ORIGEN’S ROLE IN THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Rev. Dr. Robert Derrenbacker, Dr. John Toews, Everett Kalin, and Professor Laurel Gasque for their insights and support as I conducted this research.
But you, our beloved head, arise and send us off now with prayer. As you saved us by your holy instructions during our stay, save us also by your prayers as we depart. So hand us over and commend us; most of all hand us over to the God who led us to you. Give thanks for the things that have happened for our benefit, and ask him also to lead us by the hand in what is to come, always standing by us, reminding us of his commandments, filling us with holy fear of him, becoming the best of pedagogues. For when we have gone and are no longer in the freedom we had with you, we shall obey him. Ask him also to give us some consolation for losing you, to send an angelic companion to be a good escort. And ask this also, that he turn us around and bring us to you again; this alone will reassure us more than anything else.

Gregory Thaumaturgus

*Address of Thanksgiving to Origen*
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PREFACE

. . . apart from omissions, they [Jerome and Rufinus: translations of Origen] render the ideas closely enough. But, compared with the originals, they also reflect the difference of outlook between a Greek of the persecuted minority Church of the 3rd century and Latins of the triumphant Church [at] the end of the 4th.

Henri Crouzel, *Origen*

This thought from Crouzel raises an issue which is of crucial importance to research on New Testament canon formation: the fact that the early Church is essentially split into two eras for the first 500 years. The first was one of a persecuted Church, the second, one of a politically powerful Church. The important aspect of this bifurcation for NT canon studies is that the final decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of early church writings were made wholly under the auspices of Roman imperial power. From the time of the apostles until 325 C.E., the Church endured hardships and various persecutions, including countless martyrdoms, and almost entirely at the hands of the Roman imperial government. Then, in the early fourth century, almost overnight, Christianity was declared a favoured religion of that same polity and the military might of the new Roman emperor, Constantine, brought the fragmented empire back together under the banner of this newly befriended religion. For another two hundred years, Rome and, ever increasingly, Constantinople were the centers of a *Christian* empire.

How did a nascent Christian community go from encouraging the acceptance of martyrdom and suffering – a religion absolutely founded on it in the death of their Lord and exemplar Jesus Christ – to then welcome the power of sword and sceptre from the very same Roman state that had put so much effort into eradicating it? This
is a very important question to this research because two very important early Christian figures, to whom modern historians look as making proclamations on what was acceptable Christian Scripture in the fourth century, Eusebius and Athanasius, were men serving the Church of an empire, and not the beleaguered Church of earlier times.

One wonders at the lack of resistance from the Church at such a move by Constantine, but the assuaging reality for the leadership of the Christian community within the Empire seems to have been twofold. First, Constantine claimed the victory was Christ’s as well; in fact he claimed to have been told to expect protection under the banner of the cross, and apparently by Christ himself. In historical terms, none of this can be verified. All we can verify, really, is that from that point on, Rome had annexed the Christian religion to itself. Second, the Church was confronted by Constantine’s insistence on peace amongst Christians within his sprawling empire

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1 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History: Books 6-10*, vol. 2, *The Loeb Classical Library*, trans. J. E. L. Oulton, eds. T.E. Page et al. (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1932), Book 9.9, 359: [Quotations and references in this research from volume 1 of the same series: Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History: Books 1-5*, vol. 1, *The Loeb Classical Library*, trans. Kirropp Lake, eds. T.E. Page et al. (London: William Heinemann, 1926): Hereinafter HE]. Eusebius writes in another place on Constantine’s vision of Christ and subsequent dream, (28) About the time of the midday sun, when day was just turning, he said he saw with his own eyes, up in the sky and resting over the sun, a cross-shaped trophy formed from light, and a text attached to it which said, ‘By this conquer’. Amazement at the spectacle seized both him and the whole company of soldiers which was then accompanying him on a campaign he was conducting somewhere, and witnessed the miracle. . . . (29) as he [Constantine] slept, the Christ of God appeared to him with the sign which had appeared in the sky, and urged him to make himself a copy of the sign which had appeared in the sky, and to use this as protection against the attacks of the enemy. When day came he arose and recounted the mysterious communication to his friends. Then he summoned goldsmiths and jewellers, sat down among them, and explained the shape of the sign, and gave them instructions about copying it in gold and precious stones. [Eusebius goes on to describe the jewelled piece which apparently Constantine had shown him personally, and describes the victory over Maxentius as analogous to Moses and the Israelites being delivered by God at the crossing of the Red Sea.] in Eusebius, *Eusebius: Life of Constantine*, trans. Avril Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), Book 1.28-38, 80-85. See also, Eusebius of Caesarea, *On Christ’s Sepulchre*, in *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius’ Tricennial Orations*, trans. H. A. Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), Book 16.5-7, 120-121.

2 See footnote 1.
which meant that all the conflicts arising out of doctrine would have to be settled: yet as history would prove, only ostensibly.

Until Constantine, the Church had eschewed the use of force or fighting for a secular power, so the decision to welcome such a leviathan seems, perhaps, strange from our vantage point. Yet, it must be conceded that Constantine’s offer could not have easily been shunned either. The Church would have been very hard pressed to say no to such an offer primarily because of the military might behind the one making the proposal; it was an offer they could not refuse, in one sense. Ultimately, the Church decided to interpret it as the providentia Dei, even though the incompatible realities and implications of a hulking earthly empire and vast armies still loomed.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Galatia, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!” (Gal 1:8). It is, at the very least, interesting that in less than seventy years from the date of Constantine’s victory and the merger of church and state, Rome was sacked by Gauls and the Empire of the West was well on its way to being finished. The important aspect of these observations for research on NT formation is that while the use of Christian writings in worship gatherings arose in the midst of persecution and internecine church conflict, the decisions as to what was going to be appropriate were made from a place of power. How reflective of the Church’s true gospel standard those later decisions were is both accurate and misleading at the same time. The Apostle Paul, Clement, Ignatius, Justin, and Irenaeus were all, according to their writings, fighting to preserve a living canon of

3 Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Christian Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicized Edition).
truth about God the Father and his Son. The Nicene settlement, however, would alter the focus from mere protection of truth, to the final word on it.

Origen, the subject of this study, wrote everything he did as a servant of the persecuted Church.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the influence of the Church father Origen, ca. 185 – 254, on the formation and development of the New Testament canon. Origen wrote about and understood the writings of both the Old and New Testaments as sharing a genuine unity, encouraging this idea by being the first person on record to use the term “New Testament” to refer to a number of Christian writings which complimented what was then known to some as the “Old Testament,”¹ better known generally as the Jewish Scriptures. Origen also recognized that both collections were divinely inspired, and inspired by one and the same God.² Yet it is also true that when Origen referred to the Jewish Scriptures in his writings, he typically prefixed the word “Scriptures” with the words “sacred,” “holy,” or “divine,” whereas he refers to the Gospels and Apostolic letters as merely “Scripture.” This bifurcation in Origen’s thinking actually makes the


² Origen writes in De principiis: “And not only did the Spirit supervise the writings which were previous to the coming of Christ, but because he is the same Spirit and proceeds from the one God he has dealt in like manner with the gospels and the writings of the apostles.” Origen, On First Principles, 4.2, 287. See also: Metzger, The Canon, 136.
evidence in his work on the unity of the two sets of writings more profound in that although he was committed to the special nature of the Jewish Scriptures vis-à-vis all others, his writing clearly shows a preponderance to characterize the Christian writings as belonging to the same class of revelation as the Jewish Scriptures. I suggest Origen’s coalescence of the two bodies of writings makes him one of the most important historical players in the development of the NT canon.

Origen was also uniquely placed to influence canon formation in his role as a respected teacher, sometimes arbiter, who had a great deal of interaction with most, if not all, regions of the Church in the third century. Consequently, he had first hand knowledge of which writings were considered genuine by the Church at large. The reason this latter observation is important is because when the Church finally did set a canon, it was based on the historical work of Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, in which he relayed what Christian writings were considered genuine by the various churches. Eusebius, being a student in the school at Caesarea which Origen had founded, learned almost all this information from the writings of Origen, and Eusebius says as much in the *History* by using Origen as his primary witness on the subject. These interlocking observations, his unique views on inspired Christian writings and his knowledge of the acceptance of various writings in the Church at large, compel recognition for Origen as one of the most important influences on New Testament canon formation.

If one were to consider the nexus of Church fathers whose testimony subsequently played a significant role in the Roman church’s ultimate decisions concerning the NT canon, Origen would follow, significantly, Clement of Rome and Ignatius in the first
century, then Justin Martyr and Irenaeus in the second century, and he would himself be followed by Eusebius and Athanasius in the fourth century. These figures each played important roles in the living evolution of a nascent Christian collection which went from the written and collected sayings of Christ to an essentially closed canon in 367. This date marks the occasion of the thirty-ninth Festal Letter written by Athanasius in which he sets out, as comments in obiter, the commonly accepted twenty-seven books as ecclesiastically sanctioned.

The four gospels were regarded as the pre-eminent Christian writings of the early Church for basically the first two hundred years. The letters of Paul were also highly regarded by the Church during this time, but then so were writings such as Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, and Apocalypse of Peter. The words “inspired” or “scriptural” were attached to a variety of writings, those which were ultimately accepted and, as well, many like these which did not find their way into the Roman church’s canon in 367.

The difference between “scriptural” and “canonical” is an important distinction in any discussion on canon formation because the former was never synonymous for the latter in the minds of first to fourth century Christians. Hence, just because a particular writing was considered “scriptural” did not then mean it was “canonical.” Canonical was not likely even an idea on the table until the fourth century.

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3 Athanasius, in this letter on the subject of the NT, seems to treat the listing of NT books as a mere addendum to his laying out of the OT Books rather than any final word on the subject. Establishing which OT books were genuine was his main focus in the letter.


5 Shepherd of Hermas is never to be italicized according to style guidelines.

6 See definition section below concerning these words.

Eventually, the distinction of canon was only applied to writings deliberately chosen by the ecclesiastics of the Church, and it was the Church’s choice that made it canonical, not merely the status of “inspired.” This point has been emphasized recently by scholar Craig Allert in his book *A High View of Scripture?* Allert focuses on exactly this distinction and highlights the importance of the Church councils in creating the canon, versus the common notion that the only writings actually inspired by God were the twenty-seven which made it into the NT. Allert, building on the research of Albert Sundberg concerning the distinction between canon and scripture, emphasizes that many inspired writings of the early Church were not ultimately considered as part of the Roman church’s canon.

Origen’s role in the “canon” story helps us see the process of development of the New Testament Canon at a particular point in time. He does this by giving us fairly solid indications of what writings were considered acceptable to Christian churches at the beginning of the third century. Importantly, he also aided NT development with the introduction of the idea that the apostolic letters should be understood as authored and authorized by the same God who had been responsible for the Jewish Scriptures and Gospels.

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CHAPTER ONE: 
THE EARLY FATHERS TO ORIGEN 

The Early Church and the Notion of Canon 

To write about the “early fathers of canon formation” is anachronistic. None of these people would have thought of their “canon” of faith as only a collection of inspired writings. Further, as I will argue below, Christian leaders of the first two centuries would not likely have even thought of writings as central to the gospel canon of truth. During this period, for Christians, “canon” was a word used to describe the living revelation of the one and only God through his Son Jesus Christ, the one delivered to the apostles and then shared by them through the power of the Holy Spirit, with all that entailed. The writings of the Apostles and early fathers were produced to protect that gospel from heretical and popular teachings, not to replace it. The early church fathers examined below serve as retrospective guideposts for researchers today as to how the written collection of the NT writings came together over time. It is important to remember that at no point did they assume they were creating some new alternative to the Jewish Scriptures. Related to this point, Kurt

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1 This idea of gospel “canon” is akin to the Regula Fidei, but perhaps only contextually so according to the historical era in question. The phrase originates with Tertullian who writes: Let our “seeking,” therefore be in that which is our own, and from those who are our own, and concerning that which is our own, - that, and only that, which can become an object of inquiry without impairing the rule of faith: (Tertullian, On Prescription Against Heretics, in Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian, trans. and eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. and arr. A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 3, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 12, 249; see also chapter 13, 249. The Catholic Church, however, evolved the meaning in a somewhat convoluted way to include all true revelation as that institution saw it, namely “Church tradition” and the Christian Scriptures.
Aland’s memorable observation reads, “[i]f we want to summarize in one formula the external principles which played a role in selecting the canonical writings, we can only speak about a principle of no principles at all.” Yet, Aland suggests that we look yet further to another principle for the answer – he points to the principle of providentia Dei, the providence of God.

It is almost certain from extant accounts that apostolic writings concerning the life of Christ were being given a similar status to the Jewish Scriptures in second century Church worship settings, being used alongside the Jewish Scriptures and read aloud during these gatherings. While this alone does not amount to proof that Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and other early Christian figures were thinking in terms of a closed collection, it nonetheless must be duly noted that a collection of commonly used writings, other than the Jewish Scriptures, was gaining primacy of place in this new branch of the Judaic faith. It should be noted as well that this additional collection consisted primarily of the four gospel accounts. The letters of the apostles were used for instruction, but never introduced by the phrase “it is written,” as were the Old Testament writings. Even the words of Christ in the apostolic writings were introduced mainly by the introduction, ‘our Lord said.’

Yet, it was almost inevitable that the writings of the apostles would gain favour amongst the burgeoning churches in the general geographical area of the Roman Empire of the first century. First, the early converts to Christianity had come to faith

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through the Apostles, and oftentimes in dramatic fashion. The apostles stood apart in many ways from their Christian peers in the first century, and were seen as the obvious leaders of the soon to be named, “Christian movement.” Second, the writings of the apostles in the Gospels recorded the life of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, around whom the new religion was founded and based. These apostles were hand picked by Christ to take his message to the rest of humankind, and church tradition, according to Eusebius, held that some of them took the opportunity to write down the things they remembered, specifically John and Matthew.

Of the two gospels not claiming, in their titles, to have been written by apostles, Eusebian tradition has the Gospel of Mark written by one Mark and based on the words of Peter from those who heard him preach and wanted to preserve his message. Luke, we are told, wrote his Gospel for the reasons stated in Luke 1:1 – 4,

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5 HE, Book 3.24 251: Eusebius writes: “of all those who had been with the Lord only Matthew and John have left us their recollections, and tradition says that they took to writing perforce [out of necessity].” As for the Gospel of John, Eusebius writes that this Apostle welcomed the other three gospels and confirmed their accuracy, but remarked “there was only lacking to the narrative the account of what was done by Christ at first and at the beginning of the preaching” (HE, Book 3.24, 251). According to Eusebius, the Apostle John, then, filled in the testimony concerning Christ’s early ministry with his own account. Concerning Matthew, Eusebius records that this apostle had begun preaching the message of Christ to Jews and soon decided to write out his gospel in his native Jewish tongue for them (ibid.). He writes, “Matthew had first preached to Hebrews, and when he was on the point of going to others he transmitted in writing in his native language the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent” (ibid.) Eusebius suggested that Matthew designed his written account of Christ with a specific Jewish audience in mind. This observation about Matthew being tailored to Jews is still a widely accepted view by scholars such as Bruce Metzger; see Bruce Manning Metzger, The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 89-91.

6 HE, Book 2.14, 143: Eusebius writes: “[the hearers of Peter’s vivavoce gospel] besought Mark, whose Gospel is extant, seeing that he was Peter’s follower, to leave them a written statement of the teaching given them verbally, nor did they cease until they had persuaded him, and so became the cause of the Scripture called the Gospel according to Mark.”
that being to give an orderly account, as others had, for his friend or patron Theophilus.\(^7\)

In some manner of speaking, then, once the apostles passed away, their writings helped fill a lacuna that was left by their departure. It is true that other people would take on the role of Christian leadership, but the apostles were the ones who received the message from Christ directly, and quite reasonably their accounts of Christ’s teaching took primacy of place against all others. Another important observation that is not often made is the fact that after the apostles, no others of such gifting and authority arose to take their place in leadership, and this also makes the reception of their teachings more understandable. Over time, after the passing of the apostles, the Gospel accounts and letters written by them began to shift away from merely being thought of as useful writings from the hand of those who carried the “canon”, or rule, of Christ in their breast, to becoming part of the actual canon of truth itself.

\(^7\) At this point in his narrative, Eusebius comments interestingly on the impetus for Luke’s gospel. He claims that many others had hastily undertaken to write their own accounts of Christ and therefore suggests Luke felt some kind of duty to “release us from the doubtful propositions of the others and related in his own gospel the accurate account of the things of which he had himself firmly learnt the truth from his profitable intercourse and life with Paul and his conversation with the other apostles” (HE, Book 3.24, 255). This comment is somewhat incongruent when compared with the actual words that open Luke’s gospel, “[s]ince many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (Luke 1: 1-4). The author of Luke specifically mentions the “orderly accounts” of others as his main impetus for writing the way he did, so it is not clear what Eusebius is trying to do here. It seems at least possible that Eusebius is imposing on the author of Luke a fourth century concern with the proliferation of, what were deemed, heretical gospels, such as the gospels of Thomas, Peter, and others. Alternatively, that Luke was attempting to free people from doubts, as in Eusebius, may indicate that people had doubts about Matthew and Mark, yet either way, there is no evidence in Eusebius as to what these doubts were or why Luke apparently felt this way. Luke’s own admission at the beginning of his gospel reads in a markedly unpartisan way with no incrimination of other Gospel writers, as Eusebius suggested.
An observation can be made at this point relevant to this first century canon of truth and the contemporary idea of canon. The rule, or canon, of faith may be understood socio-contextually, in regard to the early Church, as the gospel message itself, with all that would entail: such as the lordship of Christ, the leadership of the apostles, and the paramount authority of the Jewish Scriptures for teaching new believers. Paul writes to the Christians in Galatia:

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule (κανόνι — peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Gal 6:14-16)

This word “rule” is a translation of the word κανόν in the Greek. Canon means a straight rod, or measuring device which is used as a standard to measure the quality of something against a perfectly straight rule. In this letter to the Galatians, Paul measured the teachings of a group of “Judaizers,” who continued to enforce Jewish Law, against the rule of faith in order to show they did not prove true when compared with the perfect rule or standard set by Christ. Paul is not referring here to a closed collection including his own writings, – “as for those who follow this canon” – but is referring instead to the essence of the gospel itself in the true testimony of which he understood himself an important messenger. The canon was more akin to central


9 Paul’s “scriptures” were the Jewish Scriptures, as one can see by his voluminous use of them in his writings; take for example the letter to the Christians of Rome. Peter, Paul, et al. did not consider their own writings to be scripture, but Paul does assume his writings carry authority because of his personal call from Christ.
truths about God and his son Christ, and less so a codified set of rules or writings to follow.

The introduction of Christ to the small group of believing Jews who received his message, and subsequently other nationalities, was a new chapter in the history of Israel. Their canon of faith had been given to them by Christ the Lord himself, and this revelation was put in the hands of the apostles with the idea that they would take that message to the ends of the earth. This small Jewish sect of the early first century would now take the truth about God to all people, but keeping their canon of faith in its original form as the message spread further and further throughout the known world ultimately became a daunting task. New interpretations of the original message grew up alongside the apostolic faith and engendered a spirit of resistance in the Church which importantly led to circumscribed boundaries on Christian writings based on which of them bore the apostolic mark of authenticity. This genuine canon of faith was most clearly marked out and preserved for post-apostolic Christians by the accounts of Christ written by the apostles, along with some of their letters and epistles. Origen was, and is, likely the most important witness on record as to which of these letters and epistles were considered trustworthy by the Church of the late second and early third century.

**Five Points of Reference**

Before the age of global positioning systems, navigators on the seas regularly used a technique known as triangulation whereby they took three physical points of reference to get their exact location on a chart so they knew where they were at any one time. They generally used visual markers like coastal mountains, shoals, and
outcroppings of small islands that are also found on charts, which then enabled them to determine their position. Sometimes though, on the open sea far from land, the only thing navigators had was their compass, the horizon, and the stars, which made it possible to navigate, but much more difficult. My sense is that trying to establish stages of development in terms of what would become the NT canon at any one point in time is much like taking one’s fix while sailing in open waters. We have been left with very little evidence indeed about the first two centuries of Christian worship and practice, and hardly more for the third. The approach taken in this study on NT canon development, in order to set the stage for Origen in the third century, is to consult four earlier figures in the story of this process – Clement, Ignatius, Justin, and Irenaeus – as well as Eusebius who followed Origen, to ascertain what likely caused the New Testament to be established as it was. We cannot know for certain what any one time period in the Church’s history represented in terms of canon development, if for no other reason than we do not have enough extant material to make those kinds of assertions. Instead of looking for certainty at one particular point in time, this research consults five key witnesses over a three hundred year span in order to suggest what variables were shaping the direction of development regarding the NT canon.

1. Eusebius of Caesarea

While this research argues that Origen’s influence on the development of a NT canon is central to what would become the closed collection of twenty-seven writings, there are earlier figures who serve just as important a role in helping us
assemble a reasonably coherent picture of how the NT came together. Probably the most lucid piece of evidence we have regarding these important historical figures is the written work of Eusebius of Caesarea, who outlines the history of the nascent faith in his most celebrated work, The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius,\textsuperscript{10} or simply the Ecclesiastical History with the Latin abbreviation \textit{HE}. Yet it should be noted here that while the first “church historian,” \textit{per se}, gives us much relevant canon formation evidence and is duly concerned with the writings of the apostolic period and how they were received by the various churches, his work overall was driven by the desire to paint a picture of the Church’s development in aggregate for posterity, and to honour Constantine’s victory and subsequent adoption of Christianity into the bargain. Eusebius, for instance, gives great attention to persecutions, heresies, and notable figures in the first three centuries as much as to the writings of the apostles and their successors. He offers, at the beginning of his work, a statement of purpose.

I have purposed to record in writing the successions of the sacred apostles, covering that period stretching from our Saviour to ourselves; the number and character of the transactions recorded in the history of the church; . . . the number of those who in each generation were the ambassadors of the word of God either by speech or pen; the names, the number and the age of those who, driven by the desire of innovation to an extremity of error have heralded themselves as the introducers of Knowledge, falsely so-called, ravaging the flock of Christ unsparingly, like grim wolves. To this I will add the fate which has beset the whole nation of the Jews from the moment of their plot against our Saviour.\textsuperscript{11}

The \textit{History} was written somewhere just before the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E., and was in some manner a tribute to Constantine’s victories, over Maxentius in

\textsuperscript{10} See Preface, footnote 1.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{HE}, Book 1.1, 7.
the Battle of Milvian Bridge,\textsuperscript{12} and then his ultimate victory against Licinius in the years 323 and 324 when Constantine’s troops and naval forces overpowered their foes – ironically, since both sides were Roman soldiers to a man – over the course of four main confrontations.\textsuperscript{13} Licinius died a year later thus leaving the rule of the Roman Empire to Constantine alone. One year after that in 325, the Emperor himself commanded the attendance of all bishops to come before him, quite literally, at Nicaea.\textsuperscript{14} Eusebius writes of the bishops that “as the announcement circulated everywhere, they all dashed like sprinters from the starting-line, full of enthusiasm.”\textsuperscript{15} Constantine had pacified the Empire, and would attempt to do the same with the Church which had been reeling from internecine battles of its own, primarily the conflicts arising from Arianism, a competing theological standpoint insisting on the humanity of Christ, yet eschewed by many in the Roman church.

Having set the History somewhat in its historical context, it is also important to note that Eusebius’ perspective appears to rely heavily on the writings and traditions of Origen. Much of Eusebius’ information came from the library at Caesarea, the one Origen had established when moving to Caesarea and founding a school in 231 C.E.\textsuperscript{16} His reliance on the great Alexandrian Christian father cannot be overstated. For example, Eusebius wrote of Paul: “What need be said of Paul, who… was martyred in Rome under Nero? This is stated exactly by Origen in the third volume of his

\textsuperscript{12} Eusebius, \textit{Life of Constantine}, 1.33-1.41, 82-86.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., Book 2.1-19, 94-102.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., Book 3.4-7, 122-124.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., Book 3.6.2, 123.
commentary on Genesis.”17 Origen is written about many times as an authoritative reference, not merely an actor in the story. Eusebius also makes reference to the tradition he had learned at Origen’s School at Caesarea. For instance he writes: “Of Peter, one epistle, that which is called his first, is admitted, and the ancient presbyters used this in their own writings as unquestioned, but the so-called second Epistle we have not received as canonical (δευτέραν οὐκ ἐνδιάθηκον μὲν εἶναι παρειλήφαμεν).”18 Who is doing the teaching here? What tradition taught Eusebius to disregard 2 Peter as non-canonical? Based on an analysis of Origen’s writings, addressed below in detail, we see that these are most likely the findings of Origen passed down to Eusebius and others within the school at Caesarea.19 The fact that Eusebius used Origen’s writings and library to compile the History is key to understanding who it was, then, who was actually responsible for the evidence presented in the History on the early usage of Christian writings.

Further, Eusebius frequently cites the writings of Justin, Irenaeus, and others as having “reached us”20 to alert the reader of what materials were passed on to him. I suggest that in large part these materials came from Origen. It may then be fair to deduce, if Eusebius was trained under Origen’s tradition, with his writings, at his school, that any picture of the story of the early Church which the historian gives us is going to be fairly coloured by an Origenic outlook on what constituted the important

17 HE, Book 3.1, 191.
19 Ibid., Book 6.25, 77. Origen is quoted by Eusebius: “Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail, has left one acknowledged epistle, and, it may be, a second also; for it is doubted.”
20 Ibid., Book 4.18, 371; Book 4.27, 393; etc. See also Book 4.26, 387: “come to our knowledge.”
events. What also seems fair to suggest is that these writings passed down to Eusebius were collected by Origen on his extensive travels throughout his life and then, naturally, kept at his school at Caesarea. From Origen’s commentaries and extensive extant literature we can establish a fairly solid Origenic “canon” of our own with which we can then measure it against what Eusebius relates to us on the apostolic veracity of various written works. This kind of comparison shows the Eusebian treatise confirming what Origen verifies in his writings for the most part, but Eusebius appears to deviate at some points and this latter consideration will be discussed below.21

Yet right from the outset, it is important to appreciate that according to Eusebius in the History, only twenty-two books22 were considered authoritative as coming from the hands of the apostles or their assistants who wrote for them. In addition to this, he gives a cautious approbation to five others that were ultimately included in the fourth century via the Festal Letter of Athanasius mentioned above.23 Yet we also know that the early Church, the persecuted Church of the first three centuries, accorded works such as Didache, Shepherd of Hermas, I Clement, and Epistle of Barnabas the status of Scripture as well. For some reason, though, Eusebius, in the History, passes over this tradition to give us a much more conservative – perhaps even pacified – yet strictly apostolic collection.

21 In Book 6.25 of the History, Eusebius quotes Origen’s Commentary on John’s Gospel – of which we have translations by Rufinus – and confirms the views on 2 Peter which correlate with how Eusebius treats them in Book 3: HE, 6.25, 77. See below for a discussion of evidence in the writings of Origen and Eusebius.
22 The Christian writings Eusebius vouchsafed were fourteen of Paul’s letters, one each from Peter and John, the four Gospels and Acts, and the Revelation of John, for a twenty-two book list.
23 James, Jude, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter.
The narrative of the *History* turns to the question of accepted writings within the Christian Church in Book Three, Chapter Twenty-five, likely the most significant piece of extant evidence on what writings were accepted by the Church in the early fourth century. As mentioned, this passage leaves us with only twenty-two books considered as “accepted” by the churches. The Eusebian contribution to the building of any consensus of canon in the early fourth century is found primarily in this enumeration: the twenty-two are, from that point on, considered a settled matter.\(^{24}\)

The evidence from Eusebius on which books should be given preference is germane to this research, and it bodes well to quote the passage under consideration in full. Eusebius’ *History* at Book Three, Chapter Twenty-five reads as follows:

At this point it seems reasonable to summarize the writings of the New Testament which have been quoted. In the first place should be put the holy tetrad of the Gospels. To them follows the writing of the Acts of the Apostles. After this should be reckoned the Epistles of Paul. Following them the Epistle of John called the first, and in the same way should be recognized the Epistle of Peter. In addition to these should be put, if it seem desirable, the Revelation of John, the arguments concerning which we will expound at the proper time. These belong to the Recognized Books (ὁμολογουμένοις) [speaking the same; being of one voice]. Of the Disputed Books (ἀντιλεγομένων) [spoken against] which are nevertheless known to most are the Epistle of James, that of Jude, the second Epistle of Peter, and the so-called second and third Epistles of John which may be the work of the evangelist or of some other with the same name. Among the books which are not genuine (νόθοις κατατετάχθω) [from the illegitimate should be placed] must be reckoned the Acts of Paul, the work entitled the Shepherd, the Apocalypse of Peter, and in addition to them the letter called of Barnabas and the so-called (ὡς ἔφην) Teachings of the Apostles. And in addition, as I said, the Revelation of John, if this view prevail. For as I said, some reject it, but others count it among the Recognized Books. Some have also counted the Gospel according to the Hebrews in which those of the Hebrews who have accepted Christ take a special pleasure. These would all belong to the disputed

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\(^{24}\) It should be noted, though, that in the Western Church, Hebrews was eschewed at first, and in the East, the Revelation of John. So while the Eusebian list would ultimately be a foundation for NT canon, there were differences with two books, ironically the ones which were disputed all the way along in the process.
books, but we have nevertheless been obliged to make a list of them, distinguishing between those writings which, according to the tradition of the Church, are true, genuine, and recognized, and those which differ from them in that they are not canonical (οὐκ ἐνδιαθήκους [not in the ordinances/testament]) but disputed, yet nevertheless are known to most of the writers of the Church, in order that we might know them and the writings which are put forward by heretics under the name of the apostles containing gospels such as those of Peter, and Thomas, and Matthias, and some others besides, or Acts such as those of Andrew and John and the other apostles. To none of these has any who belonged to the succession of the orthodox ever thought it right to refer in his writings. Moreover, the type of phraseology differs from apostolic style, and the opinion and tendency of their contents is widely dissonant from true orthodoxy and clearly shows that they are the forgeries of heretics. They ought, therefore, to be reckoned not even among spurious books but shunned as altogether wicked and impious.

