fashion for the date of the list. The list must be dated and placed by the location of parallels to other information contained in the list. The parallels are as follows: (1) James Donaldson has identified significant vocabulary items in the list which find no parallels in the second century, some of which find no parallel before Cyprian. (2) The presence of Wisdom of Solomon within the New Testament list, previously an enigma, now is recognized as an attempt in the Eastern church to preserve books loved by the church but which could not be included in the Jewish canonical list by agglomeration, there being no tradition in the Eastern church relating them to authors of the Jewish list. The impact of the Jewish canon in the east dates from Athanasius. Parallels to Muratorius’s inclusion of Wisdom are had in Eusebius, who included Wisdom in the partial New Testament list he constructed for Irenaeus, Epiphanius, who included Wisdom and Sirach in his New Testament list, and the index of Codex Alexandrinus, which concludes the New Testament list with the Psalms of Solomon. (3) Eusebius marks the transition point from the acceptability of Hermas in the church. Tertullian, the only previous father to exclude Hermas, is a special case since his rejection of Hermas dates from his conversion to Montanism and, therefore, is not representative of the church. The attitude of Muratori exactly parallels that of Athanasius so that, in this respect, the list falls between Eusebius and Athanasius. (4) The questionable place of John’s Apocalypse, on the very fringe of canonicity following Wisdom, and the equivocal status of the Apocalypse of Peter in the list are both distinctly Eastern features and find their parallels at the end of the third and in the fourth centuries. Therefore, far from being a Roman list from the end of the second century, Canon Muratori is probably an Eastern list dating from the fourth century. Its associations are closest to those of Eusebius of all other New Testament lists.

Finally, in the traditional history of the New Testament canon, the status of those books that came nearest to being included in the New Testament but were
not is either ignored or passed over as of so little significance as to be immaterial to canonical history. Think for a moment about the concept of a core New Testament at the end of the second century if it were to include I Clement, the Letters of Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, the writings of Polycarp, the Shepherd of Hermas, and perhaps others. But that is just where our literature leaves us. One cannot distinguish in usage and authority between these writings and the writings collected into our New Testament in the church fathers at the end of the second century and on until the fourth.

In my view, a core New Testament canon at the end of the second century is no longer a viable hypothesis. I will not describe here the configuration I see as a more accurate and realistic history of the New Testament canon. The outline of that configuration is readily available in my articles, "Towards a Revised History of the New Testament Canon," *Studia Evangelica* 4; and "The Making of the New Testament Canon," *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary* (1971). I wish rather to turn my attention to the Christian doctrine of inspiration as it becomes evident in the configuration of canonical history there described. This doctrine of inspiration is not different from that which obtained in the church at the close of the second century. But, when the history of the New Testament canon was thought to culminate then, criteria of canonization were too narrowly related to apostolicity to recognize it.

The Christian doctrine had its origins in earliest Christianity and is taught throughout the documents of the New Testament. It is the doctrine that God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon all believers in Jesus. Paul taught that "no man can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." In Acts, Luke related the promise of the prophet Joel, "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," to all believers in Jesus. I know of no teaching in the New Testament that in any way restricts that doctrine to particular persons or to particular times. The church into the fourth century, throughout the history of the canonization of the New Testament (and the Old), also knew of no restriction of that doctrine, neither to apostles, not to apostolic times, nor to apostolic men. Quite independently Krister Stendahl and I, about the same time, came to a similar conclusion that the Christian doctrine of inspiration could not serve as a criterion of canonization, certainly not because the inspiration of the scriptures was in any doubt, but because the doctrine of inspiration was so broad in the church as not to be limitable to the canon of scripture.

One of Stendahl's students, Everett Roy Kalin, collected an overwhelming

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67. I Cor. 12:3b.
abundance of evidence from the writings of the church fathers into an unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled, "Argument from Inspiration in the Canonization of the New Testament," in which he shows incontrovertably that this is the case. I give here illustrative examples, mostly from his collection but also from mine.

