Reading, Writing and a Heretic: Problematizing Assumptions in New Testament Canonization

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Religious Studies

University of Regina

By

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January 12, 2017
Christian Terrance Lindenbach, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Reading, Writing and a Heretic: Problematizing Assumptions in New Testament Canonization*, in an oral examination held on December 20, 2016. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the influences behind the canonization of the New Testament literature through examinations of Hellenistic educational and textual practices, Jewish scribalism, and scholarly disputes between early Christian intellectuals. This is to problematize the assumption of the development of the New Testament as something orderly and vectored. To that end, first, Hellenistic textual and educational practices will be examined to show how Homeric poetry was redacted and collected in the academy, with specific eyes to the creation of lists by Cicero and Quintilian for lists of books to read in a liberal education. Secondly, this process of scholarship continues into Alexandrian Judaism with the Middle-Platonizing Philo, and his allegorical exegesis of the Jewish Pentateuch, to show the inclusion of Yahwistic Literature into some intellectual circles, and the resultant influence of allegory as hermeneutic in the Mishnaic literature. Thirdly, this allegorical method of textual analysis continues into early Christianity, and an examination of the scholarly discussions between figures like Irenaeus and Marcion will be done to illustrate how the evolution of the New Testament is akin to scholarly, academic discourse over textual collection and editing, and not an apocalyptic struggle of orthodoxy, as the polemists would argue. The result of this is to call into question assumptions in the field of New Testament canonization, and give voice to Hellenistic, Jewish and Gnostic sources as major influences on the collection and content of the New Testament literature, in contradiction to popular understandings of the history of canonization.
Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to acknowledge the faculty and staff at the Religious Studies department for the amazing support and environment they provided during the tenure of my graduate work. I would like to acknowledge the help and patience of Dr. William Arnal for his supervision and assistance in helping me navigate sometimes stressful and confusing terrain. His help, insight and enthusiasm was invaluable at every step of this procedure, even if my puns tested his patience. I would also like to acknowledge Drs. Volker Greifenhagen and Darlene Juschka for their support and guidance during my coursework, as well as Dr. Kevin Bond for being on the defence committee. I would also like to acknowledge Cordelia McDonald, the department administrator, for her invaluable help with the administrative requirements, and being a wonderful and encouraging person who encouraged me when I needed it. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Yuan Ren for ensuring I did not die of starvation during the semesters with gifts of food, friendship and guidance during the graduate life. I would like to acknowledge the funding through The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. The reception of The Graduate Studies Scholarship (GSS) was invaluable to my completing my research on time, as well as the Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) that I received, which enabled me to focus on my work during the semester. I would like to acknowledge the Center for Teaching and Learning at the UofR, and my reception of the Graduate Teaching Award, which helped me refine how I communicated and delivered my thesis defence, as well as how I performed as a teaching assistant at the University.
Dedication

To Kaley, for being my rock, best friend and support during the toughest time of my life, in more ways than I can describe. Thank you for giving me the strength and confidence that I did not know how to find.
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Chapter I: Greek and Roman Education, Textual Practices

Introduction

In any religious text, a few words can change an entire book. In the history of the New Testament, maintaining and procuring an *authentic* text is a matter of grave importance. Contemporary scholarship on the development of the New Testament is eclectic in approach, specifically engaging with classical narratives regarding textual origin and transmission. These classical positions tend to treat the New Testament as more or less ‘natural’ or organic in its development, with Christian distinctiveness on the texts being emphasized, discounting outside influences on the texts. One such classical position comes from William Frend, who says that “[m]ost important of all was the emergence of a fixed canon of scripture that gave the church its own sacred book, different from that of the Jews and in no way dependent on any pagan or Gnostic literature.” Is that a fair assessment? That is the question that this thesis will engage in, namely, to look at what influences were at play in the development of the early Christian canon. It is important to examine this question, especially in the contemporary world, where religious fanaticism is justified by claiming a book carries authority over people. To get a more comprehensive understanding of different facets of the New Testament is

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to get a more comprehensive understanding of the people who use that book, and to the
institutions built on the production and dissemination of that literature.

To that end, when I first came across the quote from Frend, it bothered me, and
how I came to grips with that question is how I will approach this thesis. Some, like
Frend, would have us believe the canon emerged *ex nihilo*, but for practical academic
rigor and intellectual curiosity, dismantling his assumption will be the path by which this
thesis will address the question of NT canonization. Let us leave Frend for now, but take
with us the three groups of people[^3] he believes to have little to do with canonization:
Pagans, Jews, and the Gnostics. To begin, this thesis will look at these people called
Pagans, which is essentially Greeks and Romans. The Greco-Roman world had many
achievements, but what will be examined is how they treated books, and ultimately how
books were used in educational systems, to help people read, write, and collect books.
What the first chapter will contribute to this endeavor is an examination of the scholarly
circles of literate people in Greece and Rome and how that conversation contained textual
studies on the Homeric verses alongside debates on how to collect, revise, and correct
problematic texts, with an aim to see how the practices they developed to engage with
Homeric literature will be analogous to how the early Christian intellectuals engaged with
the Jesus-literature.

[^3]: It is important to note that canonical discourse is resolutely masculine discourse;
the authorities, authors, and controversial figures are all men. Further it was exceptionally
rare for women to be treated as teachers within this time, and the discounting, if not
suppression of texts such as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* are at play as well in the
canonical process. It is important to have this understanding in the background, but it is
outside the scope of this paper to adequately account for, and will not be dealt with in this
paper.
Secondly, the Jewish people are the crucible in which we find nascent Christianity, and so it is fruitful to examine an example the people and context, to see what can be gleaned from them. The second chapter’s contribution will be a survey of Philo, and his scholarship addressing the harmonization of Greek philosophy and Jewish Scripture. This examination will show the conversation between Jewish and Greco-Roman textual criticisms and educational practices. The Yahweh literature of Judaism becomes something taken seriously among some of the intellectual elite, and an examination of a, Middle Platonic allegorical method of exegesis will become very important to Judaism with the destruction of the temple. Thus, the point of this chapter will be to show how Greek educational praxis meets Jewish religiosity.

The third group of people, the so-called Gnostics, and their differently-minded counterparts (usually labeled as orthodox or catholic) will occupy the third chapter, and have the most explicit discussion of NT canonization. Allegory is alive in the work of Gnosticism, but when combined with consequent redactions and exegesis of shared text, is seen as a mutilation of the text by other intellectuals. Valentinus and the Sethians will be the main figures in reference to Gnosticism, with Irenaeus and Justin who will have issues with their redactions and exegesis of the texts. The conversation, sometimes inflated to represent a holy struggle between right teaching and the antichrist, will be examined with an eye to show them as not so exciting, but more prosaically as competing schools of thought, with the subject material being both book-ish and sacred to each group. The climax of this chapter will be an examination of Marcion, perhaps the strongest impetus to church leaders of Irenaeus’ ilk to define a canon of NT scripture. The writings and treatment of the texts will be the data with which to scan the early
Christian history of NT canonization and refute the idea that the canon is produced in an insulated way, but rather is something incredibly diverse and in flux, coming from a manifestly diverse set of peoples and practices.

Context

In ancient Rome, especially in the period of the republic⁴, the communication infrastructure was not the same as it is currently: there was no internet, no Google, no Wikipedia, and in some places, even no library. Education was often undertaken by the family, as the household was the focal point of both an agrarian and militaristic society, with as much time spent preparing and harvesting crops as there was doing military drills and conditioning, where the boys “were trained by their elders in activities which developed their fighting powers, their physical skill and agility.”⁵ In this world, intellectual training was not considered essential, as “concentration on agricultural pursuits was always liable to be disturbed by service in war.”⁶ But especially with the spread of Hellenization, the world expanded and started to encounter other cultures, peoples, and languages. “The period which followed the end of the third Macedonian War (171-168 CE) was one of great significance in the history of education at Rome. Thousands of prisoners were brought across the Adriatic, many of whom must have

⁴ 5ᵗʰ -1ˢᵗ Century BCE, typically being associated with the overthrow of the Roman Kingdom until the establishment of the Roman Empire.


⁶ Ibid, 9.
found employment as ‘Pedagogues’ or tutors in Roman families, thereby greatly extending the knowledge of Greek.” The inflation of information meant that an education consisting of agriculture and hunting and military skills would be found wanting, and a more advanced education was necessary for success. “For this purpose, parents who had not the time, the inclination or, sometimes, the ability to teach them themselves, and who lacked any suitable assistance, would send their children to a primary school.” What we see happening is that there is an increasing demand for specialized educators who are skilled in areas outside of basic life skills, instead being proficient in Greek, rhetoric, grammar, mathematics and astronomy, among other subjects: the sophisticated, well-rounded education.

The reasonable explanation behind this seems to be that “Roman education was citizen training”. In this way, it becomes a way of preserving existing social hierarchies.

Think of it in terms of Bourdieu’s concept of social capital:

Every individual […] has a portfolio of capital. They have a particular amount or volume of capital, and their capital has a particular composition. Among the rich, for example, we find those whose wealth is weighted towards cultural capital…..

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7 Ibid, 23.

8 Ibid, 34.

these are individual possessions and attributes [but can be used to denote a stratification of the society on said parameters].

In this way, capital can be understood to be both monetary and non-monetary, with different social locations having different compositions of said capital. For example, a person could be in relative poverty but possess a doctoral degree and have immense prestige as a teacher and therefore would have capital that would be substantial for someone who may be rich and have little education. In this way, symbiotic relationships and the exchange of different capitals are exchanged. Educational capital within the Roman Empire consisted of mastery of both the existing Roman culture and of the influx of new Greek information. Those that possessed this mastery therefore had high social capital, and the price that this mastery demanded excluded all but the wealthiest who had the ability to pay for teachers and the buying of books and resources. Both the subject material as well as the teacher of this information becomes very important: the more advanced and specialized the material is, the more important it becomes to select the right person to teach the material, as well as having the educational background to handle this information. It cannot be emphasized enough how much education was linked to excellence and social prestige in Roman history. To have an insufficient or ineffective teacher had disastrous consequences socially, as “Greek learning was a commodity recognized as a mark of status”.

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11 Corbeill, “Education in the Roman Republic”, 271.
Educational Figures and Institutions

In the Greek method of education, one of the earliest figures involved with the education of the youth aside from the parents would be a ‘pedagogue’ (Appendix A, Figure 1). This figure, usually a slave attached to a household, would be responsible for escorting the young boy around to the various educational buildings like the gymnasium or the school, and be responsible for the physical and moral well-being of the child.\textsuperscript{12} There is evidence of this practice continuing into the Common Era, as Quintilian, perhaps the most famous Roman rhetor and the first to obtain a public commission for his work, outlines his requirements of a proper pedagogue:

Regarding his [the boy] paedagogi[sic], I would add that they should either be thoroughly educated (this is the first priority) or know themselves to be uneducated. Nothing can be worse than those who, having got just beyond the alphabet, delude themselves that they have acquired some knowledge. They both scorn to give up the role of instructor and, conceiving that they have a certain title to authority (a frequent source of vanity in this class of persons), become imperious and sometimes even brutal teachers of their own foolishness.\textsuperscript{13}

In this way, the experience the boy has with the pedagogue would not only influence his intellectual development, but could have real consequences for his social maneuverings.

There is also a natural limit to what education can do to assist in life. Quintilian continues:

There is one point which I must emphasize at the start: without the help of nature, precepts and techniques are powerless. This work, therefore, must not be thought of as written for persons without talent, any more than treatises on agriculture are

\textsuperscript{12} Bonner, \textit{Education in Ancient Rome}, 38.

meant for barren soils. And there are other aids also, with which individuals have
to be born: voice, strong lungs, good health, stamina, good looks. A modest
supply of these can be further developed by methodical training; but sometimes
they are so completely lacking as to destroy any advantages of talent and study,
just as these themselves are of no profit without a skilled teacher, persistence in
study, and much continuous practice in writing, reading, and speaking.\textsuperscript{14}

Just as there are disastrous consequences for the child if the pedagogue is not of upright
coloracter, there is also a naturalization of the elite class of orators, which says that the
reason that one is elite is self-evident: one can prove it. In this way, an intellectual
hierarchy that parallels and reflects the social hierarchy in Hellenistic Rome appears. The
pedagogue tended to be a slave, knowledgeable in Greek and possessed of the ability to
teach both linguistic and social customs, essentially teaching the child how to behave,
where to go, and how to act in society and avoid saying something scandalous. As
Quintilian stated above, one can be of perfect lineage, but without a skilled teacher, the
natural gifts of birth are of no consequence. It should be noted that not every child would
have a pedagogue. To have one implied having enough material wealth to not only
possess slaves, but also the financial and social capital to send and pay for a child to
attend the different forms of training. To have a pedagogue was itself a mark of status,
but more importantly, it was also a way to develop your education and better your
chances of getting more education and the prestige and social mobility that came with it.

Beyond the basic skills learned by the pedagogue, the child would attend private
schools where the teacher of grammar and reading, called “the grammaticus, [would then
direct the students and] began continuous study, usually of full texts, and their lessons
included not only reading aloud and memorizing, but also the detailed exposition of the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 65.
master.”¹⁵ Think of these schools as composition and exposition centers. The Greek term, *grammaticus*, appears often in Latin literature in different contexts. Sometimes it is translated as meaning a “critic”¹⁶, “philologist”¹⁷, “grammarians”¹⁸, “scholar”¹⁹, or “schoolteacher”²⁰. Robert Kaster views their job as critically important:

In essence, the grammarian presented himself as an arbiter of the claims of three competing forces: the habit of contemporary usage (*consuetudo*; *usus*), the authority (*auctoritas*) of the classical models, and nature (*natura*), that is, the natural properties of the language, determined by reasoned or systematic analysis (*ratio*) and set down as rules (*regulae*) in the grammarian’s handbook (*ars*).

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¹⁵ Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 212.


practice, the grammarian spent much of his time protecting the nature of the language (and so his own *ars*\(^{21}\)) against the influences of habit and authority.\(^{22}\)

Kaster writes enthusiastically of this class of people, dealing with the social circumstances and roles of grammarians into the later centuries CE, but he also comments on the roles of the grammarians within the hierarchical society of the Hellenistic Roman Empire.

Overshadowed by the rhetorician’s inevitably greater visibility and prestige, the grammarian’s institutional niche gave him his position of strength but also set his limitations. His expertise was esoteric enough to set him apart from the great majority of the population, but within the charmed world of [the literate] it involved no extraordinary distinction, and little mystery.\(^{23}\)

Kaster has a compelling argument. The function of the grammaticus seems to be analogous to secondary school educators of today. For example, consider a high school English class. It involves learning the finer points of language and speech beyond rudimentary reading comprehension, and goes into the mechanics of language such as verb forms, participles, and diagraming complex sentences, essentially refining the grammatical skill beyond the basics. Further, there are readings from great classics of the English canon like Shakespeare, Milton, Conrad, Chaucer and the like, with an exposition on the meaning, interpretation, and history of those works. Quintilian confirms Kaster’s argument by describing what is required of the grammaticus for the more senior students in his charge who

\[^{21}\] No pun intended.


\[^{23}\] Ibid, 205.
must also deal with more elementary matters. He [the grammaticus] must ask the pupils to break up the verse and give the parts of speech and the qualities of the metrical feet, which need to become so familiar in poetry that the need for them is felt also in rhetorical composition. He must point out [b]arbarisms, improper usages, and anything contrary to the laws of speech, not by way of censuring the poets for these [...] but to remind the pupil of technical rules.

Quintilian also exhibits the assertion that the grammaticus was more than just a man of letters; he was also a man of history. “A further task [for the grammaticus] will be the explanation of historical allusions; this must be scholarly, but not overloaded with superfluous labour. It is quite enough to expound versions which are traditional or at any rate rest on good authority.”

In this way, Kaster’s argument that the grammaticus holds a special status in the Roman educational consciousness is supported by the available source material. However, the technical expertise of the grammaticus is also a limitation. Though they were skilled in the understanding of grammar and historical explanation of the poetic allusions, outside of that tutelage, it was difficult to develop more comprehensive training, and so for more advanced study, the student would have to find a master elsewhere. “The average student who had attended these schools could presumably read and write enough to get by on a daily basis, but he would certainly never recite poetry with correct inflection or compose orations. These skills were not taught in the school of letters.”

To be able to work as a grammaticus would be an in-demand

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25 Ibid, 207

26 Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 77.

position, and if you were possessed of good training, that would increase your chances of patronage and financial security.