In Greek, the word for “book” is βιβλίον, and Kirsopp Lake, the translator of this passage, used the English word “book” a number of times here, but in Greek it is not found once in the passage. The word “book” is just tagged on to both

25 *HE*, Book 3.25, 256 – 259. Alternatively, G. A. Williamson’s translation reads: It will be well, at this point, to classify the New Testament writings already referred to [see above]. We must, of course, put first the holy quartet of the gospels, followed by the Acts of the Apostles. The next place in the list goes to Paul’s epistles, and after them we must recognize the epistle called I John; likewise I Peter. To these may be added, if it is thought proper, the Revelation of John, the arguments about which I shall set out when the time comes. These are classed as recognized books. Those that are disputed, yet familiar to most, include the epistles known as James, Jude, and 2 Peter, and those called 2 and 3 John, the work either of the evangelist or of someone else with the same name.

Among spurious books must be placed the ‘Acts’ of Paul, the ‘Shepherd’, and the ‘Revelation of Peter’; also the alleged ‘Epistle of Barnabas’, and the ‘Teaching of the Apostles’, together with the Revelation of John, if this seems the right place for it: as I said before, some reject it, others include it among the Recognized Books. Moreover, some have found a place in the list of the ‘Gospel of the Hebrews’, a book which has a special appeal for those Hebrews who have accepted Christ. These would all be classed with the Disputed Books, but I have been obliged to list the latter separately, distinguishing those writings which according to the tradition of the Church are true, genuine and recognized, from those in a different category, not canonical but disputed, yet familiar to most churchmen; for we must not confuse these with the writings published by heretics under the name of the apostles, as containing either Gospels of Peter, Thomas, Matthias, and several others besides these, or Acts of Andrew, John, and other apostles. To none of these has any churchman of any generation ever seen fit to refer in his writings. Again, nothing could be farther from apostolic usage than the type of phraseology employed, while the ideas and implications of their contents are so irreconcilable with true orthodoxy that they stand revealed as the forgeries of heretics. It follows that so far from being classed even among Spurious Books, they must be thrown out as impious and beyond the pale.


26 *HE*, Book 3.25, 258.
ὁμολογουμένοις [speaking the same/recognized] and ἀντιλεγομένων, [spoken against] since the translator knew that Eusebius was referring to the writings of the apostles named. Yet choosing the word “book” is likely a bit of an anachronistic turn, since there was no closed NT canon at this point in history, and it is probably safer to understand Eusebius meaning “writings” (γραφάς) or “letters” (ἐπιστολάς), since he uses both of these words in this passage before we get to his ὁμολογουμένοις.

Lake’s translation is still thought by scholars to be the most critically acceptable translation to date, and this is surprising since it was completed close to a century ago and yet the History is such a rich storehouse of data on Christian history. Paul L. Maier offered a translation in 1999, but it was only attempting to put the History into language that was more accessible to a wider English audience vis-à-vis Lake’s version.

This aforementioned small liberty taken by Lake in using the word “book” pales in comparison to other ambitious editorial projects which occasionally surfaced in the history of Christian scholarship. Rufinus, the primary translator of Origen’s works, candidly admits in his introduction to his translation of Origen’s Contra Celsum that

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28 ἀντιλέγω to speak against or contradict. Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, A Greek English Lexicon, 1957, 74.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid. Eusebius uses variations of this word when defining the writings in the accepted, the disputed, and those which are not genuine, although Lake for some reason translates “Epistle of Barnabas” as “writing of Barnabas” whereas with the same Greek word previously, he stayed with “Epistle” when referring to 1 Peter, for instance. Williamson, on the other hand, leaves it alone as “Epistle of Barnabas” to his credit.
32 Ibid.
he was continuing a tried and true tradition of combing out all the words and ideas in Origen which he thought might cause offence to orthodox ears.\textsuperscript{33} The general point raised here is that the relative veracity of any given translation for Origen or Eusebius, say, in relation to their editors and translators is an important consideration when trying to weed out the evolutionary abstractions and additions within any given text. This kind of concern is akin to Rudolph Bultmann’s suggestion that the three synoptic Gospels, for instance, are composed of many layers of textual tradition stemming from the particular Christian group responsible for the various emendations in the history of these writings\textsuperscript{34} – in that case, the main two groups were Hellenistic and an older Palestinian tradition, Bultmann even suggesting there may have also been other older layers which served as a basis for the, then, more recent redactions.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{33} Rufinus translated various works of Origen from Greek to Latin, and while doing so made revisions wherever he thought necessary. Rufinus writes concerning Bishop Damascus, whose project of translation he picks up: “For he, when translating into Latin more than seventy treatises of Origen, called Homilies, and also a number of his commentaries on St. Paul’s epistles, both of which are known to contain in the original a good many statements likely to cause offense, so smoothed over and emended these in his translation, that a Latin reader would find in them nothing out of harmony with our faith. His example, therefore, I am following to the best of my ability; if not with an equal degree of eloquence, yet at least observing the same rules, and taking care not to reproduce such passages from the books of Origen as are found to be inconsistent and contrary to his teaching.” Rufinus, \textit{Preface of Rufinus}, in Origen, \textit{On First Principles}, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), 63. See also generally: Rowan Williams, “Damnosa haereditas: Pamphilus’ Apology and the Reputation of Origen,” \textit{Logos: Festschrift fur Luise Abramowski zum 8. Juli 1993}, eds. Hanns Christof Brennecke, Ernst Ludwig Grasmuck, and Christoph Markschies (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 151-169. On the subject of Rufinus’ tendency to vet materials, Williams interestingly notes “… we must at once recognize how much of our own contemporary scholarship is still drawn towards the same temptation. For all our sophistication, we are still eager to have the Fathers declare themselves on the questions of our agenda, whether we approach them with the sympathy of a Rufinus (let us say, in trying to derive a consistently socialist or pacifist programme from early Christianity) or the hostility of a Jerome (as in the onslaught of feminist scholarship against early Christianity, or in certain very negative accounts of patristic attitudes to slavery)” 168.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
In the case of the *History*, posterity is thankfully in a better position when ascertaining the veracity of the textual tradition we are left with for primarily two reasons. One is that we have other sources, such as the writings of Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, Origen, and many others, to compare with the information in the *History*. The second reason one can feel reasonably confident in the *History* is because there is such a strong group of manuscripts for this work which all still survive in their original Greek.

The *History* is believed to have been presented by Eusebius in four different editions, and made its way to a variety of Greek copies, those which are extant being divided into two main groups (BDMΣL and ATER), and has since been made into a collated version of all the known manuscripts by E. Schwartz. This version was then translated by Kirsopp Lake in 1926 and is used in this present study. It is likely the best critical version yet available. These few steps in the document’s evolution give the reader a sense of the great distance from the original text that we stand. Each translator in the process would have had a particular theology and cultural perspective which would have been brought to bear on these reproductions as well.

The Book 3.25 passage from the *History* quoted above is likely the most influential passage ever written in terms of evidence for NT canon formation. Yet notwithstanding its pre-eminent status in the field of canon formation study, it is not without its problems. For instance, at one point Eusebius seems to be at odds with his

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37 Ibid., xxvii-xxx.
38 Ibid., xxxiii.
own words since in an earlier part of the History, he openly confesses that “we have been taught that 2 Peter is not genuine.”39 Here at Book 3.25, though, he seems to be ameliorating the former claim by classing this epistle with those writings, “familiar to most,” – James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John – and conveniently not in his “spurious” category. Another interesting aspect of the way Eusebius presents these five writings is that if you add their number to the “recognized” twenty-two you are left with the fourth century enumeration dictated by Athanasius in his Easter Festal Letter of 367.40 Everett R. Kalin, in his important analysis of another important enumeration41 in the History at 6.25, has made suggestions that might help explain these anomalies.42


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

VI. These are the fountains of salvation, that they who thirst may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone is proclaimed the doctrine of godliness. Let no man add to these, neither let him take ought from these. For concerning these the Lord put to shame the Sadducees and said, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.’ And He reproved the Jews, saying, ‘Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of Me.’

VII. But for greater exactness I add this also, writing of necessity; that there are other books besides these not indeed included in the Canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon, and the Wisdom of Sirach, and Esther, and Judith, and Tobit, and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, and the Shepherd. But the former, my brethren, are included in the Canon, the latter being [merely] read; nor is there in any place a mention of apocryphal writings. But they are an invention of heretics, who write them when they choose, bestowing upon them their approbation, and assigning to them a date, that so, using them as ancient writings, they may find occasion to lead astray the simple.

41 It is a selection of texts from Origen’s writings which look at first glance like a listing of his “acceptable” scriptures, but evidence suggests it was intentional editing on the part of Eusebius. See discussion in text from footnotes 43-52.
Kalin, in 1990, wrote that “‘The Canon of Origen,’ taken from Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.3-14, looks like Origen’s New Testament Canon list because Eusebius, *a clever compiler, wants it to.*” 43 The suspected complicity of Eusebius on grounds of overzealous editing driven by, perhaps, political pressures is well documented and this thesis does not attempt to sift the evidence for and against such a widely accepted claim. 44 Kalin further claims that Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25 does not preserve Origen’s list of the writings of the New Testament. It might be noted that with all the selective quoting Eusebius did in order to compile this list there is no mention of any writing of James and Jude… 45

Kalin’s observation that in Eusebius we are dealing with an author making selective quotes to bolster his own thesis within the larger work may speak to the difference between Origen’s ideas on what constituted Scripture and the way we see the Eusebian enumeration laid out at 3.25. In other words, if Origen’s writings and collected materials at Caesarea were the primary sources for the *History*, as I suggest, then the 3.25 enumeration shows that Eusebius, for some reason, categorized the books in a way that Origen would not have done, something I will discuss further below based on evidence in Origen’s writings.

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43 Ibid., [emphasis original], 277: Kalin also writes “... I offer an example of my assertion that what Eusebius offers and what he says he offers are not always the same thing. Just prior to the text in question Eusebius gives us what he wants us to think is Origen's canon of the Old Testament, while what Origen is actually giving in the quoted material is something else entirely. ...Despite Eusebius, the list Origen then proceeds to give is not his own Old Testament canon or that of the church at his time, but the twenty-two books regarded as scripture *by the Jews*. Kalin raises the issue of the special place of the Catholic Epistles which does not seem to come from Origen (280 – 281). Kalin further points to the fact that there is no extant list of the NT from Origen, “…all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding” (276).


45 Kalin, *Canon of Origen*, 279.
In his article, Kalin further considers the translation work of Rufinus who was translating Origen’s works later in the fourth century, after the time of Eusebius. Kalin specifically points to Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s *Homilies on Joshua* 7.1 where we find an oddly similar list to the one in 3.25 of the History couched in a metaphor about how the various apostolic writings represented trumpets in a new falling of the walls of Jericho. The significant anomalies highlighted by Kalin in these passages are: (1) Rufinus has Origen using the word “Canon,” a word which did not carry the meaning of closed set of books even in the time of Eusebius, never mind Origen; (2) Origen does not number Paul’s Epistles, but Rufinus has him say otherwise; (3) Rufinus has Origen say that Peter wrote two letters when he did not; and (4) the same thing of the apostle John, that he wrote three when Origen flatly did not. Kalin believes that Origen’s trusted Christian scriptures were the fourfold gospels alone, based on evidence in Eusebius’ quotations of Origen in Book 6.25.

Important for this thesis and connected to the above observations of Kalin is the fact that comments in the writings of Origen support the conclusion that the Alexandrian relied on, as indubitable, a much shorter collection of Christian writings than Eusebius lays out, but a much larger group of writings considered scriptural in

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47 Ibid., 278-280.

48 Ibid., 280-281.

49 Ibid., 278-279: Eusebius quotes Origen as writing, among other things, “... as having learnt by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which alone are unquestionable in the Church of God under heaven.” *HE*, Book 6.25, 75; R.P.C. Hanson, *Origen’s Doctrine of Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 182.
general. It is quite probable based on the evidence discussed here and below, that Origen had three categories of writings from which he derived benefit. (1) the Jewish Scriptures were clearly in an “indubitable” category for Origen; (2) the Gospels were also treated by Origen in the same way, yet as I discuss further below, he used different words to describe them in contrast to the Jewish Scriptures, which suggests a delineation in his thinking; (3) writings which came from the hand of the Apostles in the first instance, Peter, Paul and John. This delineation of three would accord with Kalin’s view on Origen in that only the four gospels were unquestionable in a class alongside the Jewish Scriptures. Yet implicit in the use of early Christian works in his own writings, Origen seems to have considered most of the books commonly accepted in the NT today as authoritative, and it is verified by his own hand that he considered, at least, the Epistle of Barnabas, 1 Clement, and Shepherd of Hermas, in the same fashion.

The Easter Festal Letter of Athanasius written in 367 C.E. is the first time in the history of the Christian Church where all twenty-seven writings are confirmed as orthodox, and in a tone that suggested their ubiquitous and unchallengeable nature. Yet Eusebius wrote his list forty-two years earlier in the quoted passage from the History, which seems to indicate that it could well have been Eusebius who set the benchmark for what should be considered accepted Christian writings, or alternatively, that he was merely relaying in his own words what Origen had passed on to students at the school he founded in Caesarea. Either way, it is duly noted that

50 Acts, 14 Pauline letters, 1 John, and 1 Peter.  
51 Kalin, Canon of Origen, 279.  
52 See discussion below. See also Joseph Trigg, The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century Church (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983), 12.
most of what Origen treasured as inspired and apostolic writing was included in the enumerations of both Eusebius and Athanasius.

**secundum apostolus and the growth of the need for an apostolic standard**

In Book Four of the *History*, Eusebius introduces some early post-apostolic Christians and their writings by first talking about some of the more colourful and influential heretics of the second century, such as Meander, Saturninus, and Basilides. Eusebius seems to be laying a contextual background as to why the Christian writers he describes wrote as much as they did. Men like Agrippa Castor, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus all wrote to refute heresies which claimed, nonetheless, a genuine Christian status; and these were believed by a number significant enough to cause various Christians in church leadership to respond in a verbose and compelling way. The five most important early Christian figures testified to by Eusebius, if space allotted is any indication, are Clement of Rome *ca.* 20-100, Ignatius *ca.* 35-107, Justin Martyr *ca.* 100-165, Irenaeus *ca.* 150-215, and then Origen *ca.* 185-254. These five historical figures all wrote with the aim of protecting an apostolic standard of faith, and their familiarity with various Christian writings helps us better understand how these documents were employed in the life of the Church.

2. **Clement of Rome**

In the process of considering these early Christian fathers, I realized there were two important distinctions which were pertinent to all five of them. The two issues

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53 *HE*, Book IV.7, 158-159.
54 Ibid., Book IV.7-IV.8, 159-161
are subordinationism in their writings generally, and the different species of both the “letter” and the “epistle” which fairly describe the works they have left to posterity. I chose to use this section on Clement of Rome to raise these similarities and hence, this section is somewhat larger than the others.

Clement of Rome is thought to have been personally appointed Bishop of Rome by Saint Peter himself, and his dates, ca. 20 – 100, do suggest a relationship of this nature could have easily taken place. Peter is recorded in the Epistle of Clement to James as declaring:

Hear me, brethren and fellow servants. Since, as I have been taught by the Lord and Teacher Jesus Christ, whose apostle I am, the day of my death is approaching, I lay hands upon this Clement as your bishop. . . . Wherefore I communicate to him the power of binding and loosing, so that with respect to everything which he shall ordain in the earth, it shall be decreed in the heavens. For he shall bind what ought to be bound, and loose what ought to be loosed, as knowing the rule of the church.

The mention of the “rule of the church” here is germane to this research and may indicate a need, even at this early stage of the Christian community’s development, to establish a precedent of belief and practice against all others.

Clement was a Bishop in the church of Rome, and we think he must have had some degree of authority since he wrote epistles to churches of other regions, as 1

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56 Ibid.

57 HE, Book 3.15, 233; Clement of Rome may also be the one mentioned by Paul in Philippians 4:3 (HE, Book 3.15, 233-234) but there is no mention of Paul in the Clementine Homilies or Apostolic Constitutions thought to have been written by him, and in the sixty-five chapters of 1 Clement there is only mention of Paul twice. Clement of Rome, “The Letter to the Corinthians” in The Apostolic Fathers, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.F. Marique, and Gerald Walsh, vol. 1, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, eds. Ludwig Schopp et al. (New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1947),
Clement, directed to the Corinthians, suggests. It is also speculated that he may have been a freedman, an ex-slave of Flavius Clemens and Flavia Domitilla, in 95 C.E.,

Chap. 5, 14; Chap. 47, 46. On the other hand, Peter is only mentioned once in 1 Clement, (Ibid., Chap. 5, 13) but appears many times and is recorded as a key witness and speaker in the Clementine Homilies and Apostolic Constitutions (See generally, Clement of Rome, Homilies and Constitutions, esp. Epistle of Peter to James and Epistle of Clement to James, 1-16). If these latter writings ascribed to him are taken at their word, it would seem that he knew Peter first hand but more likely only knew of Paul.

58 Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, The Twelve Caesars, trans. Robert Graves (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1957), Domitian 15, 305: “The occasion of Domitian’s murder was that he had executed, on some trivial pretext, his own extremely stupid cousin, Flavius Clemens, just before the completion of a consulship; though he had previously named Flavius’s two small sons as his heirs and changed their names to Vespasian and Domitian.”

59 Ibid., Vespasian 3, 275: The name Domitilla comes up twice in Suetonius, but apparently referring to different people. The first time is in the account of Vespasian at Chapter 3 where Suetonius writes, “Meanwhile, Vespasian had married Flavia Domitilla, the ex-mistress of Statilius Capella, and African knight from Sabrata. Her Father, Flavius Liberalis, a humble quaestor’s clerk from Ferulium, had appeared before a board of arbitration and established her claim to the full Roman citizenship, in place of only a Latin one. Vespasian had three children by Flavia, namely Titus, Domitian, and Domitilla; but Domitilla died before he held a magistracy, and so did Flavia herself.” The second place the name Domitilla appears is the account of Domitian at Chapter 17 where we learn, “All that has come to light about either the plot or the assassination [of Domitian] is that his niece Domitilla’s steward, Stephanus, had been accused of embezzlement [and consequently he agreed with the unnamed conspirators to carry the deed out, which he did].” Adding to the already confused set of names and events is the account of none other than Eusebius in the History (HE, Book 3.18, 237) writing “... in the fifteenth year of Domitian, Flavia Domitilla, who was the niece of Flavius Clemens, one of the consuls at Rome at that time, was banished with many others to the island of Pontia as testimony to Christ.” A few observations can be made based on the preceding evidence. First, the mother and sister of Domitian cannot be thought to be those mentioned in either the History or the account of Suetonius concerning the plot to kill the Emperor for the simple reason that they both died prior to his even holding a magistracy. Second, Domitian had a cousin named Flavius Clemens, and a niece named Domitilla, both of whom are mentioned in the account of Suetonius on Domitian’s reign as emperor. The assertion that this cousin and niece were married is not out of the realm of possibility but in my opinion based on the fact that Suetonius does not mention such an obvious connection, that the murdered victim’s wife’s steward was the one to ultimately kill Domitian, makes it seem quite long odds that this is the case. More likely, based on the fact that Romans of this time often named and/or renamed children in honour of a respected person, such as the Emperor Domitian did with Clemens’ own sons (see above), Domitilla was a name given to the female members of the royal extended family after the venerable mother of Domitian, and thus a niece of Domitian might well have been assigned the name. As for the Eusebian claim that Flavia Domitilla was the niece of Flavius Clemens, perhaps she was the niece of both Flavius Clemens and Domitian since they were cousins, and two cousins can be uncles of the same niece, especially if either cousin is one by marriage; Kirsopp Lake, the translator of the History used in this study, and published in the Loeb edition, notes the dissonance of the Eusebian claim that Clemens and Domitilla were uncle and niece, since he reads Suetonius in Dom. 15 as having the two as husband and wife, but unfortunately Suetonius does not even mention Domitilla at chapter 15 (Kirsopp Lake, HE, 3.18-19, 236-237. However, it is recorded by the Roman historian Dio that Flavius Clemens and Domitilla were married, but were not likely Christian but rather Jewish: Dio wrote “The charge brought against them both was that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned.” The phraseology here, “Jewish ways,” seems ripe with possibilities, one of which would most certainly have been the Christianity of the time, being seen as a
the former executed by his cousin Domitian – the last emperor of the Flavian dynasty – and the latter, his niece, exiled to the island of Pontia. We know that Flavia Domitilla was the niece of Flavius Clemens, as the Roman historian Suetonius records this in *The Twelve Caesars*. Yet we also know from the historian Dio that Flavius Clemens was also married to someone of that same name, Flavia Domitilla. Clement of Rome may have been a freed slave of someone named Clemens, but there is no proof either way, and it cannot be said with certainty that Flavius Clemens was a Christian. Domitilla, on the other hand, is supposed to have been a Christian due to the catacomb built on her land which is still a popular tourist attraction in Rome to this day. That Clement of Rome is so entangled, to say the least, with Domitian, Flavius Clemens, and Flavia Domitilla, has more to do with the evolution of a great story in the annals of tradition than any kind of historically verifiable fact.

**Letters and Epistles**

According to Eusebius, Clement wrote one “recognized by all” (ἀνωμολογημένη) epistle to the Christians at Corinth. The fact Clement wrote branch of the Jewish faith; cf. David Ayerst and A.S.T. Fisher, *In the Roman Empire, Records of Christianity*, vol. 1, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 11-12, 18. 

60 See discussion at footnote 86.
63 ἀνωμολογημένη recognized by all: *HE*, Book 3.38, 289.
64 The fact that Eusebius testifies that Clement’s epistle was recognized by all at Book 3.38, and “recognized” at Book 3.16 (ὁμολογουμένη) (*HE*, Book 3.16, 234), is somewhat difficult to reconcile with his listing of accepted writings in Book 3.25. Clement’s epistle is not even enumerated under spurious or heretical categories, let alone the “recognized” writings. What seems a possible explanation here is that in 3.25 Eusebius was collating a list of writings from those considered apostles of Christ in the first instance, whereas Clement was a generation removed, having been apparently discipled by Peter at Rome. The aforementioned goal of Eusebius to extract “Apostolic teaching”
this letter raises an important issue which also has ramifications for all of the writers under consideration in this present study. It is the important question of whether we are dealing here with an epistle or a letter. The epistle, according to Adolph Deissmann’s research, is a stage of literary development which followed the true or real letter, and was then followed by the fictitious epistle.\(^{65}\) For Deissmann, it was clear that a letter was something personal and private, much like a personal conversation,\(^{66}\) and he asserts that no true letter writer would write under the impression that his lines will be read by strangers.\(^{67}\) He also points out that just because a letter is published, does not then make it a new species of writing.\(^{68}\) This latter phenomenon only happens when a written work is published professedly as literature.\(^{69}\) With this in mind, an author who is under the impression that his letter will be read by others besides the intended addressee is writing an epistle, or piece of literature, and not a letter. It is also important to note that one word in ancient Greek, (ἠποστολικῆς διδασκαλίας) from the successors of the Apostles seems to accord with such a suggestion. 

This raises a small difficulty though, in that we see Epistle of Barnabas included in the discussion at 3.25, since Barnabas was likely an apostle (Barnabas shows up some 32 times in the New Testament and 27 of those in Acts where he is a major figure in the missionary story of the early Church. While not named in the text as an apostle per se, he is named as a prophet at Acts 13:1 and then set apart by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:2, and with Saul (Paul) himself. It seems clear that he operated in the same function as an apostle and likely was considered as such), but Shepherd of Hermas was considered as well, and there is no record of that work coming from an apostle in the first instance. Is it possible that simply being apostolic in nature was not enough to get a writing on the list at Book 3.25, but rather it must have been allegedly written by an apostle, except, as pointed out, with Shepherd? The point being that if that was not the case and Shepherd of Hermas was considered by Eusebius based on apostolicity, it appears strange, \textit{prima facie}, that Clement’s epistle was not. Clement’s letter to the church at Corinth was not mentioned by Eusebius at 3.25, even in spite of its accepted and recognized status. \(^{65}\) G. Adolf Deissmann, \textit{Bible Studies: Contributions Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity}, trans. Alexander Grieve, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), 16. 

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 3-4. 
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 4-5. 
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 20. 
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
epistulae (ἐπιστολή), is used to describe both epistles and letters. Concerning the NT, Deissman writes:

Certain as it seems to the author that the authentic messages of Paul are letters, he is equally sure that we have also a number of epistles from New Testament times. They belong, as such, to the beginnings of “Christian literature”. The author considers the Letter to the Hebrews as most unmistakable of all an epistle.

Hebrews, of course, does not open with an address, but opens with “[l]ong ago God spoke to our ancestors . . .” (Heb 1:1), and as Deissmann goes on to point out, in the case of letters the address is all important, but for an epistle it is an “unessential element.” This delineation between letter and epistle helps to decipher the intent of the authors under consideration in this research by simple evidence in their writings, and given the observations of Deissman, most of the writings of the early Fathers discussed here can be best understood as epistles, with the one exception, perhaps, of Ignatius of Antioch.

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70 Ibid., 21.
71 Ibid., 49. Deissmann also writes elsewhere, “. . . the contrast in which the Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, stands linguistically to the earlier texts of Primitive Christianity, is peculiarly instructive to us. It points to the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its more definitely artistic, more literary language (corresponding to its more theological subject-matter), constituted an epoch in the history of the new religion. Christianity is beginning to lay hands on the instruments of culture; the literary and theological period has begun.” G. Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World, trans. Lionel R. M. Stranch, rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 70-71.
72 Ibid., 50.
73 Generally, in the writings of the Fathers, I would suggest we are not dealing with letters as such, but epistles. The bare fact that by their times the Fathers were writing epistles and not letters forms a kind of boundary which separates the earliest Christian writings from the second and third generation thereof. It is then no surprise that in the History, the discussion on accepted Christian scriptures seems to divide the writings at the same point as is suggested for the end of the Christian letter, so to speak, and the advent of the epistle. The Apostles wrote letters and some epistles, while the Fathers wrote only epistles or apologetic works. While the Fathers adopted the style of the apostles, the so-called letter, their writing could never reproduce the conversational aspect or awkward specific greetings found in the personal letters of, primarily, Paul. Adolf Deissman poignantly notes the obvious difference between the real letter and epistle by noting that:

The father of the epistle was no great pioneer spirit, but a mere paragraphist, a mere mechanic. . . .