Just as we would expect, one of our earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament, First Clement, written from the church at Rome to the church at Corinth about A.D. 95, says of Paul's letter to Corinth, "Take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he first write to you at the beginning of his preaching? With true inspiration (ἐπ' ἀληθείας πνευμάτικὸς) he charged you concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos." This shows that Paul's own sense of inspiration was also attributed to his letters by his earliest Christian readers. But the traditional doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible hardly prepares us for what the writer of First Clement has to say about his own writing. He writes, "You will give us joy and gladness if you are obedient to the things written by us through the Holy Spirit" (τοῖς ἡγαμμένοις διὰ τοῦ ἅγιου πνεύματος). In 59.1 one reads, "But if some be disobedient to the words which have been spoken by him [i.e., Jesus Christ] through us (τοῖς ἕποι δι' ἡμῶν εἰρήμενοι), let them know that they will entangle themselves in transgression and no little danger." Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria wrote in his letter to the Magnesian Christians, "for you have Jesus Christ in yourselves" (λέεσον γαρ Χριστόν ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς), "I know that you are full of God" (ὅτι θεοῦ γεμεῖ), and Ignatius wrote of having a similar inspiration himself, saying, "I have many thoughts in God" (πολλὰ φρόνη ἐγραψα, ἀλλὰ κατὰ γνώμην θεοῦ), "I cried out while I was with you; I spoke with a great voice, with God's own voice ... the Spirit was preaching and saying this" (ἐλαλοῦν μεγάλη φῶνη, θεοῦ φῶνῃ ... τοῦ πνεύματος εἰκοσσυν λεγόν τάδε). That Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna martyred circa A.D. 155, was regarded as inspired is evident from what is said in the Martyrdom of Polycarp:

71. Harvard University, 1967.
72. 47:1-3.
74. 63.2.
75. 12.1.
76. 14.1.
77. Trall. 4.1.
78. Ignatius, Rm. 8.3b.
79. Ignatius, Phil. 7.1b-2.
“For every word which he uttered from his mouth both was fulfilled and will be fulfilled.” 80 The angelic Shepherd, the Spirit, seized Hermas, 81 revealing to him the material of his book. The Shepherd told him, “First write my commandments and the parables, and the other things you are to write as I show you.” 82 And again, “For every spirit which is given from God is not asked questions, but has the power of the Godhead and speaks all things of itself, because it is from above, from the power of the Divine spirit” (hoti anōthen estin apo tês dunameōs tou theiou pneumatos), 83 “Guard this flesh of yours, pure and undefiled, that the spirit which dwells in it may bear it witness and your flesh may be justified.” 84

The author of the Epistle of Barnabas writes that the Lord put “the gift of his teaching in our hearts,” 85 and says of himself, “Being persuaded of this, and being conscious that since I spoke among you I have much understanding because the Lord has traveled with me in the way of righteousness.” 86 The Epistle to Diognetus reads, “For in all things which we were moved by the will of him who commands us to speak (hosa gar thalēmati tou keleuontos logou ekinēthēmen exeipein) with pain, we become sharers with you through love of the things revealed to us” (tōn apokalupthēntōn hēmin). 87

Justin Martyr speaks frequently of the activity of the inspiring Spirit in the Old Testament prophets. But concurring with the Jewish doctrine of canon, that inspiration had ceased in Judaism, 88 Justin asserts that the prophetic inspiration is now found in the church. He writes,

The scripture says that these inumerated powers of the Spirit have come upon him [i.e., Christ], not because he stood in need of them, but because they would rest in him, i.e., would find their accomplishment in him, so that there would be no more prophets in your nation after the ancient custom: and this fact you plainly perceive. For after him no prophet has arisen among you . . . . it was requisite that such gifts should cease from you; and having received their rest in him, should again, as had been predicted, become gifts which, from the grace of his Spirit’s power, he imparts to those who believe in him, according as he deems each man worthy thereof. 89 For, [he says], the prophetical gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us. 90

80. 16.2.
81. Vitr. 1.1.3; 2.1.1.
82. Vitr. 5.5.
83. Mand. 11.5b.
84. Sim. 5.7.1.
85. 9.9.
86. 1.4.
87. 11.8.
88. Dial. 51.
89. Dial. 87, cf., 88.