The technical expertise of the grammaticus is laudable, but to colleagues it would be hardly unique, and to those with advanced training in the material it would be dreadfully basic. For the purposes and scope of this paper, the grammaticus should be viewed as propaedeutic, where the child is given the material and tools necessary to advance on to higher levels of rhetorical and oratorical study. It needs to be qualified however that it was usually only the richest and most elite students who could possibly achieve more study, though as with anything there were of course exceptions. After grammar school, the student could go on to a school of rhetoric, which marks elite company and the social prestige that comes with it. Here, a return to the grammatical tools that were learned in grammar school are emphasized to internalize the teaching and be able to use the literal and moral understandings drawn from literature in daily life. From this, there is an increasingly more advanced education under the direction of the rhetor himself to learn proper inflection, diction, speech, and other tools of rhetoric. More advanced circles above that of the rhetors would be the philosophical schools, where the students would read philosophical texts, and the students would discuss these seminal texts to situate them within the wider philosophical school and system. The cost to purchase these texts and instructions was significant, but there was a privilege that came with it. “This crucial tool [of training became] a way of distinguishing the elite of Roman society from the average man. At the same time, it also bound the men who

28 Ibid, 4.
possessed it closer together”. Further, we can look to Quintilian again for evidence of this: “I shall now briefly add something about the other arts in which I think boys should be trained before they are passed on to the rhetor, so as to complete the course of learning which the Greeks call *enkyklia paideia*.” If we break down those words, *enkyklia* means circular, encircling, and *paideia* means education, child rearing and the like, so we come out with something that means complete education. You might recognize the words as the basis for the English *encyclopedia*. This class of people were believed to have a comprehensive education. This might be similar to a terminal degree in modern academia, wherein someone has a thorough and comprehensive understanding of a subject.

> [T]he inherent civilizing value of education was so great that some men advertised their cultivation in the epitaphs […] which indicates a belief that […] the excellence that ancient men associated with education did not arise from, say, a thorough knowledge of the works of Demosthenes. Instead it was derived from the understanding that an educated man had learned a code of proper behavior…. [which] provided a young gentleman with an outline of how one was supposed to act, how he was to treat other men, what role he was to play in his community, and the manner in which he ought to approach the divine.

This, combined with the fact that these cultured men were often called upon to be ambassadors or emissaries to the emperor to represent their respective city due to their social charm and eloquence, shows that the education commanded respect. The administration of the empire rested upon these men, and anyone who hoped to have his interests protected needed to develop a network of connections among

29 Kaster, cited in Watts, *City and School*, 5.

30 Quintilian *Instit. Orat.*, 1.10, 213.

31 Watts, *City and School*, 6-7.
the cultured class. The common cultural and educational background that they all shared lay at the heart of these networks.32

One such example of the prestige and social honor that an education could bring is found in both the person and library of Celsus in Ephesus, in modern day Turkey (Appendix A, Figure 2 and 3). Praised by both Greeks and Romans, Celsus was a talented administrator, being a consul in the early first century, which would presume his aristocratic and educated background.

To the Greeks of the Asian Province, Celsus was a native son who had overcome prejudice, worked his way through the *cursus honorum* of the rigid Roman government, and attained top leadership positions, which for centuries had been beyond the reach of men of Greek ancestry. In some small way, he may have given his people the feeling of a return to the Greek rule they wanted so much.33

[To his family,] if their only objective had been to secure Celsus a gravesite within the city, surely they could have accomplished that with a simpler structure. Moreover, the Greek virtues featured on the façade seem to be an intentional statement about the man. The building’s integration of both Greek and Roman design and decoration implies Celsus consciously and rationally strove to blend the best of both cultures, and that he considered this integration an important part of who he was and why he was successful.34

“So it appears that while much is still unknown, Celsus Library stood not only as a proud tribute to an educated and talented leader, but like many other libraries, as a reflection of the community and the time in which it served.”35 The library built by his family as his tomb, and the subsequent educational contribution to the surrounding area provided by

32 Ibid, 7.


34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
the library helped secure Celsus as an important person in the community. The modern analog might be the presidential libraries in the United States, which are meant to contain and symbolize, and almost embody, the person they are built to honor. This political and cultural link to education develops concomitant with literary and educational developments across the empire and naturally affects the Christian groups, as they are a product of that Zeitgeist. This will be more evident and parsed more fully in the third chapter where I will examine how the early bishops used Alexandrian techniques to edit and proliferate the texts that formed the scriptural basis for the Christian groups.

Early Canons Used in Education

Let us now turn our attention to the material of classical education. As far as material was concerned, poetry was the paradigmatic text, especially Homer. With the goal of many students to be lawyers and senators, reading the epics was considered to be integral to finding a model to emulate. Similarly, if you wanted to be a sculptor today, you would want to study and understand Michelangelo or other great sculptors. The same goes for the ancients – to have the absolute best type of speaking and reading skills, you would read and understand the best writing, which was commonly understood to mean Homeric verse: vast in scope, history, and divine affiliations. “But, important though correct punctuation and accentuation were, the real essence of reading aloud lay in expression, in entering into the spirit of the passage, or, as the Greeks said, the ‘acting’ of it. In order to teach this, one could only use the method of personal demonstration.”36

This would happen at the realm of the rhetorical and oratorical schools of the grammatici.

36 Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 223.
and rhetors and orators. It would be a travesty to read Homer, only to realize that the version you read is a poor copy or translation which would affect your elocution, and so what we see happening is a strong sense of interest in not only how to interpret the Homeric epics, but also scholarship into what version or understandings of the epics are good to use. Quintilian speaks of this problem and says that “to go into what every third rate writer has said is a tedious waste of time or useless pedantry, diverting and encumbering minds which would be better occupied with other matters.” In this way, the movement goes something similar to Bloom’s taxonomy: learn how to do the most basic of tasks (pedagogues), study literature in a basic way (pedagogues and grammatici), master those areas, move into more complex study (philosophical, rhetorical, oratorical schools), and then begin to create your own understandings and give creativity to the material (paideia). In order to adequately grapple with the Homeric verse, you must first know what editions and commentaries are the best, so that you can have the best information available to continue your understanding and further study.

The way in which this would be done is through a list of things to be read. For Quintilian,

The practice of making reading start with Homer and Vergil is therefore excellent. Of course it needs a more developed judgement to appreciate their virtues; but there is time enough for this, for they will be read more than once. Meanwhile, let

the mind be uplifted by the sublimity of the heroic poems, and inspired and filled
with the highest principles by the greatness of their theme.\textsuperscript{38}

What is operative is that a syllabus is being given for a proper education. Homer is most
important, and other books are suggested along with the evidence of why they are useful,
such as reading tragedies to understand intense emotions. In this way, Quintilian is also
giving a canon for the study of rhetoric. This makes sense, as the required readings would
be the measure and substance of how good a teacher one was. If one was not reading the
Classics, then it would be considered an insufficient education. The selection of the
readings is an expression of value. If Homeric verse is always regarded as the best, then
other literature takes a secondary or lesser place in education. This creates a relationship
between the caliber of education and the list of readings used insofar as if you are reading
books that are considered the best, then you are receiving a better education than
someone who is reading less important texts or worse versions of the important texts.
This creates a literary hierarchy in terms of material and edition, and just as fancy cars
appeal to the lower income-classes in the current capitalist culture, so also do these
prestigious Homeric texts appeal to the masses in the book-culture of the Roman Empire.

Assessing different value to different texts was not something strange. Originally,
the Greek sense of the word ‘canon’ meant a measuring stick or a rule, and before taking
on the idea it currently carries, it meant a list of \textit{everything}. In the libraries, especially the
library of Alexandria,

\begin{quote}
the context to which comprehensive canons most naturally belong is that of
literary histories, which often try to provide a systematic and exhaustive survey of
particular literary forms or even of all the literature available for examination ….
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} Quintilian \textit{Instit. Orat.} 1.8, 201.
[and] we credit Callimachus of Cyrene, the most prominent scholar in mid-third-century Alexandria, with the first scientific effort at a comprehensive history of Greek literature [with a list of all known works arranged by subject and genre].

A real life example of this is seen in the works of Cicero. In one of his most influential works, *De Oratore*, Cicero outlines his educational idealism. Crafted in the form of a dialogue, Cicero argues with his various associates that

the pen is the best and most eminent author and teacher of eloquence, and rightly so. For if an extempore and casual speech is easily beaten by one prepared and thought-out, this latter in turn will assuredly be surpassed by what has been written with care and diligence.

Clearly seeing sophisticated reading and writing as linked to success, at the heart of Cicero’s text is the idea of comprehensive education. “Cicero, like any good orator, refused to be bound by a rigid system,” and the effects of this comprehensiveness is the development of a prime example of an early canon of literature. For Cicero, there was much value to learning not only the Latin authors, but also the Greek “foreigners” that he would translate into Latin, as he reflects that “the result of reading these was that, in rendering into Latin what I had read in Greek, I [Cicero] not only found myself using the


41 Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 79.
best words—and yet quite familiar ones—but also coining by analogy certain words such as would be new to our people.”

The result is a hedging of his bets insofar as if there is something to be understood from the Greek literature, then it should be appropriated, for to be properly educated there is a requirement for a wide set of skills and talents.

Consider the duties of a proper orator that Cicero outlines:

We must also read the poets, acquaint ourselves with histories, study and peruse the masters and authors in every excellent art, and by way of practice praise, expound, emend, criticize and confute them; we must argue every question on both sides, and bring out on every topic whatever points can be deemed plausible; besides this we must become learned in the common law and familiar with the statutes, and must contemplate all the olden time, and investigate the ways of the senate, political philosophy, the rights of allies, the treaties and conventions, and the policy of empire; and lastly we have to cull, from all the forms of pleasantry, a certain charm of humour, with which to give a sprinkle of salt, as it were, to all of our discourse.

What can be seen here is the liberal arts style of education, wherein there is a sampling of many different arts, so as to cultivate a well-rounded individual. “Cicero’s theory of scientific knowledge is borrowed directly from Greek sources: for him no true knowledge, whether of music, literature, rhetoric, or philosophy, is possible unless directed by the principles of an ‘art’.” The effect of this is to equip the orator with a wide array of skills, drawn from both the Latin and the Greek worlds, to further the social and political standing of the individual, and so the canon of this orator would be wide and

42 Cicero, De Oratore, 107.


varied, so as to facilitate the reading of prestigious texts in all the aforementioned areas. The educational model put forth by Cicero relies on Greek institutions teaching Roman virtues and ideals, and he goes so far as to say “we have to go to our fellow-countrymen for examples of virtue so we have to turn to the Greeks for models of learning”\textsuperscript{45}. The implication is that Roman educational framework relies on the assimilation of the Greek praxis and the emphasis not being Greek content, important as it may be, but that of a Roman exegetical lens. “Mastery of things Greek becomes part of being Roman – but only for certain Romans.”\textsuperscript{46} This further concretizes the social stratification of the elites possessing the most sophisticated knowledge and practices of the foreign Greek slaves and freedmen, while the lower classes must emulate them to attain social and political success. Later on, especially in the last century BCE, the movement of a comprehensive canonical understanding leans towards a selective, exclusive one that I have spoken about. Part of the reason this may have happened is in the subject material. The Greek epics being taught may have been enriching and interesting to the Greek world, but ultimately the point in the Roman Empire was to be learning Roman history and literature.


\textsuperscript{46} Corbeill, \textit{Education in the Roman Republic}, 274.
Canonical Paradigm Shift

To illustrate this change from a comprehensive educational canon of authors and subjects to a selective educational canon, Quintilian, the first Latin rhetor employed by the imperium, writing in the first century of the Common Era, will be examined. In Quintilian’s canon, the Roman and the Greek authors are separated and compared to each other in an adversarial way, unlike the more homogeneous approach of Cicero. One of the reasons Quintilian did this is not only to show the prominence of the Greek authors such as Homer and Herodotus, but to establish an ideological claim over and against these authors: Vergil is worthy to challenge Homer; Sallust, Thucydides; Livy, Herodotus; and Cicero⁴⁷, even Demosthenes.⁴⁸ In this inclusion of native authors in the same league as the Greek, Quintilian shows almost an “inferiority complex”⁴⁹ against the Greeks, showing how the Latin authors can mimic and do the same things as the Greek. Throughout the first chapter of book 10 of the *Institutio Oratio*, Quintilian others⁵⁰ the Greek authors, first listing the Greek contributions, but then listing how the Romans are worthy to challenge them.⁵¹ In this way, Quintilian’s canon shows that the Roman authors are just as worthy to be studied as the intellectually glorified Greeks, but the

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⁴⁷ By this time, it is clear that the fame of Cicero and his theory of education has become prominent enough for the elites to name him as elevated amongst the Greek intellectuals.


⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ He uses an us/them dichotomy

Greeks do have an edge due to priority and would be firmly embedded in the scholarship, and therefore remain in what is to be learned, and so in this way, the canon takes on a nationalistic ideology. We will see this same trend in the next chapter on Second-Temple Judaism and the rise of Yahwistic literature in elite intellectual circles and the impact it has on the status of Homeric texts.

To understand and read Quintilian’s canon involved a significant amount of money not only to acquire the required readings, but also to employ a master to teach the material. In this way, education is made a social distinction between the cultured elite and the unwashed masses – the foreign and the familiar – in a very real way.

Compared with [the more universal appeal and appreciation that Cicero had], Quintilian’s range is limited. For him, Cicero and the great Augustans are supreme: Virgil is his Homer, Livy his Herodotus, Sallust his Thucydides, Cicero his Demosthenes and Plato […] and] Quintilian is the first of the Latin classicists: he looks back to a past generation and is content with their achievement. He is a student writing for students; and it is characteristic of his theory that whilst Cicero recognizes the approval of a typical Roman crowd as the final test of good oratory, Quintilian contrasts the judgement of ‘the uneducated crowd’ with the canons of his own more literary criticism.  

This illustrates the movement of Ciceronian idealism to Quintilianian pragmatism, with the canon acquiring “a new function: no longer a scholar’s enumeration of the best representatives of each literary genre, nor a list of recommended reading for those wishing to practice oratory, but a body of texts every educated person should be familiar with”  

52 Gwynn, Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian, 225-6.

53 Vardi, Canons in Literary Texts, 149.
made a definitive list of what a cultured gentleman should know, upon reading those
texts, you are a cultured gentleman. This is a problematic situation:

As long as the exact body of texts marking the learned is not clearly defined, it
can still be used to establish differentiation in degrees of erudition, to encourage
the continuous seeking of further learning, and occasionally, to expose one’s
opponents’ ignorance by pointing out yet another text they should have read, but
haven’t. A closed list, like that of the biblical scriptures, on the other hand,
surrenders the key to initiation into the hands of the masses, which is all very well
for religious proselytism, but which elites, even intellectual ones, don’t like
doing.54

What this means is that people will challenge the list to stay competitive in the
scholarship and discourse. Quintilian further complicates this by adding the qualification
that “the orator must be a good man, but that no one can be an orator unless he is a good
man.”55 Cicero, conversely, can be read to imply that through training, natural inabilities
can be overcome, and so has a more Aristotelian understanding of how virtue can be
cultivated through practice. In this way, Quintilian adds a further safeguard to the elite
class by saying that there is something genetic to being a good, cultured person. This
question of identity and initiation is linked to social formation a priori, so it makes sense
to see Cicero and Quintilian employ this language.

As we have seen through the educational framework of Cicero, the Roman
conception of a canon originally began out of making comprehensive lists, not only of

54 Ibid, 150.

55 Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, The Orator's Education. Books 11-12, trans. Donald A.
Russell, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,
2001), 199.
what is important to read and learn, but also what is important to learn to become important. From the schoolmaster to the senator, masters advised what the appropriate texts were required to be initiated into the educated and/or the elite. With this understanding, canonical education then takes on an even greater importance in a social group – it is one of the measures that can determine social hierarchy. For a text to be included to be included in the canon has a double effect – it imparts value on the text itself, and it imparts value on whoever reads it. This creates an intellectual contract with the texts: insofar as these texts make someone important in the community, the favor is returned by devoting significant scholarship to them. This is evidenced by Cicero in his characterization of Oratory as an art, with the required education being reified as one of the Artes Liberales, and so demanding and encouraging the same discipline and mastery as the other liberal arts, and so just as a musician can play an instrument on any reasonable occasion, so also can the orator envisioned by Cicero perform the art of public speaking on demand. One of the reasons for this reification is that the function of the orator, for Cicero, is intrinsically pedagogical: “as history, which bears witness to the passing of the ages, sheds light upon reality, gives life to recollection and guidance to human existence, and brings tidings of ancient days, whose voice, but the orator’s, can entrust her to immortality?”\textsuperscript{56} In this way, the intellectual contract is with the preservation of historical consciousness, which to Cicero did not mean just Roman history, important as it may be. Utilizing the three styles of oratory consisting of “the easy, conversational Plain Style to instruct, the pleasant, smoothly flowing Middle Style to charm, and the

\textsuperscript{56} Cicero, \textit{De Oratore}, Book 2, 225.
striking, impressive Grand Style to stir.” Cicero’s contract is with his educational idealism, and as such, is comprehensive in its scope and devotional in its practice. Following the Ciceronian ideal, Quintilian’s nativism/classicism, though sculpted from the former, feels threatened by just how much Greek influence has invaded the Republic, now the empire, and so his contract is in looking to the Latin authors and saying that they are sufficient for the elite-class, and while the Greek authors have a broad history, to remember that it is Rome that is the power, and so there is no reason why Roman authors should not ‘conquer’ the barbarian Greeks. In this way, the text can be turned not only into a portal for education, but also a tool for domination and subjugation.