But the prototype, thus degraded to a mere pattern, mistrustfully refused to show its true face, not
With the delineation of Deissmann in mind, it seems unlikely that Clement was writing a pure letter, for the simple reason that although it was specifically addressed,\(^{74}\) it is written more in the style of a man who knew others would be reading this “letter” to the Corinthians. Clement writes at one point, “[w]e are writing this, beloved, not merely for your admonition, but also to serve as a reminder to ourselves; . . .\(^{75}\) This is not a private document, but a public one. The fact that it opens with a detailed preface of blessing and closes with a very intricate benediction also speaks to its catholic nature. It is also strikingly bereft of the personal touch of “farewell” or of any awkwardly placed greetings and instructions at its end, both of which are characteristic of Paul’s letters, for example.\(^{76}\)

**Subordinationism**

Clement refers to God the Father as “Master,” in a style very reminiscent of the way Christ would talk about his Father in the parables, and when doing so, seems to place Christ in a subordinate role vis-à-vis the Father, an allusion here to what is sometimes referred to as subordinationism. Many of the early Christian apologists

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\(^{74}\) Kleist, *Clement and Ignatius*, Epistle to the Corinthians, pref., 9.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., chap. 7, 13.

\(^{76}\) Rom 16.1-16; Phil 4.21-22; 1 Cor 15.19-21; etc.
show clearly in their writings that they think of God as being in authority above Christ, as Jesus in the Gospels often indicates.\textsuperscript{77} Clement, for instance, writes:

The ministers of the grace of God [Israel’s Prophets] exhorted through the Holy Spirit to conversion, and the Master of the universe Himself exhorted to conversion with an oath: As truly as I live, says the Lord, I do not desire the death of the sinner, but His conversion… [Ezekiel 18:23] \textsuperscript{78}

For it is to the humble-minded that Christ belongs, not to those who exalt themselves above His flock. The Sceptre of the Divine Majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ, did not, for all His power, come clothed in boastful pomp and overweening pride, but in a humble frame of mind, as the Holy Spirit has told concerning Him: for He says: [verses from the prophets]… \textsuperscript{79}

Let us consider, beloved, how the Master continually calls our attention to the future resurrection, the first fruits of which He has made the Lord Jesus Christ by raising Him from the dead.\textsuperscript{80}

The early church of Rome seems to have had a different idea about God and Christ, and one which more closely accords with Jewish perspective where God is one, and over all, including his Messiah. In the latter two quoted passages, Christ is the “Sceptre of the Divine Majesty”, and the “first fruits” of the Master, as opposed to simply the Master himself, or so it seems.

This idea of Jesus being subordinate to the Father was an idea with great favour in the early Church and some examples of it here will serve to bear this contention out a little further. Peter, in the \textit{Clementine Homilies}, in a conversation with an interlocutor named Simon, declares:

“Our Lord neither asserted that there were gods except the Creator of all, nor did He proclaim himself to be God, but He with reason pronounced blessed him who

\textsuperscript{77} Mark 10:17. As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.’; Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; John 3:16-19.

\textsuperscript{78} Kleist, \textit{Epistle to the Corinthians}, XLVII, 13.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 16, 18.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 24, 24- 25.
called Him the Son of that God who has arranged the universe.” And Simon answered: “Does it not seem to you, then, that he who comes from God is God?” And Peter said: “Tell us how this is possible; for we cannot affirm this, because we did not hear it from Him.”

Clearly, if this account is trustworthy, even Peter himself did not either ascribe to or deny a Trinitarian perspective that was later added to the gospel rule by the Roman church. Further, of the forty-six times in the Gospels where Jesus uses the phrase “my Father,” emphasising his own subordinate role, fourteen are in Matthew, four in Luke, twenty-three in John, and not once in Mark. In fact, in Mark, Jesus refers to God as Father only three times, but includes many examples of Jesus teaching about “God.” This high usage of the phrase in Matthew and John versus nothing in Mark is perhaps concomitant with evidence which shows that Matthew and John were the two preferred gospels of the early Church, but it should be noted Mark had extremely low usage in any event.

In Origen’s writings, a century later, the language is similar, but yet also more subtly tracked towards seeing Jesus as God when he writes:

We do not suppose the body of Jesus, which was then an object of sight and perception, to have been God. And why do I say His body? Nay, not even His soul, of which it is related, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. . . . according to our view, it was the Logos God, and the Son of the God of all things, who spake in Jesus these words, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life;”

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82 The difficulty of this passage for later Trinitarian theology, keeping the exegetical doctrine of “most difficult reading” in mind, makes for a provocative suggestion for further study on this subject.
86 Mark 8:38 his [Son of Man’s] Father; 11:25 Your [disciples et al.] Father; 13:32; 14:36 Abba, Father.
87 Mark 1:14, 15; 3:35; 7:9; etc.
88 See discussion in Chapter 2 below.
Origen goes on to claim that it was to the Logos God that the Father God spoke to in the creation account, “Let Us make man . . . etc.”

If Jesus had the Logos God in him, then it is perhaps difficult to measure just how far away Origen felt God the Father and Logos God were from each other, if at all. Clearly he thinks of them as separate entities in some respect, but Origen is clearly taking the development of Jesus as God to a more sophisticated level than his predecessors by insisting that the Logos God was present in Christ the Son. As I have observed in some of Origen’s writings generally, the Logos God gets at least as much attention as God the Father, in some manner of speaking, and this seems important to the development of the doctrine that ultimately won over, beginning with the Nicene Settlement of 325. Further, there is proof that Origen actually knew of others who believed Jesus was God in the Alexandrian’s own times. He writes:

Grant there may be some individuals among the multitudes of believers who are not in entire agreement with us, and who incautiously assert that the Saviour is the Most High God; however, we do not hold with them, but rather believe Him when He says, “The Father who sent Me is greater than I.” We would not therefore make Him who we call Father inferior – as Celsus accuses us of doing – to the Son of God.

Origen then bears witness, if we can trust the Greek text of Contra Celsum – and I think the theological difficulty of the passage alone insists on that supposition – to traces of a significant move in Christian theology which involved “some individuals” claiming the status of God for Christ. The difficult part where Origen is concerned is teasing out the nature of the difference between the Logos God in Christ, and the

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90 Origen, CC, 8.14, 644.
Father God, the latter whom we clearly understand Origen to be postulating as greater than Christ.

This previous observation in Origen’s comments make it seem like one is perhaps very near to tracing the roots of the most famous conflict the Christian Church ever faced, that of Arianism; and if Origen along with a great deal of the early Church separated God and Christ in the way alluded to above, then perhaps the comments of Arius become less unique after all:

But we say and believe, and have taught, and do teach, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any way unbegotten, even in part; and that he does not derive his subsistence from any matter; but that by his own will and counsel he has subsisted before time, and before ages, as perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable, and that he existed not before he was begotten, or created, or purposed, or established. For he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted, because we say that the Son had a beginning, but that God was without beginning.\footnote{Arius, The Letter of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, in Theodoretus, Ecclesiastical History: A History of the Church in Five Books, The Greek Ecclesiastical Historians of the First Six Centuries of the Christian Era in Six Volumes (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1843), chap. 5, 23-25.}

If the suggested connection between the early Church and the doctrine of Arius existed, it is remarkable indeed to think Origen left evidence of the beginnings of this conflict even one-hundred years before it actually began to boil over. My own sense is that while Origen did subscribe to the teaching of Christ that the Father is greater, he also believed the Logos God was essentially Christ, and so it seems the difference between them is absolutely within the de minimus range, and more the fodder of philosophical inquiry than the practical faith of Christ and the Apostles.

As mentioned above, if the early Church did carry this view of the Father as God alone, it is perhaps not surprising then that it is Matthew and John which are the preferred Gospels of the early Fathers, while the use of Mark is noticeably low, and
Luke fares only somewhat better than Mark. There may be an indication of why this is from the hand of Eusebius who, in describing the Church’s treatment of the Gospels, writes “of all those who had been with the Lord only Matthew and John have left us their recollections, and tradition says that they took to writing perforce [out of necessity].” If Matthew and John were the only apostles in the first instance to write their recollections, perhaps this acknowledgement points to why their gospels were relied on to such a degree vis-à-vis Luke and Mark, and why, pursuant to the above discussion, in turn, there is such a bifurcated emphasis on, separately, God the Father and then Christ His Son in early Christian writings. This phenomenon is pointed out at the beginning of this research because it turns out to be a fairly solid theological marker for not only Clement but most of the early Christian apologists whose writings played a key role in the development of the NT canon.

The reality of such a subordinate view of the Son in Clement’s epistle and homilies makes the following observation from Bruce Metzger seem to follow naturally: “… it is remarkable that Clement invokes the absolute authority of the words of Jesus only twice, whereas he refers to passages in books of the Old Testament more than one hundred times.” For Clement, and seemingly those he led, the Scripture was the Jewish Scriptures alone. Andrew Gregory similarly notes that nearly one fourth of I Clement is given over to quotes from the Jewish Scriptures, and

92 See discussion below at Chapter 2.
93 HE, Book 3.24, 251.
96 Metzger, Canon of NT, 42.
likely from the Greek Septuagint translation. Christians in the first century were much closer in time to the life of Christ, and so quite likely had adopted only the Scriptures he used in His own Jewish context. Another observation which might help explain the preference for the Jewish Scriptures is that the church in Rome was started by Jewish Christians, as were a great many in the first century, and would likely have been practicing a distinctly Jewish form of worship.

Coming back to the issue of apostolicity in Clement’s writing, Eusebius claims that some believed this Bishop of Rome may have also been the one to write the Epistle to the Hebrews in its original text, and he cites similarity of both style and content as supporting such a notion. Martin Luther, in his Preface to the Epistle to the Hebrews, also makes comments that seem to support the notion that someone of Clement’s ilk may in fact have been the author. Luther writes:

In the first place, the fact that Hebrews is not an epistle of St. Paul, or of any other apostle, is proved by what it says in chapter 2[:3], that through those who had themselves heard it from the Lord this doctrine has come to us and remained among us. It is thereby made clear that he is speaking about the apostles, as a disciple to whom this doctrine has come from the apostles, perhaps long after them.

It may be, then, that the disputed letter to the Hebrews which found its way into the NT was written by an author who also wrote a “recognized by all” 1 Clement. In another place Eusebius, curiously, recounts that those who disputed Hebrews were from the church of Rome and they rejected it because they did not believe it was

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98 HE, 3.38, 289; cf. HE, Book 6.14, 47: Here Eusebius gives an alternate accounting of the authorship of Hebrews in the opinion of Clement of Alexandria. Luke is stated as being the author, and the story sounds reasonable, but as with all speculation on this point, seemingly unverified.
written by Paul. What is interesting about this is that Clement was the Bishop of Rome, and perhaps here we have some evidence pointing to Hebrews’ authorship. If it was the church of Rome that said Hebrews was not of Paul, and others, elsewhere in Eusebius, felt it was written by Clement, then it does seem to be a reasonable inference that, since the church of Rome would have known Clement first hand, perhaps they knew it was not Paul who wrote Hebrews, but Clement. If Clement did write both, then it might seem odd that one should find its way into the NT while the other did not. Perhaps the reference to those in the church who “spoke against” Hebrews, as noted by Eusebius, gives us an indication that the early Roman church may have felt strongly about the need to preserve the integrity of only those writings from Apostles in the first instance, of which they knew Clement was not. Hebrews, in other words, was not likely considered “apostolic teaching” by some in the same way as Paul’s letters, but was instead part of the evolving group of writings which, although not “apostolic teaching” per se, were included by the fourth century Church as being orthodox in any event.

Notwithstanding this seemingly Jewish-Christian perspective in 1 Clement, there is also some evidence of his veneration for the letters of Paul. Clement, in his recognized Epistle to the Corinthians, recommends to his readers to “take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul.” He also says that Paul was truly inspired to write what he did to the Corinthians, particularly in Clement’s context, because Paul’s

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100 Book 3.3, 193.
101 HE, Book 3.25, 257.
102 The ἀντιλέγομένων books: James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John; Revelation was rejected by some altogether, and recognized by others in the same category as the core twenty-one.
103 Kleist, Epistle to the Corinthians, 47, 38; Metzger, Canon of NT, 42.
words fit the problem they were facing in that later time as well, that of factionalism. In terms of Pauline works in aggregate which Clement appears to have been familiar with, Metzger cites him making definite allusions to Romans, Galatians, Philippians, and Ephesians. Even in spite of this evidence, Metzger is emphatic that for Clement, Paul’s writings were not invested with divine authority, yet he observes an element of authority attached to them. As already pointed out, Clement’s time was very close to that of Christ himself; in fact it is thought he was born in Christ’s own lifetime, almost certainly towards the latter half, considering he was born in 20 C.E. Clement would have likely been exposed to a very Jewish perspective on Christ, unlike the confluence of the Gentile and Jewish streams of Christianity many years hence.

While much more could be said about the man and his epistle, for the purposes of this research, Clement stands most for the proposition that the Jewish Scriptures were the only Scriptures, and that apostolic writings of encouragement and correction were exactly that, useful writings in the communal life of the Church. His own letter to the Corinthians implies this perspective quite strongly. Clement also evidences in his writing a sensibility concerning the place of primacy reserved for God the Father vis-à-vis Christ, a view we suspect was widespread during the first century. One who likely shared this perspective with Clement is the next Christian writer this research examines, Ignatius of Antioch.

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104 Ibid., 47, 38.
105 Metzger, Canon of NT, 42.
106 Ibid., 42 – 43.
3. Ignatius of Antioch

Eusebius tells us that Ignatius was the second person to be appointed Bishop of Antioch in succession to the Apostle Peter. It is stated in Clement of Rome’s Apostolic Constitutions, in the testimony of Peter, that Ignatius was ordained by Paul. Clement’s record indicates Peter claiming, “[o]f Antioch, Euodius, ordained by me Peter; and Ignatius by Paul.” Theodoret of Cyrus, on the other hand, has Peter as the one to ordain Ignatius. Yet given the fact that Ignatius was born around 35 C.E., and that Eusebius has Peter and Paul being martyred in Rome under Nero’s rule, perhaps sometime around 64 C.E., it seems a slim margin for someone as young as Ignatius was, perhaps his mid twenties, to then be ordained in Antioch and remain bishop for another forty years. What is certain is the unqualified veneration paid to this bishop by both Eusebius and Irenaeus. Unfortunately, nothing certain is known of his life aside from his journey to martyrdom from Syria to Rome, under the guard of Roman soldiers.

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110 Ibid. There may be a difficulty here, though, since Peter is recorded as testifying “ordained by me, Peter.” It seems odd that he would say his own name in this instance; people do not usually communicate using their own name, although it is possible.
112 HE, Book II.25, 181.
113 Eusebius, H.E., Book 3.36, 281; Cross, Christian Church, 817.
It is believed that Ignatius was arrested during a persecution in Antioch and singled out by the Romans as their leader to be made an example.\textsuperscript{114} It also seems evident from a letter he received in Troas,\textsuperscript{115} while en route under guard to Rome, that the church of Antioch was again at peace, and presumably the hostilities had ended. It has been noted by William R. Schoedel that with this in mind, his continued desire for martyrdom seems all the more selflessly devoted to the cause of Christ,\textsuperscript{116} and perhaps tells us some of the impassable character of the person, not wishing to be released. Eusebius tells us of the impetus behind Ignatius’ letters which were written en route to his martyrdom, about which he was fully aware and for which he was eager.

he particularly warned them [the churches he wrote to\textsuperscript{117}] to be on their guard against the heresies which then for the first time were beginning to obtain, and exhorted them to hold fast to the tradition of the Apostles, to which he thought necessary, for safety’s sake, to give the form of written testimony.\textsuperscript{118}

This passage marks the first time in the \textit{History} where Eusebius ascribes to an author an intent of this nature, that being to write a testimony which bore the stamp of the Apostles’ teaching. Here we learn that Ignatius was writing to preserve the standard of apostolic faith to ward away heresies in favour of the truth passed down to him. The main point here is that Eusebius records the desire of Ignatius to preserve an apostolic gospel standard before his imminent death in 107 C.E. At least in the mind

\textsuperscript{116} Schoedel, \textit{Ignatius}, 10.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., \textit{HE}, Book 3.36, 281-287: According to Eusebius, Ignatius wrote letters to the Churches at Ephesus, Magnesia on the Maeander, Tralles, Rome, Smyrna, and Philadelphia.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., \textit{HE}, Book 3.36, 281.
of Eusebius, Ignatius’ writings are perhaps a first evidence of what would become an ongoing and widening struggle aimed at preserving an apostolic standard of faith.

Important for this research, Ignatius leaves significant evidence in his writings of his veneration for the writings of the apostle Paul, although the degree to which this is so is not settled amongst scholars.\(^{119}\) Bruce Metzger writes:

In addition to I Corinthians, parallels in phraseology make it probable that Ignatius was acquainted also with several other Pauline Epistles, including Romans, Ephesians, and Philippians. It is possible he had knowledge of Hebrews and I Peter, though echoes from these are rather faint.\(^{120}\)

Even more encouraging, but also surprising, especially in light of the fact that he may have been in the succession of Peter at Antioch, is the fact that he seems to have been very familiar with Matthew, but not likely with either Mark or Luke.\(^{121}\) For instance, Ignatius wrote in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, “… [Jesus was] baptized by John in order to comply with every ordinance.”\(^{122}\) Metzger translates it “‘… so that all righteousness might be fulfilled by him.’”\(^{123}\) The author of Matthew has Jesus say nearly the same thing at Matt 3:15.\(^{124}\) The surprising aspect of this occurrence of a Matthean turn of phrase in Ignatius is that if Peter’s Gospel was preserved in Mark,

\(^{120}\) Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 45.
\(^{121}\) Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 45-47: Metzger observes that there is no decisive proof one way or the other, and includes the only single passage which could be thought to have derived from Luke in the Ignatian letter to the Smyrnaeans. The pertinent text from this letter reads, “He [Jesus] came to those who were with Peter, He said to them: ‘Take hold on me and handle me and see that I am not a spirit without a body.’ And, as soon as they touched Him and felt His flesh and pulse, they believed.” (Schopp et al. eds., *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, Chap. 3, 119). The passage in Luke which is somewhat like it reads, “Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’” (Luke 24:39). Other than this, there do not seem to be any other similar connections to either Mark or Luke, according to Metzger.
\(^{122}\) Kleist, *Clement and Ignatius*, Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans 1.1, 90.
\(^{123}\) Metzger, *Canon*, 45.
\(^{124}\) Matthew 3:15 (NASV), But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.’ Then he consented.
and Peter was the Bishop at Antioch, one wonders, especially given Markan priority, why Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch after Peter in the first century, would be so familiar with Matthew and not Mark. On the other hand, the absence of Mark in Ignatius is par for the course in terms of the early Fathers and their choice of Gospels right up until Origen’s time, but it is interesting nonetheless to speculate that perhaps Peter himself promulgated the Matthean version of the Gospel over other accounts as well.

B.F. Westcott made the observation of Ignatius that:

The letters which bear the name of Ignatius are distinguished among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers by a character of which no exact type can be found in the New Testament. They bear the stamp of a mind fully imbued with the doctrine of St. Paul . . .

No one who reads Ignatius will disagree with this assessment; his writing is truly of a *sui generis* nature. There is likely no writer so bold in metaphor, and so passionate about his own forthcoming martyrdom. An excerpt from his letter to the Romans will confirm this suggestion:

God’s wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be ground that I may prove Christ’s pure bread. Better still, coax the wild beasts to become my tomb and to leave no part of my person behind: once I have fallen asleep, I do not wish to be a burden to anyone. Then only shall I be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ when the world will not see even my body. …Not like Peter and Paul do I issue any orders to you. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am until this moment a slave. But once I have suffered, I shall become a freedman of Jesus Christ and being united with Him, I shall rise a free man. Just now I learn, being in chains, to desire nothing.

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126 Ignatius, Kleist, *Ignatius to the Romans* 4, 82; Allen Brent has observed that this explicit overture of Ignatius about the physical suffering of martyrdom was a justification of Christ’s genuine birth and painful loss of his earthly life, a reality which aimed to combat notions of Docetism, a heresy which taught that Christ was only an allusion. (Allen Brent, “The Enigma of Ignatius of Antioch,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 57.3, (2006): 456.) Lee Martin McDonald prefers to see Ignatius as a reference point for how the early Church preferred the gospel itself, the preaching of and about Jesus which would have been carried through an oral tradition. (Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon: Its Origin, Transmission, and Authority*, [Peabody: Henrickson Publishers, 2007], 275). McDonald
Interesting for this research is the idea that he appears to want to distance himself from the authority of the Apostles who “order” the Church, whereas he insists for himself a much lower stature. Ignatius seems to be exaggerating in the case of Paul, especially, who could not have been considered a “free man,” having spent a great deal of his time either in prison or under guard during his ministry, finally dying a martyr’s death in Rome.

Matthew W. Mitchell has suggested that with the relative paucity of even Old Testament verbatim quotes in the letters of Ignatius, alongside the obvious respect paid to the forms and theology of Paul, this church father was subordinating the Old Testament to new forms of authority. While it may be the case that Ignatius was appealing to Pauline turns of phrase and theology, it does not at all seem clear that Ignatius is leading the Church away from the Jewish Scriptures in favour of Paul, most pointedly because these were letters written by a very old man under a state of duress and not likely as carefully planned statements of doctrine. Other reasons for this challenge are that, in fact, the only verbatim quotes are from the Old Testament, interprets Ignatius as preferring the authority of this message over the Jewish Scriptures, when in the letter to the Philadelphians, he writes, “…[b]ut to me the official record is Jesus Christ; the inviolable record is His Cross and His death and His Resurrection and the faith of which He is the Author.” (Ignatius in Kleist, *Clement and Ignatius, Ignatius to the Philadelphians*, 8.1 - 2, 88) Ignatius was contrasting his conviction with a perspective of some he had met who demanded to see the gospel in the Scriptures before they believed it. McDonald puts his perspective on Ignatius succinctly by suggesting, “[f]or Ignatius, the primary locus of authority for Christian faith was in Jesus Christ, more specifically in the early Christian kerygma about ‘his cross, and death, and resurrection.’”

Yet the apostolic waves of similitude that waft through the letters of Ignatius which both Metzger and Westcott point to make it difficult to believe that this is a person purely influenced by oral tradition. It seems reasonable to suggest that both letters and oral teaching passed down by the apostles were responsible for such a depiction of faith which our Martyr penned from memory.

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128 Justo Gonzalez rightly points out that Ignatius was well over seventy when he went to his death. Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 41.
proving a memorized familiarity on the part of Ignatius. Another point of dissonance which challenges Mitchell’s suggestion is that it is hard to imagine that a church begun by the Apostle Peter would be subordinating the Old Testament in any way at all. With all due respect, Peter’s tendency towards his own Jewish faith needs little elaboration in light of Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

Ignatius, besides Matthew’s Gospel and some few Pauline works, also appears to have been very familiar with the fourth gospel, John’s, and several examples in his letters suffice to show that he relied and treasured this written testimony of the beloved apostle.\textsuperscript{129} Ignatius seems to have been familiar with two gospel accounts, Matthew’s and John’s, and at least five or so of Paul’s letters. The letters of Paul, being written before the gospels, and given the dates of Ignatius, seem to fit well with written materials we might expect Ignatius to have been familiar with. Concerning his familiarity with Matthew, on the other hand, we know that modern scholarship has given lineal primacy to Mark, as the earlier basis for Matthew and Luke, which would lead to the odd conclusion that Ignatius, a bishop in the succession of Peter, from whom Mark received his testimony for his written gospel, would then prefer a later version in Matthew, unless, of course, Matthew was written first.

One real difficulty with the testimony of Ignatius in his letters is that nowhere does he explicitly quote a letter or gospel verbatim, or with any kind of tacit reference. On this point, Henry Chadwick notes: “Ignatius’ religion had its norms in a

\textsuperscript{129} Metzger, \textit{Canon}, 46 – 48.
community tradition; books were secondary, and the ‘gospel’ was not yet a book.”

There were no chapters and verses for any of the Christian writings at that point in history, and there was no fixed collection of writings. Yet there would have been letters, and copies of letters circulating which allowed Ignatius to be as familiar as it appears he was with Paul’s writings. The gospel canon, or standard, of Ignatius was a living one, alive in and amongst his own Christian community at Antioch, and his own letters served to protect this gospel. Ignatius also preserves testimony of a person who was familiar with the apostolic writings of, at least Paul and John, and he serves as one of the first witnesses, albeit implicitly expressed, to the relatively robust usage which apostolic writings received at the hands of some within the first century Church.

4. Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr was the most prolific early writer dealt with by Eusebius, and it seems reasonable to suggest that from the tone of the following selections from the History that Constantine’s Bishop wants readers to think of Justin Martyr’s works as ideal for students, but nowhere champions them as being on par with apostolic works. For instance, he writes:

Justin has left us treatises of an educated intelligence trained in theology, which are full of helpfulness, and to them we will refer students, indicating what has come usefully to our knowledge.

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131 HE, Book 4.18, 369.
He also writes that even up to his own time prophetic gifts illuminated the church, and quotes the Apocalypse of John, saying clearly that it is the work of the apostle.\textsuperscript{132}

These points must serve to encourage students to follow his arguments zealously and such are the facts about him.\textsuperscript{133}

Like Ignatius and Clement, even though Justin’s works do not show up in the enumeration from Book 3.25 of the \textit{History}, the writings seem to have been regarded as meeting the standard or rule of Christ, at least as Eusebius understands it, because he recommends the writings of Justin to fellow Christian students. Concerning the mention of Justin’s comments on Revelation, Eusebius may be working an angle here, perhaps towards those who demurred on the Revelation of John and did not think it worthy of use in worship. Eusebius emphasizes the fact that Justin has spoken on the authenticity of a book which this Bishop seemingly wanted to include in his canon, the Revelation of John. If Book 3.25 of the \textit{History}, provided above, is any indication, it seems that Eusebius is comfortable with including Revelation himself in the accepted works, but goes out of his way to state that it is very much disputed. In the above quoted passage, though, Eusebius used Justin as a witness of the veracity and apostolic nature of the work.

Justin Martyr’s date of birth is unknown, but is speculated to have been sometime around the very end of the first century.\textsuperscript{134} He converted to the Christian faith sometime around 130 C.E., and shortly afterward took on the role of a Christian teacher at Ephesus.\textsuperscript{135} He is generally believed to have been of Roman descent, based

\begin{footnotes}
\item[132] \textit{HE}, Book 4.18, 371-373.
\item[133] \textit{Ibid.}, 373.
\item[134] Westcott, \textit{A General Survey}, 98.
\item[135] Metzger, \textit{Canon}, 144.
\end{footnotes}
on the Latin names of his father and grandfather, but his writing does not show a lot of Hellenistic influence, characteristic of a Roman education, which makes his nationality of another race possible. It must also be said of Justin that he was an ardent Platonist, not unlike Origen. Henry Chadwick puts Justin’s outlook succinctly when he writes: “The transcendent God of Plato, beyond mortal comprehension, is the God of the Bible. Socrates rightly perceived how corrupt the old religion was, and in consequence was hounded to death by the Athenians – a model of integrity for Christian martyrs.” It was perhaps Justin’s optimism of the ability of Platonism to further accent Christianity which would go on to encourage the likes of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and then Augustine, all of whom were admitted Platonists. This is important when one thinks of the far reaching effects of such a philosophy which exalts the soul and devalues the body to, sometimes, lamentable ends. Such an outlook is a key ingredient to, for instance, Augustine’s “Just War” conversation in the City of God, and Clement of Alexandria’s absolutely tortuous instruction on the

137 Ibid., 356; Roman parents would often have their children given a Greek or Hellenistic education, usually by Greek slaves or teachers.
138 Westcott claims Justin was of Greek descent, and that his family had settled in the Greek colony of Flavia Neapolis: Westcott, A General Survey, 98; see also, Henry Chadwick, The Early Church (London: Penguin, 1967), 74.
139 Chadwick, Early Church, 75-76.
140 Ibid., 79.
141 St. Augustine, Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans, trans. Henry Bettenson, intro. John O’Meara (London: Penguin, 1972), 19.7, 861-862: Augustine reads, “But the wise man, they say, will wage just wars. Surely, if he remembers that he is a human being, he will rather lament the fact that he is faced with the necessity of waging just wars; for if they were not just, he would not have to engage in them, and consequently there would be no wars for a wise man. For it is the injustice of the opposing side that lays on the wise man the duty of waging wars; and this injustice is assuredly to be deplored by a human being, since it is the injustice of human beings, even though no necessity of war should arise from it.” See also John Langan “The Elements of St. Augustine’s Just War Theory,” Journal of Religious Ethics 12.1 (Spring 1984). Regarding Augustine’s reliance on Plato and Cicero, see The Republic of Plato, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press,
ascetic life in his writings, such as his work entitled *Christ the Educator*. Justin was the first in a long line of like-minded philosopher Christians, and for him to end life in martyrdom was perfectly logical both according to his faith, and his philosophy. The fact that he was martyred makes it more likely that he was a Roman citizen, as it was citizens who were being asked to sacrifice to the emperor and thereby prove their fealty, many Christians refusing at the cost of their lives.

