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be transmitted, used in worship and teaching, and preached as God's word and God's will, the entire collection was increasingly received and acknowledged as God's word to Israel. Eventually the leaders and the people endorsed a canon of what they believed to be "Sacred Scripture." Thoughtful discussions resulted in the reflective judgment that the twenty-four books contained divine revelation and were divinely inspired, that other books, no matter how worthy, were not to be held in this category, and that those chosen books were to form the rule of their life, belief, and practice. Thus, the road to canon was a long process of reception, and the canon itself was the apex of that reception.

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III. Formation of the New Testament

1. Collection. The four oldest manuscripts, which originally contained all 27 writings of the NT, are dated to the 4th (Codex Sinaiticus N 01, Vaticanus B 03) and the 5th century CE (Alexandrinus A 02, Ephraemi Rescriptus C 04). Only about 1% of all extant manuscripts contain all 27 writings of the NT, the vast majority contains only one or a subset of the four units.

The four units of the NT, which are discernable in the manuscript tradition, carry the following titles in many minuscule manuscripts: τετραεὐαγγέλιον (Four-Gospel-Book: Matthew, Mark, Luke,

John), ἐπιστολαὶ Παύλου ΙΑ (14 Letters of Paul: Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon), πραξάποστολος (Acts and general Letters: Acts, James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude), and ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου (Revelation of John). It is unclear when these volume titles originated and whether these were already part of the first edition of the NT. Extant manuscripts from the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE are mostly fragmentary. Nevertheless, with few exceptions manuscripts of this period, which cover more than one writing, present these in the order of the later tradition, thus supporting the notion of four original collection units. The manuscripts therefore invite us to view the NT as a collection of 27 writings published in four volumes.

Melito of Sardes (ca. 180 CE) is usually cited as the oldest witness to the title "New Testament." Although he does not use the term explicitly, it is implied by his use of the title "Old Testament," which is introduced without further explanation (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.13–14). At the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century CE Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen refer to the NT as a collection, indicating its wide circulation (Trobisch: 44).

In manuscripts containing more than one volume, the order of the volumes varies. The order of the specific writings within each volume changed slightly in the Byzantine manuscript tradition, where Hebrews is moved from its place following 2 Thessalonians to the end of the Letters of Paul, following Philemon. At the same time the Letters of Paul are placed between Acts and the General Letters.

Erasmus of Rotterdam's influential printed edition of the Greek NT (1516) was based on Byzantine manuscripts. And because Eberhard Nestle (1898) collated critical printed editions against the standard text edition which had grown out of Erasmus' work, the 27th revision of the Nestle edition (1981) still reflects the order of the Byzantine manuscripts. Almost all modern Bible translations are based on the Nestle edition.

At least one collection of a subset of NT writings was published before the middle of the 2nd century CE by Marcion of Sinope. Although copies did not survive, its contents can still be reconstructed from the writings of Marcion's adversaries. It consisted of one gospel, which was similar but not identical with Luke, and of 10 letters of Paul (Hebrews, 1–2 Timothy, and Philemon were not included).

2. Book. A closer look at the manuscripts reveals common editorial features which cannot have originated with the authors of the individual writings. The notation of the *nomina sacra*, the codex form, the uniform arrangement and number of writings in the manuscript tradition, the formulation of the

titles, and the evidence indicating that the collection was called “New Testament” from the very beginning demonstrate that the NT is a carefully edited publication and not the product of a gradual process which lasted for centuries. These editorial features serve to combine disparate material into a cohesive literary unit. Furthermore, these elements cannot be credited to several, independently operating editors, but must be the work of a single editorial entity. In other words, the uniformity of the redactional elements in the manuscript evidence indicates that the NT was edited and published by specific people at a very specific time and at a very specific place.

3. Competition. The Christian Bible faced strong competition during the 2nd century CE.

Competing with the “Old Testament” were the Septuagint, the edition of Theodotion of Ephesus, and the edition of Aquila. Competing with the NT was Marcion’s Bible. From 135 CE onward, Valentinus, a representative of the Christian gnostic movement, lived in Rome and is reported to have published a *Gospel of Truth*. Sometime around or after 150 CE, Tatian, a student of Justin, produced the *Diatessaron* by combining the four canonical gospels into a single account. This edition competed with the NT for centuries in the Syriac Church.