Whoever controls the texts and their importance controls its impact on the community, so we see commentaries and editors having significant authority over the value of these texts. Attempting to change or alter the text can have very real consequences:

The most famous example comes from a dispute over Salamis between Athens and Megara first attested by Aristotle. In this conflict over the control of Salamis, Athens appealed to lines from Homer in order to justify their possession of the island. Later traditions indicate that Megara responded by accusing the Athenians of interpolating these verses into their Homeric corpus since they were lacking in their own copies of Homer. This disagreement may give further evidence for the circulation of city editions of Homer. Whether or not this story is authentic, at the very least it offers clear evidence that controlling the Homeric text was perceived as more than just a pedantic scholarly activity; it had real ramifications in Greek political life.

57 Bonner, Education in Ancient Rome, 80.

What we see happening is that editing scholarship becomes more crucial the more important the text in question is. A text’s *authenticity* is heavily emphasized, and the desire to have the original texts of Homer,\(^59\) without blemish or corruption, becomes very important. *Purity*, and the pursuit of texts free of blemish and error, becomes linked to scholarship and textual transmission. In order to really understand Homer, you have to read the best manuscripts, and those are, for later antiquity, at the library of Alexandria.

We have a copy of Homeric verse (Appendix A, Figure 4), which is from a tenth century CE copy of the *Iliad*. Around the text at the center are the editor’s commentary, and likewise in the margins of the text, the comments, corrections (*Scholia*), and other editorial markings are used to critique the text. What we see happening in the Alexandrian academy\(^60\) is the development of sophisticated source and textual criticisms. This was done either through *ekdosis*, “the conjectural emendation of the transmitted text and the choice between textual variants discovered through collation of different copies,”\(^61\) or *diorthosis*, referring to “the combination of the two.”\(^62\) “Correction (*diorthosis*), collation (*antiballo*), alteration (*metaballo, metatithemi*), athetesis (*atheteo*), expunction (*ou graphein*), marginal notes (*semeia, skolia*), and even emendation

\(^{59}\) This emphasis is transferable to the other authors as well, as time progresses.

\(^{60}\) While we have little manuscript evidence from the early centuries, we can assume a lineage of similar practices due to the prevalence of the scholia in many manuscripts we do have.

\(^{61}\) Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul*, 33.

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
(metapoioe, metagrapto) were all part of the ancient textual critic’s methodological repertoire available for rectifying perceived errors in the text – errors occasioned by an inability to make the text square with the critic’s interpretation or authorial construct.”

This was to be the standard practice amongst textual critics, as “while the practices used to fashion corpora varied somewhat from author to genre, fundamental for each was the conception of authorship driving the reacquisition, collection, and correction of the text”. The reason this is important is that it signifies a movement towards a sophisticated textual tradition, versus the oral traditions that preceded. This emphasis on editorial revisions and social identities of canons will be very important when looking at the textual practices of rabbinical Judaism in the second chapter.

Conclusions.

It is important to show that education was a very influential part of social mobility in the Roman world, and that there were different stages to that education that brought with them varying degrees of social capital and prestige. This was evidenced by the discussion of pedagogues, grammatici, and schools such as philosophical and rhetorical and oratorical, and the social titles that came with them such as paideia. This paper tried to show how the development of educational material went from a comprehensive canon of everything, personified in Ciceronian educational theory, to a more selective, exclusive, closed canon seen in the writings of Quintilian, which has political and social influences affecting the canonical status of certain authors. Thirdly, behind all of this was

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.
a movement that emphasized that the texts in these canons be as authentic as possible to the original sources, notwithstanding any political or social interpolations, as seen in the Athenian script of Homer. Just as there is no such thing as a neutral text, there is no such thing as a neutral canon. The selection of what authors and writings to include is shaped by what you hope to achieve with the canon, as Cicero was comprehensive so as to be a convincing orator, and Quintilian was more classicist so as to maintain Roman primacy amidst barbarian writings.

The next chapter will show how this culture of textual scholarship and editorial practices is syncretic with Judaism. The methods of textual criticisms and interpretation of key texts will be challenged by a different hermeneutic in the way of allegory. The educated scholar, Philo Judaeus, will serve as a case study for doing criticism and exegesis on texts outside of the popular Greek and Roman canons, with his analysis and writings on the books of the Hebrew Bible, and how allegorical interpretation begins to be attractive to scholars and religious figures within and outside of Judaism to account for the flux of political and social power and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. This will serve as the environment which Christianity finds itself in, and the subsequent discourse of which editions and collections of writings are authoritative.

Chapter II: Jewish Scribalism and the Middle Platonic Developments in Textual Exegesis and Redaction

The point and method of analysis in this chapter will be focused on the rise of Middle Platonism and its impact on the place of Jewish texts in Homeric scholarly
authority and practices. This will be done by exploring Jewish textual tradition to show that the class of scribe and teacher not only valued the canonical Greek writings, but also collected and edited culturally important Jewish writings and applied scholarly textual interpretation and editing to those texts. Secondly, to see further the Middle Platonic effects on Jewish prevalence in Alexandrian intellectual development, Philo of Alexandria, a paradigm of Middle Platonic thought, will be discussed akin to Cicero and Quintilian to say that within textual interpretation and scholarship, Roman and Greek educational practices and beliefs provide the textual matrix for the Yahwistic literature to become regarded as essential reading. This hypothesis has a double-influence on Christian scripture canonization insofar as showing the inclusion of Yahwistic literature as the philosophical and educational curriculum among the elites in the Jewish academy, but also shows how the scribe sees a change of importance both politically and religiously after the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE under Roman general and soon to be emperor, Titus Flavius.

Library of Alexandria as Intellectual Hub

We have access to a text that narrates the translation of the Hebrew Bible:

On his appointment as keeper of the king’s library, Demetrius of Phalerum undertook many different negotiations aimed at collecting, if possible, all the books in the world. By purchase and translation he brought to a successful conclusion, as far as lay in his power, the king’s plan. We were present when the question was put to him, “How many thousand books are there (in the royal library)?” His reply was, “Over two hundred thousand, O King. I shall take urgent steps to increase in a short time the total to five hundred thousand. Information has reached me that the law books of the Jews are worth translation and inclusion in your royal library.” “What is there to prevent you from doing this?” he said. “Everything for your needs has been put at your disposal.” Demetrius replied, “Translation is needed. They use letters characteristic of the language of the Jews, just as Egyptians use the formation of their letters in accordance with their own
language. The Jews are supposed to use Syrian language, but this is not so, for it is another form (of language).  

This excerpt from the *Letter of Aristeas*, written roughly in 170 BCE articulates the legendary story of the translation of the Jewish Hebrew scriptures into the Greek Septuagint, signified by the numeral LXX, allusive to the story of the 70 translators that produced the exact same copy of the text under the Ptolemaic king, Philadelphus II, which aided in the solidifying of Greek as the acceptable language to be used in Jewish rituals and readings, or rather, introduces a barbarian (Hebrew) literature into Alexandrian Greek culture. Additionally, it shows how the process of Hellenization moves throughout the Mediterranean as a result of Macedonian expansion and cultural influence. In the prior chapter, the focus was mainly on Italy and Rome, a place where Latin and Greek were already familiar, but in the land of Palestine and Egypt, a process of Hellenization was operative over centuries of domination under the Diadochi of Alexander the Great, which caused Greek influence to permeate the region. The political and economic center of this area, the largest city after Rome, was Alexandria in Egypt, and it is this city that will be at the center of this chapter.

Old Persian and Armenian traditions indicate that Alexander the Great, upon seeing the great library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, was inspired to combine all the works of the various nations he conquered, translate them into Greek, and collect them all under one roof. While this inspiration was certainly prompted at least in part by a desire to consolidate information, and thereby power, under


66 Ibid, 9.
Greek authority, it is also an indication of Alexander's desire for his empire to be a multicultural empire--albeit one unified under the influence of Hellenism.67

The library was established by Ptolemy Soter in the third century BCE, and sported a vast collection of not only Homeric and Greek texts, but also Jewish writings, as alluded to with pride in the Letter of Aristeas. The Athenian scholar in the letter, Demetrius of Phalerum, became responsible for the initial arrangement of the texts included in the library68 and worked to have the library as not only a place of books, but also a place of intellectual achievement. The leading scholars of the Ptolemaic Empire had their needs provided for and were encouraged to do their academic work at the library of Alexandria, and so they did with, for example, Euclid, refining his geometry.69

In the realm of literature, the scholar Callimachus was a seminal figure, and through “his and his colleagues’ work, a system of literary genres was established, and a canon of the best authors defined. The Alexandrians performed the first, fundamental studies of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar and other early poets as well as Athenian drama.”70


69 Ibid, 81.

70 Ibid.
As mentioned at the end of the first chapter, there was much emphasis on the textual continuity and authenticity of a text studied in school. What develops in the Alexandrian study of the Homeric verse is a tension. The gods of Homer and Hesiod do not behave like good citizens: they murder, rape, and get drunk all too often. Even though this group of scholars working on translating the texts and rectifying any issues with the texts are striving for accuracy, there are hermeneutical disputes in Alexandria. The Scholia show that when faced with a confusing or contentious passage, athetizing was an option. That is, they would reject a verse as foreign to the original text on the following criteria: first, “verses were athetised if they differ syntactically from what is usually found in Homer or contain words or forms that are later than the main Homeric dialect”.71 Secondly, “they were ready to expel [repetitive] verses. In such cases they tried to decide which occurrence was the original one and athetise the rest.”72 Third, they wanted to fix the inconsistencies in the narratives of the texts by removing conflicting passages, for example, “in Iliad 13.658-9 a certain Pylaemenes participates in the lament for his dead son although he has himself been killed earlier in the poem.”73 Finally, they wanted to remove blasphemous passages. Already in the second half of the sixth century BCE Xenophanes of Colophon had reacted against the way in which the Homeric gods behave: “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods / all sorts of things which are matters of

71 Ibid, 88.
72 ibid
73 Ibid.
reproach and censure among men: / theft, adultery and mutual deceit. (frag. 11).”

Plato too in similar fashion had expelled them from his ideal city:

such battles of the gods as Homer composed: these are not to be admitted into our state whether they have been composed with a deeper meaning to them, or not. For the young are not able to distinguish what has a deeper meaning and what hasn’t. Whatever opinions they have formed at their age are hard to wash out and usually become ingrained. Perhaps then for these reasons we must make it of prime importance that the first stories they hear are the finest tales possible to encourage their sense of virtue.”

In order to address this problem, some interpreters had developed an allegorical reading of text, though most scholars of the time still athetised the text as a preferred measure. What is striking is that both techniques – revision and reinterpretation – were applied to traditional writings as an act of scholarship, to ‘save’ them for contemporary audiences.

**Judean Scribalism in the Context of the Ancient Near East**

One of the texts deemed worth having in the library was the Jewish book of scriptures and law. Among the other populations in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Jews were considered a very strange community: they believed only in one god, they removed the male foreskins as a sign of initiation, and they regarded themselves as saved by said

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singular deity, whom they worshipped and sacrificed to in a temple primarily in Israel.\textsuperscript{76} Alexandria continues to be a major center for intellectual life within the Roman Republic, now the Roman Empire. As time passes, the Empire becomes more and more diverse, with Hellenization embracing many different cultures and beliefs.\textsuperscript{77} In Alexandria by the first century, there is a large Jewish population, which brings a different way of doing textual scholarship along with it. For the Jews, Greek canons, though influential among the elite, share cultural importance with the writings attributed to Moses. By the time of the Romans, large importance is placed on these traditional Judean documents, especially the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, commonly referred to as the Pentateuch.

Much like the Alexandrian library activity of collecting and maintaining its books, there is evidence which suggests that there was a temple library in Jerusalem that did much the same thing. An example of this is found in 2 Maccabees:

The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings. In the same way Judas also collected all the books that had been lost on account of the war that had come upon us, and they are in our possession. So if you have need of them, send people to get them for you. (2 Macc. 2:13-5)

\textsuperscript{76} There was also at least one temple in Egypt, most famously in Elephantine, but the Jerusalem temple will have the place of historical importance for the purposes of this paper.

\textsuperscript{77} So long as they do what they are told.
This passage is “an example of how material associated with an official collection (in the
temple) survived, gained authority and/or was legitimized”.\textsuperscript{78} Historicity aside,
notwithstanding that 2 Maccabees was written before 70CE, the text at least implies that
certain texts were collected and valued as being important religiously; the library of
Nehemiah is considered important enough to warrant hiding, preservation, and restoration
to the temple by Judas Maccabaus. Josephus also speaks of a collection of the “sacred
books of Moses, which had been placed in the temple,”\textsuperscript{79} so this provides further
evidence for the claim that there was a collection of some sort at the temple. It is
important to qualify this and say that while it is not unreasonable to say that there was a
collection of texts found at the temple, it is problematic to say that this collection is
proto-canonical or a canonical collection of scripture, as there is simply not enough
evidence to substantiate that claim either way. Call it a product of modernity, but
historical biblical studies have given monolithic importance, priority and centrality to the
bible, as it exists in its present canonized form. This can be labelled as the “Hegemony of
the Biblical”. According to Mroczek, who coined the term,

\begin{quote}
The bible is, by definition, at the center of biblical studies, but it does not follow
that the bible was, by definition, at the center of ancient Jewish intellectual
culture. The absolute centrality of the biblical is a theological, not a historical
axiom: a concern with the biblical in the texts that we study must be shown with
evidence, not assumed by default. While the history of the field is a history of
people seeking the origins, development, and meaning of these iconic texts, the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78} Jaqueline S. Du Toit, \textit{Textual Memory: Ancient Archives, Libraries, and the Hebrew

\textsuperscript{79} Flavius Josephus, \textit{Jewish Antiquities}, trans. Ralph Marcus, vol. 326 (Cambridge,
Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 10.4.2 (Pg. 189).
subjects of our study were not necessarily preoccupied with the same things; they were not marching to the biblical finish line, but living in a culture whose intellectual, religious, and literary creativity cannot be assimilated into one dominant icon.  

The problem is assuming the priority of present day canonized biblical texts in the historical investigations of the original milieu of those texts. The researcher assumes the biblical texts as the default lens through which historical data is gathered, or to put it another way, assumes that the entire world was exactly as the biblical authors say it was. This assumption ignores the plurality of texts, only some of which were eventually considered canonical. It is the same as assuming one thousand years from now, that the National Post was the only documentation of worldview available, and was totally accurate regarding the views and outlooks of Canadian citizenry, when in reality it was just one voice among many. Just as there is no such thing as a neutral text, there is no such thing as a neutral history. Thus, the task of the scholar of religion is to take into account that, although the biblical text seems very important to a specific issue in a period in history, it is a leap in logic to assume that the text was intended for that reason. A healthy dose of skepticism regarding those assumptions when analyzing texts and histories can open up other data that might not be evident if the assumptions are made. What can be substantiated is that there was a collection of texts deemed important that were kept and maintained in the temple by a certain class of people and attributed to Moses, a prophet and writer with no human equal, in obvious parallel to Alexandrian veneration of Homer.

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Both actors, of course, represent learned cultivation of their respective cultures, undertaken by societal elites. Judean culture, having roots and influences from Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures, places scribes and priests in analogous roles to grammatici and pedagogues. Both possessed significant amounts of social capital, as compared to the unlettered masses. The parallels between Hellenistic and, later, Roman educational matrices and the rest of the world is struck in deep relief. Consider this explanation of ancient Egyptian educational practice:

Dignitaries, clergy, officials, and anyone with any rank in the royal administration sent their sons to school, or to a tutor. Literacy ran in families, just as scribal offices in practice were often hereditary…. the typical teaching relationship was modeled on the bond between father and son, which even if merely rhetorical still reflects the importance of birth and family for access to a formal education.81

In much the same way as the Greek and Roman Paideia, these Ancient Near Eastern scribes with this advanced training and specialization formed a cohesive group of peers, by virtue of their common educational realities.82 And the capital center of this work for Judean culture was the Jerusalem temple, where

the literati formed an elitist society. Their knowledge was a knowledge contained in, and symbolized by, written texts – texts that they could read but that were inaccessible to the ordinary citizen. These scholars not only studied and used the sacred texts; they also wrote and edited them.83

As with the scholars in the Alexandrian library, classification of different texts into different genres takes place, depending on style and intentionality. Some of these are


82 Ibid, 52ff.

83 Ibid, 72.
apocalyptic, and focus on sages such as Daniel and Enoch, while others can be
categorized as Wisdom literature which outline ethical and philosophical truths such as
the writings of Ben Sira, known as the book of Sirach and Qoheleth, known as
Ecclesiastes. “Different Jewish communities professed different opinions and had, thus,
different canons.”84 This makes sense, as shown in the last chapter, with Quintilian
having a more classicist canon in response to the encroaching barbarians into Latin
circles.