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Kalin concentrated his interests especially upon Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius. I pass over his discussion of the vocabulary used by these writers to describe the presence of the Spirit for inspiration of the Old Testament authors, citing only examples illustrating the belief of these authors in their own and their contemporary Christians' inspiration by the Spirit. Irenaeus comments, "We hear of my brethren in the church who have prophetic gifts and who through the Spirit . . ." *(kathōs kai pollōn akoumen adelphōn en tē Ekklēsia prophētika charismata echontōn, kai . . . dia tou pneumatos . . .)*, showing his belief in the Spirit's inspiration in his own day. He writes of "the divinely inspired elder and preacher of the truth" *(divinae aspirationis senior et et pracco veritatis)* who composed a poem against the heretic Marcus. He describes the Spirit-inspired activity of Christians, saying, "For some really and truly drive out devils, . . . others even have knowledge of things to come, visions, and prophet utterances. Others heal the sick . . . and now, as I have said, the dead even have been raised and remained with us for many years." *(In Heresies 3.11.8, he remarks that the symbol of the Gospel according to Mark—the flying eagle—points out the gift of the Spirit hovering over the church, and in the following section deplores the excesses of some of the anti-Montanists. He says,*

Others, again, that they may set at nought the gift of the Spirit, which in the latter times has been, by the good pleasure of the Father, poured out upon the human race, do not admit that aspect [of the evangelical dispensation] presented by John's Gospel, in which the Lord promised that he would send the Paraclete; but set aside at once both the gospel and the prophetic Spirit. Wretched men indeed! who wish to be pseudo-prophets, forsooth, but who set aside the gift of prophecy from the church.

Origen speaks of his own sense of being inspired:

And as Moses heard God [he writes], and then gave to the people the things which he heard from God, so we need the Holy Spirit speaking mysteries in us, so that by our prayers we might be able to listen to the scriptures and again to proclaim what we have heard to the people *(Et quomodo Moyses audiebat Deum, et deinde ea quae a Deo audierat, proferebat ad populum; sic nos indigemus Spiritu sancto laquente in nobis mysteria, ut orationibus nostris scripturam passimus audire, et rursum quod audivimus populus intime) *. [Again he remarks], For if I sell for

90. *DiaL*. 82.
92. *Haer*. 1.15.6 (Gr. text: Epiphanius, *Haer*. 34.11.10, Kalin, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
reward the things that have been spoken to me by the Holy Spirit, what else do I do but sell for reward the Holy Spirit? 97

Origen affirms the identity of the Spirit of truth who revealed the spiritual interpretation of the apostles 98 with the Spirit who reveals the spiritual interpretation to the church. 99 And Origen prays that just as the Lord put words in the mouth of Jeremiah, so God might give words also to him. 100

The matter of inspiration, however, is more intricate in Origen than in any of his predecessors. Like Justin, Origen was aware of the Jewish canonical doctrine of inspiration, holding that the Spirit had forsaken Judaism and was now active in the church. However, formerly, following the ascension of Jesus, many more manifestations of the Spirit were evident than in his day. “Nevertheless, even in this day,” he wrote, “there are traces of a few people whose souls have been purified by the logos.” 101 But Origen also introduced the concept of non-inspiration. On the one hand he notes that here are things written in the prophets and in Paul that are not by inspiration, Moses having commanded some things by his own authority 102 as similarly Paul in his letters. 103 On the other hand, Origen also refers to the writings of the Greek philosophers 104 and of some Christian writings 105 as being written without inspiration. Elsewhere Origen speaks of philosophers and heretical Christians as having what Stendahl has called “negative inspiration” inspiration by Satan or the demons. 106 This negative inspiration is commonly attributed to the heretics by Origen’s predecessors, going back to Hermas. 107 Since, in Origen’s contrast between inspired and noninspired gospels, he is contrasting the four accepted Gospels with heretical gospels (of the Egyptians, of the Twelve, of Basilides, of Thomas, of Matthias, and others), Kalin is probably correct in concluding that Origen does not employ the distinction inspired/noninspired as a means of division or separation among orthodox writings but, similar to the inspired-negative inspiration demarkation, as a division between orthodox and heretical or pagan writings. 108