Eventually, he, not unlike the subject of this study, Origen, would open a Christian school. Justin’s school, however, was in the Imperial city of Rome where he defended Christianity against accusations and heresy using his rhetorical and philosophical training. Justin’s written works are largely the result of his opposition to various philosophers and heretics in Rome who challenged the apostolic faith in Christ. He himself was an articulate philosopher and well educated defender of the faith, a Christian apologist *par excellence*, and this in the face of the Roman authorities who were persecuting Christians on very weak and often falsified

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142 Clement of Alexandria, *Clement of Alexandria: Christ the Educator*, in *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, eds. Roy Joseph Deferrari et al., trans. Simon P. Wood (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1954), Clement writes, “His beard, then, is the badge of a man and shows him unmistakably to be a man. It is older than Eve and is the symbol of the stronger nature. By God’s decree, hairiness is one of man’s conspicuous qualities, and, at that, hairiness distributed over his whole body. Whatever smoothness or softness there was in him God took from him when He fashioned the delicate Eve from his side to be the receptacle of his seed, his helpmate both in procreation and in the management of the home. What was left (remember, he had lost all traces of hairlessness) was manhood and reveals that manhood. His characteristic is action; hers, passivity. For, what is hairy is by nature drier and warmer than what is bare; therefore, the male is hairier and more warm-blooded than the female; the uncastrated, than the castrated; the mature, than the immature. Thus, it is a sacrilege to trifle with the symbol of manhood. But to seek beauty in hairlessness – and here my words grow warm – is sheer effeminacy, if done by men; adulterousness, if by women. Both of these vices are to be eliminated from our way of life as far as possible.” (Book 3.3.19, 214-215).

143 It has been suggested elsewhere that Origen’s father must have been Roman because he was beheaded: Crouzel, *Origen*, 5.

144 Cross, *Christian Church*, 915.
evidence. Justin’s first apology, for instance, deftly picks apart accusations made
against Christians in an attempt to have the emperor bring a stop the persecution
against this burgeoning group within Roman Society. Justin writes:

To the Emperor Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antonius Pius Augustus Caesar . . . I,
Justin . . . have drawn up this address and petition.  

For we have come into your company not to flatter you by this writing, nor please
you by our address, but to ask that you give judgment [on the false accusations
made against Christians].

For we are accused of being Christians, and to hate what is favourable is unjust.
Again, if one of the accused denies the name, saying that he is not [a Christian],
you acquit him, as having no proof that he is an evildoer; but if anyone
acknowledges that he is one, you punish him on the account of this
acknowledgement. You ought also to enquire into the life both of the confessor
and the denier, that by his deeds it would appear what kind of person each is.

This latter passage bears the stamp of the main thrust of extant works from Justin,
defending Christianity in the face of a cruel Roman policy, on behalf of Christians
living in Rome and throughout the empire. As his surname indicates, and perhaps
fittingly given his life’s work, he died a martyr’s death, like so many of the Christian
martyrdoms which had first impressed him and brought him to adopt the Christian
way as his own. According to Eusebius, Tatian, a student of Justin’s who became a
prolific writer against heresies like his master, wrote that Justin’s death was
encouraged by the philosopher Crescens, whom Justin convicted of gluttony and

Leslie William Barnard, vol. 56 of Ancient Christian Writers, eds. Walter J. Burghardt et al. (New
York: Paulist Press, 1997), chap. 1, 23.
146 Ibid., chap. 2, 23.
147 Ibid., chap. 4, 25.
fraud by preaching the truth.\textsuperscript{148} “Such was the cause of the martyrdom of Justin,”\textsuperscript{149} wrote Eusebius.

Similar to Clement, Justin’s works are filled with quotations from the Old Testament, yet unlike Clement, he emphasizes the transitory nature of the Old Covenant in favour of the new revelation of Christ in the gospel.\textsuperscript{150} Coming from a non-Jewish background and belonging to a more and more gentile populated Church, this inclination in Justin is not hard to imagine. As for his knowledge and use of writings from the apostolic period, it is clear he was familiar with some of what would become the NT. Justin calls the apostolic writings about the life of Christ, the “Memoirs of the apostles.”\textsuperscript{151} In his own words from the \textit{First Apology} already quoted, he writes, “[f]or the Apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, thus handed down what was commanded them . . .”\textsuperscript{152} Again, he writes, “on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.”\textsuperscript{153} Metzger claims that this testimony shows how the two different sets of writings, the Gospels and the Prophets, were read interchangeably, and further that because Justin places the Memoirs ahead of the Prophets, that they were considered of greater authority.\textsuperscript{154} The former assertion seems reasonable enough, but the latter is not certain at all and may be due rather to

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{HE}, Book 4.16, 359-363. See also, Dopp and Geerlings, \textit{Early Christian Literature}, 356-357: Here it is noted that Tatian later became a heretic, but praised his teacher Justin.

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{HE}, Book 4.16, 363.

\textsuperscript{150} Metzger, \textit{Canon}, 144 – 145.

\textsuperscript{151} St. Justin Martyr, \textit{First Apology}, 66, 70-71.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} St. Justin Martyr, \textit{First Apology}, 67, 71.

\textsuperscript{154} Metzger, \textit{Canon}, 145.
Metzger’s disposition as a Christian scholar who occasionally reads the outcome into the process. If the enormous number of Old Testament writings quoted verbatim in Clement, Ignatius, and Justin himself, are any indication, this assertion by Metzger that the Memoirs were above the Prophets is somewhat counter-intuitive. Certainly the Memoirs were important in being given similar status in worship, at least the worship with which Justin was familiar, but to say they were “above” seems exaggerated in this case.

In terms of the writings of Paul, strangely, given the later time period, they are not quoted from at all. In spite of this fact, Metzger still claims that Justin’s controversy with Marcion\textsuperscript{155} bears witness of having known several of Paul’s letters, and that various forms of expression in his works are reminiscent of someone who had been moulded by Paul’s theology.\textsuperscript{156} What bears on this research most keenly is the fact that, given the later date, coming after both Clement and Ignatius who both seem to be familiar with Paul, Justin evidences a striking predisposition towards the Gospels and the Prophets alone. Here again, as with Clement of Rome, the evidence seems to suggest that this Roman Christian community of which Justin was an important part, having grown out of the Roman Jewish community, was still in a process of defining itself in terms of writings used in worship. The fact that Justin does not mention Paul’s letters being used in worship does not mean they were not read and shared by the churches; in fact Clement, who preceded Justin, tells us exactly that. On the other hand, it is also possible that we are dealing with a time in the Roman Christian

\textsuperscript{155} St. Justin Martyr, \textit{First Apology}, 58, 64. See also, Döpp and Geerlings, \textit{Early Christian Literature}, 398-400.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 148.
community’s development where Paul’s authorship may have invoked much the same affection as, say, a work from Clement or Barnabas, and therefore would not have been seen at the time as any kind of uniquely special writing. It seems Clement may have thought of himself as serving a similar role to Paul, having written the Corinthians a massive letter in the style of an apostle, and mentioning Paul’s letter only after having written forty-six paragraphs of his own admonition and encouragement. It is also possible that Justin saw his writings in a somewhat similar light, yet his writings are largely apologetic, and not in the pure style of an epistle.

The veneration for the Jewish Scriptures remained paramount during the second century, but Justin shows evidence that the locus of inspired writings was expanding to include the Gospels, and it seems that this Church at Rome began putting more emphasis on the new covenant in Christ who had been present all along in the narrative of the Old Testament. Unlike Clement who saw the Gospel in more obvious terms as being the Master’s voice in the verses of the Jewish Scriptures, Justin’s elevating of the Memoirs indicates that the words and teaching of Christ in written form were of prime importance to worship in his lifetime, and were treated similarly to the trusted Jewish Scriptures. It may be fair to suggest that the church in Rome at this point had a written collection of the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospels alone.

5. Irenaeus of Lyons

Given the emphasis of Justin on the primacy of the Memoirs of the Apostles, the Gospels, it is not surprising that one of his greatest admirers took up the same fight.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{157} HE, Book 5.8, 459; Chadwick, Early Church, 79.
In Book 4.19 of the *History*, Eusebius indicates that in the latter half of the second century, a number of Christian writers published many works, among them Hegesippus, Dionysius of Corinth, Bishop Pinytus of Crete, Philip, Apolinarius, Melito, Musanus, Modestus, and “above all” he writes, Irenaeus. Eusebius is careful to mention, immediately after this enumeration of writers, the fact that they all held to the one apostolic tradition. He writes, “their correct opinions on the sound faith of the apostolic tradition (ἀποστολιῆς παραδόσως) have come down to us in writing.” Yet it seems from the aforementioned list of “accepted” writings given at Book 3.25 by Eusebius, that although these Christians wrote in accordance with the apostolic rule of faith, their writings were not included in it.

Not very much is known about the biographical details of Irenaeus. Eusebius’ *History* is disappointingly bereft of any account of his life, although he speaks of Irenaeus and his works with the highest regard. It is believed he was born between 120-130 C.E., although dates as early as 97 to as late as 147 have been offered as well. He is also thought to have been given a thoroughly Hellenistic education which comes through in his elaborate use of rhetoric when exposing the contradictions in the teachings of heretics. Irenaeus gives an account of hearing Polycarp preach in his youth and so it is believed by some that he was from Smyrna.

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158 *HE*, Book 4.21, 373-375.
159 Ibid., 375.
160 Ibid., 375.
where Polycarp was Bishop.\textsuperscript{163} Yet the words of Irenaeus do not exactly make such a conclusion necessary. He writes:

Him [Polycarp] even I saw in my early youth. For he remained a long time with us and was exceedingly old. And after a glorious and conspicuous martyrdom he passed away, having always taught these things which he learnt from the Apostles which also the Church hands down and which alone are true.\textsuperscript{164}

If Irenaeus only “even” saw him, and Polycarp “remained” a long time with them, was the latter just visiting and the young boy got a chance to hear the revered saint, or is the comment purely about the length of life which Polycarp realized? According to the record of Eusebius, a letter sent by Irenaeus to one Florinus goes to some length to describe the vivid memory of Irenaeus concerning Polycarp.\textsuperscript{165} The letter reads:

For while I was still a boy I knew you [Florinus] in lower Asia in Polycarp’s house when you were a man of rank in the royal hall and endeavouring to stand well with him. I remember the events of those days more clearly than those which happened recently, for what we learn as children grows up with the soul and is united to it, so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came in and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the discourses which he made to the people, how he reported his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had heard from them, and about their miracles, and about their teaching, and how Polycarp had received them from the eyewitnesses of the word of life, and reported all things in agreement with the Scriptures.\textsuperscript{166}

The most interesting aspect of both these quoted passages from Irenaeus, from the perspective of this research, is the emphasis on Polycarp’s having taught a gospel of an apostolic mark. If Ignatius heard the gospel from Polycarp, who in turn had heard it from the Apostles, then there seems to be an implicit reference here to the

\textsuperscript{163} Cross, \textit{Christian Church}, 846.
\textsuperscript{164} Irenaeus, \textit{Against the Heresies}, vol. 1 of 2, trans. F.R. Montgomery Hitchcock (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1916), 3.3.4, 86.
\textsuperscript{165} \textit{HE}, Book 5.20, 497-499.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
perspicacity of his own understanding of the one true gospel. This may be fair enough given the fact he was writing these words with the knowledge that, perhaps, many Christians would be reading the account and would be comforted to know of his apostolic connections. The one weakness of this latter passage in the letter to Florinus appears to be the sophisticated recollection of detail which Irenaeus claims having from his “childhood.” It almost reads a little too encyclopaedic in that he remembered where Polycarp sat, what he said, how he looked, his character, etc. Perhaps he was less a child than he remembered. The main point though remains that similar to the other three early figures discussed so far, and in a more pronounced way, Irenaeus is primarily and deliberately concerned with the need to protect one gospel, handed down in succession from the Apostles to his own day.

It is known that as a presbyter of the Lyons community, he visited Rome with letters in support of Christians who were imprisoned in both Vienne and Lyons. Oddly, given our historical perspective and knowledge of Montanism as a “heresy”, here Irenaeus was part of a Christian community in Gaul who had a tolerant attitude towards this particular group of Christians.167 On his return to Lyons in 177 C.E.,168 he succeeded Bishop Pothinus after the latter died a Martyr’s death with those same

167 _HE_ 5.3-5.4, 443-445; It is a little unclear from Eusebius just what the letters contained concerning Montanism, either positive or negative. The Montanist Christians, a few of them, began to spread views of prophecy which caused dissension amongst the Christians at Gaul, and thus the leadership had to respond to this and seconded various ones to write letters which were to be sent to Rome, amongst other places. The letters seem to have been a favourable report of the Montanist Christians and the inference is generally made that if these were exonerating documents, then Irenaeus must have supported the Montanists as well. See also generally, Döpp and Geerlings, _Early Christian Literature_, 301.

imprisoned Christians.\textsuperscript{169} It remains a mystery why, if Irenaeus lived amongst the Christians imprisoned, that he himself was not martyred as well.\textsuperscript{170} Yet we know those same martyrs commended Irenaeus to the Bishop Eleutherus of Rome when he was sent there in 177 C.E., just before the most intense persecutions broke out against the Christians at Lyons.\textsuperscript{171} There is no conclusive evidence on record as to why he avoided such terrible persecutions by taking this trip but we do know that those who died were the ones who sent him. In spite of the paucity of historical details about his life, the writings of Irenaeus became widely known and respected by many in due course. It should be noted as well that, unfortunately, none of the written works of Irenaeus survive in his original Greek.\textsuperscript{172}

The main reason for his most famous work, \textit{Against the Heresies},\textsuperscript{173} was that Gnosticism was a very real threat to the Church during his time in Christian leadership in the late second century. The first of the five parts of this great work of Christian apologetics is taken up by Irenaeus explaining the view of Valentius, a notorious Gnostic whose beliefs carried one far into the realms of non-verifiable imaginings on a grand scale. Matter was evil, and thus God had no part in the creation, so the Gnostic belief system conveniently filled the lacuna with all sorts of levels of agencies and aeons.\textsuperscript{174} In answering this claim that God had no part in creation, Irenaeus uses the Greek word for canon, in the following way: “The rule

\textsuperscript{169} \textit{HE}, Book 5.5, 449.
\textsuperscript{170} Brauer, \textit{Westminster Dictionary}, 441.
\textsuperscript{171} \textit{HE}, Book 5.4, 445.
\textsuperscript{172} Chadwick, \textit{Early Church}, 80.
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{HE}, Book 5.7, 451; Eusebius gives the full title \textit{Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge falsely so-called}; \textit{HE}, 4.29, 395; Here, the author gives the book the shorter title, \textit{Against the Heresies}.
\textsuperscript{174} Irenaeus, \textit{Against Heresies}, Hitchcock, Book 1, pref., 18.
[regula = κανών] of truth we hold is, that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed that which has existence out of that which had none."¹⁷⁵ The idea was that this “truth” is one aspect of a greater canon of truth including the Jewish Scriptures and their account of creation. For all these early figures, the idea that the rule of faith, the canon of belief, must be protected is a paramount impetus behind their writings. Yet while the apostolic faith was defended by these writings, it is not certain that any of these people – perhaps even Paul – intended their works to be a replacement for the gospel standard of truth. Paul quoted the Jewish Scriptures, Clement and Ignatius use them as well, but also show knowledge of Paul, and Irenaeus quotes Ignatius, all within in a living nexus of testimony to what they understood as trustworthy revelation, and all in the face of belief systems from individuals like Valentius¹⁷⁶ and Marcion,¹⁷⁷ whose ideas bore the Christian name, but whose writings were void of truly apostolic content.

The claim of authenticity from Valentius was that he had been taught by Theodas, a pupil of the Apostle Paul.¹⁷⁸ One can see, then, the desire on Irenaeus’ part to show that he was genuinely of apostolic descent as he wrote his treatise, because he was very much answering the false claims of one who claimed the same thing. The striking difference noted and argued by Irenaeus is that while both traditions claimed apostolic descent, – even if that were true – only one measured up to the apostolic standard passed down to them.

¹⁷⁵ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Hitchcock, 1.22.1, 38.
¹⁷⁶ HE, Book 4.10, 327; 4.14, 337.
¹⁷⁷ HE, Book 4.18, 373; 4.27, 395.
Regarding evidence on writings considered by Irenaeus to be apostolic, his treatise *Against Heresies* is an anchor for the idea that there are only four apostolic Gospels worthy of the name. He writes:

Matthew edited a writing of the Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome and founding the Church. After their departure Mark, the pupil and interpreter of Peter, handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter. And Luke the attendant of Paul recorded in a book the Gospel that was proclaimed by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, published the Gospel during his residence in Ephesus. *And these all declared unto us the one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and one Christ the Son of God.* If any one does not agree with them, he spurns the fellow-workers of the Lord, he spurns our Lord Christ; nay, more, he spurns the Father, and is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as do all the heretics.  

In a very real sense, Irenaeus has given us here his gospel canon, if you will, against the Valentian heresies. He emphasises that God is one, and the Maker of heaven and earth, directly in refutation of the Gnostic notion that God did not make the heavens and the earth. Important for this research, as well, he spells out the four specific accounts of Christ’s life which preserve this declaration of truth concerning God. Irenaeus insists that these four writings alone are to be trusted by the Christian community. He writes: “It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are.” Irenaeus was refuting the heresies of Valentius, who said there was more to be known in the secret Gnostic elaborations of truth so-called, and of Marcion who vetted out three of the gospels for this own purposes and thus his emphasis on neither adding nor taking away from the apostolic standard is found in his defence of the four alone.

179 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1, 82 – 83 (emphasis added).
Bruce Metzger notes that although Irenaeus closes the Gospel collection to four, he does not make the same efforts to close out the apostolic writings in such fashion.¹⁸¹ But Metzger does see in Irenaeus evidence that the Pauline writings were considered as scripture, yet this scholar still has to deal with the fact that this church father never introduces Paul’s writings with the preface, ‘it is written.’¹⁸² He attempts an explanation by saying that Irenaeus, instead, uses a very intimate introduction, such as “Paul says…” etc., to ameliorate the lack of evidence.¹⁸³ More likely, it seems that based on the treatment of the writings of Paul by the earlier fathers already discussed, the idea of canonizing the Apostle was not necessary, because his letters did not constitute the gospel standard itself; they rather supported and defended it in, perhaps at least, a similar way to Irenaeus himself who was continuing the tradition in his own writings.

Henry Chadwick takes the idea of Irenaeus’ canon even further to claim that:

Irenaeus realized that Marcion was right in one thing — that it was necessary to have a canon or fixed list of authoritative writings of the New Testament. Hitherto the dividing line between books accorded the status of being read in the church lectionary and books that were of approved orthodoxy had not been decisively drawn. Irenaeus drew the line, and is the first writer whose New Testament virtually corresponds to the canon that became accepted as traditional.¹⁸⁴

He goes on to say that Irenaeus put boundaries on the letters and other writings of the contemporary NT, besides the gospels. Chadwick’s assertion seems over-generalized concerning Irenaeus’ treatment of writings other than the gospels and even Metzger’s understanding is at variance with it. There is no evidence in Irenaeus that he closed

¹⁸¹ Metzger, Canon, 155.
¹⁸² Ibid., 155.
¹⁸³ Ibid., 155.
¹⁸⁴ Chadwick, Early Church, 81.
out anything but the gospels, and he did so to stem the tide of heresy, not for reasons of laying a foundation for any kind of closed collection of useful Christian writings.

In closing off the four gospels from addition, Irenaeus was protecting the gospel standard, the canon of Justin, Ignatius, Clement, and Paul. For Irenaeus, as for Paul, the rule of faith was a living one.

One of the most striking things Irenaeus says to support this notion is found in a passage where he speculates on how a Christian society without these letters and writings could still continue in the true apostolic faith. He writes:

And if the Apostles had not even left us the Scriptures, would it not behove us to follow the order of tradition which they handed on to those to whom they entrusted the Churches? Many nations of barbarians who believe in Christ and have their salvation not written on paper with ink, but by the Spirit on their hearts, assent to this order, and carefully keep the old tradition, believing in one God the Maker of heaven and earth and all of therein, by Christ Jesus the Son of God.  

The evidence seems to point to a gospel rule which exists as some kind of living truth, one that survives in the midst of the Christian communities, rather than being found in the Scriptures themselves. In John’s gospel, Christ is portrayed as supporting this notion as well when he says to some devout Jews: “You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40). When one looks at the evidence adduced above on how these early Christian witnesses treated the idea of a rule or canon of faith and contrast it with what Christ himself says, a twenty-first century Christian cannot help but pause.

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185 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Hitchcock, 3.4, 88.
In Summary: The Legacy of the Fathers

The implications for NT development research found in the writings and lives of these early Christians discussed above are significant. Clement of Rome’s *Epistle* to the church at Corinth seems fair evidence that a tradition which began with Paul, one whereby recognized leaders who send both admonishment and encouragement to the various churches under their purview, continued for the sole purpose of preserving the purity of the gospel standard in these communities. Clement seems to have seen himself in much the same role as Paul, a recognized leader with the authority to intervene on behalf of the living gospel of Christ. As a witness for NT development, the evidence left by Clement of Rome testifies to a stage of development in the early Church whereby the sacred writings are definitely and unequivocally the Jewish Scriptures, but also acknowledging the great usefulness of epistles, both Paul’s and ultimately his own, judging by the tone and content of his work.

Ignatius, although not quoting explicit passages of Paul or the Gospels, still exhibits the mind of a person with a firm grasp of both Pauline theological expressions and Gospel narrative turns of phrase. In some passages of Ignatius, his imitations of Paul are so strong they even seem exaggerated. Bruce Metzger’s suggestion that Ignatius was familiar with these early core writings is eminently reasonable based on the discussion of evidence above. In Ignatius’ context, and in his seventies, riding to his death in a cage with leopards tied to the cart, the absence of detailed citation language is hardly surprising. To say he wrote these letters under duress is perhaps an understatement. One marvels at the courage of a man in that
situation who could write anything, let alone seven letters of encouragement and
instruction. His reliance on the Jewish Scriptures and the absence of explicit reference
to Christian writings leave little room for any conclusion but that he, like Clement,
saw his own writings serving the same role as Paul’s letters of admonition and
encouragement.

It is not until we begin to look at the writing of Justin Martyr that we see a more
robust acknowledgement for the usefulness and the uniqueness of the “Memoirs of
the Apostles” – the Gospels. Justin’s testimony confirming the importance of these
gospel accounts tells us that written works were being relied on to convey the gospel
message itself, and that fact alone is indicative of a stage of NT development.
Clement of Rome seemed to be dealing with a gospel he learned at the hands of those
who knew Christ, and thus did not necessarily have to rely on writings per se. Justin,
on the other hand, had and, perhaps, needed these writings due to his relative distance
in time from the apostles. Justin’s work gives evidence of the evolution of these
writings from being mere collections of Christ’s sayings towards being a vehicle
which preserved and shared the Gospel of Christ for second century Christians. Justin
was also a gentile, and his interpretations are always in favour of the new covenant in
Christ versus the older, Jewish covenant. Justin stands, in some respects, at the very
real crossroads of a Jewish-Christian form of worship, and the more Christ-centered
worship within the context of the, largely, gentile Church of his day.

In Irenaeus, we have what would become the final word on the closed nature of
what carried authority for him beyond the Jewish Scriptures. The four Gospels were
stated by him to be a closed collection, to which nothing could be added and nothing
taken away. Yet we also know he had very real reasons for using these turns of phrase. The prohibition against additions was a direct response to the spurious additional knowledge claimed as necessary in the heretical Gnostic teaching of Valentius. The impugned action of “taking away” was also a response to heretical practices, most notably Marcion’s pared down version of the Gospels and complete rejection of the Jewish Scriptures. For Irenaeus, his Scriptures were the Jewish Scriptures, just like Clement of Rome. But unlike Clement, the records of the apostles in the Gospels were now a necessary source for Christ’s gospel for the very simple reason that as Christian communities moved further and further away from the time of Christ and the Apostles, the need to preserve the standard of faith with a written record was deeply pronounced. The Gospel rule was still a living reality in the various Christian communities, but these written gospels served as a ready defence against Gnostic formulations which aimed to take the message outside the bounds laid by Christ and the Apostles. In time, these four written records became the boundaries around which the Christian community participated in its living gospel.

Similar to the emphasis on protecting the gospel found in these Christian fathers, this research suggests that Eusebius’ *History* itself is a result of the apostolic tradition taught by Origen and passed down in his school at Caesarea. The emphases of Eusebius may well reflect Origen’s own predisposition on many of the important issues spelled out by Eusebius as his work’s *raison d’être*. Thus, the preservation of apostolic writings passed down from each successive generation which Eusebius chronicles in his work is, I suggest, a solid point of reference for inferring the
disposition of Origen regarding the relative importance of the various early Christian writings.

Yet even by Origen’s time in the third century, the Jewish Scriptures were still the paramount source of written authority within the Christian community, but due to the efforts of the aforementioned fathers, the Gospels had now become a key addition to the Old Testament for the transmission and preservation of Christ’s gospel. Paul’s letters were in high circulation by the third century, but had not perhaps reached to the heights of authority which the Gospels had. At the hands of Origen, though, all three categories of writings would be moved in the Christian consciousness towards a coalescence of sorts to form a unified revelation which began with Adam and ended with the Apostles.
CHAPTER TWO:
ORIGEN

Life of Origen

What need be said on the life of Origen? There are a number of summaries of Origen’s life which are worthy of note, and should be consulted for a more in-depth consideration of his life and work.¹ This research, however, concerned as it is with Origen’s place in the development of the NT canon, will attempt to concentrate on aspects of Origen’s writing which have to do with his idea of Scripture and his familiarity with writings which were common trade in the early church. Yet, something must be said about Origen’s life for two reasons. One, because I suggest that the details of Origen’s life are indicative of his knowledge of NT writings, and second, that his story is also indicative of the ascetic directions which the Church would embrace over the next one thousand years and beyond. I think this is important because it says something generally about the ubiquitous legacy of ideas and Scriptural guideposts which were set by Origen in his lifetime.

Origen’s life stands virtually alone in the annals of Christian biography in terms of having an equal. Eusebius writes that even though a book of its own would be

needed to cover Origen’s life: “[in] the case of Origen I think that even the facts from his very cradle, so to speak, are worthy of mention.” Eusebius provides the only robust story of Origen’s life on which all subsequent accounts of his life have been and continue to be based. There are also small pieces of evidence concerning Origen’s life in his own writings, some details in the writings of St. Jerome, and some details in a speech of praise to Origen written by one of his former students, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, which has come down to us in Greek. There are other sources but these noted are the more important ones. Yet the essential aspects of Origen’s life are, for the most part, in the pages of the History. This research will treat the account of Origen in Eusebius as reliable in the main, primarily because there is such a solid basis of multiple Greek manuscripts which had a separate existence and yet accord with one another in a convincing way, already alluded to above.

**Origen’s Youth**

Origen was born in 185 C.E. and this is known because Eusebius says he was “not quite yet seventeen” soon after his father’s martyrdom. We know from earlier in Book Six that the period in question was somewhere in or around the tenth year of the reign of the Emperor Septimius Severus, a former Roman general who had seized power in the style of the time. The date 202 or 203 C.E. is pertinent concerning this

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4 See discussion in Crouzel, *Origen*, 1.
5 See footnotes 56 and 57.
7 *HE*, Book 6.2, 11.
period of his reign, and if you subtract seventeen, you are left with 185 or 186 C.E. as the date of Origen’s birth.\textsuperscript{8} As mentioned, his father, Leonides was beheaded in martyrdom for his Christianity,\textsuperscript{9} and it is written that Origen was passionate for this same fate and encouraged his father in his final days not to recant “on account of us.”\textsuperscript{10} Eusebius paints a picture of Origen in the \textit{History} as a very zealous young man, similar to most young men who are wont to be passionate about something.

Considering the imprisonment and then killing of his father, one gets the sense that Origen felt it was his duty as a Christian and son of a martyr to stand for Christ, whatever the cost. We learn that, one time, upon realizing a number of Christians were going to be martyred, Origen was sent into a rage of passion and planned to join them for a forthcoming martyrdom.\textsuperscript{11} It should be noted that at this time his father was likely in jail facing this same fate, so Origen’s passion as a young boy is perhaps more understandable. His mother was so frightened by Origen’s mood that she is said to have hid his clothes so that he would be forced to stay indoors rather than offer himself for arrest and possible death.\textsuperscript{12} This rigorous praxis in the life of the young Alexandrian is a quality which he never quite laid down.