An example of this can be seen in the Qumran community and canon. Qumran, a
settlement on the west bank, not far from Jericho, has become very important in the last
few decades. In caves there, ancient scrolls and papyri were found, referred to
collectively as the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of these documents was the first book of Enoch,
written in Aramaic: prior to its discovery among the Dead Sea Scrolls, it was preserved
only in Ge’ez, as a part of the Ethiopic canon. This book speaks of the patriarch Enoch,
and his journeys and revelations from Yahweh, and contains explanations of
cosmological systems, calendrical systems, commentaries on technology, and sky
journeys around the world, culminating in a story of a flood, and Enoch’s role in dealing
with this flood, with his grandson, Noah, who is portrayed as the savior of the world.
Consider the sixth chapter of Genesis alongside the sixth chapter of 1 Enoch (Appendix
A, Figure 5). In Genesis one sees only a glimpse of these beings, called the Nephilim,
seemingly the product of angelic defilement. In 1 Enoch, one finds an entire narrative of
the creation, machinations, and divine punishment of these beings. The parallelism shown

84 Ibid 263.
in the chart shows that there were related materials, concerns, and legendary motifs being circulated in different communities. That is, a larger intellectual conversation was taking place among textual elites. There were groups that were doing a close reading of the Genesis texts, or the traditions and ideas behind them, and giving an apocalyptic flavor to the story to try to account for why the world was the way it was, and what consequences will follow. The dating of 1 Enoch is difficult, as it is a composite of different authors and dates, but viewed as being composed by exilic and post-exilic scribes, the apocalyptic genre used by the scribes is understandable. “During [that time], apocalyptic became a major trend in Jewish thought …. apocalyptic is both prophetic and revelatory; …. Old Testament ideas and stories … are interpreted, elaborated, and presented through the paradigm of apocalyptic dualism, wherein sharp distinctions are drawn between the opposing cosmic powers of good and evil and between the present and coming ages.”

In this way, apocalypticism and Wisdom literature production is essentially a scribal process.

[B]oth [genres] depend on the relentless quest for paradigms, the problematics of applying these paradigms to new situations and the [science of lists] which are the characteristic activities of the near eastern scribe…[And] when the historical patterns are correlated with cosmogonic and kingship traditions and when the attendant structures of woes and promises are directed towards a condition of foreign domination , there is an apocalyptic situation – though again lacking the literary form of the apocalypse. Both proto-apocalyptic literature and apocalyptic situations were present in Babylonian materials from the Hellenistic period and these materials stand in close continuity with archaic scribal traditions and activities…. [Again] Apocalypticism is Wisdom lacking a royal court ad patron and therefore it surfaces during the period of Late Antiquity not as a response to

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religious persecution but as an expression of the trauma of the cessation of native kingship. Apocalypticism is a learned rather than a popular religious phenomenon. It is widely distributed throughout the Mediterranean world and is best understood as part of the inner history of the tradition within which it occurs rather than as a syncretism with foreign influences.\textsuperscript{86}

In this way, the literature being produced by Judean scribes is the articulation of an anxiety surrounding foreign dominion, particularly following the 70 CE temple destruction, and so Smith articulates the argument for the apocalyptic genre being evidence of the scribes creating and collecting texts that are trying to handle the new reality in the eastern Mediterranean. This makes sense, and it is reasonable to see how the inclusion of Jewish canons into the Alexandrian academy are influenced by the political and social activities surrounding that academy. The scholars of Alexandria and Judea would want to work with texts that are viewed as important to the people giving them patronage, as well as showing their adaptability in their exegesis, which would bring prestige among literary peers. The non-literate population would look to the literate for guidance and instructions, and understanding of the religious texts, so as to avoid hellfire and live an ethical life.

This tendency to start thinking about ethics and the purpose and direction of life is not unique to just the Qumran group, not to Jews, nor even to ANE scribes, but also appears in the same period with the development of the school of Middle Platonism. “The period designated by historians of philosophy as the ‘Middle Platonic’ begins with Antiochus of Ascalon (ca. 130-68 B.C.E.) and ends with Plotinus (204-70 C.E.), who is

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considered the founder of Neoplatonism.”\textsuperscript{87} At its most basic, Middle Platonism is the movement of thought in which Pythagorean dimensions of Plato’s thought were emphasized and exaggerated. It is fascinating that this reinterpretation appealed to a Platonic ‘oral tradition’, thus striking a parallel to later Rabbinic reinterpretations of Moses. John Dillon characterizes the main concerns of middle Platonism as ethics, physics, and logic. Within the stream of ethics, there is a significant focus on the purpose and direction of life, claiming that happiness comes from an alignment with nature, or the “ideal of ‘Likeness to God’ (\textit{Homoiosis theoi})”\textsuperscript{88}. There was also a wide discussion on the nature of free will, an inconclusive one. In the realm of physics, “the question of the nature and activity of the supreme principle, or god, is dominant.”\textsuperscript{89} “Drawing upon Pythagorean mathematical theory, Plato began his metaphysical schema\textsuperscript{90} with a pair of opposed first principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad. The One is the active principle which imposes limit on the indefinite or unlimited Dyad, thereby laying the ground for


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 45.

the orderly construction of the cosmos.”

This construction of the world and the creation of multiplicity is accomplished through another entity called the “World Soul”, who appears across a wide range of literature in numerous ways and may be described as Demiurge, Sophia, and Logos, especially in later Christian texts. There are lower creations of gods, demons, angels, and other angelic figures, which will be very important during the discussion of Gnosticism in the next chapter. In the realm of logic, this period makes a change from the staunch rigour of Aristotelian syllogisms, and towards a dialogue happening “on the non-philosophical, or at least the sub-philosophical, level. The treatises are bald and didactic, stating their doctrine without attempt at proof, and aimed at an audience which, it would seem, was prepared to substitute faith for reason.”

This Middle Platonic parallel to the Pentateuchal narrative shows how taking something on faith was not something considered silly: Abraham is remembered for his forging of the first covenant, not his economic prowess. But, how one teaches and understands this text is important, and therefore demanded the right education and understanding in order to expound the ‘right’ teachings behind the texts.


92 Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 45.

93 Ibid, 119
Philo of Alexandria as Paradigmatic Middle-Platonist

Going back to the intellectual center of the empire, Alexandria, one of the most prominent Middle Platonists was a Jew, Philo. “Philo went through the full Greek basic education … as any young Greek of good family would have done, and he speaks of the process repeatedly, and with great respect, even when he is officially inveighing against pagan learning.” 94 While Philo was clearly comfortable with the techniques of learned exegesis developed by Alexandrian Homeric scholars, he applied these techniques to his own culture’s epic literature: the Pentateuch of Moses. Better still, in so doing he was able – as did the Homeric scholars – to make Moses compatible with his own, contemporary, Platonic worldview. As Dillon notes: “[T]he great revelation for Philo was that this apparently primitive collection of works, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, when looked at with a properly trained eye, contained the highest and most profound philosophy.” 95

In Philo’s exclusive use of Moses over Homer, there is a drift from a cosmopolitan to a more sectarian focus.

Philo was intimately familiar with Greek hermeneutics and in a sense presents the peak of extant Jewish Bible scholarship in Alexandria, but he may also be seen to mark its end. He neither integrated the Bible any longer into the general academic discourse around Homer nor encouraged open dialogue and controversy. Philo instead turned increasingly to preaching the correct interpretation of Scripture,

94 Ibid, 140.

95 Ibid, 141.
hoping to provide conclusive answers which would render further inquiry superfluous.\textsuperscript{96}

One of the ways that he provides these answers appears in the text called \textit{Questions and Answers on Genesis}. As the name implies, this work is a series of questions, posed by Philo, and then answered by Philo. Consider the first question.

2. (Gen. ii. 5) What is the meaning of the words, “And God made every green thing of the field before it came into being on the earth, and every grass before it grew”? In these words he alludes to the incorporeal ideas. For the expression, “before it came into being” points to the perfection of every green thing and grass, of plants and trees. And as Scripture says that before they grew on the earth He made plants and grass and the other things, it is evident that He made incorporeal and intelligible ideas in accordance with the intelligible nature which these sense-perceptible things on earth were meant to imitate.\textsuperscript{97}

If this process seems familiar, that is because it is something used extensively by later thinkers, notably Thomas Aquinas in his \textit{Summa},\textsuperscript{98} as well as being a standard educational format into the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{99} In this way, we can read this Philonic text as an educational tool. This harkens back to the \textit{grammatici} reading the Homeric texts to the

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students, and then giving the ‘real’ teaching behind it. This is direct evidence that Philo is using a Greek scholarly matrix through which to handle Jewish ideas: the reading of a foundational texts, a detailed exposition by the teacher. This is evident because there does not seem to be any voice other than Philo’s own in the Q&A, which is suggestive of this text being used in a student-teacher capacity, and not something that was meant for colleagues. Maren Niehoff, a scholar on Alexandrian affairs, makes this distinction and argues that Q&A is meant as a manual of instruction, and not meant for peers, whereas another work of Philo, Allegorical Commentary, is something that was meant for colleagues in the Alexandrian intellectual community. “Philo’s Q&A thus provides unique insights into one aspect of Jewish instruction in First-Century Alexandria. This series is the first extant work which puts the verse-by-verse commentary to didactic use for a wider audience, which had already received primary education but had no directly scholarly interests. The considerable breadth of the Q&A suggests a serious demand for Philo’s instruction and points to regular teaching activity.”100

In the Allegorical Commentary, Philo goes through the Pentateuch, and gives his detailed, textual exegesis in a scholarly and allegorical way. Consider again, his treatment of the creation of the Garden of Eden:

And God planted a pleasaunce101 in Eden toward the sun-rising, and placed there the man whom He had formed” (Gen. ii. 8). By using many words for it Moses has already made it manifest that the sublime and heavenly wisdom is of many names; for he calls it “beginning” and “image” and “vision of God”; and now by the planting of the pleasaunce he brings out the fact that earthly wisdom is a copy of this as of an archetype. Far be it from man’s reasoning to be the victim of so great impiety as to suppose that God tills the soil and plants pleasances. We

100 Niehoff, Jewish Exegesis, 167.

101 A part of a garden that is meant solely to give aesthetic pleasure.
should at once be at a loss to tell from what motive He could do so. Not to provide Himself with pleasant refreshment and comfort. Let not such fables even enter our mind. For not even the whole world would be a place fit for God to make His abode, since God is His own place, and He is filled by Himself, and sufficient for Himself, filling and containing all other things in their destitution and barrenness and emptiness, but Himself contained by nothing else, seeing that He is Himself One and the Whole.¹⁰²

Here, Philo uses allegory to preserve a passage that might otherwise merit athetizing (what divine entity would plant a garden?). Philo approaches this by placing the problematic passage at the start, and then rationalizing an allegorical exegesis for it. It is a very special and precise balancing act. “The literal dimension of Scripture is thus not dismissed but shown to be problematic to a degree that renders the allegorical meaning plausible, if not necessary. This twofold position creates the characteristic complexity and ambiguity of Philo’s work.”¹⁰³ This work shows that while Philo is a student of Roman and Greek education, he shows special attention to the conventions of textual scholarship insofar as dealing with the grammar of the Pentateuch¹⁰⁴ and is the first biblical scholar to deal with punctuation.¹⁰⁵ “[H]e was the first scholar [in Alexandria] to anchor a consistently allegorical approach in serious literal scholarship, thus offering a


¹⁰³ Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis*, 144.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 139; 145.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 139.
new theory of allegory, which is rooted in Aristotelian notions of authorial intention.”  

But in his “[s]tressing the uniqueness of the Jewish Scriptures, Philo assumed that they ultimately transcend literary analysis. Philo thus departed from Aristotelian scholarship, even inverting it, and initiated a new path of religiously committed exegesis, which became very attractive among his later readers.”  

For Philo, his work can be read as both intellectual and devotional. The notion of an intellectual contract comes up here again, and it is worth reiterating at this time. The scholarship that Philo is devoting to the literature of Moses is making his scholarship in demand in the Jewish intellectual circles, while appeasing any religious affiliations he might have, coming from a very prominent Jewish family in Alexandria, and in doing this scholarship, gets a double reward, both intellectually and culturally. This is suggestive of a link between faith and scholarship, that if you are a better scholar on the material, and are respected for your work, it will be given special status in religious circles as well. An example is the canonization of important scholars in the Christian Church and people asking intercessions from them for understanding.

There is a trend present, at least theoretically, that can account for this transition in the intellectual elite circles to include the Jewish canons. Under the leadership of organizing the library by firstly Demetrius of Phalerum (~297BCE), then Zenodotus of

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid, 151.
Ephesus (~284BCE) and later Aristophanes of Byzantium (~195BCE) among others.\textsuperscript{108} a desideratum to maintain and proliferate Homeric verse as being the vanguard of intellectual achievement is promoted. Participation in the criticism and scholarship of that material is to be in the cutting edge of scholarship and academic endeavor within the humanities. The \textit{Scholiasts} are removing and emending the contradictory and problematic statements in the Homeric corpus, so as to produce the perfection of what Homer intended, but there is a problem that comes with that. At a certain point, there is no longer anything else to correct, and once a definitive edition is edited, exegesis becomes a circular heuristic to which further revisions are made to the texts. Now, within the framework of Alexandrian textual criticism, someone like Philo, who is thoroughly educated, thoroughly Jewish, and thoroughly Middle-Platonist, can mine a lot of intellectual data from the Pentateuch, considered to be contradictory and problematic when read in a literal way. So for Philo, a more profound textual/devotional/intellectual venture is to put forward Moses as the chief of scholarly and Platonic interpretive techniques, thus establishing a switch in the course material. Once again, it is obvious that Philo in his later career is both teaching a captive audience, viewed through his \textit{Q&A}, but also having serious collegial conversations in his \textit{Allegorical Interpretation}. Did Homer become unfashionable? With the volatile political milieu that the Jewish

groups saw themselves in following the Hasmonean overthrow\textsuperscript{109}, Philo’s Middle Platonism shows how a problematic set of texts from an imperially ill-favored group of people contains the fertile soil to allegorically till a set of laws and way of life through which to build an ethical framework and narration of a created world and cosmology: all very important to the Middle-Platonic endeavor.

It seems ironic to say that with the process of Hellenization, Homeric scholarship loses its place of importance in textual study, with each region or province able to educate and disseminate its own message. Homeric verse rewards ethical or heroic behavior with almost godhood, both in thought and deed. Philo had “learned from the Stoic (and perhaps Pythagorean) exegesis of Homer what philosophic truths could be concealed behind battles and fornications, shipwrecks and homecomings, and it must have suddenly struck him that this was just what was going on in the Pentateuch.”\textsuperscript{110} It would be anathema to the Alexandrian scholars to simply say all the mistakes are allegorical, and so a parting of the ways happens, but as history tells, Judaisms in the time of Philo were about to be transformed by two cataclysmic events: the destruction of the temple, and the life and influence of Jesus. Both of these events shaped, in complicated

\textsuperscript{109} After the revolts, the Hasmonean Dynasty (140-37BCE) was not under foreign domination, but was subject to sectarian as well as foreign disputes, in addition to it being an important religious period with the rededication of the Temple after Antiochus IV’s desecration of it.

\textsuperscript{110} Dillon,\textit{ The Middle Platonists}, 142.
ways, how textual study moved from the classroom into the political and religious
spheres.

Judean Scribalism

Concurrent with all of these developments, a rather distinctive form of Judean
literate culture stood alongside Platonizing scholarship. In Judea, particularly, the
position of the scribe held significant authority, not only practically for employment, but
also ideologically, as the duties of a scribe were varied: archiving (possession and control
of the present), historiography (possession and control of the past), didactic writing
(maintenance of social values among the elite), predictive writing (possession and control
of the future)".\textsuperscript{111} The schools and institutions that facilitated the training of these scribes
helped create a class of people that had significant authority. They could be the teachers,
administrators, or intellectual diplomats. They would also naturally form a textual
group, and in that way, given their training and resources, would be the first to edit and publish
documents. “We can identify […] literary activity undertaken by the scribes in
furtherance of their professional interests: writings that display the scribal ethos itself –
historiographic, didactic, liturgical and legal. [These texts] lend themselves naturally to
being canonized by copying, studying, and teaching in the schools.”\textsuperscript{112} Scribes then
would want to collect and discuss and teach the documents that relate to their own
professions. The curriculum used for study and analysis in these scribal schools to this
point would arguably consist of the wisdom literature, as oftentimes the Judean scribes

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 74-5.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, 84.
would be viewed as sages or wise men and very influential in their own right. In wisdom literature, the focus is how to live your life, conduct yourself in public affairs, and generally stay ‘off the radar’ of the people that would want to do you harm. Some examples of this wisdom literature come from sources such as Qoheleth and Sirach, or Ben Sira. Ben Sira, a Hellenistic Jew, writing in the second century BCE,\textsuperscript{113} outlines the position of the scribe:

\begin{quote}
He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients,
   and is concerned with prophecies;
he preserves the sayings of the famous
   and penetrates the subtleties of parables;
he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs
   and is at home with the obscurities of parables.
He serves among the great
   and appears before rulers;
he travels in foreign lands
   and learns what is good and evil in the human lot.
He sets his heart to rise early
   to seek the Lord who made him,
   and to petition the Most High;
he opens his mouth in prayer
   and asks pardon for his sins.
\end{quote}

If the great Lord is willing,
   he will be filled with the spirit of understanding;
he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own
   and give thanks to the Lord in prayer.
The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge,
   as he meditates on his mysteries.
He will show the wisdom of what he has learned,

and will glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant. Many will praise his understanding; it will never be blotted out. His memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations. Nations will speak of his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise. If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.

Though Ben Sira is widely accepted as a writing that was utilizing common ideas in ANE literature, “it seems inescapable that Ben Sira meant his praises to apply at least in part to his own society. […] It is like enough, then that some individuals in Jewish society called scribes had prestige in that society because of their legal expertise. But […] they may also have gained prestige by virtue of the main function suggested by their name, that is, writing.”