Papias of Hierapolis’ five-volume work, a collection of unpublished material on Jesus was also well known (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39). Furthermore, the NT itself informs its readers that it is not a complete edition (John 21:25) and that there were books on Jesus published before (Luke 1:1).

4. Canon. Scholars of the period concede that there was no established, authoritative entity during the middle of the 2nd century CE that could have decided and enforced the use of a special edition of scripture among Christian churches. Nevertheless, the NT became the authoritative collection of writings for the emerging Catholic Church. No synod or council in antiquity ever decided on the contents of the NT. The parallel publishing ventures of the time, which tried to serve the needs of a growing Jewish and Christian readership, suggest that the formation of the Christian Bible with its two distinct parts, the Old and the New Testaments, is best interpreted on the background of the book industry of the time.

5. Literature. The perception that the NT constitutes a literary unit encourages an interpretation on the macro level. The beginnings and endings of each of the four volumes connect the units. The first two words of the Four-Gospel-Book, βιβλος γενέσεως (Matt 1:1), with their references to Genesis, create a link to the editorial title of the first book of the HB/OT. The last sentence of the Four-Gospel-Book (John 21:25) refers to books in plural about Jesus, nicely bringing the volume to a close: “But there are also many other things that Jesus

did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” The first sentence of the *πραξιάπόστολος* has a literal reference to the last sentence of the Four-Gospel-Book: “In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about *all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning*” (Acts 1:1). The doxology at the end of the *πραξιάπόστολος*, Jude 23–24, nicely rounds off this volume. The first sentence of the Letters of Paul refers to the royal lineage of Jesus and his resurrection (Son of David according to the flesh, Son of God through his resurrection; Rom 1:3–4) addressing an obvious difference between Mark, which includes neither an explanation of the royal origins of Jesus nor a resurrection appearance of Jesus, and the other three gospels. At the same time, this sentence reaffirms the reader’s sentiment that Luke’s gospel is Paul’s gospel as it insists on both the royal origin of Jesus and gives an account of his resurrection. The last sentences of the Letters of Paul pick up this theme again. By mentioning Luke and Mark in the same sentence (Phlm 24) readers are reminded that Luke knew Mark and that on a literary level Luke’s gospel is to be seen as an improved edition of Mark (cf. Luke’s reference to previous, badly organized books on Jesus in Luke 1:1–3). The introduction to the Revelation of John finally answers the question who this John is, who was mentioned in the title of the anonymous fourth gospel and identified as the beloved disciple in John 21:24, and who the author of the three letters are, where the name John is given only in the titles but not in the text. The first sentence states that Revelation was written by John “who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:2), a phrase that readers of the NT will understand as a reference to the Gospel according to John. This sentence effectively links the Revelation of John to the Four-Gospel-Book, the *πραξιάπόστολος*, and the Letters of Paul (John is one of the three pillars of the Jerusalem church, Gal 2:9). Finally, the ending of Revelation, with its warning neither to add nor to remove any of the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22:18–19), forms an excellent conclusion and encourages readers to apply this warning not only to the Revelation of John but to the entire Christian Bible.

The NT as a publication is nicely organized. Some titles span the whole collection and assume that readers are familiar with the other volumes. The title “Gospel according to Luke” links to the other three gospels through the unusual but similar construction “Gospel according to” (εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ). By referencing Theophilus and the ascension of Jesus, Acts is firmly linked to the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1–2; Luke 1:3; 24:51) and establishes a connection between the Four-Gospel-Book and the *πραξιάπόστολος*. The last we-passage of Acts informs readers that the author is with Paul in Rome

(Acts 28:11–16). Read together with 2 Timothy, “Luke is the only one with me” (2 Tim 4:11) in Rome (2 Tim 1:17), readers of the NT are able to identify Luke, who was mentioned in the title of the gospel, as the same person who accompanied Paul on his last trip to Rome (Acts 28) and was a companion of Paul at the side of Mark (Phlm 24) as well as Paul’s beloved physician (Col 4:14).

