

Soli Deo Gloria

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Department of Bible and Theology Newsletter

Term Paper Edition

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From the Editor

Every semester the Bible & Theology faculty reads some amazing term papers in our courses. The following articles by Claire Bonin and Christian Sanchez are two such papers. They have been edited from their original fifteen pages down to one page each. For brevity, their extensive footnotes have also been deleted. Contact the original authors to read their papers in full.

NT Canon

Claire Bonin

There is significant evidence to suggest that the NT as it exists today was not the result of arbitrary decisions on the part of a select few solely as a reaction to heresy. On the contrary, the probability of the natural and early recognition of the concept of a NT canon is indicated by the theological and historical roots of Christianity, the nature of the NT writings, and the testimony of the Apostolic Fathers. Before examining these three areas, it would be helpful to first clarify the evidence surrounding Marcion himself.

Marcion the Mastermind?

In A.D. 144, Marcion was excommunicated by the church in Rome for his heretical teachings. In order to uphold his own gnostic beliefs, Marcion removed portions and made

additions to the books in his proposed canon, which included the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's epistles. The fact that editing was necessary indicates the previous existence of a standard and norm concerning those texts that make up the NT. If this were not the case, then the energy and vehemence with which the church leaders of the time rejected Marcion's work would make no sense.

In view of the response he received, it is only logical to suppose that in his "creation" of a new canon, Marcion was tampering with writings that were already regarded as authoritative and thus part of an accepted (though perhaps not yet formalized) standard.

Clearly, even within Marcion's era there are indications that the concept of the new canon should not be laid only at the heretic's door. What evidence for an early canonical concept exists before Marcion? First, there is the substantiation that comes from Christianity's innate characteristics.

Christianity: A Religion with a Past

The faith of the original disciples and all orthodox believers who followed them was grounded in the beliefs and history recorded

in the Hebrew Scriptures. In other words, "the theological matrix of first-century Christianity created a favorable environment for the growth of a new written revelational deposit."

One aspect of that "theological matrix" was the recognition of the OT as a written narrative that was incomplete. The basic tenets of the Christian faith declare the story of the Jewish faith to be completed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. How natural, then, for the first believers (who were part of the Jewish people) to assume that the continuation and ending of the old, sacred story would likewise be put in written form. The assertions of the earliest believers that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and the fulfillment of the Hebrew Law and Prophets clearly called for new, authoritative accounts to be written and preserved.

The NT Writings: Self-Proclaimed Authority

In addition to Christianity's roots in Judaism, the NT writings themselves argue for a ready acceptance of their uniquely sacred quality. Within the Gospels, Jesus himself establishes the authority of the apostles, (the authors or at least sources of all the canonical book), when he chooses them, designates them apostles, and imbues

them with power. Within the NT, the apostles repeatedly confirm that divine authority is innate to their role (Acts 10:41-42; 1 John 1:1-4; 2 Peter 3:2; Gal 1:1; 1 Cor 14:37-38; 1 Thess 2:13, 4:8, 5:27).

Here lies the key aspect of the inherent authority of the NT writings: it is divinely conferred on the authors, the apostles, and flows directly from Jesus Christ, God the Son. Thus, any letter, history, or Gospel that bore the apostolic seal "bore the highest possible authority that any document could bear." Given this fact, there is significant support for the assertion that recognition of the NT canon was not a by-product of heresy but the result of the regard in which the apostolic writings would have been held.

Apostolic Acknowledgement

The authority of the apostles and, through them, of the NT writings, is also upheld in the works of the Apostolic Fathers. Clement of Rome references the divine origin of the apostles' authority when he reminds his readers that the message declared by the original disciples was the message first declared by Jesus; he then further emphasizes this principle of continuing commission: "Christ...was sent forth by God, and the apostles by

Christ.” Polycarp and Ignatius echo such prestigious assessments in their own writings.

Although several of these early Christian writers were of that last generation who had personal contact with Paul and the original disciples, not one of them claims for himself the same level of authority. A clear distinction exists between the age of the apostles and all the leaders and written works that came after. One can only imagine, then, their surprise if they were confronted with the popular modern theory that individuals like themselves possessed the authority to independently determine the canon of the NT.