The Aramaic word saw-fare’ or the Greek word grammateus appears 122 times in both the Hebrew bible and the NT. In two senses of the word, it first means a person who tallies numbers or takes records, religious or secular. It was their job to accurately record and recount findings to those who requested information. In the second sense of the word, “in the early monarchy the chief ‘scribe’ was the highest


court official next to the king. His job was to receive and evaluate all royal correspondence – to answer the unimportant and give the rest onto the proper officer or to the king himself. He also wrote and/or composed royal communications to those within the kingdom." Under these definitions it is easy to see how the scribe held significant authority, and could easily exercise that authority. Throughout the literature, there is mention of the priests and scribes as being distinct within the social and religious framework. The function of the whole state, and especially the temple necessitated scribes to look after finances and correspondence, while the priesthood would engage in the actual cultic practice, and had more direct contact with the sacred, thereby getting more social capital. With thousands passing through the temple to sacrifice to Yahweh, both scribe and priest would be full-time positions. But this was not a relaxed relationship. In the present secular society, intellect and scientific rationality is valorized, but in the religiously dominated society of Palestine, these intellectual scribal elites were

116 For example: “So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and equity to all his people. Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Seraiah was secretary; Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David’s sons were priests.” (2 Sam 8:15-8.)


less significant to the common people than the people who communicated with Yahweh and were the instruments of atonement for sins. Even within the priesthood, there is a hierarchical contention between the return of the Zadokite priesthood of Babylonia and the Levitical priesthood remaining in Judea. A digression, but the point is that even though there was a distinction between the priests and scribes, we cannot imagine that distinction as a stable one. As history would eventually show, Judaism is forced into being a religion of the book, and so the priesthood eventually fades from emphasis. But, as the point of this chapter is textual transmission and redaction, let us turn more specifically to the person of the scribe.

The training of these scribes would be very similar to that of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian literary elite. “The epigraphic evidence suggests that training in rudimentary scribal skills was available throughout Palestine, but the formation of scribes who were ‘expert and wise’ required a program of study provided only in the temple school”\textsuperscript{119}. Though there is really no apparent evidence of a concise syllabus of what was studied as scribal curriculum, the first stage of education was much like the later Hellenistic and Roman insofar as it entailed the apprehension of basic grammar and vocabulary, where the second stage “was devoted to the memorization and study of the classic texts of their trade and culture. Further specialization is likely to have occurred, presumably in the form of an individual traineeship.”\textsuperscript{120} Philo’s Q&A is one such example of more detailed exposition on a text, and it is reasonable to envision how it

\textsuperscript{119} Van De Toorn, \textit{Scribal Culture}, 97.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 98.
could be read as a transcript of a lecture to an individual or group of students. It also is reasonable to say that the Pentateuchal material was involved, if not required, in the training of Judean scribes. As the Homeric epics recounted the history and ethos of Greek-ness to the students, so also would the Pentateuch have told the story of the patriarchs and relationship of God to the Jewish world. This can be gleaned from archaeological evidence, as a school does not exist in isolation, and a sense of important texts can be found in what is found in the extant archives and collections. At Qumran, “about 25 percent of the dead sea scrolls are scriptural. Except for the scroll of Esther, all books of the Hebrew bible are represented by at least one copy, [with the most being of Psalms, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah].”\textsuperscript{121} This can be accounted for because according to a rabbinical doctrine that goes back to the late Hellenistic period, the spirit of prophecy had ceased [after the death of Moses]; the authority of the prophets now lay with the scribes [like the Levites before them inherited it from Moses]. From this ideological perspective, the prophets of old can retrospectively be qualified as “scribes” and “teachers” themselves. The scribes were, in a way, the new prophets\textsuperscript{122}

And these new prophets “held the key to the symbolic capital of the nation”.\textsuperscript{123} Much like the heroes in the Homeric Greek epic like Achilles and Hector, the Yahwistic scribal education would have people like Samson and Joshua. Powerful kings like Menelaus and Agamemnon are akin to Solomon and David. The labors of Hercules can be compared to the sojourn of Moses and the godly-assisted feats of power and strength he showed. This is speculative, but reasonable, and it is not meant to convey that the scribes did not have

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 102.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Van der torn, \textit{Scribal Culture}, 107.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 106.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
an understanding and expertise with the Greek canons, which it is reasonable to say they did, rather it is to say that Jewish canons would have more relevant substance to their cultural education. Nevertheless, it is not the point of this chapter to investigate the curriculum of the scribes, as analogous as it is to the Roman educational matrix, but to show what sort of people the scribes were, and how groups of scribes produced, redacted, and disseminated various bodies of texts.

Mishnaic Literature

What the destruction of the temple, as well as the influence of Middle Platonism and its increasing emphasis on not just glory, but a well-governed life, gave to the world was the establishment of writing communities of a certain scribal class that collected, analyzed and published texts that reflected the scribal ethos, namely teaching, history and ethics. Thus do ANE scribalism and Hellenistic Middle Platonism come together. These productions have been organized by textual scholars into 6 categories for classification purposes: “transcription of Oral Lore”, “invention of a new text”, “compilation of existing lore, either oral or written”, “expansion of an inherited text”, “adaptation of an existing text for a new audience”, and “integration of individual documents into a more comprehensive composition”.124 This is being done in different textual circles and one such production is the Enochic literature, for example, shown to be engaging with the Noah story of Genesis as well as older ANE texts. Allegorical interpretation becomes central to the exegesis of the Torah after the destruction of the Temple by Roman forces in 70 CE. Following this event, every mention of the Temple and of sacrifice must either

124 Ibid, 110.
become allegorical or symbolical or be disregarded completely. For the post 70 CE
scribe, this seems fairly straightforward. Ben Sira in the passage above already outlines
the mandate of the scribe: “[penetrating] the subtleties of parables; he seeks out the
hidden meanings of proverbs and is at home with the obscurities of parables.” So in this
way, allegorical interpretation would have been easily applied. But the destruction of the
temple puts the priests out of business, and provides the scribes with a dilemma:

they could seek to incorporate the Destruction into the Deuteronomic paradigm of
sin and punishment, or they apply the teaching of the book of Daniel that
historical events should not be studied for meaning, or they could lapse into
despair. They refused this last option. They continued to employ the rhetoric of
sin and punishment without ever quite identifying the specific sin that deserved
such punishment, but simultaneously they labored to distract their followers
altogether from the question of history and its meaning.\(^\text{125}\)

The Mishnah (3\(^{\text{rd}}\) century CE), or the codification of the Pharisaic Oral Torah, is one such
product of this labor. The scribes who authored it, usually considered to be the root of
rabbinical Judaism, recognized that “unlike the life of Temple and sacrifice, the life of
Torah and commandments could be maintained anywhere and was not dependent on
structures that enemies could destroy.”\(^\text{126}\) So in this way, the redaction of biblical texts
creates a system that is self-sustaining because the scribes themselves are the exegetes
and authors of the texts they produce. An example of this is in the Mishnaic origin story
given for the founding of Rome:

\(^{125}\) Robert Goldenberg, "The Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: Its Meaning and Its
Consequences," in The Cambridge History of Judaism, ed. Steven T. Katz
(Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 199.

\(^{126}\) Ibid, 201.
Levi said, the day that [King] Solomon entered into a marriage arrangement with Pharaoh-Necho, the king of Egypt, Michael came down and stuck a reed into the sea. A sandbank formed, and a huge forest developed, and this subsequently because the capital of Rome. The day that Jeroboam erected two golden calves Remus and Romulus came and built two small huts in Rome. On the day that Elijah departed a king was enthroned in Rome.\textsuperscript{127}

So with this practice and heredity of authoring texts and rich practice of exegesis and authoring different genres of literature, the scribes of the second temple period hold a significant place in the literature used among the Judaisms. But nonetheless, this is paradoxical:

they [the scribes] had made themselves the recognized leaders of Judaism by virtue of their knowledge of Torah, but the Torah itself presupposed a hereditary leadership of Priests … and this ambivalence was expressed in the idea that the arrival of the Messiah would be accompanied by terrible and violent suffering; ‘May the Messiah come speedily,’ one rabbi reportedly said, ‘but not while I am alive.’\textsuperscript{128}

This restructuring acts as a powerful political and practical tool. Pharisaic Judaism can then be something not under imperial control in the political sense, as the destruction of the temple marks a shift from a place, to an idea, and the scribes themselves are the ones creating the system by which to follow, and is not dictated by the priestly class of the institution of the temple. To be Jewish after this event is to follow a way of life that is not limited to sacrificial offerings, but by reading accepted texts and believing in a common accepted history and self-affiliation on the basis of the canon of literature and shared belief held by the community.

\textsuperscript{127} Avodah Zarah chapter 1, Ruling 2, Cited in Heshey Zelcer, A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud (Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker, 2002), 53.

The point of these examples was to try and account for how Yahwistic literature became a text that was read and studied alongside the Homeric epics. With Alexandria having a very large Jewish population, it is understandable how that literature might see a rise in popularity. Philo, much like those prior to him, questions and applies his training to the Yahwistic literature, and in so doing he does something novel within Homeric circles: analyzing so-called barbarian texts, but using his allegorical hermeneutic to put forward a philosophically rigorous system by which he gained popularity and commissions to teach. Additionally, the fluctuating politically reality of the Hasmonean dynasty, combined with destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, causes the literate class of Judean Scribes to utilize the apocalyptic genre as articulated by Smith in this paper to come to grips with and handle the subsequent identity crisis that Judaism found itself in. This is important as it shows just how much influence the scribes could have within a society, to not only gain work as teachers as a livelihood, but also work on the exegesis of Yahwistic texts that carried cultural and religious implications alongside that exegesis, as shown through the Mishnah. The link between power, authority and scholarship is more focused in Judaism, and is appropriate to examine to see how the syncretism of different scholarly backgrounds and texts created a conversation amongst the elites. The Middle Platonists struggled with the Greek gods, and the scholarship of the Homeric verses, though still very institutional and important, was shown to be not exclusive in the academy, which marks a shift in what was understood to be a cultured, canonical education.
Conclusions

The point of this chapter was threefold. First, an attempt was made to show a change in what scholarship examined at the elite levels. This was done by surveying how the irony of Hellenization brought the glorification of all things Greek, but also saw how the Homeric epics fall out of favor with some intellectuals as shown through Philo, echoing the criticism of poetry and histories by Plato and Xenophanes. Secondly, this chapter tried to show how such criticism of the pagan gods signaled a shift in the philosophical framework of intellectual thought, as shown in the rise of Middle-Platonism, and the effects it had on not only the exegesis and scholarship of Homer but also how other significant works like the Yahwistic Pentateuch could be just as valuable to elite-level scholarship, as shown in the Philonic commentaries but also in the scribal schools of Hellenistic Judaism with the inclusion of Pentateuchal materials alongside the Greek\textsuperscript{129}. Third, this chapter tried to show how after the destruction of the Temple and the now impractical priesthood, the scribal class had a unique opportunity to rise to authority manifested with the articulation of the Mishnah and the ontological shift of Judaism from a sacrificial cult to an intellectual and textual enterprise. This last point, that the integration of the Yahweh literature read by Jewish literary elites is considered important and uses the same scholarly practices and textual engagement as the Homeric, provides the ground into which the discussion of the early Jesus groups will take place in the next chapter by analyzing how editing practices and intellectual conflicts determined affiliation with either Christianity or the shoddy, scholarly error of heresy.

\textsuperscript{129} It is reasonable to assume that scribes would be at least familiar with Greek literature as part of their education.
Chapter III: Polemical Disputes Relating to the Collection and Redaction of Early Christian Literature

Introduction

The point of the preceding two chapters was to provide substance for the examination of the social/intellectual matrices which affected the early development of the New Testament canon. How texts are interpreted is related to authority, both intellectually and politically, and this interpretation has affected not only the Alexandrian scribes and their claims to correct Homeric interpretation, but also to the Jewish intellectuals of Philo and the Judean scribes with their respective Middle Platonic and Mishnaic productions. To that end, this chapter will examine the early Common Era texts and figures that are influential not only for the rise and eventual dominance of the Jesus literature, but also for how that literature was received by different Jesus groups, and later by the wider empire under Constantine. Textual material is being generated and edited in the first four centuries by a variety of Jesus followers, in ways similar to the textual and redactional practices of both the Alexandrian scholars and the Jewish scribes. Even the declaration of the canon of the Christian church by the later church fathers is affected by not only Hellenistic-Roman scholarship and Jewish scribalism, but is also the product of the theological and doctrinal claims to authority made by what became the dominant orthodoxy, but also by other schools of thought present at that time. The contestations of early Christian bishops over the content of canonical scripture demonstrates the relationship between the development of the New Testament and the extant textual culture of Alexandrian and Jewish intellectuals and scribes.
Early Jesus literature is in flux. From the individuals and groups that viewed Jesus as a wise teacher pointing towards a higher god, to those groups that equated Jesus and God as the same, the literature is diverse. What we will now call mainstream or orthodox Christianity is the version with which we are most familiar with in the present. The ancient orthodoxy is the evolving doctrine of a church of Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, and those bishops with whom the modern Christian churches claim their roots. Groups and individuals that differed in theology, belief, or institutional identity, called a *haireses*, heretics, are also present\(^\text{130}\).

With the lineage of Homeric educational and exegetical practices, combined with Jewish scribal practices and the Middle Platonic refocusing of interpretative praxis, a very nice environment for the Jesus literature to develop is in place. This literature is about Jesus, who was crucified around 30 CE, after preaching and teaching a distinctive way of life within the context of the Judaism of the time. Born of a Jewish family, Jesus’ followers recorded some of his contentious positions: Sabbath rules could be broken for the right reasons, apocalyptic consummation was at hand: a firebrand if there ever was one. Jesus supposedly said that he was the king of heaven, the son of God, and could forgive sins and save humanity. The authorities had him killed as a political and religious dissident, but after claims that he came back from the dead, had a glorified human body, and took his place as king of heaven, his popularity continued and grew. But not all of his fans had the same understanding of who Jesus really was, and so it is in this creative and

\(^\text{130}\) Originally, the notion of a *hairesis* was meant to signify different factions, or parties, or opinions, without a value of attached to it. Think political parties. It is later that a value becomes attached to the label of heresies, with it being a pejorative term.
conflictual environment that I will argue that both Alexandrian and Jewish culture contributed to the NT canonization process.

Gospel Linkage to Homeric Verse

One type of text that we commonly associate with Jesus is biography. Thinking back to Greek works such as Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* and Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Greeks*, this type of literature serves a two-fold purpose. First, it gives a story that is interesting to listen to, and secondly acts as a didactic endeavor to the understanding shared by the author. One text that focuses on Jesus’ biography is the Gospel of Mark. Dated somewhere after the Jewish war with Rome (66-74 CE), it is widely accepted that Mark is the oldest of the gospels.\footnote{This is due to the Synoptic Problem. Simply put, the Synoptic Problem is the product of textual critical methods that looks at the relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke. When looking at the text in parallel, there are striking similarities between them all, as well as additions and deletions in the Matthean and Lukan materials. Analysis suggests that Mark was a source text used by the author/s of Matthew and Luke. Additionally, material not present in Mark, but common between Matthew and Luke is generally attributed to a lost but academically reconstructed text known as Q, coming from the German word *Quelle*, meaning source. In most NT scholarship, Markan priority combined with Q-source for Matthean and Lukan commonalities makes the two-source hypothesis, which is generally considered to be the acceptable solution to the Synoptic Problem.}
As a genre of literature, Gospels are not unique. There is a biographical genre extant by the common era, and Adela Collins puts forward four different functions of ancient biographical works. First, there is “ecomiastic” literature, which was to selectively describe a powerful figure’s life, exaggerating the good, and silencing the bad, such as the writing of Isocrates and the description of the life of Evagoras, ruler of Cyprus. This type of literature, Collins argues, is not suited to the gospels due to the synoptic gospels “[lacking] the rhetorical techniques associated with it; further, they do not hesitate to include incidents that Hellenists would have considered embarrassing, such as the agony in the garden and the crucifixion itself.” The second is the “scholarly biography”. Diogenes Laertius’ Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers fits into this category quite neatly. “The aim of the work is to write a history of philosophy that divides philosophers into two main successions, an Ionian or Eastern and an Italian or Western”. The treatment of the biographies is frequently irreverent, and Collins concludes that this style has little to do with the Gospels. The third type is “’Didactic’, as a primary aim is to instruct the reader, not only about the life of a particular individual but also about the way of life that s/he founded. “The goal is to win respect for and hopefully allegiance to the figure’s way of life. The subjects of this type of literature are


133 Ibid.


135 Ibid.
typically religious leaders and philosophers, especially those who founded communities or schools”

Collins draws parallels between this type of literature and the lives of Moses and Pythagoras that were already circulating. This comparison is analogous to the biography of Moses that Philo constructs. “The gospels clearly have an affinity with this type [didactic]. All four contain extensive teaching of Jesus, and discipleship is a major theme in each.”