During Origen’s very earliest years, Leonides is said to have required Origen to master both a Classical Greek education and a thoroughgoing knowledge of the Scriptures,\textsuperscript{13} most likely the Old Testament and perhaps also the Gospels in this

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\textsuperscript{8} Crouzel, \textit{Origen}, 2.
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{HE}, Book 6.1, 9.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{HE}, Book 6.2, 11.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{HE}, Book 6.2, 11.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{HE}, Book 6.2, 13-15.
author’s opinion. In another place in the *History*, Eusebius records that Origen as a boy was often not satisfied with only the plain meaning in the Scripture, and “busied himself, even at that age, with deeper speculations, troubling his father by his questions as to what could be the inner meaning of the inspired Scripture.” These “deeper speculations” would later be the hallmark of Origen’s written analyses of Scriptures, in a novel practice which he created on his own, known today as “biblical exegesis.” His Father apparently rebuked Origen for wanting to learn beyond his years, but secretly thanked God that he was given the honour of being the father of such a blessed child, and would often uncover Origen’s breast to kiss him while he slept. While parents may sympathize with this kind of deep affection, it should be noted that Eusebius is recounting stories from others who knew Origen in the school at Caesarea: “These are the stories, and others akin to these, that they tell about Origen’s boyhood.”

While the tone of Eusebius can seem a touch hagiographical at times, and with the tendency of stories to be, shall we say, nuanced with time, this author believes the heart of the stories to be historically reliable. This suggestion is based on the fact that “they,” anyone at Caesarea who could have reasonably been expected to see the work, in the School of Caesarea, would also be familiar with the stories of Origen and

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14 See also Everett Kalin, *Canon of Origen.*
16 However, it should be noted that his exegesis was more focused on the allegorical interpretation of Scriptures than is the exegesis of current times, which is almost entirely given over to bare meaning in context. One perhaps can hardly expect otherwise of Origen, since Christ and Paul both use allegory regularly. See the synoptic parables of Christ (i.e. Matt 22:1-14) or Paul’s letter to the Galatians (Gal 4:21-31): “Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants” (24).
18 *HE*, Book 6.2, 14: As to whom specifically, Eusebius refers to them as “the older men of our day” at *HE*, Book 6.33, 87.
it seems extremely unlikely that Eusebius would embellish stories in such a communal context as Caesarea, and without anyone’s knowing. With that measure of accountability in what had been planned all along as a public document, it would have been nearly impossible to subvert the essence of the stories with any kind of gross emendation on the part of our author.

These contextual facts about Origen in his boyhood are, I believe, of paramount importance for any consideration of his life-long character and future accomplishments. If one considers that Origen’s own father was taken forcibly away to prison and then martyred in a brutal and violent way when Origen was only a boy, it is no small wonder that he devoted his entire life to the relentless cause of his father’s desire that he be a studious and learned man of the Christian Church. Yet Origen took his father’s desire further, and was not only the most learned teacher in the Church of his day, but was driven to live an ascetic life that would make even Socrates blush. Of paramount importance as well, in terms of the effect of this passion in Origen’s role in the development of the NT, is that Origen grew up under his father’s tutelage in the study of the Scriptures. It seems reasonable to suggest that whatever Origen was given beyond the OT, in terms of apostolic writings for study would then show up in his own writings later in life, perhaps more strongly than ones

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19 Origen was very familiar with Plato and Socrates, a fact which even a cursory reading of Against Celsus bears out. Plato and Socrates are likely mentioned as much as the apostle Paul, perhaps for the simple reason that Origen is answering challenges from someone who quotes Plato at will. That Origen’s ascetic life would make Socrates blush is obvious to anyone familiar with both these characters. Socrates may have walked around in bare feet, but he had a wife and children, likely servants, was part of the military as a younger man, and was a regular at fine banquets, if Plato’s accounts are to be trusted. Origen did not marry, as far as we know, he certainly would not have ever spent time in the military, and the account of his life in the History leaves little for the imagination in terms of his distaste for temporal pleasures.
that were not. I will discuss below the predisposition of Origen towards various NT writings, and I suggest that his use and familiarity with the different writings may have been something which began at an early stage of his unique life.

**Origen the Teacher**

After his father’s death, we know that Origen was left with his mother and younger brothers, basically bereft of any kind of living, and on top of that his father Leonides’ property was confiscated by the Roman imperial government. Origen was soon taken in, perhaps his family as well, by a woman of wealth living in Alexandria. She had another teacher living with her as well, someone, perhaps ironically, named Paul whom Eusebius claims was a heretic. Eusebius goes out of his way here to point out that Origen, young as he was, would never join in prayer with this “Paul,” and kept the “rule of the Church,” loathing anything heretical. This comment seems specially tailored for his reading audience, especially if one considers that Eusebius also co-authored a work entitled *Defence of Origen*, with a certain Pamphilus. This latter work was written before the *History*, so it is clear that if Eusebius and Pamphilus felt Origen needed a written defense, then proving the orthodoxy of his self-styled saint was likely of paramount importance in his later

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.; Now of course the fact that Eusebius names him a heretic means that the man himself, and likely the wealthy patron, called themselves Christians. It is noted here as well, that Eusebius states bluntly that Origen eschewed heresy, which tends to show a predisposition of our author to want to exonerate Origen at every turn. Eusebius, along with Pamphilus, wrote a work called “In defense of Origen,” and in some very real way, his comments in the *History* resonate with this same tone.

23 Ibid.

24 *HE*, Book 6.33, 89: [a.k.a. *Apology for Origen*].
treatise as well. Eusebius may have also wanted Origen to appear in an orthodox light because Origen and his library were the primary loci for most of the information found in the History.

We learn from Eusebius that Origen had a proficiency in secular studies which allowed him to begin teaching and supply himself with the necessities of life. Apparently at that time in Alexandria there were no Christian teachers practicing because of a recent wave of persecutions, with the result that many who knew of Origen’s faith and teaching prowess began to consult him for instruction. Plutarch and his brother Heraclas were among those who first came to hear the “word of God” as the text relates, the former having a notable Christian life ended by martyrdom, and the latter becoming Bishop of Alexandria in Origen’s own lifetime.

Origen was eighteen when he began his time as catechetical instructor at Alexandria, and was known to all those of the faith for his fierce and relentless support of those sentenced to death as martyrs, going with them side by side to their deaths, greeting them with kisses, and causing the bloodthirsty throngs to go in to a frenzy and come near to

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25 Clearly, Origen is the person most referred to in the History, and certainly more detail is given about his life than anyone else, including the apostles. One wonders if the History itself was not in some way written not only to record Christian history, but to weave a leading role for the departed saint.

26 HE, Book 6.2, 15-17; Who knows if this included a servant, his own quarters, or home for his immediate family, the text is disappointingly silent here.


28 HE, Book 6.3, 17: Henri Crouzel observes that Heraclas seems to have had a change of heart toward Origen while a bishop, pointing out that upon finding out that Origen had preached at Thmuis, being welcomed by Ammonius, he bolted over to Thmuis and, “short of deposing him [Ammonius] completely,” installed someone to share the bishopric with him. Crouzel, Origen, 24: Crouzel was paraphrasing Photius in a pamphlet entitled Ten Questions and Their Answers at Question 9. It seems Origen’s popularity was a problem for both bishops of Alexandria.


30 Ibid.
stoning him. Eusebius records that divine assistance, as in the case of his mother hiding his clothes, saved him on a number of occasions.

Origen’s lifestyle in Alexandria mirrored his teachings – praxis – and Eusebius goes out of his way to mention this particular fact about the young Christian teacher. He writes that this fact, combined with the cooperation of divine power, brought throngs of people to share his passion. Eusebius recounts Origen’s choice to structure his life such that “youthful lusts” would be avoided, and so he worked hard during the day, and studied the Scripture for the greater part of the night. As for ascetic practice, he did not sleep on any kind of bed (couch) but the floor, lived a life of poverty, went without shoes for many years, and also refrained from drinking wine and only ate what was necessary for many years. Eusebius tells us that much of this was in direct obedience to Christ’s admonitions, for instance, not to have two coats, and not to worry about the future (Matt 6:34). Jerome also recounts of Origen in a letter:

Ambrose [Origen’s patron pursuant to γραφών] declares that he never took a meal in Origen’s company without something being read, and that he never fell asleep save to the sound of some brother’s voice reciting the Scriptures aloud. Day and night it was their habit to make reading follow upon prayer, and prayer upon reading, without a break.

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31 My own observation here is that if these crowds of “unbelievers” were on the verge of “stoning” Origen, quite possibly they were Jews leading the charge, for the simple reason that stoning is widely known as a method of inflicting the death penalty in Jewish culture, even under Roman rule, where Jewish courts could sentence people to death under their own laws. If the Romans had wanted to kill Origen, they likely would not have chosen stoning.
34 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
His zeal for the life of a disciple, the commitment to keep his life in line with what he taught others, and the astonishing events of his daily life – the escapes from stoning, and fearless disposition towards persecution – caught people’s attention to such a degree that soon Origen was bringing people to the Christian faith and way of life in very large numbers.\(^{38}\) His converts often went to their death in martyrdom,\(^{39}\) but it did not seem to stop people from coming to hear him.

The facts about Origen’s lifestyle at Alexandria, recounted by Eusebius, also give us an indication, perhaps, of the kind of Christian writings Origen preferred. Origen’s life certainly seems to reflect the teachings of Christ in the synoptic gospels about abstaining from lustful practice,\(^ {40}\) admonitions about eschewing earthly treasures,\(^ {41}\) and certainly denying the flesh whenever possible.\(^ {42}\) There seems to be something of the prophet in his lifestyle as well, almost living an Elijah\(^ {43}\) or John the Baptist\(^ {44}\) kind


\(^{39}\) *HE*, Book 6.4, 6.5, 23-27. Eusebius recounts some of the better known people who were converted under Origen and died a martyr’s death: Plutarch, Serenus, Heraclides, Hero, another Serenus, etc.

\(^{40}\) Matt 5:28; 15:19.


\(^{42}\) Matt 5:30; 18:8; 26:41; Mark 9:43, 45; 14:38.

\(^{43}\) 1 Kings 17: Elijah lived through a time of great drought and famine, and it is recorded that he was even sent by the Lord to live alone and was fed by ravens, and thus living day to day in terms of food. But for Origen, there is not only this OT connection with Elijah but also the transfiguration episode with Christ and Moses (Matt 17:3-4; Mark 9:4). In fact, Elijah’s name comes up in the four gospels twenty-nine times and this doubles, quite surprisingly, the occurrences of Isaiah whose name shows up sixteen times. All this is pointed out simply to reinforce the fact that if Origen hung his hat on the gospels, which is shown clearly below, then it should be no surprise that his life mirrors Elijah, the most prominently mentioned Prophet in the Synoptics and John. Alternatively, if one considers Moses in this category of Prophet, and certainly he was one, he appears some thirty-seven times in the four Gospels, just edging out Elijah by a small margin.

\(^{44}\) Matt 3:4, Mark 1:6; Matt 11:11: I think this verse may give us some indication of the impetus behind Origen’s lifestyle, for Jesus tells his disciples that “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” While the text of Eusebius does not state this explicitly, I infer from Origen’s lifestyle that as he sought the life of a disciple with such zeal that the example of John the Baptist made a
of existence, surviving only on the absolute necessities. While nothing certain in terms of favoured writings can be extracted from these observations on Origen’s lifestyle, I think one can say with confidence that the teaching of Christ in the Gospels is the *sine qua non* influence on Origen’s lifestyle choices. I think it is a little harder to pin his choices on a Paul or Peter, say, on the basis that we do not have any indication these men recommended absolute poverty or lived like this, although Paul mentions having lived in want.\(^45\) Now, on this aspect of Origen’s lifestyle strictures, one event must be mentioned which proves once and for all his serious and unreserved attitude towards obeying the commands of Christ in the gospel of Matthew, for instance.

In Matthew 19:12, we read “[f]or there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.” Origen accepted it. According to Eusebius, he castrated himself.\(^46\) This proves clearly that Origen took the message of Christ in the Gospels to have supreme authority for him, and there is no question that, for Origen, these particularly strong impression on him, especially when Jesus basically says John is the greatest born of woman, ergo, being like John is a positive thing.

\(^45\) Philippians 4:12 “I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.” [Perhaps the trouble with the latter part of this verse is that it looks possible, if the two couplets on state of being are juxtaposed so as to be referring to the same thing, that Paul may be delving into an oxymoronic metaphor. A more obvious example would be the teaching of Christ that those who seek their life will lose it and those who lose it will find it again, which is found in the Synoptics five separate times (Matt 10:39; etc.)]. It should also be noted that the cost of books, libraries, and bare access to writing materials in the first century would have made the practice of writing and collecting books prohibitively expensive. It is possible that these kinds of considerations affected both Paul, and then later on Origen. We know that if it were not for Ambrose, Origen’s patron, posterity would be far worse off in terms of extant works from Origen.

\(^46\) *HE*, Book 6.8, 29.
words of Christ seem to have been the very instructions of God. I also note that while
generally the History of Eusebius is not well seasoned with humour, his description of
Origen during and after this event made this author smile. He writes:

At that time, while Origen was performing the work of instruction at Alexandria,
he did a thing which gave abundant proof of an immature and youthful mind, yet
withal of faith and self-control. . . . he hastened to put into effect the Saviour’s
saying, taking care to escape the notice of the greater number of his pupils. But
wishful though he might be, it was not possible to hide a deed of this nature.47

The picture of this young man barely out of his teens, walking around gingerly after
the “operation,” makes Eusebius’ cautious tone and description here come across in
quite an amusing way. As to why Origen did it, other than to obey Christ, Eusebius
records that it was to avoid slander – presumably concerning sexual misconduct – as
he was teaching women as well as men.48 But this deed came back to hurt Origen
somewhat later in life.

Apparently the Bishop of Alexandria at the time, one Demetrius, was at first very
impressed by Origen’s act and approved of the demonstration pursuant to his zeal and
sincerity of faith.49 But in time, as Origen’s fame grew to the ends of the Christian
world, Demetrius changed his tune and began slandering Origen for such a monstrous
act.50 Eusebius says it was because of “human weakness” that Demetrius did this,
likely envy.51 Jerome writes also of this in his Lives of Illustrious Men in the section
devoted to Origen: “[H]e [Origen] offended Demetrius, who was so wildly enraged at

47 HE, Book 6.8, 29 (emphasis added).
48 Ibid. The inference being quite obviously that he wanted to remove any reason for possible
accusations of a sexual nature.
49 Ibid.
50 HE, Book 6.8, 31.
51 Ibid.
him that he wrote everywhere to injure his reputation.” A great deal of ink has been spilled on the anger of Demetrius towards Origen and the latter’s subsequent exit from his duties at Alexandria to take up residence in Caesarea, but suffice it to say for this research, the consensus seems to be that the Bishop’s ire was a result of Origen’s being ordained at Caesarea, outside of his authority and area of jurisdiction, as well as the castration incident mentioned above. Renowned Origenist, Henri Crouzel, has written exactly this in a concise and well-argued description of the events in greater detail, and his book is an essential reference for anyone interested in Origen generally.

**Gregory Thaumaturgus on Origen**

It should be noted here also that one of Origen’s students at Caesarea, one Gregory Thaumaturgus, wrote an address of thanks to Origen which is extant and it is full of valuable information on Origen. His writing tends to praise Origen’s qualities perhaps a little in excess of what his teacher may have wished, and delves regularly into hagiographical narrative. Gregory, after ten chapters explaining how his own reticence to speak—presumably on a subject as vast as Origen himself—had only been barely overcome, writes, “[f]or I am proposing to speak about a man who looks and seems like a human being but, to those in a position to observe the finest flower

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53 Crouzel, Origen, 17-24; Crouzel’s sources for this are *HE* 6.8 and 6.23: Photius in *Bibliotheca* 118: Jerome in *Letter 33 to Paula*: Origen in *A Letter to Friends in Alexandria* and the Preface to Book 6 of the *Commentary on John*: preserved by Jerome in part *Apology against Rufinus*: in part by Rufinus, *De adulteratione librorum Origenis.*

54 See footnote above.
of his disposition, has already completed most of the preparation for the re-ascent to the divine world."\textsuperscript{55} Gregory never seems to leave much room for speculation on how he felt about Origen.

Gregory recounts the instruction of Origen by memory, "for he said no true piety toward the Ruler of the universe . . . was possible to anyone who did not lead a philosophic life."\textsuperscript{56} This observation aligns with the recounting of Eusebius on Origen's ascetic practices.\textsuperscript{57} Gregory seems to have been thoroughly taken by Origen as a father in the Christian teachings and it will suffice to provide a more indicative passage of this rapturously written address whereby we learn how Origen worked with his students:

On occasion he would trip us up in speech, challenging us in thoroughly Socratic fashion, every time he saw us fighting the reins like unbroken horses, veering off the road and running aimlessly every which way, until by persuasion and coercion, as by the bit which was the word from our own mouth, he made us stand quietly before him. [98] At first it was hard for us and not without grief, as he was introducing us novices, who had never practiced following an argument, to his own reasoning, and purifying us at the same time. . . When he had brought us to a proper frame of mind and prepared us well to accept the words of truth, [99] only then, as into soft, well-tilled soil, ready to push forth what would come from the seeds, he began to plant lavishly.\textsuperscript{58}

As an unshakable base for everything else whatever, he laid down geometry as a kind of sure foundation; then he drew us up to the heights through astronomy, as if, by a kind of sky-high ladder of the two sciences, he were making heaven accessible for us.\textsuperscript{59}


\textsuperscript{56} Gregory, \textit{Address}, 79, 103.

\textsuperscript{57} The ascetic way of life was often referred to as living the "philosophic life," and hence the connection in this instance.

\textsuperscript{58} Gregory, \textit{Address}, 97-99, 107.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 114, 109.
Notwithstanding the hagiographical tone and humorously exaggerated turns of speech, it seems fairly certain that Origen felt that the sciences were the gateway to higher learning, in much the same way Plato did.\(^60\) It should be noted here that Origen’s grasp of Platonism and philosophy in general was reportedly so sharp, that even popular Greek philosophers of his day would dedicate their own works to Origen and bring them before him for judgement.\(^61\) Origen seems to have woven the two streams of knowledge, Christianity and Platonism, such that knowing God in Christ was evidenced and perhaps even begun by dealing sufficiently with the passions via a philosophic life. To this end Gregory also recalled, “In addition to all his [Origen’s] other zeal and hard work, how I would like to extend my discourse on his teaching concerning theology and his reverence, entering into the man’s very disposition!”\(^62\) Further again, “[t]o such [false philosophies] he advised us to pay no attention, even if someone be hailed by everyone as a genius, but to pay heed to God alone and his prophets.”\(^63\) Even though Origen did teach philosophy as part of his curriculum, it seems the final emphasis was on becoming a Christian disciple rather than a Platonist one.

In fact, there is a small part of a letter from Origen to Gregory, in which Origen confirms both his ultimate commitment to Christian belief and practice, but also his

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\(^60\) Recall the famous inscription over the doorway to Plato’s Academy, which reads something like “One must know geometry to enter these doors.”

\(^61\) *HE*, Book 6.19, 55-57: Eusebius records, “Now, as witnesses also to his achievements in this direction, we have the Greek philosophers themselves who flourished in his day, in whose treatises we find frequent mention of the man. Sometimes they would dedicate their books to him, sometimes submit their own labours to him for judgement, as to a master.”

\(^62\) Ibid., 150, 116.

\(^63\) Ibid., 173, 120.
sense that philosophy was to become the “handmaiden,” as it were, to faith. Origen writes:

I should like you, however, [even though Gregory could have been a legal expert or philosopher] to make Christianity your “object,” and to bring the whole force of your ability to bear upon it, with good effect. I am therefore very desirous that you should accept such parts even of Greek philosophy as may serve for the ordinary elementary instruction of our schools, and be a kind of preparation for Christianity: also those portions of geometry and astronomy likely to be of use in the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, so that, what the pupils of the philosophers say about geometry and music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy, viz. that they are the handmaidens of philosophy, we may say of philosophy itself in relation to Christianity.  

Gregory Thaumaturgus ended his salute to his teacher by asking Origen to pray for his students, and it is worth repeating. It demonstrates the father-son emotions which had by then emerged in Gregory and also supports the aforementioned suggestion that Origen’s primary goal with his students was Christian and not Platonic.

But you, our beloved head, arise and send us off now with prayer. As you saved us by your holy instructions during our stay, save us also by your prayers as we depart. [205] So hand us over and commend us; most of all hand us over to the God who led us to you. Give thanks for the things that have happened for our benefit, and ask him also to lead us by the hand in what is to come, always standing by us, reminding us of his commandments, filling us with holy fear of him, becoming the best of pedagogues. For when we have gone and are no longer in the freedom we had with you, we shall obey him. [206] Ask him also to give us some consolation for losing you, to send an angelic companion to be a good escort. [207] And ask this also, that he turn us around and bring us to you again; this alone will reassu re us more than anything else. 

Regardless of the philosophic underpinning Origen ordered for his students, it is interesting to note here the strict piety of Gregory, and his desire to be reminded of

\[65\] Gregory, \textit{Address}, 204-207, 126.
the commandments, to have holy fear, and that only then to be considered perfect pedagogues. If Origen’s students came away with this kind of attitude towards the Christian way of life, it is hard to then demur on Origen’s use of philosophic training to get there.

In terms of what we might infer from Gregory’s comments on Scripture usage, it seems he was still very much immersed in the Jewish Scriptures. He recalls Origen specifically reminding his students to give heed to “God alone and his prophets.” Further, as previously alluded to, the mention of the importance of commandments and holy fear does sound more connected to the ethos of the Jewish Scriptures and Gospels than it does, say, to Paul’s writing. Yet we also know that Origen’s instruction to Gregory involved the Gospels because in Origen’s letter to his student he implies this by his language, “the Saviour urged us to this when He said, not only, Knock and it shall be opened, Seek and ye shall find, but also, Ask and it shall be given unto you.” While the OT Scriptures and Gospels were likely the two primary sources for documented instruction, the apostolic letters would also have likely been common fare as well since Origen’s use of apostolic writings outside of the gospels is very common in his own works and it seems more than likely that Origen’s disposition here would have been reflected in his curriculum as well. What appears certain is that Origen’s guideposts for Christian teaching had their epicentre in the Gospels, particularly Matthew. The Alexandrian’s strict asceticism based on the

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66 As much as this may be the case, there are also examples of this kind of ethos in Paul, for instance at Philippians 2:12: “Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

teachings of Christ in the Gospels brought much attention to him during his lifetime, yet ultimately they were part of a tradition which sometimes had far reaching, and, regrettably, pointedly negative results.

In Origen taking his ascetic practice so far and recommending it to so many, he, along with other ascetically minded Christians such as Clement of Alexandria, who had been a teacher previous to Origen in that same city, helped lay a foundation for an overly punctilious and physically degrading version of monasticism which eventually caused much grief for many Christians over the centuries, in particular the women within various Christian communities. The rigid asceticism practiced and taught by Clement and, to a lesser degree, Origen evolved into the idea that women were the gateway to the sexual sins associated with procreation. This idea ultimately led to the Catholic Church asserting that Mary, the mother of Christ, was not only a virgin before giving birth to Christ, but remained one for life. This teaching appears to deny the testimony of the gospels which read otherwise.\textsuperscript{68} In any event, it is duly noted that while Origen’s commitment to the ascetic life began with noble intentions, over time the model of asceticism and celibacy which he and others had merely chosen as a “philosophic” way of life became a mandated requirement for anyone who wished to serve in the priesthood of the Catholic Church.

The regrettable results, both theologically and practically, which were associated with asceticism through the centuries can not be laid wholly at Origen’s feet. In fact, compared to the writings of Clement of Alexandria before him, Origen is somewhat of a reformer in this regard. Perhaps Clement’s penchant for overly detailed and

\textsuperscript{68} Matt 12:47; 13:55; etc.
philosophically imbued theologies is one of the reasons why he is never even mentioned once by Origen that we know of, and yet we know that Clement was a popular teacher in Alexandria just as Origen was also coming on the scene as a Christian teacher. Whether this is the case or not, for this research it is important to keep in mind that Origen was part of a Christian-Platonic tradition at Alexandria in which one was committed to a philosophic life, and this kind of ascetic focus in Christian teaching is found most prominently in the Gospels and Prophets.

**Origen’s Travels**

One of the unique qualities of Origen is the fact that he was likely more well-travelled than anyone we have on record from the third century. This peripatetic quality of Origen’s caused him to visit personally a stunning number of the churches functioning at the time, and thus he became familiar with what Christian writings were common trade and which of them were not. We learn from Jerome that Origen took a trip to Caesarea, on matters that are not mentioned, and there he was ordained by the Bishops Theoctistus and Alexander⁶⁹ who were very supportive of him and obviously impressed by his godly life and, one would expect, his teaching prowess.⁷⁰ Origen also made a trip to Rome to “see the most ancient church of the Romans,”⁷¹ where he apparently spent a short time.⁷² Eusebius wrote that Emperor Alexander’s mother, Mamaea, summoned Origen to come and instruct her in the city of Antioch,

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⁷² Ibid. [My guess is that this indicates a number of days, and perhaps weeks. A short time in those days had a different meaning than it would carry today.]
and she gave him the protection of Roman soldiers, a far cry from the Roman guard of Ignatius. Origen had also been summoned for an audience – personal instruction in the faith – by the ruler of Arabia, presumably a Roman governor of some kind. We also know from Eusebius that Origen travelled to Nicopolis, near Actium as well.

The offhand way in which Eusebius records the various travels of Origen, always in connection with some event like Origen finding another translation of something, Origen being summoned, etc., leaves the reader with little doubt that the travels recorded in the History were just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. If one were to look at a map of the Roman world of Origen’s day, and then place markers everywhere we know he went, it covers a stunning amount of territory. Jerome recounts Origen taking a journey from Alexandria to Athens, by way of Palestine. Even at 50km a day on foot or mule, it would have taken him almost two months, and that does not account for brief stays along the way. These observations become important to this research by indicating that in the days of travel by animals and carts, Origen would have, of necessity, stopped in at every major center along the way and, more importantly, likely made visits with the various Christian communities in each city.

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73 HE, Book 6.21, 67.
74 HE, Book 6.19, 63.
75 HE, Book 6.16, 53.
76 Rome, Actium, Antioch, Athens, Caesarea, Arabia, and of course, Alexandria.
77 The distance between Rome and Athens is 1051km on a straight line axis, by road it would be Rome to Venice 393km, Venice to Trieste 115km, Trieste to Athens 1183km for a total of 1691km. Assuming he did use the Roman highway system, Origen would have likely met many Christians along the way. Athens to Alexandria by road would have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of 2637km or 1638 miles.
78 St. Jerome, Lives, 373.
79 Food, water, shelter, etc.
80 As we have discussed above, there is proof of his visiting a great many of the bigger Christian centers like Rome, Antioch, Palestine, etc. but one must account for the great distances in between these places and the Christian communities therein, and consider at least the strong likelihood of
This is exactly why we get comments from Origen such as “[f]or the Church of God, e.g., which is at Athens, is a meek and stable body, as being one which desires to please God.”\textsuperscript{81} He knew this because he had stayed there for a time.\textsuperscript{82} If one were to name the cities he likely visited on even one leg of his journey from Alexandria to Athens, the distance between Caesarea and what then soon became Constantinople, for instance, some of the highlights would have been Tyre, Sidon, Laodicea, Antioch, Tarsus, Selucia, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, the cities of Galatia, Phrygia, Bythnia, and then the city of Nicomedia. This does not take into account smaller towns in between these places either. The itinerary of Origen would likely have been replete with visits to third century churches in places like these, and enabled him to make the following statement in a letter to one Africanus: “I have to tell you what it behoves us to do in the cases not only of the History of Susanna, \textit{which is found in every Church of Christ in that Greek copy which the Greeks use, but is not in the Hebrew.}”\textsuperscript{83} How did Origen know that this writing was found in every church of Christ? I suggest that his language, not only in this example but in numerous others,\textsuperscript{84} conveys a first-hand familiarity with the churches which he had visited personally. The fact that he can use Origen having visited them. One wonders how else he could have been so well acquainted with much of the Church of his day.  