Apostolic Acceptance

The significant catalogue of NT books cited by the Apostolic Fathers indicates a certain level of canonical *practice* related to the NT texts, even if the word “canon” was not used. Clement (A.D. 95) appears to be aware of a tradition concerning the Synoptic Gospels, a collection of Pauline Epistles, and the book of Hebrews. Irenaeus’ letters (c. A.D. 110) suggest he was in possession of a collection of Paul’s letters that included 1 Cor, Eph, 1 & 2 Tim, Rom, Phil & Gal. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke also appear to have been within Ignatius’ experience.

It is generally accepted that Polycarp, (c. A.D. 110-135), was aware of Rom, 1 Cor, 1 & 2 Tim, Phil, Eph, and Gal, further

substantiation of a known Pauline collection. Papias recognized at least the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and was likely aware of a collection of Gospels as early as A.D. 110. Other NT works he acknowledged include 1 John, 1 Peter, Rev, and several Pauline epistles, which were clearly regarded by Polycarp as Scripture.

Conclusion

There is a difference between publication of a canon and the “fundamental idea of canonicity.” Marcion may have achieved the former, but Christianity’s background in Judaism, the claims of the NT books, and the witness of the Apostolic Fathers all point to the latter. The most that can be said for Marcion is that he aided the Church’s clarity of expression concerning what it already acknowledged in regards to the NT texts.

The topic of the NT canon is indisputably complex, and it is not the purpose here to suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, this understanding of the natural progression of the canon’s recognition highlights God’s sovereign plan. Only He, with His absolute knowledge and wisdom, could have so skillfully paved the way through history, the filters of human authors, and the confusion of heresies for the new revelation of His Word to be written and preserved.

In the end, von Harnack’s “creative act” was God’s alone. As with everything else He has done, this creative act of God calls for worship and thanks.

New or Renewed?

Translating Jer 31:31

Christian Sanchez

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (Jer 31:31)

Historical Context

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of events during one of the most tragic eras of Israel’s history, the Babylonian exile. This exile involved the “destruction of the Temple, the dwelling place of the Lord of Israel, and the exile of God’s people.” Jeremiah’s prophetic career lasted from 627 - 586 BC, which included the end of Assyrian reign and the beginning of Babylonian rule.

The main audience of Jeremiah 29 is the exilic community in Babylon. Jeremiah sends the exiles a letter of encouragement and later transitions to rebuking a false prophet, Shemaiah. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is an oracle of salvation, and more specifically, a promise of deliverance. Jeremiah 31:31-34 is the climax of both 31:23-34 and of the whole oracle of hope in Jeremiah 30-31.

New or Renewed?

Jeremiah 31:31 employs a theme of *new covenant*. In

doing this, Jeremiah contrasts the old Mosaic covenant to a new covenant that is to come, characterized by a law that will be written “on their hearts” so they will all know God, “from the least of them to the greatest.”

In 31:31 the term *new*, *חֲדָשׁ* (*hā-dāš*), can be translated a few different ways, including both *new* and *renewed*. E. P. Sanders points out the difficulties with interpreting this word as “new” when he asks, “has God denied or replaced the mosaic covenant?” Werner Lemke describes the translation options thusly, “We might call this new in the sense of ‘brand new’ or ‘novel.’ On the other hand, ‘new’ may also be used to refer to something which was known previously but which has received ‘renewed’ vitality or validity, as for instance in Lamentations 3:22-23, where the poet asserts that Yahweh’s gracious mercy and compassion are ‘new’ (*hādāshim*) every morning.”

Though translators have argued for both *new* and *renewed*, it seems that the majority of modern scholarship has leaned on the side of *renewed*.

Walter Kaiser Jr. argues for a mediated position, “The Hebrew word, however, must serve both ideas: new in time and renewed in nature. Thus for Jeremiah 31, the context, content and New Testament vocabulary

distinction decides in favor of a ‘renewed covenant’.” The repetitive theme of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is this idea of a new *and* renewed covenant.