The fourth type is called an “ethical biography”, which gives a description of a life under the auspices of a specific morality, to illustrate the benefit of living that way. Collins goes on to show more types, such as Entertaining biographies, as well as Historical Biographies, which “have the same aims as historiography: to give an account of an important series of events and to explain the events in terms of their causes.”

The Gospels have affinities with the didactic biographies as well as the historical biographies insofar as the narrative flow of the text portrays Jesus generally as the leader of a school, giving lessons to his disciples, and performing works of power, so as to cement his authority. Depending on which gospel you read, the person of Jesus is

136 Ibid.


139 Ibid

140 Ibid, 32

141 Ibid

142 Ibid.
portrayed differently. In Matthew, Jesus is the supreme Rabbi and teacher of Mosaic law. In Luke and John, Jesus is the wise sage or teacher. In Mark, Jesus is very emotional, and focused on predicting the apocalypse. But, in all four Gospels, the understanding that Jesus is a good person to imitate and base your life on is central. In this way, Christianity as evidenced by the gospels seems to resemble other Hellenistic and philosophical schools of thought.

Synoptic comparisons give further evidence of the editing practices akin to those utilized on the Homeric corpus. Consider the narration on leaven (Appendix A, Figure 6). The narration of Mark has the disciples as being fairly idiotic, not understanding the parables, forgetting to pack food for a boat ride, and bumbling along the teachings of Jesus. In addition to the Pharisees, it includes Herod as a hypocrite. The Lukan material athetizes the repetitive language and the image of the disciples as stupid, cleans up the flow of the text, and alters the theological and ontological message of Jesus by explaining that the leaven was meant as hypocrisy. The Matthean version still has the disciples as foolish, but emphasizes the Sadducees as a group to be cautious of, without explicitly saying that leaven is symbolic of hypocrisy. What this suggests is that textual editing is going on, using the same tools and methods as the Alexandrian scribes. The Lukan scribe corrects and explains the Markan dialogue to portray Jesus as an adept teacher, whereas in Matthew and Mark, the disciples are not grasping the point of the teaching, which makes Jesus look like an ill-qualified teacher. Luke assumes the intellectual license to athetise the troubling parts and adapt the message of Jesus as something clear and didactic, versus a Markan riddle to an imbecilic cohort. Now while there is speculation as to whether different editions of Mark were used by Matthew and Luke, this example
coalesces with the scribe trying to adapt the text to a new audience by way of textual correction and athetization.

It can be seen that while the Gospels were edited and examined by a variety of different textual critics, they are also in conversation with Greek textual material outside of Judaism. Remembering that the paradigmatic text in a classical education is Homeric verse, let us now consider the Gospel literature in light of the Hellenistic classics. First off, Jesus is a different kind of hero. “Empedocles advertises the claim to fetch the *menos* [soul/life-force] of a dead man out of Hades, but that means that he was prepared to go down to Hades, just like Orpheus for Persephone or Heracles for Alcestis. However, [Jesus] raising somebody from the dead by commanding him or her ‘Wake up’ is unheard of for mortals in earlier antiquity.”

Jesus seems to be doing something novel in terms of generic conventions and the meaning behind the text. The Jesus of Mark especially has seen scholarship on how the gospel is in dialogue with the Homeric corpus. Traditionally, the Markan Gospel has been treated as primarily related to the LXX and Jewish sources, but recent scholarship examines the Gospel in terms of a Hellenistic and not strictly Jewish source for its form and narrative. Dennis McDonald’s work, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, uses the criteria of “accessibility, analogy, density, order,

distinctiveness, and interpretability”\textsuperscript{144} to construct the argument that Homer was the guiding force behind Mark, not only in format, but also as a backdrop onto which the author projects Jesus’ superiority to those familiar pagan heroes.

From a comparison (Appendix A, Figure 7), McDonald argues that the Eucharist meal of Jesus celebrates, imitates, and overcomes the cannibalistic meal that Odysseus finds himself in. “Whereas Odysseus and a few others saved their skins – literally – from the cannibalistic Laestrygonians, Jesus himself is the meal in Mark; he gave his body and blood for others…. [and] the evangelist transvalues the devastation of the Laestrygonian meal into a meal of salvation”\textsuperscript{145} The death of Jesus parallels Hector’s in the \textit{Iliad}, and the naming of James and John the “Sons of Thunder” prepares the reader to compare these former fishermen with the Heavenly Twins, protectors of sailors, the Dioscuri, “lads of Zeus”, the god of thunder”.\textsuperscript{146} Again, the \textit{Iliad}, when compared to Mark, shows that

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[t]he deaths of both heroes anticipate the falls of cities. Like Achilles gloating over the corpse of the one the Trojans glorified as a god, the centurion gloated over the corpse of the putative Son of God. Few ancient burials required courageous rescues of a corpse at nightfall, as with the corpses of hector and Jesus. Mark’s indebtedness to the \textit{Iliad} helps explain the function of the taunts of Jesus’ foes and the gloat of the centurion. The divine preservation of Hector’s corpse from dogs, birds, and desiccation sheds light on the speed of Jesus’ demise and internment, and the laments of the three Trojan women illumine the role of the three women at Jesus’ tomb. Mark not only imitated the death and burial of
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\textsuperscript{145} Ibid, 123.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, 174.
Hector, he emulated them. Homer, not history or tradition, explains the Gerasene demoniac, the anointing woman, the fleeing naked youth, Joseph of Arimathea, the women who came to anoint Jesus, and the youth sitting in the tomb.

From this, McDonald situates Markan literature as something novel and a literary work of art. Mark’s appropriation of the Homeric narrative and theology, as well as biblical texts and oral traditions [results in] one of the most powerful, compelling, and influential narratives in the history of literature. To mistake Mark’s fiction for early Christian reality, whether historical or traditional, is to slight his enormous and enduring contribution to theology. To appreciate him fully is to accept him as an artist.

Nevertheless, Mark was not a popular gospel in the history of scholarship, with more emphasis being placed on the other gospels, and Mark being contentious due to its adoptionistic-sounding christology. The point of this Markan digression was to show how in one of the canonical gospels, there is evidence of a Homeric tint, at least conceptually. It is not hard to see how this was made possible: Homeric literature was the most popular among educated elites due to its place in the curriculum, and so for the author of the Gospel of Mark to appropriate the style would be to make both a literary and theological claim, which would see it as a new epic, and worthy of paying attention to, as the Jesus groups valorised him and not Hector. Again, while this might not be the mainstream

148 Ibid, 190.
149 Ibid.
150 To see more about the lack of Markan references in Patristic texts, see Michael J. Kok, The Gospel on the Margins: The Reception of Mark in the Second Century (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).
understanding, it certainly adds another literary engagement to Mark insofar as it is a work of literature in conversation with the conventions of Greek literature.

Pauline Letter Collection and Editing

Beginning roughly in the 50-60s CE, Paul wrote letters to congregations in cities as well as to individuals. There has been much discussion in scholarship about how the letters of Paul were collected and distributed, and one such scholar, David Trobisch, has a hypothesis that is interesting. Trobisch begins by examining the nature of ancient manuscripts of the Pauline letters, and notices something. In certain papyri, like P. 46, the letters are arranged according to length\textsuperscript{151}, whereas in the other codices, like Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Ephraumi Rescriptus, the order is consistently Romans, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1 Thess, 2 Thess, Heb, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus, Phlm, notwithstanding the movement of Hebrews as shown in other codices like Claromontanus, which places Hebrews after Philemon. What Trobisch argues is that “the manuscripts split the New Testament into four parts: The Gospels, the letters of Paul, Acts/general letters, and Revelation. Furthermore, the uniform titles, sequence, and number of letters in the manuscripts indicate that the canonical edition of the letters of Paul derives from one single archetype”\textsuperscript{152}, which for Trobisch is arranged by the addressees. Thus, the organization of the texts are to “the letters to congregations … (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2

\textsuperscript{151} Rom, Heb, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Eph, Gal, Phil, Col, 1 Thess

Thessalonians, Hebrews); [and] the letters to individuals … (1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon). Letters with identical addressees are placed adjacent to each other (1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy).”153 Think of these as early collections literally sewn together by later redactors, which is indicative of a canon of Paul starting to circulate.

Troisch recognizes three stages to this letter collection and publishing: authorized recensions, in which “the author of the letter prepares the letters for publication”; expanded editions, where “after the author’s death these editions are expanded”; and comprehensive editions, in which “all the available editions are combined”.154 The first stage of this process is where the author himself “was responsible for the selection of letters and for editing them.”155 Think of this stage as collecting your journal entries to make a memoir, wherein you would select the most representative, relevant, and most important to you for the collection. If people wanted to reproduce that, then that would be an authorised recension. Secondly, there are expanded editions, which begins to happen after the author dies.156

Unpublished letters are collected. If their topic is somehow related to authorized recensions, they are published as appendices to these collections. Otherwise

153 Ibid, 27.

154 Ibid, 50.

155 Ibid, 50-1.

156 I find this to be a methodological assumption – really? You have to die for this to happen? Where is the evidence for this?
letters covering the same subject or addressed to the same person are put together and published as separate volumes.\textsuperscript{157}

Think of these as someone going through your journals after you die, and adding additional material which you yourself were not interested in publishing, but are still relevant and widely read, as an appendix to your already edited and collected memoir. The third stage of development is the comprehensive edition, where “scribes try to produce manuscripts containing all known letters.”\textsuperscript{158}\textsuperscript{159} This is where the expanded editions are further combined with everything they consider to be written by you. Trobisch relates this to Paul by saying “manuscripts containing all fourteen letters evidently represent the stage of comprehensive editions.”\textsuperscript{160}

A diagram (Appendix A, Figure 8) is helpful to show this process. The authorized recension that Paul did himself is Rom/1-2 Cor/Gal and comprises the first unit. The collections comprising additional letters to individuals and cities show what the comprehensive NT edition of Pauline letters as we have it today looks like. While it is accepted that there are only seven authentic Pauline letters written by his own hand, there are also pseudonymous letters and pastorals that fit the content criteria for the collectors of the expanded editions. We can imagine each collection being their own sort of micro-canon, being published independently insofar as the content and length of their

\textsuperscript{157} Trobisch, \textit{Paul’s Letter Collection}, 51.

\textsuperscript{158} Again – one should question the criterion for this, as there were \textit{many} letters associated with Paul that did not make the cut.

\textsuperscript{159} Trobisch, \textit{Paul’s Letter Collection}, 51.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
manuscript was akin to different anthologies. Another diagram can help this argument. There were three different anthologies floating around from the first century onward: the ones Paul himself edited, and those compiled by fans or followers, to make up three editions. These later are combined to make the canonical texts as we know them.

Upon looking at another diagram of the length of Pauline texts (Appendix A, Figure 9), one can see that Ephesians and 1 Timothy are longer than the books following immediately behind them. This demarcates the micro-canons of the expanded editions and appendices by the size-principle of arrangement. “Once the principal of arrangement of the older collection is established, the beginning of the appendix is marked by a letter that does not match this principle. The beginning of an appendix is confirmed if from that letter on, all following letters are arranged again according to the principle of arrangement of the older collection…. [and the authorized letters of Paul are arranged according to] the length of the texts.” 161 From the diagram, one can see the divisions of the textual units starting with Ephesians and 1 Tim. They not only contain the letters to groups and individuals, but also follow the principle of arrangement of the authorized recension. In this way, Trobisch presents the novel idea that Paul himself edited the first collections, which is why they have priority in the collection in terms of place, but also in terms of arrangement, dictating the arrangement of the following collections. Given the expensive and permanent nature of manuscripts, the scribes would put the largest text at the front of the collection, to ensure they did not run out of space at the end. 162

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162 Ibid, 16
of the contents of the literary units, they are bound together by the nature of their addressees: groups or individuals. Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, and Galatians are bound by themes of fundraising and the conflicts Paul had with Jerusalem and other civic concerns. Trobisch summarizes the point of including Romans in the unit as

Paul [putting] down his theological testament in a very abstract, general and philosophical way. He covers positions that are in dispute between him and the Jerusalem authorities: the observance of the law, circumcision, and eating habits. He does not hesitate to inform the Romans about his fears, finishing the letter with a plea to pray for him.\textsuperscript{163}

Galatians was intended as an affidavit to “prove his case against the saints in Jerusalem.”\textsuperscript{164} And “Corinth is one of the places where the conflict escalates. The first four chapters of 1 Corinthians deal with quarrels that originated around Peter and Paul. The last four chapters of 2 Corinthians reveal a culmination of this conflict.”\textsuperscript{165} And so Trobisch argues that “the Ephesians knew that 1 Corinthians was composed of more than one letter, and they expected as much for 2 Corinthians as well. Paul gives them all the information he deems necessary for his friends in Ephesus to understand the setting”\textsuperscript{166}, as he is going to ask for more money from the region. So in this way, the reason that Paul edited the letters the way he did becomes purposeful and thematic. The collection of Paul, Trobisch argues, is made up of mini-canons of manuscripts. The texts and thought of Paul were being collected and distributed, and Paul was evidently valued for his thought and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[163] Ibid., 94.
\item[164] Ibid.
\item[165] Ibid.
\item[166] Ibid.
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theology. The Trobisch hypothesis is meant to show how the collection and editing of the collections took place, in much the same way that it was done earlier in antiquity, namely that the authentic letters and the pseudonymous or spurious letters were differentiated and subsequent collection and editing made that clear in various ways. The result of that is the formation of a culture around a text. We see this happening with the letters of Cicero, who explicitly sent his texts to his peers to be edited.

Texts are the traces not of literary processes aimed at the production of perfect texts, but of social performances. Put another way: if the political can be textualized by being compared to a work-in-progress, then the textual can in turn be politicized by being imagined as an ever-changing site of community. This perspective provokes the reflection that texts, over and above their abilities to express a community’s identity or anxieties, can also be the medium of that community’s existence. Cicero’s literary republic existed through the constant negotiation of his texts and the imagination of possible alternatives to what they expressed. Textual criticism is thus socio-political history; for where a text is most potentially plural, there it is most potently political.167

A group of people is collecting, editing, and reading the Pauline letters in much the same way as would be done for non-Christian schools of thought to create a seminal list of writings of the founder. This trend is not unique, with the writings of great thinkers or schools of thought making it into the material being taught in the classrooms, exactly like Cicero and Quintilian recommending great thinkers like Isocrates, Homer, Livy, or Vergil. For our purposes, Gospels and Pauline letters found particular importance among a variety of Christian groups before sharp distinctions could be made between heresy and orthodoxy.

Gnosticism and Allegorical Exegesis in Early Christianity

The so-called Gnostics, for example, variously conflicted with early church thinkers like Irenaeus and Justin. Gnosticism is a very difficult subject to discuss, as the term itself is problematic and increasingly the consensus is that Gnosticism was not some cohesive unity but a multitude of groups that were retrospectively made a collective by being anachronistically labeled as Gnostics. Some general observations are nonetheless possible: “Gnosis is the recognition … that reality is deception that we are enslaved in a prison that we cannot smell or taste or touch and that there exists, apart from this deceptive reality, another place that is our true origin and source.” What current academia knows about the Gnostics comes first from the church fathers’ polemical writings, and more recently from the 20th century discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library. These writings provide a theater in which the New Testament canon is presented, argued, defended, and reified. This theater is the crucible that will show how the criticism and thought of the heterodox Fathers gives the nascent New Testament a development influenced by the intellectual and textual practices of the schools of Roman and Jewish antiquity.


Let us begin with the Valentinians. This group, characterised and based around a 2nd century CE Alexandrian theologian named Valentinus, was particularly popular and influential, but also particularly hated and caricatured by orthodox Christianity in the 2nd century.

It is not only the number of people known by name and remnants of their literary activity that bear witness to the significance of the school of Valentinus in nascent Christianity. Its impact can also be inferred from the energetic condemnation of this group in the works written by bishops and other key figures of early church history. Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen all regarded the Valentinians as posing a severe threat to what they considered to be true Christianity.170

Because it was an extensive movement, “it is difficult to speak of Valentinianism as a coherent movement”171.

Unlike baffling or confusing texts such as the Gospel of the Egyptians or On the Origin of the World, the surviving works of Valentinus lack elaborate mythic schemes, cosmoologies, and casts of characters. Many scholars of Valentinus imagine that he and his followers probably worshiped with other mainstream Christians, but then held additional private meetings in which the hidden or higher meanings of such things as the sacraments were discussed…. Valentinus was therefore recognizably Christian – he taught about the coming of Jesus as the Savior, for instance. But he was probably also an assimilationist, drawing freely on Greek philosophy to fill out his ideas of the world and of Christ.172

The early church father Irenaeus categorized the Valentinians on the basis of two movements, with one being a school-like organizational structure, the other taking on a ritualistic, cultic appearance. The terminology used by Irenaeus “corresponds with the

170 Ismo Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism: Myth, Lifestyle, and Society in the School of Valentinus (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 2

171 Lewis, Introduction to "Gnosticism”, 68.

172 Ibid, 66
strong emphasis they placed on education. In Valentinian texts, the world is described as a place of instruction that needs to be visited by those coming from above …. [and in addition] Christ is called ‘the teacher of immortality,’ opposed to another figure designated as an ‘arrogant teacher’”. This distinction is analogous to the different levels of instruction in Hellenistic schools, with the pedagogue having more rudimentary instructional capacity and the Grammaticus giving more intense teachings, and the philosopher having the most in-depth teachings. In this way, Jesus surpasses Homer as the best teacher of ethics and physics, and the study of Valentinian teachings of Jesus lead a Valentinian Christian philosophy and hermeneutic to develop, with Alexandrian academic rigor. This is supported by how seriously opposing intellectual currents took Valentinus as a ‘threat’ to their version of Christianity, and the extensive critiques of his academic and philosophical understanding of Christianity provided by Irenaeus, for example, who devoted thousands of words to describing and critiquing his ideas in meticulous detail.