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{HE}, Book 6.32, 85.  
\textsuperscript{83} Origen, \textit{A Letter from Origen to Africanus}, Ante-Nicene Fathers, (1885), 386 (emphasis added).  
\textsuperscript{84} While all his writings betray this kind of familiarity, \textit{Letter to Africanus} is a great case in point, since Origen often uses the pronoun “our,” as in “our” books, scriptures, etc. See also the selection of Origen in Eusebius where he writes on the writings produced specifically by apostles in the first instance, and comments that Peter wrote one but the second was doubted [by some of those in the churches] and that John left one, but some say the others are not genuine at \textit{HE}, Book 6.25, 77. With Origen, we are dealing with a meticulous mind.
language like “every Church of Christ” implies he likely knew, at least, the major Christian centers and enough of the other ones to speak with that kind of authority and frankness.

In another passage concerning Origen’s frank admissions on the churches, and very germane to this research, Origen admits that “Peter . . . has left one acknowledged epistle, and, it may be, a second also; for it is doubted,” and “John . . . has left also an epistle of a very few lines, and, it may be, a second and a third; for not all say that these are genuine. Only, the two of them together are not a hundred lines long.” These statements relating to pseudonymity in the History are taken from Origen’s fifth exposition on the Gospel of John. It should be pointed out that Origen, here, is merely recounting the writings that were produced by apostles, and not laying out any assessment of Christian Scriptures in the style of Eusebius at Book 3.25. Origen’s tenor in this passage shows that these comments are likely matters of penumbra to his thinking, or ancillary to the main issue of that particular writing, which happened to be John’s Gospel. I think it should be pointed out as well that the latter comment, concerning the brevity of 2 and 3 John, comes across in a very nonchalant manner; in other words, he seems pointedly indifferent as to their genuineness, even in spite of their disputed nature.

In Summary

Origen’s tendency to visit other regions serves to bear out the suggestion that, first, he was very familiar with the churches of his time because he had physically

\[85\textit{HE},\text{ Book 6.25. 77 (emphasis added).}\]
\[86\textit{Ibid. (emphasis added).}\]
visited a great number of them. Second, and connected with this observation, is the fact that he was able to relay to others, specifically in his writings where posterity is concerned, what written materials were being used and considered genuine in and amongst the various churches of his day, most especially the major centres for which we suspect he may have had a predilection. Origen’s experiences also reveal a life modelled on a devout asceticism which is most commonly found in the Gospels and Prophets. His unflinching literal obedience to Christ from the instruction found in Matthew’s Gospel leave little doubt that, even as a young man, he was very likely familiar with such a work. Keeping all these contextual variables in mind, I suggest, that since there is no other figure on record in the first three centuries of the Church who gives us so much information on what writings were considered genuine by Christians generally, that Origen is the logical place to look when attempting to determine what a third century Church collection would have looked like.

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CHAPTER THREE:
ORIGEN AND THE JEWISH SCRIPTURES

Origen’s Attachment to the Jewish Scriptures

Another event that Eusebius makes note of in the History, which figures into this research on what Origen considered as scriptural, is the creation of Origen’s famous Hexapla in which the Alexandrian gathered various manuscripts and copies of the Jewish Scriptures to compare with the commonly used LXX, and from places far and wide apparently. We learn that Origen hounded out any versions he could get his hands on in order to make a Hexapla, six separate columns of the Psalms in various translations for comparison, in much the same was as the Synoptic Gospels are today laid out in synopses. Origen was the first to do this in the Christian Church, besides being the first “exegete.”

Origen’s original contribution in this aforementioned instance concerning the Hexapla also tells us something of what he was passionate about in terms of Scriptures. Eusebius relates of Origen:

So accurate was the examination that Origen brought to bear upon the divine books, that he even made a thorough study of the Hebrew tongue, and got into his possession the original writings in the actual Hebrew characters, which were extant among the Jews. Thus, too, he traced the editions of the other translators of the sacred writings besides the Seventy; and besides the beaten track of translations, that of Aquila and Symmachus and Theodotion, he discovered certain others, which were used in turn, which, after lying hidden for a long time, he traced and brought to the light, I know not from what recesses. With regard to these, on account of their obscurity (not knowing whose in the world they were) he merely indicated this: that the one he found at Nicopolis, near Actium, and the
I think the first sentence of this passage speaks volumes in terms of gauging the importance placed on the OT by Origen. He travelled far and wide to collect Jewish Scriptures and carried out punctilious study on the books and various translations of the OT. His numerous commentaries on these books seem to bear this fact out clearly. The fact that Eusebius relates this project of Origen’s on the OT translations, then available, must say something about the supreme importance which the Jewish Scriptures had for our teacher. A recent scholarly work on Origen by Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams claims “everywhere Origen lived and travelled he collected Jewish and Christian books,” but they give no reference as to where this evidence for the collecting of Christian books lay. We know from the above passage that the Jewish Scriptures he collected on his travels are accounted for, yet there is no proof in Eusebius that Origen collected Christian books on his travels. On the other hand we do know that Origen had Christian writings in his possession, but we are not told if he went to great lengths to gather them while travelling in order to amass a collection at Caesarea. This distinction is made here because it is important to this inquiry to understand Origen’s affinity for the Jewish Scriptures vis-à-vis apostolic writings in circulation among the Christian churches of the third century.

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3 Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2006), 57: This book is an analysis of the literary style of Origen in the Hexapla and Eusebius in his *Chronicle*, specifically the use of columns in both. I agree with the authors in their ultimate assertion that Christian scholarship is still the heir to Origen, but I demur somewhat on the same claim for Eusebius. While the latter built on what had already been done in the first instance by the Alexandrian giant, he cannot be considered Origen’s equal on most levels. Eusebius himself, if the contents of the *History* are any indication, would, I think, heartily agree.
This brings us to a relevant point recently discussed here, that if we compare his above mentioned care and attention to the Jewish Scriptures with the offhand way Origen mentioned the doubted books of both Peter and John, it can hardly then be asserted that he thought of all apostolic writings in the same light as the OT Scriptures. If we draw the view back even further to look at the aggregate picture of what Origen produced in his lifetime, we see that Origen’s primary focus in both commentaries and homilies is clearly in favour of the Jewish Scriptures and Gospels, with either style category also showing a fair number of each written on a few of Paul’s letters as well.\(^4\) In fact, Origen makes a fairly blunt delineation between the Jewish Scriptures and other “Scriptures” by his description of them.

**Origen’s Sacred Scriptures**

Probably the greatest single piece of evidence concerning Origen’s categorization of Scriptures, if one can make such an assertion, is the fact that when writing about the Jewish Scriptures he usually refers to them prefixed as “holy (sacred) scriptures”\(^5\) (ἱερὰς γραφὰς)\(^6\) or “divine scriptures”\(^7\) (Θείας γραφὰς), but with the writings of the Apostles the term “scripture” alone is used. He also talks of the Jewish Scriptures as τυχόντος γράμματος\(^9\) (extraordinary writings\(^10\)), which gets translated often

\(^7\) Origen, *Philocalia*, Lewis, 2.1, 30.
\(^8\) Ibid., chap. 2.1, 36.
\(^9\) Ibid., chap. 2.4, 39.
\(^11\) Ibid., 164.
as “inspired Scripture.”\textsuperscript{12} The second piece of evidence pointing to this bifurcation in Origen’s thinking is that he writes about “our Scriptures” vis-à-vis the Jewish Scriptures, in other words, “our,” the Christian OT as compared with the Jewish version thereof. The proof for such a claim can be found in his writings \textit{A Letter to Africanus} and \textit{Contra Celsum}, which fortunately have come down to us in Greek so that we do not have the subterfuge of a Rufinian redaction to account for, as with some of Origen’s extant works. Of the great numbers of examples of this bifurcation in his works at large, the following examples will serve competently to the task at hand.

Of Origen’s use of the phrase “our Scriptures” vis-à-vis the Jewish Scriptures, strictly the LXX as Christians understood it, the evidence is to be found in \textit{Contra Celsum} and the \textit{Letter to Africanus}, a letter preserved in the \textit{Philocalia}, a collection of Origen’s writings collated by Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus.\textsuperscript{13} The letter is basically one of admonition from Origen to one Africanus on the fact that the \textit{History of Susanna} in the book of Daniel is accepted by the churches at large and can be trusted, even though it does not appear in most canons of Jewish Scriptures. Origen opens the letter:

\begin{quote}
Origen to Africanus, a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child, greeting. Your letter, from which I learn what you think of the Susanna in the Book of Daniel, which is used in the Churches, although apparently somewhat short, presents in its few words many problems, . . .
\end{quote}

Africanus made some disparaging remarks about the Susanna episode in Daniel (which was later deemed Apocrypha) and Origen takes steps to try and correct his

\textsuperscript{12} Origen, \textit{Philocalia}, Lewis, chap. 2.4, 32.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Origen, \textit{Letter to Africanus}, 1, 386.
friend. An example of the disposition of Africanus which Origen is answering in this letter reads, in Origen’s hand, “[y]ou begin by saying, that when, in my discussion with our friend Bassus, I used the Scripture which contains the prophecy of Daniel when yet a young man in the affair of Susanna, I did this as if it had escaped me that this part of the book was spurious [Africanus thought it a forgery].” Further Origen recalls, “[y]our further objections are stated, as it appears to me, somewhat irreverently, and without the becoming spirit of piety.” For some reason Africanus comes across in the letter in a somewhat churlish way. We do not know the reason why this might be other than to speculate that what caused grief to Demetrius, that is Origen’s popularity and zeal, may also have made waves with others in the Church of the time, and perhaps gave Africanus grist for his mill in this instance.

Yet what we are able to take away from Origen’s letter with a great deal of certainty is the way he juxtaposes “our copies” or “our Scriptures,” in other words the Christian Scriptures with the Jewish Scriptures. Origen writes in the following passages, first of “copies,” then of “Scriptures:”

I found the word “bound” followed in our versions by very many verses which are not in the Hebrew at all, beginning (according to one of the copies which circulate in the Churches);

[and in many other places I found in Job where our copies have more than the Hebrew ones;]

our copies are very much fuller than the Hebrew;

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15 Ibid.
16 Origen, Letter to Africanus, 11, 390.
17 Origen, Letter to Africanus, 2, 386.
18 Origen, Letter to Africanus, 3, 387.
19 Ibid.
[b]ut why should I enumerate all the instances I collected with so much labour, to prove that the difference between our copies and those of the Jews did not escape me;

I marked with an asterisk those passages in our copies which are not found in the Hebrew.

Nor do I say this because I shun the labour of investigating the Jewish Scriptures, and comparing them with ours, and noticing their various readings [this, he reminds Africanus, he has already done]; lest in my controversies with the Jews I should quote to them what is not found in their copies and that I may make some use of what is found there, even although it should not be in our Scriptures; *in our Scriptures there are many etymological fancies, so to call them, which in the Hebrew are perfectly suitable, but not in the Greek.*

I cannot understand how, with all your exercise in investigating and meditating on the Scriptures, you have not noticed that the prophets continually quote each other almost word for word. For who of all believers does not know the words in Esaias? [Isaiah 2:2-4];

In the next place, as it is his object to slander our Scriptures, he ridicules the following statement: *'And God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept etc.'*

The question to ask at this point is whether by apposing the two sets of writings, he is saying they are definitive collections for the respective practices of each faith in the third century as he knew them. In other words, by writing “our Scriptures” in comparison with the Jewish Scriptures, is the implication from Origen that the, clearly expansive, Jewish Scriptures in Christian churches of that time were alone the Scriptures, not including other writings? I suggest that some arrangement very similar to this may very well have been.

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21 Ibid.
24 Origen, 4.38, 514.
Divine is Distance

What is divine is also distant. I think someone once said “time equals divine” concerning literature’s evolution from mere writings to sacred documents, but that puts the point too strongly in my opinion. Time does not always equal divine status for everything, but it may be more fair to say that the things that are divine, always require distance, or the passage of time in order to cultivate that kind of value. For example, the Jews of the Kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon et al, had the books and tradition of Moses along with the tacit authority of the living Prophets which were the sole loci for the divine and Jewish way of life. For the Jews of the intertestamental period, it was the Pentateuch, but also the writings of the Prophets from Samuel to Daniel, which expanded the idea of divine Scriptures to include the latter half. Yet although divine, these writings, up to the intertestamental period never coalesced into what one could label a canon or closed collection of writings. In fact that did not happen until after the beginning of the Christian period, and likely in response to the overwhelming popularity of this branch of Jewish faith which challenged their very existence. Perhaps it should come as no surprise then, given the slow evolution in the life of a religious document from historical documents or literature to “divine history” or “divine literature,” that in Origen’s time the sacred or divine Scriptures, in toto, were the (having only just been collated by Christians and then Jews) Jewish Scriptures.

I suggest that for Origen, while the Gospels and apostolic writings were clearly inspired by the same God who brought Israel the Jewish Scriptures, it just was not
time for them to be divine in the way the OT writings were. Yet, as we will see below, Origen did take the Church a major step in that direction. The divine status of the apostolic writings alongside the OT did not come until at least the proclamation of Athanasius in 367 alluded to above, yet even there Athanasius makes a delineation between Holy Scriptures and Christian Scriptures. In 367, the two sets of writings were not the “one” book that we know of today, but rather two collections of inspired writings, and Origen’s teachings were paramount to the development of this complimentary status for the apostolic writings.

Origen’s characterization of the OT in his writings bears out the fact that he is careful most of the time to append a prefix such as “holy,” “divine,” or “sacred” to the word Scripture when describing the books that make up this testament.\(^{25}\) When, on the other hand, he talks about the Gospels or various other apostolic writings considered scriptural, he drops the prefix and simply notes them as scripture. Origen is not alone in this practice either. One hundred years after Origen’s death in 254 C.E., Jerome reveals to us this same practice by writing “[w]ho is there, who does not also know that he was so assiduous in the study of Holy Scriptures, that contrary to the spirit of his time [and] of his people, he learned the Hebrew language, and taking the Septuagint translation, he gathered the other translations in a single work.”\(^ {26}\) This differentiation between divine Scripture and “Scripture” is axiomatic in Origen’s theology and writings, and the following discussion will demonstrate this.

\(^ {25}\) Origen does this almost all of the time, but there are times when he does not as at chapter 49 of CC, we read: “It were indeed to be desired, that all the accusers of Christianity were equally ignorant with Celsus, not only of the facts, but of the bare letter of Scripture, . . .” Origen, CC, 1.49, 418; 2.4, 431.

\(^ {26}\) Jerome, Lives, 373-374.
Apostolic Scripture

I will, as briefly as possible, lay before the reader an indicative swath of references in *Contra Celsum* pursuant to Origen’s use of the word “scripture.”

Perhaps of great relief to some and no small wonder to others, the first time Origen uses the word is in connection with the Gospel of Matthew. He writes “from what the Scripture (ἡ γραφή)\(^{27}\) adds, ‘For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.’”\(^{28}\)

In another place, Origen uses the word “scripture” (γραφῆς)\(^{29}\) to refer to the accounts of the dove alighting on Christ.\(^{30}\) Origen writes that Peter and Andrew were fishermen, according to “Scripture” \(^{31}\) (ἡ γραφή).\(^{32}\) In these examples Origen is referring to the ministry of Christ, therefore the Gospels, as Scripture. Origen recalls the words of Christ to “[s]earch the Scriptures” (ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφάς)\(^{33}\) in John 5:39,\(^{34}\) yet perhaps Christ referring to the Jewish Scriptures as “Scriptures” follows naturally in some sense since there was only one set of writings to delineate at that time. Similarly, Origen quotes Paul in Rom 16:25-26 as using the phrase “Scriptures of the Prophets.”\(^{35}\) Quite often, Origen would only introduce the apostolic writings

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\(^{27}\) Origen, *Contra Celsum*, Libri I. II. III. IV., ed. Wilhelmvs Selwyn (Londini: Cantabrigiæ, 1874), 1.2, iv. [Hereinafter CC, 1874]

\(^{28}\) Origen, CC, 1.2, 395: Matthew 27:18.

\(^{29}\) Origen, CC, 1874, 1.48, 46.

\(^{30}\) Origen, CC, 1.48, 417: Origen writes, “That Jesus Himself related the account of the opening of the heavens, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at the Jordan in the form of a dove, although the Scripture does not assert that He said that He saw it”: Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32.

\(^{31}\) Origen, CC, 1.62, 423: Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16.

\(^{32}\) Origen, CC, 1874, 1.62, 60.

\(^{33}\) Origen, CC, 1874, 3.33, 185.

\(^{34}\) Origen, CC, 3.33, 477.

\(^{35}\) Origen, CC, 2.4, 431. This term shows up as a result of the King James Version (hereafter KJV) being used by the translators of the *Contra Celsum*. Rom 16:26 reads “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known
with the name of the author, as in, “the word is used by our Paul in writing to the Corinthians.” Origen also juxtaposes the Gospels and Jewish Scriptures in one thought flow to give us a stronger proof of the claim at issue when he writes, “[i]t will be incumbent on him who treats the declarations of the Gospels philosophically, to establish these doctrines by arguments of all kinds, not only derived from the sacred Scriptures (τῶν Θείων γραμμάτων).” So while the word “scripture” (γραφῆς or ἡ γραφή) on its own is used both for apostolic writings and occasionally for Jewish writings, the far greater number of examples in Origen, pertaining to the Jewish Scriptures, come prefixed as “holy scripture”.

**Holy, Sacred, and Divine Scriptures**

There is a significant number of examples of Origen prefixing “Scripture” with the words “sacred,” “holy,” or “divine.” We read at the opening of Book 4, Chapter 80 in *Contra Celsum*, “[t]hose holy Scriptures, which bear the name of Moses ([κ]αὶ ὁ Θεῖος δὲ κατὰ Μωϋσέα λόγος).” Again Origen writes, “what words of flattery and piteous wailing are contained in the Holy Scriptures (Θείας γιγνόμενος to all nations for the obedience of faith:).” In the more critical New American Standard Version (hereafter NASV) it reads “Scriptures of the Prophets” as well, but in the NRSV it reads “but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith,” removing the idea that γραφών translates as “scriptures” but rather “writings” and it does seem that if the author were trying to indicate Scriptures, they should have used γραφήν instead (see *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Barclay M. Newman, Jr. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1971] in *The Greek New Testament*, eds. Kurt Aland et al. rev. ed. Barbara Aland et al. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1966], 38). See also Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 165-166. It seems a bit of a moot point anyway, since even if the early Christian author (if not Paul) intended the word “writings,” to him or her they were Divine Scriptures anyway.

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38 Origen, *CC*, 4.80, 533. In parentheses, Origen, *CC*, 1874, 4.80, 317: Here the translation should likely read something akin to “divine words of Moses,” but the meaning is the same regardless.
when the sinner says in his prayers to God, ‘I have acknowledged my sin, and mine iniquity have I not hid (Psalm 32).’ In another place, Origen writes “yet truly sacred Scripture (ἡ Θεία γραφή) is nowhere found distinctly approving of their conduct as good, nor yet passing sentence upon it as blameworthy [in regard to the episode in Genesis concerning Lot and his daughters].” In yet another place we read “he [Celsus] pretends not to have observed, acting like those individuals who listen to the Holy Scriptures (τῶν Θείων γραφῶν [or in Migne’s Latin translation “divinas Scripturarum”]) in a malignant spirit, and ‘who talk wickedness with lofty head’ (Deut. 32:39).” Origen uses this Deuteronomy passage to rebuke Celsus for focusing on Jesus asking the Father if he might forgo the suffering ahead of him, and then ignoring the last phrase spoken by Jesus in Matt 26:39 that “nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” In the context of “those individuals” relating to the Deuteronomy passage, the Holy Scriptures, in this instance, are the Jewish Scriptures.

Origen also writes of Celsus, “[f]or those who do not understand these and similar expressions in the sacred Scriptures (τῶν Θείων γραφῶν [or] divinarum Scripturarum),” referring to the uses of metaphor – “your hands fashioned me” – in

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39 Origen, CC, 1874, 3.63, 213.
40 Origen, CC, 3.63, 489.
41 Origen, CC, 1874, 4.45, 282.
43 Origen, CC, 1874, 2.24, 102.
44 Origen, Contra Celsum, in Origenis: Opera Omnia, trans. & ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 8, Patrologiae: Cursus Completus (Seu Petit-Montrouge: Bibliotheca Cleri Universæ, 1856), 2.24, 528. This is how “Holy Scriptures” reads in Migne’s Latin version from 1856. I have cited some other examples of the bifurcation from Migne’s Latin translation below also.
45 Origen, CC, 2.24, 442.
46 Origen, CC, 4.37, 513; Origen, CC, 1874, 270; Origen, Contra Celsum, Migne, 4.37, 631.
the books of Job and Psalms. Our teacher’s defence against this Christian antagonist’s claim that the story of Lot’s daughters is “worse than the crimes of Thyestes,” reads, “whereas Celsus ought to have recognized the love of truth displayed by the writers of sacred Scripture (τὰς Θείς γραφὰς), who have not concealed even what is to their discredit.” This is an excellent example of how Origen appends this prefix “sacred”, especially in such passages where one can sense by his tone that he is impassioned and on the defensive. Alternatively, in other places where the tone is more subdued, and he talks of the Jewish Scriptures in an ancillary way, he will sometimes use the term γραμμάτων or “Scripture.”

Origen also calls the OT collection by the name “Jewish Scripture” (τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν γραφῶν) in the context of discussing the Jews. One of the most striking juxtapositions involving the Scriptures of both the Christian Church and Jewish faith reads:

Nay, so far as Celsus can make it appear, the birds possess grander and more divine ideas than, I do not say we Christians do, or than the Jews, who use the same Scriptures with ourselves, [ταῖς αὐταῖς γράφας χρωμένων Ἰουδαίων]

47 Origen, among other things, discusses the use of the word “hands” found in the following passages of Holy Scripture: Job 10:8, Your hands fashioned and made me; and now you turn and destroy me; Psalms 119:73, Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.

48 Origen, CC, 4.45, 518. There is no extant copy of A True Discourse written by Celsus, so all that remains are the selections extracted from Origen’s reply.

49 Origen, CC, 1874, 4.45, 281.

50 Origen, CC, 4.45, 518.

51 Origen, CC, 1874, 4.72, 309.

52 Origen, CC, 4.72, 529.

53 Origen, CC, 4.52, 521.

54 Origen, CC, 1874, 4.52, 290.

55 Origen, CC, 1874, 4.89, 327.
or ac nos Scripturis\textsuperscript{56} but even than are possessed by the theologians among the Greeks, for they were only human beings.\textsuperscript{57}

If we contrast this with what Origen says soon after that “in accordance with the will of him who is called in our Scriptures (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἡμῶν or Scripturæ nostræ)\textsuperscript{58} the ‘prince of this world,’\textsuperscript{59} it appears that not only is the prefix missing, but the word which gets translated “scriptures” is actually λόγοις meaning “words” or, in this case, “writings”. In these last two examples, the fact that Origen uses the familiar word γραφαῖς for the Jewish Scriptures and λόγοις for the Christian writings supports the claim that Origen thought of the two bodies of writings in a categorically different way. The examples which pertain to this debate, even in \textit{Contra Celsum} alone, are too numerous to be recounted here,\textsuperscript{60} yet the discussion of this difference in treatment is an important contextual marker for understanding Origen’s overall perspective on the idea of Scripture.

\textbf{Origen’s New Way Ahead}

\textbf{Bringing the Apostolic Writings into Confluence with the Jewish Scriptures}

In \textit{Contra Celsum} there exists evidence that with Origen we are likely dealing with the person who brings apostolic writings into a greater confluence with the

\begin{footnotes}
\item Origen, \textit{Contra Celsum}, Migne, 4.89, 664.
\item Origen, \textit{CC}, 4.89, 537: (emphasis added).
\item Origen, \textit{CC}, 1874, 4.93, 332; Origen, \textit{Contra Celsum}, Migne, 4.93, 667.
\item Origen, \textit{CC}, 4.93, 539: (emphasis added): Origen referring to passages from John and Paul like John 16:11, or Ephesians 6:12.
\item I found the following passages which, although not quoted here, bear out the same bifurcation and are of the same ilk. See Origen, \textit{CC}, 5.5, 545; 5.17, 550; 5.18, 551; 5.60, 569; 6.5, 575; 6.7, 576; 6.16, 580; 6.18, 581; 6.21, 582; 6.25, 584; 6.33, 588; 6.37, 590; 6.50, 596; 6.54-56, 598-599; 6.70, 605; 6.79, 609; 7.12, 615; 7.20, 619; 7.27, 621; 7.30, 623; 7.32, 623-624; 7.34, 624; 7.42, 628; 7.47, 630; 7.60, 635; 7.67, 638; 7.69, 638; 8.3, 640; 8.4, 641; 8.19, 646; 8.25, 648-649; 8.30, 650; 8.37, 653; 8.46, 656; 8.56, 661. The above suggestions on this divide in the thought of Origen are robust enough to justify further serious research on this point.
\end{footnotes}
Jewish Scriptures than anyone on record.\textsuperscript{61} For instance, Origen oftentimes writes about the apostolic writings and Gospels as concomitant with the Jewish Scriptures, which up until the third century was something rather unique. He writes “[a]nd not only did the Spirit thus deal with the Scriptures before the coming of Christ, but, inasmuch as He is the same Spirit, and proceedeth from the One God, He has done the same with the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles.”\textsuperscript{62} In one sense, what the writings of Irenaeus did for the Gospels, Origen’s writings helped achieve for the apostolic letters.

Gregory and Basil of Nazianzus, the Cappadocian Fathers, recognized this theological tendency in Origen and preserved the idea in a work known as \textit{Philocalia}. In this work of selected quotes from Origen’s works, they emphasized how the Alexandrian understood the whole of Scripture as sharing a genuine unity. In fact, half of the chapters in \textit{Philocalia} are dedicated to Origen’s view on Scripture.\textsuperscript{63} Gregory and Basil support the notion of unity in the two sets of writings, by, for example, titling a chapter in their selections of Origen with the words, “[t]he whole

\textsuperscript{61} In this instance I refer to Origen as bringing the writings of Peter, Paul, and John into a confluence of thought and appreciation with the Jewish Scriptures. Paul, of course, brought the Jewish Scriptures into his own writings in many places, but here my point is that Origen is the one to bring Paul’s writings into a class along with the Jewish Scriptures.

\textsuperscript{62} Origen, \textit{Philocalia}, 1.16, 18; Origen also emphasizes elsewhere the different character of the words and teachings of the apostles: “For the words of those who at the first assumed the office of (Christian) ambassadors, and who gave their labours to rearing up the Churches of God, - nay, their preaching also, - were accompanied with a persuasive power, though not like that found among those who profess the philosophy of Plato, or of any other merely human philosopher, which possesses no other qualities than those of human nature. But the demonstration which followed the words of the apostles of Jesus was given from God and was accredited by the Spirit and by power. And therefore their word ran swiftly and speedily, or rather the word of God through their instrumentality, transformed numbers of persons who had been sinners both by nature and habit, whom no one could have reformed by punishment, but who were changed by the word, which moulded and transformed them according to its pleasure.” [Emphasis in the Original], Origen, \textit{CC}, 3.68, 491.

\textsuperscript{63} Origen, \textit{Philocalia}, chap. 1-14, 1-61.
Divine Scripture is one instrument of God, perfect and fitted for its work …”\textsuperscript{64} The fact that these two Cappadocians took the time to collate disparate selections from Origen to emphasize the idea of unity in Scripture is important to this study in that it suggests that while Origen did not, as far as we know, feel the need to write a treatise on the subject of the unity between the two groups of writings, yet his ideas and language obviously bear out this notion of unity quite strongly. Gregory and Basil use these excerpts to imply exactly that. In other words, the idea of the sole unity of Scripture as a tenet of Christian belief is something which came after Origen’s time, as evidenced here by Gregory and Basil’s \textit{Philocalia} of the latter fourth century. However, Origen’s writings, I suggest, written over a century earlier, were likely the strongest impetus in that direction.