Eusebius speaks readily of the activity of the Spirit in his own day. In his

98. Contra Celsum 2.2.
99. Hom. 5.8 in Lev.; Kalin, op. cit., pp. 53f.
100. Contra Celsum 4.1; Kalin, op. cit., p. 54.
103. I Cor. 7:10, 12; Orig., Hom. 16.4 in Num.
104. Contra Celsum 3.68, 81; Hom. 2 in Cant., etc.
sermon for the dedication of the church built by Constantine at the site of Christ's tomb, he says that not all know the cause of the building of a church at this place, "but those enlightened about divine matters by the power of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (hoi men ta theia dunamei pneumatos entheou pephôtismenoi) both know and understand." 109 Eusebius regarded the Spirit as having been miraculously present at the choice of Fabian as Bishop of Rome (c. A.D. 236).

For when the brethren were all assembled for the purpose of appointing him who was to succeed to the episcopate, [writes Eusebius], and very many notable and distinguished persons were in the thoughts of many, Fabian, who was there, came into nobody's mind. But all of a sudden, they relate, a dove flew down from above and settled on his head, in clear imitation of the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove upon the Saviour; whereupon the whole people, as if moved by one divine inspiration (hösper huph' henos pneumatos theiou kinëthenta), with all eagerness and with one soul cried out "worthy," and without more ado took him and placed him on the episcopal throne. 110

For aid in his composition of his Church History, Eusebius writes, "We pray God to give us his guidance, and that we may have the help of the power of the Lord" (theon men hodëgon kai ën tou kuriou sunergon schësein euchomenoi dunamin), 111 and speaks of his own inspiration for writing the Life of Constantine. 112 Eusebius writes of revealed directions to the martyrs at Lyons, 113 of the frequent indications of the continuing activity of the Spirit in the times of Ignatius and Polycarp, 114 of the prophetic charismata present in the church in Justin's age, 115 and to the time of Irenaeus. 116 Early in the third century Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem, miracuously changed water into oil. 117 The power of God was present even in Eusebius' own time, especially in the witness of martyrs. 118

Examples such as these can be multiplied in the church writers throughout the period of the formation and canonization of the Christian Bible. As Kalin observes, the concept of inspiration is not used in the early church as a basis of division between canonical and non-canonical orthodox Christian writings. 119 In forming the list of the Christian Old Testament, the criteria of inspired/not-inspired is not used to divide between the included and excluded books. When

109. De laud, Const. 11.3; Kalin, op. cit., p. 135.
110. H.E. 6.29.3; Kalin, op. cit., p. 135.
111. H.E. 1.1.3; cf., 1.5.1.
112. v. Const. 1.11.2; Kalin, op. cit., p. 137.
113. H.E. 5.3.2f.; Kalin, op. cit., p. 137.
116. H.E. 5.3.4; 5.7.1-6; Kalin, op. cit., pp. 138f.
117. H.E. 6.9.1; Kalin, op. cit., p. 139.
118. H.E. 8.7.1ff.; Kalin, op. cit., p. 140.
119. Idem.
the Shepherd of Hermas, the Christian writing that came closest to being included in the New Testament of all excluded books, came to be excluded from the developing New Testament canon in Eusebius' time, it was not attacked as non-inspired.\footnote{120} Throughout the entire period of canonization, discussion in the fathers over the question of inspiration or non-inspiration or negative inspiration has to do, virtually without exception, with orthodoxy versus heresy. The question of inspiration, thus, does not function as a criteria of canonization; the common view of the church throughout this period is that inspiration is broadly and constantly present in the church.