Valentinus and the orthodox fathers were doing nothing novel. The practice of textual criticism and exegesis were not new things, as preceding chapters have shown. The dialogue happened in a school setting in a variety of different environments, but with Jesus as the subject, rather than Moses or Homer or Plato. Valentinian texts use the same gospels, Pauline letters and the Hebrew scriptures used by other contemporary Christians, but the exegesis of the Valentinian lineage had its own distinctive flavor.

173 Dunderberg, Beyond Gnosticism, 3-4.
Exegetical Disputes over scripture

That we are dealing here with variant interpretations of the same basic texts, and that these disputes are offered in the same academic terms as in non-Christian schools is evident even in that extravagant form of Gnosticism known as Sethianism. For example, in the Sethian Text, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, the biblical text of Genesis is reread so that the archons, or angels, create Adam. Irenaeus disagrees with this.

For when John, proclaiming one God, the Almighty, and one Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten, by whom all things were made, declares that this was the Son of God, this the Only-begotten, this the Former of all things, this the true Light who enlightens every man, this the Creator of the world, this He that came to His own, this He that became flesh and dwelt among us—these men, by a plausible kind of exposition, perverting these statements, maintain that there was another Monogenes, according to production, whom they also style Arche.

Irenaeus is straightforwardly operating as an intellectual, as a textual scholar. His disagreement with Sethian cosmology hinges on a reading of shared authoritarian texts. Irenaeus in the same chapter goes on to give the following lesson to Gnostic exegesis, and it is worth quoting at length.

Then, again, collecting a set of expressions and names scattered here and there [in Scripture], they twist them, as we have already said, from a natural to a non-

174 There is much debate as to whether Sethianism can be categorized as ‘Gnostic’. For a defense of the term ‘Gnostic’ being applicable to Sethianism, see David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

natural sense. In so doing, they act like those who bring forward any kind of hypothesis they fancy, and then endeavour to support them out of the poems of Homer, so that the ignorant imagine that Homer actually composed the verses bearing upon that hypothesis, which has, in fact, been but newly constructed; and many others are led so far by the regularly-formed sequence of the verses, as to doubt whether Homer may not have composed them. Of this kind is the following passage, where one, describing Hercules as having been sent by Eurystheus to the dog in the infernal regions, does so by means of these Homeric verses—for there can be no objection to our citing these by way of illustration, since the same sort of attempt appears in both:—

Thus saying, there sent forth from his house deeply groaning.— Od., x. 76.
The hero Hercules conversant with mighty deeds.— Od., xxi. 26.
Eurystheus, the son of Sthenelus, descended from Perseus.— Il., xix. 123.
That he might bring from Erebus the dog of gloomy Pluto.— Il., viii. 368.
And he advanced like a mountain-bred lion confident of strength.— Od., vi. 130.
Rapidly through the city, while all his friends followed. — Il., xxiv. 327.
Both maidens, and youths, and much-enduring old men.— Od., xi. 38.
Mourning for him bitterly as one going forward to death. — Il., xxiv. 328.
But Mercury and the blue-eyed Minerva conducted him.— Od., xi. 626.
For she knew the mind of her brother, how it laboured with grief.— Il., ii. 409.\footnote{This verse also mimics a genre of poetry well known in antiquity called a Cento, which consisted of making a poem out of rearranged verse units from another work entirely. It is reasonable that Irenaeus would have known of such a genre, and might be feigning ignorance and using it to take a cheap shot at the “Gnostic” literature.}

Now, what simple-minded man, I ask, would not be led away by such verses as these to think that Homer actually framed them so with reference to the subject indicated? But he who is acquainted with the Homeric writings will recognise the verses indeed, but not the subject to which they are applied, as knowing that some of them were spoken of Ulysses, others of Hercules himself, others still of Priam, and others again of Menelaus and Agamemnon. But if he takes them and restores each of them to its proper position, he at once destroys the narrative in question. In like manner he also who retains unchangeable in his heart the rule of the truth which he received by means of baptism, will doubtless recognise the names, the expressions, and the parables taken from the Scriptures, but will by no means acknowledge the blasphemous use which these men make of them. For, though he will acknowledge the gems, he will certainly not receive the fox instead of the likeness of the king. But when he has restored every one of the expressions quoted to its proper position, and has fitted it to the body of the truth, he
will lay bare, and prove to be without any foundation, the figment of these heretics.¹⁷⁷

Irenaeus’ aim is illustrating how the Gnostic exegesis is a bankrupt scholarship and should be rejected. He is saying that if the way the reconstruction and interpretation is being done was to be applied to Homeric scholarship, it would be laughed out of the room, and so why should the Gnostic exegesis be treated any differently? Here, Irenaeus is showing his cards as an educated bishop who is as comfortable with the Homeric text as he is with the scriptures, and advocates treating both in similar ways. If viewed through the lens of two different schools of thought, the discussion is understandable and common place, but when viewed through this religious lens, the stakes can be greatly inflated, as the nearly hysterical rhetoric of some authors make clear.

Irenaeus’ Context and Polemics

Irenaeus begins the last book of Against Heresies with this pronouncement:

Then also— having disposed of all questions which the heretics propose to us, and having explained the doctrine of the apostles, and clearly set forth many of those things which were said and done by the Lord in parables— I shall endeavour, in this the fifth book of the entire work which treats of the exposure and refutation of knowledge falsely so called, to exhibit proofs from the rest of the Lord’s doctrine and the epistles: [thus] complying with your demand, as you requested of me (since indeed I have been assigned a place in the ministry of the word); and, labouring by every means in my power to furnish you with large assistance against the contradictions of the heretics.¹⁷⁸

It seems as if Irenaeus was commissioned to assist a group of second-century Christians in adjudicating among a variety of complicated teachings. Being Bishop of Lyon, modern

¹⁷⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 1.9.4.

¹⁷⁸ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 5, Preface
France, Irenaeus would be far removed from Alexandria, where Valentinus and other Gnostic teachers are operating, but when viewed through the rubric of competing schools of thought, Irenaeus’ treatise reads like the testimony an expert witness brought in by the prosecution at a trial, who is giving his opinion and not much more. To that end, *Against Heresies* reads like Irenaeus’ didactic manual to his students containing all the teachings Irenaeus was aware of, with the instruction of “both controverting [the wrong ones] in a legitimate manner, and [being prepared] to receive the proofs brought forward against them, casting away their doctrines as filth by means of the celestial faith”.*179

Irenaeus does this by first expounding false teachings and doctrines with a lineage back to Simon Magus, the first false teacher, to his present day, and then systematically refuting it. He argues that it is impossible for any one to heal the sick, if he has no knowledge of the disease of the patients. This was the reason that my predecessors—much superior men to myself, too—were unable, notwithstanding, to refute the Valentinians satisfactorily, because they were ignorant of these men's system.*180

Irenaeus complains that they “start their allegorical exegesis by formulating exegetical questions with regard to [obscure biblical passages] that are susceptible to conceal a more profound meaning [and solve them] by raising another, larger, impious question [of whether there is a higher god than the demiurge]”*181 therein using scriptures as the

*179 Ibid.


framework onto which they build a cosmology. The parallel with Philo is obvious and extensive. Irenaeus’ biblical exegesis has its grounding in his argument, called Recapitulation theory, that “Jesus traversed the same ground as Adam but in reverse. Through his obedience he overcame the powers that hold humankind in thrall—sin, death, and the devil. To establish his theory, Irenaeus contended that Jesus experienced every phase of human development—infancy, childhood, youth, mature adulthood—sanctifying each by obedience.”182 In this way, Irenaeus is providing a similar allegorical interpretation, but with the understanding that his allegorizing is true and authentic.

Such, then, are the first principles of the Gospel: that there is one God, the Maker of this universe; He who was also announced by the prophets, and who by Moses set forth the dispensation of the law,—[principles] which proclaim the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and ignore any other God or Father except Him. So firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these [documents], each one of them endeavours to establish his own peculiar doctrine.183

Irenaeus argues for a four gospel canon on a variety of natural claims184, and justifies this claim using his biblical exegesis. In addition, due to his reliance on the LXX for evidence of his recapitulation argument, the canon of Irenaeus would have the LXX, the four canonical gospels, the letters of Paul, as well as Revelation, so as to provide the means and method to establish institutional authority based on scripture, tradition, and apostolic authority.


183 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 3.11.7.

184 Ibid.
The corpus of Gnostic writings is diverse and further strengthens the appearance of early Christianity being a loose agglomeration of schools, all focused on the same or similar texts, but differing among themselves based on their intellectual interpretation of these texts, and especially, later editing and organization of the writings to better accord with their distinctive interpretive directions. The basic activity is too similar to other groups of intellectuals to ignore. The Enochic traditions, Philonic allegories, Genesis scholarship itself as well as the New Testament all speak of angels being creative in some function, and so the Sethian exegesis of them in *HypArch* is not something surprising. It was however distinctive: “[f]or example, *OrigWorld*, *HypArchons*, and the *TriPro* all end with an eschatological apocalypse….But while many ancient apocalyptic texts discuss wars between human kings, most NH apocalypses remain firmly of the conviction that the final eschatological war will happen in the heavens.”¹⁸⁵ Even more interesting is that “these apocalyptic texts from NH are grouped together in a single codex: Codex V contains five texts, four of which are named apocalypses …[which] suggests that a scribe was intentionally ordering the material he received to copy, and that he produced, in turn, a ‘Book of Apocalypses’ for someone or some community. How they used such a book remains a mystery.”¹⁸⁶ This evidences a collection of texts to use in some sort of endeavor that would study or learn about the apocalyptic, which further indicates diversity in the way texts would be used and collected.


The criticism that Irenaeus lodges against Valentinians, Sethians, and others, that is to say, shoddy exegesis resulting in grievous error, becomes important in the discussion of Marcion’s New Testament as a mutilation of the text. The discussion of these two groups, Valentinians and Sethians, as well as Marcion, highlight two things about nascent Christianity. First, the Greek textual culture is very influential, and is demonstrated by the Christian polemicists by Christianising it and making Jesus the supreme teacher of what should be learned. Clement of Alexandria, a prominent and influential (more or less) mainstream bishop, pens a text entitled the *Pedagoge*, which emphasizes a deep comparison of the great Greek teachers as lacking when compared to Jesus.

They say that Phœnix was the instructor of Achilles, and Adrastus of the children of Cræsus; and Leonides of Alexander, and Nausithous of Philip. But Phœnix was women-mad, Adrastus was a fugitive. Leonides did not curtail the pride of Alexander, nor Nausithous reform the drunken Pellæan. No more was the Thracian Zopyrus able to check the fornication of Alcibiades; but Zopyrus was a bought slave, and Sicinnus, the tutor of the children of Themistocles, was a lazy domestic…. But our Instructor is the holy God Jesus, the Word, who is the guide of all humanity. The loving God Himself is our Instructor.\(^{187}\)

Clement proceeds to give a program of life, with every custom and how to navigate them as a follower of Jesus, paralleling the way a pedagogue would accompany a child and educate them in the social world. Even further to this comparison is the understanding of Jesus as Pedagogue in the imagery of childhood being necessary for salvation: “let the

children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

Marcion on the Redaction and Exegesis of Scripture

As Homer was the lens through which scholars viewed the world for centuries leading up to the development of the Jesus literature, for Christians, the Jesus literature as well as the Jewish scriptures gives fulfillment to the prophetic writings found in the Hebrew scriptures. But Marcion (~160CE) looked at the writings of the Christians, as well as the writings in the Jewish scriptures, and had some serious issues. First, when looking at the books of the Hebrew bible, he saw a God who is just, and not afraid to extinguish entire cities for the sake of righteousness, whereas in the writings of the apostle Paul, as well as the gospels of Jesus, he saw a god who is all loving, all goodness, and all forgiving. How are these compatible?

Writing in the 2nd century CE\textsuperscript{189}, Marcion asserted that the creator God of the Hebrew Bible, as described in the LXX\textsuperscript{190}, was distinct and lesser from the new God that the Gospels and Paul talks about, with the God of the Hebrew Bible being a just and

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{188} Mark 10:14-5.
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\begin{footnote}
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\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{190} It would be another paper entirely to discuss the development of the LXX, so for the purposes of this paper, it will be understood to be at least representative of the Hebrew scriptures.
\end{footnote}
jealous being, and the God of Jesus being loving and forgiving, with Jesus being a manifestation of this good knowledge, and not really a meaty, dirty human characteristic of the creator God (a *new* God = a *new* Testament). Marcion is arguing that he understands what Jesus was *truly* about. What Marcion argues has been associated with a group of Jesus followers called Demiurgical Christianity, which is essentially saying the creative work of God in Genesis was done via the agency of a demiurge, i.e. a lower creator, drawing here from Plato’s *Timaeus*. Looking at the Markan baptismal narrative of an adoption of Jesus by God, as well as the passion narratives of Jesus implying that God had left him, other schools such as Docetism, monophysiticism, and Arianist writings would find their base. These different possible interpretations that the Gospels contain make it confusing to properly understand this new God, and so Marcion authors the *Antitheses* where he contrasts the seemingly incompatible statements between what is advised in the Hebrew scriptures and what is said in the Jesus literature.\(^{191}\) Further, Marcion believed that it was corruption and false apostles that changed the message of Jesus, and therefore he changed the texts himself to correct these perceived mistakes.

The ‘false apostles’, in Marcion’s mind, not only tried to corrupt the gospel preached to those in Corinth, Galatia, and elsewhere; Marcion claimed they were responsible also for the corruption of the physical gospel – and Paul’s letters – transmitted in manuscripts down to Marcion’s day.\(^ {192}\)

To that end, there is polemical evidence that details some of Marcion’s editing practices. For example, Epiphanius claims that

\[
\text{at the very beginning [of the Gospel of Luke, Marcion] excised all of Luke’s original discussion [...] and the material about Elizabeth and the Angel’s}
\]

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\(^{191}\) Scherbenske, *Canonizing Paul*, 73.

\(^{192}\) Ibid, 85.
annunciation to the Virgin Mary; John and Zacharias and the birth at Bethlehem; the genealogy and the subject of the baptism. All this he took out and turned his back on, and made this the beginning of the Gospel “in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar.”

Any textual emendation is subject to debate within biblical studies, and as chapter one has striven to show, there was already an extant concern with editing the Homeric verse for inconsistencies in an attempt to get at a more authentic text, so the concern of Marcion was normal and predictable. For Marcion,

[his canon of the New Testament, in contrast to the generally accepted Christian collection of twenty-seven books, comprised an edited version of the gospel of Luke (omitting such parts as the infancy narratives, genealogy, baptism, and temptation) and ten epistles of Paul (not including 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) with the references to God as judge and passages dealing with punishment or the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy edited out.]

Marcion believed that Paul alone understood the gospel message, and that these false apostles corrupted the physical gospel as well as the letters of Paul with Jewish interpolations. This fits with the function of Alexandrian scholars editing the mistakes out of the texts of Homer, so as to get back to the pure, authentic message by way of athetization. Further, Marcion writes prologues to his Pauline corpus, which cement the extent that later editors can interpret or influence the text. “The Antitheses and Argumenta set out the fundamental rubrics and themes under and through which Marcion interpreted


Paul [and] Marcion sought to reestablish what he thought was the original purity of the text in accordance with his interpretation of Paul’s writings – an interpretation he codified in his paratextual materials.”¹⁹⁵ The rejection of the Hebrew scriptures, as well as the editing of the Pauline letters and gospel of Luke, were interpretive decisions. Joseph Tyson argues that, as a reaction to Marcion’s gospel, Luke underwent another editing by the author of canonical Luke and Acts to add in the preface, infancy narrative, and a rewriting of the Markan empty tomb, as well as a resurrection narrative, so as to create a forceful anti-Marcionite document.¹⁹⁶

But there are some issues with this hypothesis from Tyson. For example, if Marcion did have the editorial razor in his hand when he was authoring his gospel, why would he have so many inconsistencies in editing which the orthodox fathers besiege him with saying that these inconsistencies contradict the theology Marcion is trying to promulgate? Jason BeDuhn articulates and problematizes this dilemma of Marcion mutilating the texts: “either Marcion was an incredibly inept editor, as Tertullian sometimes suggested, or he had never undertaken such an ideological purge of these texts.”¹⁹⁷ Judith Lieu promotes this methodological assumption on the basis of the influence of the very prevalent compilation and collecting of texts of important people.