Quoting Origen from their copy of his \textit{Commentaries} on the Gospel of Matthew, we read:

But there is also a third peacemaker, he, viz. who shows that what to the eyes of others seems like disagreement in the Scriptures is not really so, and who proves that harmony and concord exist, whether between the Old [παλαιῶ]\textsuperscript{65} and the New [καινὰς],\textsuperscript{66} or the Law and the Prophets, or Gospel and Gospel, or Evangelists and Apostles, or Apostles and other Apostles. For, according to the Preacher, all the Scriptures, words of the wise, are as goads, and as nails well fastened, words which were given from collections from one shepherd, and there is nothing superfluous in them. And the Word is “one shepherd” of things relating to the Word, which do indeed sound discordant to those who have not ears to hear, but are in the truth most harmonious.\textsuperscript{67}

A little further on, Origen finishes his thought by remarking, “For he [the peacemaker] knows that the whole Scripture is the one, perfect, harmonious

\textsuperscript{64} Gregory and Basil of Nazianzus, \textit{Philocalia}, 6.0, 42.
\textsuperscript{65} Origen, \textit{Philocalia}, Robinson, 6.1, 49.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Origen, \textit{Philocalia}, Lewis, 6.1, 42-43.
instrument of God, blending the different notes, for those who wish to learn, into one song of salvation.”\textsuperscript{68} In these passages, the stress from Origen is on the unity of Scripture as a whole, yet accounting for “different notes” in the harmony, thus allowing a differentiation while at the same time thinking of them as emanating from one Word, one Logos God.

**Origen and a New Testament**

Similar to the above passage on the contrast of old and new, at Chapter 11 of the *Philocalia*, Origen is quoted as writing, “[t]hese, I say, are they who approve the New Testament, but reject the Old.”\textsuperscript{69} This excerpt comes from one of Origen’s commentaries on Ezekiel. The translation above is from George Lewis in 1911, and the Greek words for “New Testament” are καινην ἐγκρίνοντες or “new certain class,” roughly, and appear in a confluence of thought with regard to the Old Testament ἀποδοκιμάζοντες διαθήκη.\textsuperscript{70} The placement of the words seems to indicate the possibility that the “new class” is a new “testament,” and Origen merely uses the word “testament” once for both the new and old class. Lewis, the translator of this rendition of the *Philocalia*, obviously thought so. If Origen meant this, it is significant as being one of the first uses on record of “New Testament” being ascribed to the apostolic writings.

The other interesting aspect of this juxtaposition from Origen on “old” and “new,” is that it is preceded by an opening statement which reads, “[e]very good pasture, and

\textsuperscript{68} Origen, *Philocalia*, Lewis, 6.2, 42-43.
\textsuperscript{69} Origen, vol. 20 of his *Commentaries* on Ezekiel, *Philocalia*, 11.1, 53.
\textsuperscript{70} Origen, *Philocalia*, Robinson, 11.1, 61.
the pool of clear water, represent, I suppose, the oracles of the sacred Scriptures ἱερῶν γραμμάτων 71 as a whole.” This is based on Origen’s allegorical reading of Ezekiel 34:17 and following, where there is a rebuke from Ezekiel to the people who, even though they feed on the good pasture and drink clean waters, they foul it with their feet. For Origen, those who accept the new writings yet reject the Old Testament are those fouling the water with their feet. What this means is that when Origen writes “the oracles of sacred writings ἱερῶν γραμμάτων as a whole,” he is referring to both, which is a strong statement of the unity he conferred on the two sets of writings.

There are two other places where Origen uses the phrase “New Testament,” but it should be noted that there is a hint of caution in his tone as, for instance, when in De Principiis he writes, “that which is called the Old Testament, and that which is styled the New.” 73 On this point, Harry Y. Gamble writes, “Origen’s phraseology here suggests that he regarded such terminology as novel and perhaps not wholly suitable.” 74 Given the above discussion on Origen’s attachment to the Jewish

71 Ibid., 11.1, 60.
72 Origen, Philocalia, Lewis, 53.
74 Gamble, NT Canon, 21.
Scriptures, Gamble’s suggestion accords not only with this research, but with Everett Kalin’s, discussed above, as well.

**In Summary: Unity of Writings New and Old**

In some sections of Origen’s writings, the reader gets the sense he may have been trying to establish the fact that the God of the Jewish Scriptures is also responsible for the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. Without meaning didactically to overstate the confluence of old and new covenants, Origen would, in my estimation, naturally think and write of them together in words such as these:

In reply to this claim [from Celsus] to know “all about it,” which is an astounding piece of swagger, we must observe that if he had read the Scriptures, above all, the prophetic writings, (ἐἶπεν ἀνεγνώκει μάλιστα τοὺς προφήτας) which we admit are full of dark sayings and things obscure to the many, and if he had studied the parables in the Gospels, and the texts of Scripture (γραφῇ) containing the Law and the history of the Jewish people, and the utterances (φωναῖς) of the Apostles, and, reading with a fair and open mind, had wished to get at the meaning, he would not have been so bold as to say, “I know all about it.” Not even we who spend ourselves upon these studies would claim to know “all about it,” for truth is dear to us.

We can see from the Greek that Lewis merely inserts the first occurrence of the word “Scriptures,” when really it translates, “since if he [Celsus] had read especially the prophets” or something of that nature. Even in spite of this theologically driven misstatement by Lewis, I think the passage actually supports the notion the translator is trying to impose on it, perhaps telling us why Lewis made such a decision in the first place. Origen does use the word Scripture (γραφῇ) here in the classic sense, but only in relation to the Jewish Scriptures as one can see from the above passage. Yet

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75 Origen, *De Principis*, 4.16, 364-365.
77 Origen, *Philocalia*, Lewis, 18.6, 91.
taken as a whole, I see this passage as a natural expression from Origen, whereby he writes about the various strains of his “scripture” – Prophets, Gospels, Law, and Apostles – in the same breath, as it were. I do not see here in Origen any kind of dogmatic agenda pertaining to Scripture per se, but merely the state of God’s revelation as he understands it in the business of responding to Celsus. The fact that he was not writing a treatise on how Scripture should be classified makes his comments on it even more valuable to this research, since we know that these kinds of comments are merely the ancillary assumptions he carried with him.

However much Origen did to bring the Jewish Scriptures and apostolic writings together theologically, the evidence in Origen does not lead me to believe he was fully ready to treat them as the selfsame thing, even though our retroactive inferences may want to impose this idea on him. The passage quoted above, where he only classifies the Jewish writings as Scripture, supports such a suggestion. On the other hand, Origen does take Christian theology much further in characterizing the apostolic writings as a live option for equal status with the Divine Scriptures of the OT. The Church would eventually adopt this perspective, and my suggestion is that these strong declarations from Origen, which draw together the OT with the Gospels and Apostolic Letters, are evidence of the development of a notion that both sets of writings amounted to one unified collection.
CHAPTER FOUR:
ORIGEN’S APOSTOLIC CANON OF WRITINGS

Origen in the History

An important piece of information gleaned from the History is found at chapter 6.25 where Eusebius presents passages from Origen in an effort ostensibly to give the reader an indication of what the Alexandrian would have approved of in terms of writings from the Jewish Scriptures and, more importantly, apostolic writings. Eusebius puts together three passages of Origen, coming from disparate works, and at first glance they do look like a neat list covering both old and new testaments. Yet the fact that they are taken from three different places in Origen’s writings gives concern, and, as Kalin similarly observed, they fit together too conveniently for anyone to accept them as giving us any kind of canonical “list” from the hand of Origen, regardless of what our compiler intended. Eusebius first quotes Origen’s work on Psalm 1 where there is a twenty-two book listing of writings from the Jewish Scriptures. Right after this in the text, and important for this research, he gives Origen’s opinion on the Gospels from the first of his commentaries on Matthew. Origen writes “. . . as having learnt by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which

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78 HE, 6.25, 73.
alone are unquestionable in the Church of God under heaven,’” according to the text of Eusebius.¹ Eusebius had then presented Origen vouchsafing the authenticity of the Jewish Scriptures and the gospels. Immediately after this, though, Eusebius presents a selection from Origen’s writing on the Gospel of John and quotes him thus:

But he who was made sufficient to become a minister of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit, even Paul, who fully preached the Gospel from Jerusalem and round about even unto Illyricum, did not so much as write to all the churches that he taught; and even to those to which he wrote he sent but a few lines [keep in mind this is Origen writing here]. And Peter, on whom the Church of Christ is built, against which the gates of Hades shall not prevail, has left one acknowledged epistle, and, it may be, a second also; for it is doubted. Why need I speak of him who leaned back on Jesus’ breast, John, who has left behind one Gospel, confessing that he could write so many that even the world itself could not contain them; and he wrote also the Apocalypse, being ordered to keep silence and not to write the voices of the seven thunders? He has left also an epistle of a very few lines, and, it may be, a second and a third; for not all say that these are genuine. Only, the two of them together are not a hundred lines long.²

Recalling the discussion above on Origen’s separation of “scripture” vis-à-vis Holy or Sacred Scripture, one clearly sees that this passage is particularly bereft of any mention of even scripture, let alone the more weighty designations given to the Jewish Scriptures by this author. He talks of these apostolic writings in a more casual and off-hand way, perhaps indicating that although he values them and acknowledges the Church’s general approval of them, he does not feel the need to add any prefix to solemnize their value. Also, one can clearly see that this latter quoted selection in Eusebius is not a list of “approved” Scriptures, but only his enumeration of writings that came from the hands of the apostles in the first instance.

¹ *HE*, 6.25, 75.
² *HE*, 6.25, 75-77.
The last thing we read from Eusebius on Origen’s opinions concerning various writings is a passage concerning the book of Hebrews, and Eusebius quotes Origen from his commentary on the same book. To summarize it briefly, Origen is unsure of who wrote it, but accepts it as the thought of Paul, written by someone else, and commending those churches which have decided to treat it as Paul’s.3 Here again, Origen does not talk in terms of scripture, so I think we are hard pressed to take these examples as an indication of Origen’s canon, again, regardless of how they were collated by Eusebius. They appear in their separate works as ancillary comments from Origen on what are to him, matter-of-fact realities about these writings, and yet in the History they appear as so much more. Eusebius packages all this information from Origen’s hand in one very small chapter of Book 6 in the History. It is clear he placed them that way for a reason, but why? Kalin’s suggestion that we are being given a “clever compiler’s” enumeration of disconnected statements from Origen certainly seems fair, and the above discussion of Scripture in Origen does lend to Kalin’s main point that Origen’s canon never likely grew beyond the OT and Gospels alone.4

**Origen, Eusebius, and Impugned Writings**

Eusebius does not give a lot of detail about the last years of Origen’s life but he does indicate that Origen suffered torture during the persecution of Decius, and was apparently released, yet continued to produce “sayings full of help for those who needed uplifting – [of all these matters] the man’s numerous letters contain both a

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3 *HE*, 6.25, 77-79.
4 See text at footnotes 43-52 of chapter 1.
true and accurate account.” We know also from Jerome that Origen died and was buried in the seaside city of Tyre, just north of Caesarea Maratima in the time of Gallus and Volusianus, and was 69 years old.

Origen lived a full life, to say the least. Yet we know perhaps only small cross sections of that life from the account of Eusebius and a few other sources. As with the other Christian writers Eusebius describes, he seems to be primarily concerned with what Origen wrote and his familiarity with both Jewish Scriptures and apostolic writings. Eusebius, in Book 3.25, laid out what he understood to be the accepted writings of the Church of his day, and in a ten-chapter work of this kind laid out over a chronological period of three hundred years, he made this enumeration very early on. In fact, he does not even get to Origen in the third century until Chapter Six. In some ways, it looks as though Eusebius may have placed his enumeration where he did as a didactic and literary pre-emptive strike, if you will, whereby he lists the accepted writings at the beginning, and then spends a great deal of time propping up his claims with the evidence of historical Christian notables, primarily in this respect, Origen.

In one sense, that seems fair enough, since even in present times we are told to introduce research with the conclusion, then make an argument or show evidence to support the claim. Yet that is not necessarily how one writes a history, even today. In other words, why is this passage from the History at 3.25, from a bird’s eye view, placed where it is? Consider that Book 1 concerns Christ and the apostles; Book 2, Book 3.

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5 HE, 6.39, 93-95.
6 Jerome, Lives, 374.
7 As noted above, Eusebius claimed it would take a whole treatise on its own to cover all the events in Origen’s life.
more of the apostles; Book 3, the Apostle John, Clement, Ignatius, and then, all of a sudden in the chronological narrative, he jumps 220 years to the accepted writings of Christians in his own time. Eusebius then promptly jumps back 220 years to Ignatius and picks up the chronology. The anomalous placing of his enumeration seems hardly accidental. Also a curiosity, the Eusebian list is at 3.25, while Origen’s collected comments on apostolic writings appear at 6.25 in the History – although this latter anomaly has a much better chance of having been a random occurrence than the former.

What might be the reason for this the Eusebian placement of these “apostolic” scriptures? I think first one needs to consider the possibility that Eusebius knew he was creating a “canon” of sorts by his famous enumeration. I think Eusebius saw himself as finishing the job which Origen did not quite get to in his own lifetime, hence Origen’s primacy of place in the work as a whole. In the last two centuries, many scholars have investigated these two passages in the History, yet there can be no final answer on what they really signify unless some new evidence is found from the hand of Eusebius telling us what he actually meant to convey by his tri-fold categorization of books into “spoken the same,” “spoken against,” and “spurious.”

From the observation above of his placement of this listing, it seems there must have been a reason, but why? After much consideration on the subject, and before going any further, I offer a few brief suggestions as to why this may be so.

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8 Although this research is not concerned with the delineations per se, further research by Everett Kalin has done much to help us understand them. See “The New Testament Canon of Eusebius,” *The Canon Debate*, eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Henrickson, 2002), 386-404.
The evidence seems to suggest that the Eusebian “canon” may be attributed to the separate but related fact that there was a perceived need to break away from the Jewish influence on Christianity within the context of a quickly growing and ever more unwieldy worldwide Christian Church, and second, that the heresy of Arianism, a related phenomenon, also threatened the Church’s stability. I will give a few contextual markers, keeping in mind the above discussions of subordinationism and the general division of “Holy Scripture” and “Scripture,” as to why I think this might be so, at least in so far as it concerns the inclusion or exclusion of apostolic writings.

Eusebius began writing the History sometime around 311 C.E., near the promulgation and enforcement of the Edict of Toleration of the same year. Kirsopp Lake thinks this 311 date is the right one based on evidence in the text, but it is not certain because Eusebius writes, at the beginning of Book 1, about the “martyrdoms of our own time” which sounds like he wrote from within the period of persecution itself. I tend to agree with the later date because “our time” likely refers to “within one’s own life” rather than “here at this moment,” which would follow naturally if he wrote from within the Toleration period looking back. I also suspect it would have been more realistic to start a project of this magnitude once the persecution had stopped. Further, I think it is also possible that while he may have begun the project then, he likely made revisions right through the Constantinian episode at Nicaea, hence justifying my assertion that Arianism produced some of the impetus for his

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9 HE, 1.1, 7-9; See the discussion of this subject generally in Kirsopp Lake, Introduction, HE, xix-xxii.
10 I suggest that Eusebius may have seen this calm in the storm as a golden opportunity to write down for posterity the History of the Church, realizing that he was not sure if he would get another opportunity like this again.
content and structure in the *History*. For instance, Chapter 9 ends with Constantine and Licinius triumphant and the churches safe, and then Chapter 10 recalls Constantine’s victory over Licinius and there Eusebius reproduces letters concerning the restoration of churches, and, most importantly, the command of Constantine for a synod of Bishops to be held.\footnote{HE, 10.5, 455.} It needs to be remembered, then, that Eusebius was writing part of the *History* after Constantine had already called for this synod for unity, hence Arianism had already begun in earnest. If Arianism was a key stumbling block to Church unity just prior to Constantine’s settlement at Nicaea, and Eusebius was editing and writing the History during this period, then it seems logical to suggest that writings with Arian leanings may have been given short shrift.

**Eusebius and Jewish-Christian Writings**

Concerning the consideration of Jewish-styled Christian writings, it is important to remember that, even though Constantine did not consolidate the Roman Empire and adopt Christianity until the early 320s, in 311 Eusebius had interpreted the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans years earlier as divine punishment for their treatment of Christ and his apostles. This may have been a later emendation on the part of Eusebius due to the burgeoning relationship between Constantine and the Church, but whatever the reason, Eusebius’ writings gives some very negative descriptions of the Jews. He writes:

To it [Pella (place name)] those who believed on Christ migrated from Jerusalem, that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea, the judgement of God might at last overtake them for all
their crimes against the Christ and his Apostles, and all that generation of the wicked be utterly blotted out from among men.\textsuperscript{12}

Eusebius then proceeds to describe the atrocities amongst the Jews in the grotesquely vivid language of Josephus from the latter’s account of the slaughter.\textsuperscript{13} Immediately after the above quoted passage of the \textit{History}, Eusebius invites his readers, “come, then, take up again the fifth book of the history of Josephus and go through the tragedy of what was then done.”\textsuperscript{14} There is little left for the imagination as to how Eusebius feels about this incident, since immediately after quoting the tragic events on the slaughter in Jerusalem, he states “such was the reward of the iniquity of the Jews and of their impiety against the Christ of God.”\textsuperscript{15} The Romans are clearly interpreted as God’s agents on earth, dispensing punishment for the great injustice of Christ’s death. It seems odd that Eusebius did not recall Christ’s own admissions that his death was for a purpose and therefore not to be resisted.

While Eusebius comes across as anti-semitic in his language concerning the great many Jews who perished, his disposition does tell us something about why, perhaps, the Christian Church was so willing to take on the Roman Empire as their new patron. If the Roman Empire was used by God to punish the Jews for killing Christ and the Apostles, then it is not too big a leap to Eusebius’ seeing them as also ordained by God under Constantine to both win and guarantee their freedom, and further

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{HE}, 3.5, 201.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{HE}, 3.6, 203-215; I must pause here to indicate that in my own humble experience only when reading \textit{accounts} of the First Crusade have I come across testimony so horrifying on both the levels of human degradation and human suffering. See, for instance, Dana Cushing ed., \textit{A Middle English Chronicle of the First Crusade: the Caxton Eracles}, 2 vols., trans. Dana Cushing (Lewiston, N.Y. : Queenston, Ont.: E. Mellen Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{HE}, 3.6, 203.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{HE}, 3.7, 215. Eusebius goes on to write that Josephus records that 1,100,000 Jews perished by famine or sword, and another 90,000 children under seventeen were sold in to slavery.
guarantee their dominance as an imperial religion. Should it then be a surprise that Eusebius would leave out or label as spurious the very books which owed more to the Jewish Scripture and/or Arian leanings than the rest? I suggest such a reality could well have followed quite naturally.

The four letters I would refer to as a case in point on this claim are 1 Clement, Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, and Shepherd of Hermas. All four of these writings are replete with Jewish overtones, language, and Jewish Scriptural references, and are pointedly not Christ-centered in the way that the Gospels or Paul’s letters are.\textsuperscript{16} Further on this line of thought, and as discussed earlier, the Arian claims were focused on the relative status of Christ vis-à-vis His Father in a pointedly more Jewish way. When defending their doctrine at the Council of Nicaea, the Arian delegation quoted the Shepherd of Hermas, alongside 1 and 2 Corinthians, “[b]elieve above all that there is one God, who created and restored all things, calling them from nothing into being.”\textsuperscript{17} Of course we know that Eusebius specifically labelled as “spurious” the Shepherd in his History, which might support the idea that this particular writing was kept out on Arian grounds.

\textsuperscript{16} B.F. Westcott writes that “The Shepherd bears the same relation to the Epistle of St. James as the Epistle of Barnabas to that to the Hebrews. The idea of Christian law lies at the bottom of them both.” Westcott also writes here that the Shepherd serves as an example of how Christianity at the time was in danger of Jewish principles. B.F. Westcott, A General Survey, 202-203.

We suspect that Eusebius himself was of the Arian view at one point based on testimony of the time.\textsuperscript{18} Yet if he was, it must have been in the short period between 318, the beginning of the Arius saga, and 325, the date for our council. The Arian controversy began, perhaps not so ironically, in Origen’s former home of Alexandria, between, again, a bishop and a priest. Bishop Alexander of Alexandria began his episcopate in 313, after the 311 date under consideration regarding the History’s inception, and his dispute with Arius comes some few years later. The Arian controversy concerned the question of whether Christ was actually God, and thus was very much linked to the aforementioned tradition of subordinationism in the early Fathers. It looks at least possible that the Shepherd was sidelined due to its Arian leanings sometime around the time of Nicaea, and it may have been part of the reason for Eusebius’ awkwardly inserted enumeration at 3.25. Without this discussion on writings at 3.25, the History would read as basically chronological, and this supports the possibility that the whole list may have been inserted nearer to Nicaea than otherwise. If one prefers the view that Eusebius labelled the Shepherd spurious earlier on in 311, and that no altering of the text later on due to Constantine’s settlement occurred, then it does not look like he could have been vetting it solely on Arian grounds, but perhaps rather on the other consideration alluded to, the predominantly Jewish perspective within its pages. Of further interest, we know from Origen that the tradition concerning this book at Caesarea was actually fairly positive.\textsuperscript{19} Origen said

\textsuperscript{18} Theodoretus, Letter of Arian to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, in Ecclesiastical History, 1.5, 23-25: “Eusebius, your brother Bishop of Caesarea, Theodotius, . . . have been condemned because they say that God had an existence prior to that of his Son,” 24.

of this Scripture that it was “divinely inspired,” but his reference in the *Commentary on Romans* does not inspire confidence that this writing was used heavily by Origen but rather the opposite.\footnote{See previous footnote.} There is also a further example in Origen’s *Homilies on Joshua* which confirms this subordinate status for the Shepherd.\footnote{Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, trans. Barbara J. Bruce, ed. Cynthia White, vol. 105, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, eds. Thomas P. Halton et al. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 10.1, 110: Origen is dictated as saying, “Furthermore, in a little book that is called the *Shepherd*, a figure of these things is also described.” This statement implies a familiarity with the work on Origen’s part, but the way he presents it to his hearers is as to people hearing about it for, perhaps, the first time.}

Of the other writings mentioned, *Didache*, *1 Clement*, and *Epistle of Barnabas*, we know that Origen considered the last of the three “Scriptural” as well, and he includes it in the same breath as the Gospel of Luke and 1 Timothy in *Contra Celsum*.\footnote{Origen, *CC*, 1.43, 424.} Concerning *Didache*, there is very little evidence, but some phrases of Origen do suggest a familiarity.\footnote{Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Books 1-5*, trans. Thomas O. Scheck, vol. 103, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, eds. Thomas P. Halton et al. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1.18.6, 94: Origen uses the phrase “the two ways” which features prominently in the *Didache* in the opening lines.} On *1 Clement*, Origen shows a familiarity, mentioning him by name as the “disciple of the apostles” and quoting the recognized letter of his to the Corinthians in a passage of *Contra Celsum* in which he enumerates various Scriptures, including, presumably, this one.\footnote{Origen, *De Principis*, 2.3.6, 273: Origen mentions Clement by name in an overarching discussion of Scripture, sandwiching it between a quote from *Wisdom of Solomon* and 1 Corinthians.} As discussed above of *1 Clement*, it is the Jewish Scriptures that dominate this work, and a similar observation could be made of the other three under consideration here. Each of them, in their own ways, inheres to a very Jewish Christian perspective and thus could give us some
indication as to why Eusebius kept at least three of them in the spurious category. Eusebius does not put *I Clement* into any of the categories, and while he did use the same Greek word, ὁμολογούμενη in reference to Clement’s epistle that he used for the accepted books at 3.25 (ὁμολογούμενοις), it seems more likely he thought of Clement’s work in the same light as, say, Ignatius. Yet, there is the rub, since in Clement’s case Eusebius acknowledges that he may have been the author of Hebrews. If one speculates that this is the case, (Clementine authorship for Hebrews), then perhaps here again we may be dealing with an outright vetting by Eusebius of *I Clement* because of its explicit subordinationism language and debt to the Jewish Scriptures. In other words, Hebrews focuses on Christ while *I Clement* is a very Jewish-Christian document, therefore it may have followed quite naturally for Eusebius to favour the former and set aside the latter on the grounds here suggested.

Concerning all four of these early Christian writings, the fact that Origen uses them so infrequently, though, does go some way to suggesting that while they were in his pantheon of scriptural writings, they were not likely relied on to any great degree. That Eusebius categorized three of these books the way he did as “spurious,” may suggest that even though common currency in the early churches, by his own time in the fourth century, these pointedly Jewish writings within Christianity were on their way out of favour.

Here, I suggest, at the beginning of the fourth century, the Church stood at a crossroads between an early Christian community model of faith, begun almost

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26 *HE*, Book 3.25, 256.
wholly by Jewish believers, and functioning in worship, morality, and communal networking in much the same ways Judaism did, and the new alternative of a Church with Christian Scriptures, where Christ himself was God. It was the aggregate growth and size of the gentile Christian Church, even before the Nicene settlement, which made these latter trends a more potent and possible reality. In some ways, then, the early Christian Church made up of mostly Jews and functioning in a very Judaic style of Christian belief and practice was on its way into history, while the newer model of gentile Christianity tried to get a handle on their future, in part via the settlement at Nicaea. Yet this “new dawn” for Christianity was also clearly one smoothed by the Roman empire of Constantine, and one where the Church went from pauper to power almost overnight.

While there were likely other considerations in the mind of Eusebius when writing his enumeration of which writings were “accepted,” most pointedly the conclusions of Origen which have been discussed above, it seems to me that Eusebius made the choices he did knowing full well he was now the subject of an Emperor whom, as he thought, God had sent to deliver the Church. No more would the members of the Roman church be able to disagree about things like whether Christ was God or merely the Son, as alluded to by Origen above. From Constantine forward, the Church legislated and enforced one rule for all. Eventually, and unfortunately in many ways, the Church adopted the very heavy-handed practices of an empire to deal with its problems. David L. Dungan, in his 2007 book *Constantine’s Bible*, writes on the sad irony of such a marriage as this.
When it [the Church] began to use the sword against its enemies, the “heresies” (*haireseis*), the church thus became deeply twisted and lost its way. Power-hungry, greedy politicians began to take over positions of leadership. In this atmosphere, how could Jesus of Nazareth or the Apostle Paul or Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the prophets speak? Were not their voices almost snuffed out, encased in heavy leather bindings of the lavishly illustrated codexes, lying on cold stone altars in giant stone buildings? How could those voices speak and be heard?27

There would be no disagreements à la Peter and Paul anymore, those divisions were culled out and had the sword as their guarantor. Yet, as the following one thousand years of Christian history would reveal, these requirements for enforced unity proved untenable, to say the least. To Origen’s mind, this kind of enforced flattening of Christianity would have been both absurd and distasteful. He writes “may we not offer a similar apology [as he did for Jewish sects] for the sects of Christianity? What Paul says concerning them seems to me truly marvellous: ‘There must be also sects among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you [1 Cor 11:19].’”28 Clearly, Paul and Origen were theologically a long ways off from the political disposition of Eusebius and the Church under Constantine et al.

On the other hand, one wonders if the Church at Nicaea had any kind of realistic choice in the matter anyway. In other words, could the Church have said no to Constantine’s involvement? Could they have told him politely to keep to matters of state while they continued to argue over doctrine and threaten the stability of his Empire? I see Eusebius as just one of many in the Church of the time who welcomed,

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28 Origen, *Philocalia*, Lewis, 16.2, 78-79; 1 Cor 11:19: “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine.”
perhaps a bit too quickly, the involvement of the state in the affairs of the Church. At the time, of course, it meant the end of persecutions, return of Church property, and a great deal more property and funds bestowed on the Church as it began its rise to the eventual status of the pre-eminent religion in the Empire. It must have been a very tough offer, nearly impossible, to turn down at the time. Yet it would seem from Nicaea forwards, in contrast to Christ’s teaching in the Gospels, that what was God’s was now Caesar’s, so to speak.

Perhaps one of the only people who was bold enough to stand up to such a change, the only one who would have decried the marriage of the Church to a secular power and would have been ready to face the consequences, had already passed on.

**Origen’s Canon According to his Usage of Apostolic Writings**

**Some Statistical Observations**

The next piece of evidence offered as support for Origen’s key role in the formation of the NT canon is the apparent use he made of NT Scriptures in his own writings, in order that we might have some idea of which early documents were

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29 Constantine, Letter Written by the Emperor Constantine Respecting the Building of Churches, in Theodoretus, Ecclesiastical History, 1.15, 58-59: Constantine writes to Eusebius of Caesarea, “Exert yourself diligently in the reparation of the churches under your jurisdiction, and admonish the principal bishops, priests, and deacons of other places to engage zealously in the same work; in order that all the churches which still exist may be repaired or enlarged, and that new ones may be built wherever they are required. You, and others through your intervention, can apply to the governors of the provinces, and the commanders of the troops, for all that may be necessary for this purpose; for they have received written injunctions to supply whatever your holiness may command. May God preserve you, beloved brother.”