The import of this material for the question of the Christian doctrine of inspiration is obvious since it describes a circumstance in the early church that is far different from the commonly accepted doctrine that the books of the Bible are different from all other writings because they are inspired, that inspiration is determinative for canon, that inspiration is synonymous with canon. It is this doctrine of the exclusivity of inspiration to the Bible canon that caused historians of the canon to use the terms "scripture" and "canon" as synonyms. If by "scripture" we mean inspired books, and if all inspired books are in the canon, then "scripture" and "canon" are synonyms. But Kalin has now made it abundantly evident that this doctrine did not inform the early church in the process of canonizing its Bible.

We are now able to trace the history of the doctrine of the exclusivity of inspiration to canonical books. Its origin is in Judaism. When the Jewish canon was being settled about the end of the first century A.D., a doctrine of canon was propounded at the same time. It is first found in the writings of Josephus\footnote{121} and appears to have been protested by IV Ezra.\footnote{122} It is found also in the Talmud.\footnote{123} This doctrine states that inspiration existed only from Moses to Ezra; thus only the canonical books are inspired. The function of this doctrine was not that of a criteria of canonization, but appears more probably to have been to drive out of circulation those books that were not included in the canon. When the early church became aware of this Jewish doctrine, it immediately agreed with it. The church concurred that the Spirit of inspiration had ceased in Judaism; "God now pours his Spirit upon the church" was the Christian response.

Following the rise of humanism, when Christians became cognizant of the content of Jewish literature, not John Calvin, but early Calvinists found this Jewish doctrine, first propounded in Judaism after the church had arisen and

121. \textit{Contra Apion}. 1.8.  
122. 14.45f.  
123. George Foot Moore (\textit{Judaism, I} [Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1927], 237, 243, 421) who cites Tos. Sotah 13.2; cf., Sotah 48b and Yoma 9b; Tos. Shabbat 13 (14).3; Sanhedrin 11a; cf. Tos Yadim 2.13.}
become separated from Judaism, and appropriated it to the Protestant canon which excluded the Apocrypha, and used it dogmatically against the Roman Catholic decision at Trent. Thus, for example, the Westminster Confession of 1647 reads, "The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of Scripture." It is this doctrine, appropriated by early Calvinists from Judaism, that spread virtually throughout Protestantism, strengthening its dogmatic stance against Catholicism, that we have learned to accept as the Christian doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. This is what Protestants traditionally have meant when affirming that the Bible is inspired. Now we are able to know this doctrine for what it is. It is not a Christian doctrine. It arose in Judaism subsequent to the church's separation from Judaism. And it counters the plain teaching about inspiration of the canonical books it purports to defend.

The Christian doctrine of inspiration is that taught in the New Testament itself and held in the early church throughout the period of canonization of the Christian Bible, that God pours out his Spirit upon Christians and the church. In Christian thought throughout the period of canonization there is no doctrine restricting inspiration either to a particular period or to particular persons, except that inspiration is denied to heretics. The consequent meaning of canonization and the function of the canon in the church was in keeping with the meaning of the term the church used to designate its list, "the canon" (ho kanōn), "the measure" or "the standard." Thus, in forming the canon, the church acknowledged and established the Bible as the measure or standard of inspiration in the church, not as the totality of it. What concurs with canon is of like inspiration; what does not is not of God. Thus the Christian doctrine of inspiration describes the unity of Christians with their canon; the Spirit of God that inspires these books dwells in and enlivens them. Christian inspiration, therefore, is seen not to be a derivative from the New Testament; it comes from God. But Christian inspiration parallels biblical inspiration, complementing it, and opening every Christian age to theological verisimilitude, like the books of the Bible and the periods in which they were written are verisimilar. The Christian doctrine of inspiration encourages the Christian, to paraphrase Henry Cadbury, neither to run the peril of modernizing Jesus nor of archaizing ourselves. Rather, the Christian doctrine of inspiration, drawn from the New Testament and Christian thought from the period of Bible canonization, is that the Christian embodies the living and enlivening Spirit of God in every age for that age, the Bible canon being the standard, the measure in all things. "The letter kills, but the Spirit makes alive." 


125. II Cor. 3:6b.