There is something else in this oracle that is easy for the modern eye to miss. “This remarkable verse, often (mis)appropriated by Christian commentators to provide support for New Testament ideas of “knowing God,” is all the more remarkable when considered in its proper context—a prophetic imagining of a post exilic community where knowledge of God (through the ‘internalized’ Torah) is shared by all *without any intermediary teaching authority*.” This was a significant shift in ancient Judaism. No longer would they have to experience God through select individuals of religious authority, (i.e. Moses, priests, prophets), but they would experience Him individually. The concept would have been unprecedented, raising the question, “what will that look like?” The answer would come in the 1st century.

Jer 31:31 in the NT

The NT affirms fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy in multiple passages. There are echoes of Jeremiah 31:31-34 throughout Romans. 2 Corinthians 3 more overtly echoes Jeremiah’s *New Covenant* motif. Hebrews 8 quotes the Jeremiah passage directly and connects it to

fulfillment in Jesus. As J.A. Thompson summarizes, “The sectarians of Qumran understood themselves to be the men of the New Covenant. But the New Covenant for them was nothing more than the mosaic covenant with strong legalistic tendencies. The other group was the Christians, who saw the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s words in the emergence of the Christian church, which was comprised of those who confessed Jesus as Lord (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:15; Heb. 8:8-9:28).”

Others have spoken of the prophecy in Jer 31 being fulfilled in the process of regeneration and rebirth of salvation. However one characterizes it, for believers today this prophecy foreshadowed the freedom we have now. Because of Christ, any Christian can have access to the father and is not held to the Mosaic Law for a means of salvation. It is through Christ that believers can experience God and salvation.

Espresso Yourself: A Quick Guide to Coffee

Robin Taylor
@WreckitRobin

“A coffee a day keeps the doctor away”

College is a time of studying, fun, and sleep deprivation. With as much as most of us have going on, it’s hard to find times where we can get a full 8 hours of sleep. This means most students become

addicted to one solution: coffee. Coffee tends to be a staple in the diet of most students, but how much do they actually know about it? There are so many terms people throw around and it can get pretty confusing. Below I have taken some of the most common drinks and broken them down in a quick guide for the new (or even not so new) to coffee so you can understand what’s really going into your cup.

Drip Coffee: Drip coffee is coffee in its most basic form. It is brewed by placing roasted, ground coffee in a paper filter and pouring hot water over it. As the water passes through, it absorbs all the oils and flavors and drips into a cup or pot.

Seems simple, right? Well, coffee can vary in many ways such as the bean’s country of origin, the roasting method, the roasting type (light, medium, dark), brewing method, body, mouthfeel, brightness, etc. As interesting as some may find all this, for the sake of brevity all these things will not be discussed here.

Espresso: This little drink packs quite a punch and is the foundation of almost every other specialty drink discussed below. Espresso is brewed by forcing a small stream of extremely hot water through finely ground beans. The consistency of plain espresso is generally thicker than traditional

black coffee and the flavors and caffeine content are much more concentrated. This means the serving size is also generally significantly smaller than traditional coffee, normally referred to as a shot. Feeling slightly adventurous? Try a shot of espresso and then drink sparkling water right after for a delightful, yet intense, experience!

Americano: This is another strong drink and is considered an acquired taste. Like most specialty drinks, this also builds off the regular espresso. It is made by adding a shot of espresso to extremely hot water. This tends to be similar to drip coffee in strength of caffeine but has a stronger flavor.

Latte: Lattes are noted for being one of the easiest and most popular drinks to create. It’s a shot of espresso with steamed milk, usually at a 2:1 ratio of milk to espresso with just a little foam to top it off. When prepared hot, a trained barista can create beautiful artwork in the foam of the steamed milk. A latte is the platform for almost every flavored drink and is most commonly served iced, which makes it the most popular espresso-based drink.

Cappuccino: This drink is extremely similar to the latte, but still has its own uniqueness. It is made with one-third milk, one-third espresso, and one-third foam. The extra foam is the

biggest difference from the latte and acts as an insulator to help keep the actual drink warmer, longer.