Similarly, the name Mark in the title of the second gospel links to the companion of Peter and Paul mentioned in the *πραξάποστολος* (Acts 12:12, 25; 1 Pet 5:13) and the Letters of Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24). As was pointed out above, another obvious connection between all four volumes is supplied by the name John in the title of the gospel, as a character in Acts, as the author of three general Letters, and in the title of the book of Revelation.

The selection of eight authors seems to point to the conflict between Paul and the Jerusalem-based leadership of the early church, the disciples (Matthew, John, Peter) and the brothers of Jesus of Nazareth (James, Jude). Mark and Luke both seem to represent the second-generation followers of Jesus and display a harmonizing function. On the narrative level, both can be associated with Jerusalem as well as with Paul. The conflict which may have informed the selection of these eight authors is most explicitly addressed in the account of the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), which indicates to the readers that the council finally resolved the differences.

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IV. Christianity

- Patristics, Orthodox Churches, and Early Medieval Times
- Medieval Times and Reformation Era
- Modern Europe and America
- New Churches and Movements

A. Patristics, Orthodox Churches, and Early Medieval Times

1. The Christian Old Testament. The formation of a Christian biblical canon – composed of Old and New Testaments – begins in the 2nd century CE. The reception of the OT, i.e., the Bible of Israel, occurred at first without any reflection. That is, as “the scriptures” of the Jews, it was also “the scriptures” of the first Christians and significant for them in the interpretation of the Christ event.

The first fundamental question was raised by Marcion, who rejected the Jewish Bible with its strange God. In discussions in the 2nd and 3rd century CE, the arguments clearly were in favor of the

OT as the Bible of the Christians (Karpp: 53): against the Jews, the unity of salvation history in God’s action in Israel and in Christ is emphasized; against gnostic doctrines (including Marcion), the unity of the Creator (OT) and the Redeemer (NT) is emphasized.

The second open question has to do with the extent of the OT. In Greek-speaking early Christianity, the Greek Bible of the Jewish community of Alexandria, that is, the Septuagint, was taken up and accepted. The question of extent thereby played no role at all. Melito of Sardis was the first to attempt to establish a binding demarcation of the OT by researching the Hebrew canon in Palestine and by using the term “Old Testament” for the first time.

In the following period, the difference between the influence of the synagogue (Hebrew canon) and the Septuagint tradition, with its limitation in extent, becomes apparent. In reality, a compromise results later, in which a distinction is made between the canonic (Hebrew Scriptures) and deuterocanonic scriptures of the OT (additional texts of the LXX: Tob, Jdt, 1–2 Macc, Wis, Sir, Bar, Add Esth, and Add Dan).

2. The Formation of the New Testament Canon.

With the transmission of Jesus’ proclamation, a new authority appeared next to the Jewish “scriptures.” This, at first, oral transmission then found a written form in the Gospels (70–100 CE), so that the authority of Jesus as Lord of the community was embodied in these new scriptures. The letters of the apostle Paul (collection from 100 CE) then were added as further scriptures with fundamental authority, in part pseudepigraphical in nature, as well as the writings of other apostles (James, Peter, John, Jude) and, further, Acts and Revelation.

Basic decisions in favor of the formation of the canon were made in the 2nd century CE. With his radical Paulinism and rejection of the OT law and the OT God, Marcion for the first time created a canon consisting of the Pauline Letters in combination with Luke and excluding the OT. The widespread canon of Marcion (his own church!) provoked reactions from the larger church and thus furthered development considerably.

Montanism and gnosis had an influence upon the development of the canon. The prophetic movement of Montanism provoked through its own writings an inquiry into the question of a binding recognition of texts and brought discredit upon a prophetic text like Revelation. In the 2nd/3rd century CE, gnosis, with its particular doctrine of redemption, gained influence through its treatment of biblical scriptures as well as through its own writings, which made a clear demarcation necessary.

The apologists of the 2nd century CE (Justin and others), whose texts show which “New Testa-