As with the ‘Gospel’, therefore, Marcion’s reading of the Pauline text is best approached as a combination of textual choices and of interpretation. It is within

¹⁹⁵ Scherbenske, Canonizing Paul, 114-5.


this framework that the role played by a Pauline corpus, as opposed to a haphazard collection of disparate letters, must be considered. Although how his own exposition of the apostle’s meaning was articulated and communicated is never evident from his opponents, it should be assumed that it was neither obviously naïve nor incomprehensible.\footnote{Judith Lieu, \textit{Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 242.}

What Lieu is positing has no small impact on the study of the canonization of the NT. Though there were obviously some edits made to the text by Marcion, including some athetization, it has become very problematic to say that he was mutilating the text as his opponents believed, just to put forward some ideological agenda.

Few researchers seem to have considered the fact that writers such as Tertullian were in no position to know the state of texts in or before the time of Marcion, nor did they have any independent information that would have told them whether marcion’s or their versions of these writings were the earlier one…. In short, the acceptance by modern researchers of the claims made about Marcion’s handling of the texts included in his New Testament is an example of uncritical adoption of polemic as history.\footnote{BeDuhn, \textit{The First New Testament}, 30-1.}

What is to be gleaned from this is that Marcion was editing the texts of both Paul and the Gospels, using the same toolkit that the Alexandrian scholars were using to establish the text of Homer, which is indicative of Marcion as an intellectual doing textual scholarship, and not a crazy anti-Semitic firebrand that the polemicists (ancient and modern) picture. It is important to challenge this methodological assumption, as it not only breaks the dogmatic slumber of source critical approaches to the canonization of the NT, but also as
it challenges the academy to formulate more accurate hypotheses on the basis of the available data.

There is further evidence that suggests that Marcion was not a heretical firebrand, but a teacher wanting to establish a school in Rome. This is something that numerous intellectuals did in an attempt to establish themselves in a major city. After his arrival in ~140 CE, “he [Marcion] endowed the Church with 200,000 sesterces, roughly the annual salary of the head of the Roman navy in Sinope”. 200 “Justin Martyr…for example, who had gone through the most important philosophical schools, arrived there around the same time and established a Christian philosophical classroom. The Christian Valentinus had come shortly before Marcion and did likewise.” 201 Einar Thomassen succinctly outlines Marcion’s relationship with the other schools in this sublime observation:

Epiphanius (probably using Hippolytus’s lost Syntagma) offers the most detailed account of what happened. Marcion was in Rome, urging his message of the true Christian faith. [Marcion demonstrated that the scriptural canons with Pagan and Jewish influences had], in consequence, no relevance for the Christians. Instead, the Christians must define a scriptural canon of their own. … In the summer of 144, he invited the "presbytes and teachers" of the capital to a debate whose topic would be the interpretation of Luke 5:36-37, on not filling new wineskins with old wine. Marcion failed, however, to convince the assembled Christian leaders, and the meeting ended with Marcion breaking his ties with them. The two hundred thousand sesterces he had previously donated to the Christians in Rome (Marcion was a wealthy ship owner from Pontos) were returned to him. He then left to found a church organization of his own. Thus Marcion, like Valentinus, provides no example of the condemnation of a heretic by the leadership of a church.


201 Ibid.
Marcion’s situation is quite the opposite of that of an expelled heretic, for it is he who refused to accept his opponents as true Christians.\(^{202}\)

To further evidence the activity of Marcionism as a school of thought, in the Marcionite paratextual materials like the *Antithesis*, Eric Scherbenske argues that they fit with an educational genre of literature called the Isagogic.

The primary concern in these isagogic texts was to introduce the inexperienced student to a topic or field of study. In so doing it was common for isagogic texts to present information in a format easily accessible to beginners often (though not always) dealing with broad and general themes. Not only did isagogic texts introduce and ease the student into a topic or field by broaching broad themes in a non-technical and non-argumentative way, it also introduced the novice to themes that would be encountered later in the course of study. By supplying notes for guidance in the field the isagogic text shaped the rubrics under which subsequent knowledge would be placed. The isagogic text thus supplemented (or stood in the place of) the author or teacher, sometimes directly in the first person.\(^{203}\)

Scherbenske continues the argument by analyzing the evidence provided by the orthodox writers, such as Tertullian, when he says

Marcion’s Antitheses did not consist in carefully reasoned arguments. Marcion’s refutation and rejection of Judaism and the Jewish God was instead grounded in the accumulation of discrete, yet interrelated, antithetical statements that elucidated his fundamental themes. Tertullian's attempt to offer alternative


\(^{203}\) Eric W. Scherbenske, "Marcion’s Antitheses and the Isagogic Genre," *Vigiliae Christianae* 64, no. 3 (2010): 263.
antitheses and interpretations reveals the succinct and straightforward quality of Marcion’s statements.\textsuperscript{204}

The substance of Marcion’s writings were to show that

the God of the Hebrew Bible was vengeful in contrast to the merciful God proclaimed by Jesus (Marc. 1.27.1); the one was bellicose, the other pacifist (Marc. 1.6.1-2); one just, the other good (Marc. 1.6.1-2); one sullied with the creation of the material world, the other alien to this mutable world (Iren. Haer. 5.2.1); one petty and particularistic, the other magnanimous and universalistic (Marc. 4.63); one known, the other unknown (Marc. 4.6.4); and one God of the law, another of the gospel (Marc. 4.6.3).\textsuperscript{205}

This discussion is one of textual interpretation, strikingly similar to Philo’s \textit{Allegorical Interpretation} insofar as it supposes an agreement with the thought of the school by the reader, offers basic instruction in that system of thought. When viewed as school disputes, it is completely reasonable to see Marcion as the head of a school. When viewed through the lens of Marcion’s opponents, he is an arch-heretic wanting to corrupt the church. This highlights Marcion’s main interpretive departure, claiming that allegory had corrupted the message of Jesus therein spawning his impetus to preserve the \textit{true} teaching of Jesus and Paul. Likewise philosophical is the argument over the relationship and substance of both Jesus’ human and risen body: “the polemical tradition is all but unanimous that according to Marcion, Jesus did not undergo normal human birth.”\textsuperscript{206}

This is problematic, as depending on the philosophical training one had, it would be difficult to agree on a definition of substance.\textsuperscript{207}

\textsuperscript{204} Ibid, 266.

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid, 265.

\textsuperscript{206} Judith Lieu, \textit{Marcion and the Making of a Heretic}, 372.

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid, 373.
“For the stoic-oriented Tertullian, body and flesh as much as the soul were all substances. From this outset and his assumption that Marcion, too, is talking only of ‘substance’, he could not see how Marcion maintained the idea of a risen body, if he denied the resurrection of any bodily or fleshly substance in the (Stoic) materialistic sense. In this respect, the dispute was a principal misunderstanding between a Middle-Platonic Marcion and a Stoic Tertullian rather than between rejection and acceptance of a bodily resurrection.208

The enduring effect that Marcion had on the orthodox church was surely the crystallization of the canon of scriptures. Marcion’s canon contained “the first ‘edition’ of the Pauline letters of which we have direct knowledge. It had ten letters of Paul in the order: Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Romans, 1-2 Thessalonians, Ladoiceans (=our Ephesians), Colossians-Philemon, and Philippians.”209 This does not accord with the Pauline collections identified by Trobisch in its placement of Galatians, but as that letter was critical to Marcion’s attack on ‘judaizers’ of the scripture. Therefore, critical to his exegesis, it was placed at the front of the Pauline collection in the codex. Central to the canon of Marcion is the Pauline message, as Paul was the sole reliable witness to Christian truth, Marcion adopted as his normative resources a set of Christian writings consisting of a gospel, usually presumed to be the gospel of Luke, and a collection of ten letters of Paul, and regarded these documents alone as the authoritative basis of genuinely Christian teaching. [But believing that they were corrupted by Jewish interpolations] Marcion also sought to establish their original form by means of critical emendation.210

This seems to be a difficult pill to swallow for the Church Fathers, who themselves cement their authority in the apostolic succession back to Peter. Marcion’s suggestion

208 Vinzent, Christ’s Resurrection, 122.
that Peter was not as authoritative as thought would be to bankrupt the authority of the bishops and ostracize the Jewish framework which served as the justification and textual grounding for the many other Christian groups. The response to Marcion is very fast\textsuperscript{211} and severe.

The Old and New Testament that, after Marcion, had emerged in a rather short and intensive production process at Rome, reconnected Christianity with the Jewish tradition, reduced Marcion’s Docetic Christology, and endorsed a more human, fleshly Jesus. The combination emphasized a monarchian identification of Jesus Christ and the god of the old testament, and maintained at least some of Paul’s radicalisms. Acts served as the important bridge between the Apostles and Paul: Acts lowered Paul’s profile, to some extent domesticated him, and shaped the reading of his letters by harmoniously subordinating him to and complementing him with other apostolic authorities. The Gospel was removed from Paul, and, through combining prefaces of \textit{Acts} and \textit{Luke}, put under the name of Luke. \textit{Luke} was then complemented by \textit{Mark} and \textit{Matthew}.\textsuperscript{212}

The anxieties over doctrine, scripture, tradition, authority, and even identity are all operative in this stage of the canonization process. Irenaeus’ recapitulation theory of Jesus is not what he is largely remembered. This textual dispute of Irenaeus was part of an ongoing conversation with bishops before him who had already been discussing this identity-anxiety, like Ignatius of Antioch and his discussion of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism. What Irenaeus is remembered for is systematically drawing the boundary lines between what he believed to be false interpretations and what he believed to be a singular truth. In doing so, he was used to identify the entity of the orthodox church and its heretical outsiders, creating the social dichotomy but also consolidating a monopoly on scripture and tradition, crucial in the institutionalization of the Catholic

\textsuperscript{211} At least, insofar as the church did \textit{anything} quickly.

\textsuperscript{212} Vinzent, \textit{Christ’s Resurrection}, 92.
Church, as well as in the appropriation and assimilation of the practices and traditions of Judaism as found in the scriptures. This social project arose out of Greek textual and educational practices, alongside Jewish tradition to successfully utilize the power dynamics that came with the ability to create, edit, and distribute texts. In the centuries that followed Irenaeus and Marcion, in 367, Athanasius of Alexandria publishes his canon:

These are, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Afterwards, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, viz. of James, one; of Peter, two; of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition, there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next, to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.²¹³

Around the same time as Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem publishes his:

Then of the New Testament there are the four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are mischievous. The Manicheans also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being tinctured with the fragrance of the evangelic title corrupts the souls of the simple sort. Receive also the Acts of the Twelve Apostles; and in addition to these the seven Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude; and as a seal upon them all, and the last work of the disciples, the fourteen Epistles of Paul. But let all the rest be put aside in a secondary rank. And whatever books are not read in Churches, these read not even by yourself, as you have heard me say. Thus much of these subjects.²¹⁴


This would be the definition of a canon by the bishops of the victorious church. A lot happened from the time of Marcion to that of Athanasius and Cyril. Orthodox Christianity moves from a sect of Judaism to something on the radar of governors and emperors. Hardly systemic but yet significant, persecutions against Christians happened during more than one administration of emperor, and as fate would have it, after a battle on the Milvian bridge outside Rome in 312 CE, the Constantinian legalisation of Christianity would follow a year later, and in 324, a letter would record two important policies:

One law, which survives in part, forbade Jews to buy Christian slaves, proclaiming that it was wrong for those who had killed the prophets and their lord to own those redeemed by the savior; the other, which has not survived, gave the canons of Church Councils legal force, forbidding governors to disregard synodical decisions, on the grounds that God’s priests were superior to any civil magistrate.

The latter law gives unprecedented power to the nascent Christian church, which would become the de facto government structure during the decline of the Roman Empire, and provide the institutional framework for European politics for centuries to come. From the time of Jesus to the time of Cyril and Athanasius, the office of bishop has grown from the patriarch of the family to the leader of the town, to the leader of the city, then to the province and so on, to the point where the communion of bishops is said to have absolute and total authority and control within the church, undoubtedly due to the polemical discussions that had proceeded them.

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Conclusions

A literary canon does not emerge out of nothing. The gospel of Mark has a *flavour* of Greek tragedy, as well as the signs of Alexandrian editing practices. The Pauline letter collections have analogous roots. Gnostic and Marcionite writings have throwbacks to Middle Platonic cosmology, with all the rigor and intensity of elite Alexandrian scholarship, and just as there is no such thing as a neutral text, there is no such thing as a neutral canon. All are co-dependent with interpretive directions. The development of the canon of the New Testament is influenced by and parallel with the development of schools of thought and how those schools communicated their ideas, not only to their followers, but to competing institutions. The school that saw the greatest eventual success is the school of Irenaeus, Tertullian and the like, though in practice they did nothing novel when compared to the so-called heresiarchs. This thesis started with a quote from Frend, and it is worth revisiting what he said: “[m]ost important of all was the emergence of a fixed canon of scripture that gave the church its own sacred book, different from that of the Jews and in no way dependent on any pagan or Gnostic Literature.” Given the evidence put forward in this thesis, that is a tough case to prove, as the literature was in conversation and dialogue with both insiders and outsiders, with the canon emerging on the event horizon of a multitude of events and correspondences, and not some fixed and unique revelation. That is true even to today, with the Catholic bible having different composition than other Christian traditions. This thesis challenges the assumptions that are made within some of the scholarship on canonization of the New Testament, a problematic term emerging from a problematic history. The lens of this

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thesis is a fascinated curiosity, and what the research gives to academia today is diversity of opinion within the scholarship, but in most cases, a troubling comfort with ascribing a definitive explanation to a human concern based on bias and rhetoric. Soren Kierkegaard is reported to have said that once a label is given, the labeled thing is negated. It is much more productive to give equal voice to all participants in the discussion, and to that end, the Jewish, Gnostic, and Greek influences behind the New Testament hopefully have been given a chance to have a voice of their own. This position of treating Christianity as any other process has been examined by many scholars²¹⁷, and it is worthwhile to pay attention to that scholarship and not reify an explanation on the basis of it being a religious institution. The data remains mostly unchanged, but how we engage with it does change, and if this thesis hopes to do anything of value, it will be to have done an honest, transparent, equitable exposition of the extant book culture and concomitant editing and exegetical matrices that the NT emerges from, and how the Greek, Jewish and Gnostic voices in that discussion were influential in the canonization of the New Testament.


Appendix A

Figure 1

Figure 2

Libri: International Journal of Libraries & Information Services, Sep 2014, Vol. 64
Issue 3, p277-292, 16p Color Photograph; found on p278.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Enoch\textsuperscript{222}</th>
<th>Genesis 6\textsuperscript{223}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:1 In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said to one another, “Come, let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children.”</td>
<td>6:1 When men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, 6:2 the divine beings saw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them. -- 6:4 It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth -- when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:1 And they took wives unto themselves, and everyone (respectively) chose one woman for himself, and they began to go unto them. And they taught them magical [arts]</td>
<td>6:5 The LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:2 And the women became pregnant and gave birth to great giants whose heights were three hundred cubits.</td>
<td>6:6 And the LORD regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Figure 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Luke 14:1-3</th>
<th>Mark 8:14-21</th>
<th>Matthew 16:5-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.</td>
<td>Now the disciples had forgotten to bring any bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out—beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” They said to one another, “It is because we have no bread.” And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” They said to him, “Twelve.” “And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” And they said to him, “Seven.” Then he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”</td>
<td>When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. Jesus said to them, “Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They said to one another, “It is because we have brought no bread.” And becoming aware of it, Jesus said, “You of little faith, why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you gathered? How could you fail to perceive that I was not speaking about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees!” Then they understood that he had not told them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Odyssey 10.100-103 and 105-16</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mark 14:13a-16 (Arranged chronologically)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Odysseus sent two comrades (plus a herald) to seek out hospitality</td>
<td>• Jesus sent two disciples to seek out a guest room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They went out and met a woman drawing water to take back to the city</td>
<td>• They went out and met a man carrying water back to the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The messengers asked questions and were shown a “high-roofed house.”</td>
<td>• The messengers asked questions and were shown an “upper room”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An ogre “made ready his meal”.</td>
<td>• The disciples readied the Passover</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8

- NT
- Deluxe Pauline Corpus
- 1/2 Tim, Titus, Phlm (Hebrews) (Expanded)
- Eph/Phil/Col/1/2 Thess (Expanded)
- Romans, 1/2 Cor, Galatians (Authorised Recension)
Figure 9

Approximate length of the letters of Paul

~The Religious Studies Teaching Assistant Creed

We believe in one lordly marking system
The pass and the fail
Marking all that is seen and unseen
We believe in one lord, the professor
The only designator of duties
Eternally begotten of the tenure
Prof from Prof
Supervisor from Supervisor
True teacher from true teacher
Through him all hours were paid
For us men and for our salvation
He came down from the podium
And by the holy spirit did not assign marking duties
And became favored among the assistants
And was made legend
For our sake he was tried under the dean
He suffered performance reviews and was sad
On the third semester he taught again
In accordance with the contract
He ascended to the committee
And is seated at the right hand of the Associate Dean
He will come again in glory to judge the smart from imbecilic
And his tenure will have no end
We believe in one Chicago manual of style, the logical, the giver of footnotes
Who proceeds from Turabian and the MLA
That with the Markers and the profs, is adored and glorified.
It has spoken through the articles
We believe in one, expensive and academic SBL
We acknowledge one Thesis for the reception of degrees
We look forward to the designation of the sabbatical
And the life of the summer to come.