Music Review: Church Clothes 3

Tiree Dean

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16). If anyone is a Christian and a hip-hop lover then they are very familiar with this verse. It is the mantra of the 116 Clique Movement, a movement well known by those of urban backgrounds or who have an affinity towards hip hop culture.

The pioneer of this Christian hip-hop movement is none other than Lecrae Moore, a Texas native born in Houston and currently living in Dallas. Initially Lecrae was not a Christian, but after conversion he began to flesh out his faith as raps over rhythmic beats. He started his career as a rapper on the Christian-owned record label, Cross Movement. After his debut album Lecrae broke off from the Cross Movement and started his own label, Reach Records. Alongside his business partner Ben Washer, Lecrae rapped, signed other artists, and went on national tour.

Lecrae’s most recent project, Church Clothes 3, was released on January 15, 2016. This album surprised the 116 Clique fan base.

Nevertheless, Lecrae’s album went to #1 on the Billboard Rap/Hip-Hop Album chart, #1 on the Billboard Top Christian Albums chart, #1 on the iTunes hip-hop music chart, #3 on the Digital Albums chart, and #12 on the mainstream Billboard 200. Church Clothes 3 is a 10 song LP with a modern hip-hop sound, hints of bay area music, and classic boom rap rhythms.

The Church Clothes series is a musical anomaly with its theme of Christianity and American taboos. At first listen, one might assume that the Texas rapper is criticizing his faith for its inconsistencies. On closer examination it becomes clear that Lecrae’s intentions are to raise awareness of important issues that society and the Church tend to ignore. The album series is fearless about speaking out on issues that are traditionally unpopular within the mainstream music community. Despite his unorthodox methods, Lecrae’s voice has proven to be effective and popular in both mainstream and Christian hip-hop.

Lecrae’s latest album completes the Church Clothes trilogy, reinforcing its sonic style and lyrical focus. It features hip-hop legend E-40 and a host of other Christian hip-hop artists such as Propaganda, Jackie Hill-Perry, JGivens and John Gives. The album continues to address racism, governmental injustice, and

pursuit of God despite other people’s opinions. The album is deep, and will leave the listener challenged, informed, and encouraged in the faith.

Resource Review: NTGateway

Dr. Terance Espinoza

NTGateway.com is one of the premier websites for the academic study of the New Testament. It began in 1997 as a “useful links” section on Dr. Mark Goodacre’s homepage. The next year he spun this rapidly-growing section off into its own website and called it NT Gateway.. Logos sponsored the site in 2009 and brought in more resources and design ideas. One may not agree with every link that is connected to the site, but if you are looking for a reputable, academic website for any sort of NT study, NTGateway.com is one of the first places you should go.

Calendar

The **Society for Pentecostal Studies** (SPS) will hold its annual meeting at Life Pacific College in San Dimas, CA, March 10-12. The theme is “Worship, the Arts, and the Spirit.” For more information, go to sps-usa.org.

The **Society of Biblical Literature** (SBL) regional meeting will be at the Marriott Hotel, DFW Airport North, Irving, TX, March 11-13. The theme is “Engaging Diversity.” SBL will co-host the meeting

with SWCRS, ASOR, ASSR, and AAR-SW. For more information go to swcrs-online.org.

The **Evangelical Theological Society** (ETS) regional meeting will be at Dallas Theological Seminary, April 1-2. The theme is “Exegesis and Hermeneutics.” Douglas Moo and W. Edward Glenny are the plenary speakers. For more information, go to etsjets.org and look for the “Southeast Region” under the “regions” button.


Puzzle


What is the book, chapter, and verse reference for each of the following biblical passages? Where can you see the opening lines of both on display in the Schaeffer Center? Post your answer to both questions on Twitter or Facebook, tag us @SAGUBibTheo, and the first correct answer on each platform will win a \$5 Starbucks or Chick-Fil-A gift card. An individual may only win on one platform per month.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים
אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ
λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος
ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν,
καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ
λόγος.

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