30 See footnote above.

31 Matthew 22:15-21: “Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?’ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.
preferred by him and which were not. In this way we may be able to roughly sketch out which Christian writings were in his orbit during his many years as a teacher and minister of the Christian gospel. By doing this, we may better understand what was valued and preferred generally in and amongst the Christian churches of Origen’s time, and we may also be able to see a partial reflection of the Eusebian choices made at Book 3.25 of the History.

To attempt a detailed accounting of Origen’s use of the NT in his extant works is a task that not even a doctoral thesis could handle; there are just too many extant works and they are replete with examples of NT usage. In order to fit some of the information contained in his writings into this inquiry, I have collated the pertinent NT usage data from twelve of his popular extant works, and arranged them on a chart to the end of producing graphs which help the reader see this evidence visibly. The following table is a list of the works selected, beside which is an abbreviation to identify the individual writings, and then the corresponding translator who produced the versions I chose.32

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<tr>
<th>Selected Works of Origen</th>
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<th>Translator</th>
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Each time these translators noted Origen using verses from a particular passage of the NT, she or he noted this in an index of Scripture at the back of each work. I took the time to collate the data in each book, then collated all the data from the twelve works in the table below. The table I assembled gives the raw numbers and totals for the number of times Origen used or referenced a particular verse of NT Scripture in any of the separate writings mentioned above. The rows are indicative of the twenty-seven books of the NT, while the columns are headed by the abbreviations for the translated writings I worked with to produce these results. Probably the most


33 For a more robust and fuller version of this table, see Appendix A.
significant information on this table is the percentage column, because it indicates,
out of all the NT Scriptures used in all twelve of these works, what percentage of the
time Origen made reference to any one given verse. The other thing of note is that
when collating the data for, say, Origen’s *Homilies on Luke*, I did not include the
results concerning his use of Luke because they were the very subject of Origen’s
study and would be overrepresented, thus skewing the data. These are marked with an
“n/a”. What should also be noted is that what took me some time to collect, the
information below, took the translators even longer, and their indexing of Origen’s
use of the NT has aided my research significantly. The last thing to mention is that
these twelve works do not represent all of Origen’s extant works, although they do
account for some of the more substantial works such as *On First Principles* and
*Contra Celsum*. I chose these works of Origen because I think they represent a fair
cross section of the extant material, and the scope of this current project would not
allow for an accounting of all extant writings, although it would likely be worthwhile
for someone to tackle that at some point in the future.

The table below indicates the raw numbers, totals, and percentages for Origen’s
use of NT writings in the selected titles, all of which are noted in the column
headings. Sometimes a value in the percentage column was below one percent, and
for the actual number you can refer to an expanded version of this table in appendix
A.
### Data Table for Origen’s Use of the NT

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What immediately stands out in the percentage column is that Origen seems to have favoured the Gospels and letters of Paul vis-à-vis the other writings. Yet Paul’s letters and the works of the four evangelists account for the largest works in terms of chapters, not counting Revelation, and so such an observation is not surprising on its own. Interesting as well, among other things, is the fact that Origen’s use of Matthew is almost double compared to the next closest Gospels, Luke and John. More
generally on this point, Bruce Metzger has written that the predominance of Matthew, and to a lesser degree the other Gospels, in the writings of the early Fathers suggests that these writings were recognized as authoritative before the Pauline epistles were.\textsuperscript{34} He also points out that Matthew was likely the only Gospel read widely in Palestine for the first few centuries,\textsuperscript{35} which, since Jewish Christians were the first to plant churches in other regions, seems to fit with the high use of Matthew generally amongst churches, even up to Origen’s day.

Origen’s frequent use of Matthew is interesting here primarily because this gospel is the one most connected to Jewish Christians, according to Eusebius and as noted above. The previous discussion on the evidence in the early Church for a Jewish-styled Christianity relates to this observation somewhat, in that even by Origen’s time in the first half of the third century, this “Jewish Gospel,” if you will, was the preferred record of Christ’s life and teachings from the person who had more knowledge of early Church writings than anyone on record.

To make the information on Origen’s NT usage data above easier to digest, I have created the following bar graph of only the percentage column for greater clarity.

\textsuperscript{34} Bruce Metzger, \textit{The Canon of the New Testament}, 262.
Again, one can see Origen’s reliance on the Gospels and Paul, and of further interest, on the book of Hebrews. Paul’s letters look to be key to Origen’s thinking and show up strongly in his work, especially if we keep in mind that books such as Ephesians and 1 Timothy, short as they are, both figure strongly relative to their actual size in the group of twenty-seven. In other words, while we see that, for instance, 1 Corinthians is used more often than Colossians, one has to remember that Colossians is only a third of the size of 1 Corinthians. With this in mind, the following line graph shows how Origen’s use of NT writings compares with the variation in size amongst NT books generally.
The lowest data line on the graph is just there for reference on Origen’s actual usage of NT writings, but the upper two are relative comparisons of the NT writing sizes compared to Origen’s relative usage. Origen’s relative use of NT books, with data points indicated by triangle shapes, while showing some striking congruence to the NT writings based on size, also shows some striking departures in usage, for example the differing data points from Mark to Romans. This suggests that Origen’s preference for the various books was not equal across the board. If, on the other hand, Origen’s relative usage was the same at every point with the NT size line, we might

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36 The calculation for determining the relative usage is simply by bringing the data from Origen’s usage up to a relative percentage point matching the NT control of 100% in 28 chapters. In this case it means taking the 19% representing Origen’s preference for Matthew, and multiplying it by 5.2632 to bring it to the control of Matthew at 100%. All the other values are multiplied by the same number to reveal whether there is any possible connection between Origen’s usage and the NT writing size variability, in order to determine whether Origen was familiar with all books equally, or some more than others, as one would suspect. It turns out that while there is striking continuity from 2 Corinthians to Colossians, it seems Origen’s preference for the various books was not equal across the board. This data is only reliable in the trend line itself and not the data points because they are relative.
want to suggest that Origen was as familiar with all the books of NT and relied on them equally, but the divergence shown above suggests otherwise. I have included a chart at the end, Appendix C, which reveals greater detail concerning Origen’s works, relative to his use of the separate NT writings in them.

I think it is fair to say, based on data from the first table, that we are likely dealing with a list of twenty-two writings\(^{37}\) - the four Gospels, Acts, fourteen Pauline letters, one each from Peter and John, and Revelation – which one might claim as being relied on by Origen with a great deal of confidence. As we learned from Eusebius, in keeping with Origen’s own opinion reproduced in the History, we see from the table that 2 Peter, along with 2 and 3 John, all come in under one percent, yet as pointed out, one would not expect works like 3 John to be oft quoted for the simple fact that it is barely one page of text. Yet given the fact that the numbers for these books are so low, when compared with, say, 2 Timothy, Titus, or James, it does seem that although Origen knew of these writings, he was not using them with the same frequency when compared to his use of even Paul’s smaller letters. For a ranked bar chart of all Origen’s NT preferences, see Appendix E.

In keeping with the intention of this research to show that Eusebius was steeped in Origen’s tradition at the school at Caesarea, the next bar chart offers a parallel comparison of Eusebius, based solely on the NT usage data in the History, with Origen’s data. One can see that while there are some notable differences, on the whole there seem to be tangible similarities as well.

\(^{37}\) 4 Gospels, Acts, 14 Letters of Paul, 1 Letter of John and Peter respectively, and Revelation.
Here, the use of Acts by Eusebius is the most obvious *non-sequitur*, but there is a solid reason for this. As with the table above where Origen’s use of Luke in his commentary on Luke was counted “not applicable” (n/a) because of obvious overrepresentation issues, in the same way Eusebius, writing a history of the apostles, clearly relied heavily on Acts and so this probably could have been omitted but was included in the data nonetheless. Not counting Acts, Eusebius uses Matthew more than any other writing which reflects Origen’s disposition quite strongly. It also seems of note because it shows the resilience of this Jewish-framed Gospel well into the fourth century. For both these authors, Mark is not used much, but most of the material in Mark is in Luke and Matthew anyway, yet it still shows evidence of the choice not to use Mark a great deal of the time.

Connected to my assertion above that Eusebius sidelined certain writings because of their being styled in a very Jewish fashion, is the stunning fact that Eusebius,
unlike Origen, does not reference James even once. It should be noted, though, that while Eusebius does not reference James once in the text of the History, he does include the writing in his famous Book 3.25 enumeration. Yet the absence of James in Eusebius does seem to suggest that what caused angst for Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, his famous “epistle of straw,” 38 could possibly have been a problem for the first Church historian as well. Interestingly, Luther alludes to the opinions of the ancients, in reference to the testimony provided in the History, in support of his opposition to James being in the NT canon. 39 What is of key interest to this particular study, concerning the judgement of Luther on disputed books such as James, is that his main problem with them seems to have been their lack of focus on Christ vis-à-vis a Jewish-influenced Christianity. He is on record as saying of James that “It contains not one syllable about Christ” and “I maintain that some Jew wrote it who probably heard about Christian people but never encountered any.” 40 Perhaps the brash comments from Luther regarding Jews and the disputed Christian writings pay tribute to the development of an anti-semitic sensibility that began centuries earlier, at least by the time of Eusebius, who, as I alluded to earlier, charged the Jews with the killing of Christ. It is stunning to think that such a tragic view was still vibrant, and perhaps stronger, all those centuries after Christ’s lifetime. What is even more shocking is to

38 Martin Luther, Preface to the New Testament, in Word and Sacrament I, 362; Luther writes: “In a word St. John’s Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul’s epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, and St. Peter’s first epistle are the books that show you Christ and teach you all that is necessary and salvatory for you to know, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or doctrine. Therefore St. James’ epistle is really an epistle of straw, compared to these others, for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel about it. But more of this in the other prefaces.”


40 Ibid., 424.
think that the atrocities of the Second World War might very well be traced back to what began almost two millennia earlier as a piously held belief that because the Jews were the ones to kill Christ, they were somehow morally repugnant.

Of course, Eusebius cannot be held to account for Luther’s views, much less the more recent events, but I do suggest that the predominantly Jewish Christian perspective of the writings which he sidelined in the History make it seem as if his negative attitude towards the Jewish people could have played a role in his choices at 3.25.

Other interesting observations concerning the above graph comparing NT writing usage in Origen and Eusebius includes the high use of Revelation by Eusebius, tying in with my suggestion above that Eusebius seemed to be encouraging the acceptance of both Hebrews and Revelation even though they were “spoken against” writings. We see also that Origen shared such a preference for both writings as well.
The line graph\textsuperscript{41} above reveals that, with the exception of Acts, the usage of NT writings for these two authors does seem to be somewhat connected, especially in the case of Hebrews, where the data is almost identical.

Thus far, we can see that both Origen and Eusebius show a similar familiarity with both Hebrews and Revelation in their writings. Yet, what is odd about this is that these are two of the books which are supposedly “spoken against” and, if the attention given by Eusebius to these controversies in his 3.25 discussion is any indication, the Church was deeply divided on the use of these writings. Thus far in this research, I have observed that Origen often favours the more Jewish-styled writings within the Christian faith, primarily Matthew – and of course this coupled with his ubiquitous use of the Jewish Scriptures. If we go back further and look again at Clement, Ignatius, and Irenaeus, we know that the Jewish Scriptures were essentially all they considered “Sacred Scripture.”

If one looks at Clement’s usage of NT writings in \textit{1 Clement}, it helps draw together some of the suggestions alluded to above. The following chart shows the relative usage of the NT writings in the works of Clement, Ignatius, Justin, and Irenaeus, in a selection of their extant writings.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{41} Appendix F.
\textsuperscript{42} See appendix H for a more detailed view of this chart. See also appendix I for a line graph of the same information.
Clement stands basically alone in his knowledge and familiarity concerning Hebrews, and he shows significantly more usage of that epistle than any other writing from the NT collection. If we recall again what was discussed above about Eusebius giving testimony that Clement was felt by some to be the author of Hebrews, this data would certainly aid such an argument. An ameliorating factor, perhaps, which may challenge this, though, would be the fact that Clement’s second most used book is James, the book not even used once by Ignatius or Justin, and barely used by Irenaeus, not to mention lack of this in Eusebius. The implication is that if Clement did write Hebrews, if his extremely high use of material from it leads us to suspect this, then it seems suggestive that James also, a very Jewish Christian writing, shows up as much as it does vis-à-vis the other NT writings. Put another way, if Clement highly regarded both Hebrews and James, both deeply rooted in Jewish Christianity, and we know he regarded the OT as his Holy Scripture, perhaps the high use of Hebrews is
not so unusual, although I demur on this point. My own sense is that, based on the evidence, one would be well within reason to claim Hebrews was written by Clement, since his familiarity seems to go beyond that distinction into what one might want to suggest was first-hand knowledge.

Either way, it is interesting to note that even by Origen’s time in the third century, Hebrews was still highly regarded by the Alexandrian, as was Revelation. Whatever the controversies were over the books, this man who had visited nearly the entire Christian world was comfortable with seeing them in the same light as the writings of Paul.

**In Summary**

Overall, I think the following observations on Origen’s use of NT writings can be made. First, Matthew is relied on more than any other writing. As mentioned above, it seems Matthew had been treasured as the most important Gospel in many places from the earliest times, particularly in Palestine, and so Origen’s reliance on it may seem to follow quite naturally. Another reason why his affinity for this Gospel was so strong may be the fact that the portrayals of asceticism in the teachings and life of Christ in Matthew fit very well with the Platonic worldview into which Origen was born and raised at Alexandria. It seems entirely possible that Matthew was introduced to Origen at a very early age, perhaps by his father. Origen’s use of the other Gospel accounts cannot be written off, though, in fact they too appear significantly in Origen’s work. Perhaps all one can say is that it looks, based on the evidence, as if Origen preferred Matthew, but was very familiar with all four, and this accords with his own testimony, noted above.
Alongside his high use of Matthew and the other Gospels, the writings of Paul are highly relied on as well, a fact borne out by the data above. In fact, his use of Paul’s writings from Romans to Colossians makes up an even forty percent of his entire usage spread. The writings of 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John, seemed to be a non-concern to Origen based on the quote Eusebius provides in the *History*, and the data here aligns with that assertion as well. Likely the most surprising piece of data is Origen’s extremely high use of Hebrews, James, and Revelation given the fact that two of them were very strongly contested, and James was not even used once by Eusebius in the *History*.

As suggested above, Origen, in my opinion, represents someone who is rooted in the Jewish Scriptures, and thus the strong showing of books adhering to similar themes in Origen’s works does not surprise me at all. Where there is low usage by Origen of a NT writing, it does not, in the main, raise an issue with me, because most of those books are small by comparison. Although the notable exceptions to this, Philemon, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, where little or no reference is made by Origen, do strike one as important, if only for the reason that Origen would have known what was being used by the churches, and no reference in his works is almost tantamount to saying they must have been written after his time. Origen’s low use of Mark is also a little surprising, in comparison with the others. Yet Mark would have been superfluous anyway, since most of Mark is already in Matthew.

As for the writings sidelined by Eusebius, Origen’s reliance on them seems low as alluded to above, yet perhaps higher than Philemon and 2 and 3 John. As we do not have all of Origen’s writings at our disposal, we cannot say with certainty how much
more or less the debated works might have shown up in his non-extant works which are, so far, lost to posterity. Origen does not seem to have had a canon per se, but rather a select swath of writings which to him bore the stamp of divine inspiration. His core canon, if he would concede such a term, was clearly the Jewish Scriptures, and perhaps the Gospels. Yet Origen believed the writings of the Apostles were divinely inspired by the same God who gave Israel its Divine Scriptures, and discussed the two sets of writings as if they were virtually one and the same, and were but the various notes which make a complete harmony. The Christian Church found its first real impetus towards coalescing the testaments into one sacred and unified revelation from God in the theological ideas of Origen.
CONCLUSION

With his list of accomplishments and contributions to the, then, future of Christianity, second only perhaps to Paul in this respect, it is perhaps somewhat embarrassing to think that most Christians today have not even heard of Origen. The characters they do know of all seem to come after the Romanization of Christianity. Names such as Augustine, Patrick, Anselm, Luther, Calvin, etc., fill the halls of western popular culture, but from the persecuted Church of the first three centuries, hardly a sound is uttered. It is tragic to think that most of the characters from the persecuted Church of the first three centuries and their stories are all but lost on the Church of the twenty-first century. This present discussion has tried to emphasize the importance of these figures to the development of a body of writings, which in time would come to be treasured by the Christian Church as an important record of the living Gospel canon which had been passed down by the Apostles. This collection came, in time, to be known as the “New” Testament, as opposed to the Older Testament of Jewish Scriptures.

Origen’s role in this process was not likely a planned effort on his part, yet his life and work did make significant contributions to the advancement of the idea of a Christian testament. First, he serves historical research in his writings as a person who collected reams of information on the various churches of the third century while on his travels and numerous sequestered visits. One of the key things he allows
historians to see in his extant works is which Christian writings were in favour in the third century. Another significant contribution was the creation of his school and library at Caesarea, filling the library with all his discovered works and documents, which were in turn used by Eusebius to write the *History*. The third and most compelling contribution suggested by this research concerns the tendency of Origen to bring the letters of the Apostles into confluence with the Gospels and Jewish Scriptures, which in turn led to the idea that the three collections were actually one complete and inspired revelation from God. The fact that this idea appears, barely veiled as it is, in the *History* of Eusebius goes some distance towards showing how deeply Origen’s biblical theology had affected those who continued in his school at Caesarea, even a half a century after his own time.

As mentioned, Origen was responsible for a great deal of information recounted by Eusebius in the *History* and it would likely not be too far fetched to suggest he should receive the credit as a, then, posthumous co-author. One wonders if Eusebius could have even written the *History* had it not been for the work and life of Origen. If one considers what would be missing in terms of historical data if this were the case, it is nothing less than staggering. One must remember Eusebius wrote the *History* at Origen’s school at Caesarea with *his* library. If Origen had not bequeathed these treasures to Christian posterity, one can only speculate as to whether Eusebius could have written anything of this magnitude or not.

Yet just as Eusebius stood on the shoulders of Origen, so to did Origen stand on the shoulders of Christians before himself, most pointedly for this study, on the contributions of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus.
These four historical Christians are not the only ones who bequeathed information to Origen’s Church of the third century, but they are likely the four most important in terms of the implicit and explicit information they give to us about what constituted the Scriptures for the Church of the first two centuries. The fact that the Jewish Scriptures were seen in such a unique and special light even in Origen’s time is something we also see clearly in the writings of the other four. In a very real sense, then, it may be fairly suggested that, for instance, Origen would have been raised by parents in a Christian community whose presuppositions on sacred writings had already been shaped by the apostolic and apologetic works of the early Fathers.

Most pointedly for this discussion, Origen came into the Church at a time when the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were already considered the only authoritative accounts of Christ’s life. The letters of the apostles, however, were still in the penumbra vis-à-vis the Jewish Scriptures and had not, then, secured an equal footing with the Gospels. It is with Origen’s writings that we see a distinct move towards an NT canon that included the apostolic letters. Origen built on the apostolic traditions already prevalent in the Church of his day, and we see the growth of these most clearly evidenced by the works of the early Fathers.

Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch from the first century both vouchsafed in their writings the fact that the Jewish Scriptures were the only “Sacred” Scriptures. The writings of Clement of Rome are replete with both quotations and allusions to passages from the Jewish Scriptures. Such usage evidences both a first hand knowledge on his part and, given the context of his Epistle to the Corinthians being directed to a specifically Christian community, revealing also that he expected his
admonitions and encouragement backed up by explicit use of Jewish Scriptures to be an effective way to communicate to other Christians. Clement does mention Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church, but only briefly, and in a fashion which makes one suspect he thought of his own letter in much the same genre as Paul’s. In the study of NT canon formation, Clement stands most for the proposition that the Christian Scriptures were the Jewish Scriptures, and that letters of admonition from apostolic types were functionally beneficial, but not necessary components of the gospel canon. I think it is fairly safe to say that Clement’s gospel “rule” or “canon” was the same as the Apostle Paul’s, alluded to earlier. It was not a set of writings, but a collection of truths and principles about God’s revelation to humankind in his Son, the Messiah.

Ignatius of Antioch, unlike Clement, clearly uses Pauline turns of phrase and repeats a thought from Matthew’s Gospel, which shows his familiarity with that writing as well. While the only thing Ignatius does quote verbatim is the Jewish Scripture, his use of Paul’s language makes it certain that he was very familiar with at least some of Paul’s letters. The fact that this first century figure could reproduce Pauline-like phrases in a time when there were no chapters or verses in these letters leads me to suggest that he must have read or heard these letters numerous times to be able to access the style with such ease.

We know that Ignatius wrote his letters as an older man being transported in a cage by Roman centurions on the way to his forthcoming martyrdom. I think given this context it is difficult to extract anything like concrete evidence about his scriptural assessment of the writings of Paul, say, vis-à-vis the Jewish Scriptures. Yet I do think his familiarity with Paul’s few letters and the Gospel passage he alludes to
do show us that while the first century Church was likely anchored by the Jewish Scriptures as the only divine set of writings, it also seems clear that Paul’s letters and the Gospels were becoming an important part of the young Church’s essential elements of existence. The further the Church got away in time from Christ and then the apostles, the more dear their teachings and writings seem to have become.

The fact that Ignatius writes in the style of Paul, at times, may seem to support the suggestion that he sees himself in the same light as Paul, but as noted above, Ignatius demurs on this point and asks not to be thought of in this category of “authority.” This kind of delineation in Ignatius also raises the question of whether, if his words were not of the same authority as the apostles, then were the apostles’ words of the same authority as the Jewish Scriptures? I think it may be safer to say that for Ignatius the divine Scriptures were the Jewish Scriptures, but a new category of authoritative writing was being recognized in, at least, his Christian community, and a kind of writing that stood above the authority of bishops like himself. These authoritative writings seem to have been the letters of the apostles, most certainly including Paul. Ignatius then evidences an important transition in the development of the NT canon, whereby the letters and Gospels seem to have carried an authority that was beyond the ecclesiastical structure of his own times, yet not likely beyond the Jewish Scriptures. We cannot be sure how Christian writings were used in worship contexts of his time, but that kind of evidence would be recorded soon after in the writings of Justin Martyr.

Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both stand for a similar proposition in NT canon development, that the four Gospels alone were the pre-eminent writings of
Christianity outside of the Jewish Scriptures. Both writers still evince a reliance on the Jewish Scriptures as their divine Scriptures, but the “Memoirs of the Apostles,” as Justin called them, were seen clearly in a new and authoritative way as the only four accounts of Christ’s life which bore the stamp of apostolicity and were ordained by God as such. Yet for both these figures, the gospel canon was most certainly still a living one that existed within Christian communities, and not one consisting of documents. The writings of these two figures aimed to protect the gospel canon of truth, but did not claim to be part of it.

We also see in the writings of these two early Fathers that the gospels carried an authority that was now an essential part of the young Church’s existence. It is also suggested here that while they likely thought of the apostolic letters as superior to their own, they also likely saw their writings as part of the continuing tradition of protecting the gospel canon of truth, which had begun with the writings of Peter, Paul, and John. True also of both these figures is that their greatest impetus to defending this one apostolic Gospel was a direct response to the heresies prevalent during their lifetimes which offered the world new interpretations of Christ and his purpose, and ones which were not connected to the apostles in the first instance. Gnosticism and Marcionism were two of the most formidable non-apostolic versions of Christianity that these two apologists contended with. Apostolic lineage, in terms of the Christian teaching offered, became an all-important factor for these Christian apologists, primarily because their opponents had claimed the same thing. Very much connected to this struggle over apostolicity came, perhaps, the most important contribution to NT canon development from these two figures, this being the settling,
once and for all, of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as the only four accounts of Christ’s life and teaching which carried the stamp of apostolic authenticity.

Neither Justin or Irenaeus shows any evidence of elevating Paul’s writings into the same class as the Gospels. In fact, Justin shows very little evidence of relying on them at all, not quoting Paul once. We know that Paul’s letters had been familiar to some Christians in Justin’s city of Rome because Clement of Rome mentions Paul’s letter to the Corinthians in his epistle, and one might suggest that Paul’s letter to the Romans, although received more than a century earlier, might have been available somewhere in that city as well. It should be noted, though, that it is also possible that Paul’s letter to the Romans became more of a treasured writing in places where apostolic visits were few and far between, unlike Rome, which saw most of the apostles on its doorstep. We know from Ignatius that earlier in the first century a few of Paul’s letters were widely available to at least some churches. The dearth of Paul in Justin may only suggest that he was either not familiar with the letters himself, or that, as has already been suggested, he did not feel they were essential to the living Gospel canon itself, but rather saw them as ancillary writings after the fact, similar to Clement’s perspective on Paul’s and his own writings.

Taken together, the writings of these four aforementioned historical Christian notables give evidence that while Christian communities relied on the Jewish Scriptures as their divine writings, the Gospels had also earned a place of authority as writings which correctly transmitted the message of Christ which had been given to the apostles in the first instance. This is important since the insistence on the four
Gospel accounts against all others essentially paved the way for their being understood as writings ordained by God, in much the same way the Jewish Scriptures had been. While none of these Christian Fathers claims equal status explicitly for the Gospels alongside the Jewish Scriptures, the writings of the last in the chronological order, Irenaeus, are absolutely and implicitly pregnant with this notion.

Another important contribution to the understanding of how the NT canon was formed which came from these Fathers relates to Deissman’s distinction between Christian letters and epistles. The Fathers, with perhaps the exception of Justin, knew of Paul’s letters because they had already become an important part of the young Church’s mode of teaching, and this within mere decades of Paul’s exit from the historical stage. Most of Paul’s letters were exactly that, true letters. But some of these “letters,” along with the writings of Peter and John, were clearly written as public and not private documents, therefore implicitly inferring that they were epistles. Similarly, in the writings of these Fathers under consideration, we do not have letters as such, but epistles. The bare fact that by their times the Fathers were writing epistles and not letters forms a kind of boundary which separates the earliest Christian writings from the second and third generation thereof. Similarly, Eusebius also seems to draw his dividing lines for acceptable Christian writings by including only those writings that were either real letters or, sometimes, epistles from Apostles in the first instance. The advent of the epistle in first century Christianity, beginning with Ignatius and Clement, seems to have indicated a new path forward in Christian literature, thus leaving the former letters of the apostles in a category all their own, to be venerated and imitated, but never unseated.
By Origen’s time in the third century, the apostolic and apologetic work of these four aforementioned had come to fruition and the Gospels were by then, I suggest, virtually on par with the Jewish Scriptures. However, the latter were, strictly speaking, still very much thought of as the Sacred Scriptures. If Origen had been made to enumerate the sacred scriptures for Christians in his own time, the evidence above seems to indicate he would have first indicated that the divine scriptures for Christians are much the same as those used by the Jews. Origen clearly uses different language to describe the Jewish Scriptures vis-à-vis all other inspired writings, yet, functionally and theologically, he seems to have brought the Apostolic letters into some level of congruence with both the Gospels and, more importantly, the OT.

What the early Fathers had done for the Gospels, entrenching them as the only authoritative accounts of the life of Christ, was something Origen would be instrumental in doing concerning the letters of the apostles. Origen’s presuppositions on the Gospels pursuant to authority had, by his own times, already been fixed by the Church at large, but this was not the case for the apostolic letters. Yet within Origen’s writing we see that for this venerated Christian minister of the third century, the apostolic letters were understood, theologically, as one part of a divine whole including the Jewish Scriptures and Gospels. I also suggest that Origen’s peripatetic ministry was a key to his fingertip grasp of what apostolic letters were most in use pursuant to the various Christian centers then in existence. Origen’s tendency to bring the three sets of writings into confluence is, I suggest, likely the most important theological step taken, within the Christian community of the time, towards the idea
that this collection of Old and New Testaments shared a genuine and harmonious unity.

What was a theological understanding for Origen was soon praxis for the Church at large, and both the testimony of Eusebius and Athanasius in the fourth century concerning acceptable Christian writings of their day supports such a claim. The mere fact that Christian writings were enumerated in the works of these two fourth century Christians speaks volumes on its own, and again, in the latter instance of Athanasius they importantly appear right next to, and after, an enumeration of Jewish Scriptures. I suggest that Origen’s major contribution to NT canon development was to bring the three main categories of writings, Jewish Scriptures, Gospels, and Apostolic letters, into such a strong confluence that, seemingly, ever after him these three written testimonies began to be understood by the Christian Church as one complete and unified revelation from one and the same God.
APPENDICES
(Appendices can be obtained from author upon request.)

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