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Pentecostal Canon of the Bible?

*Marius Nel**

North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

marius.nel@nwu.ac.za

Abstract

Classical Pentecostalism is traditionally regarded as a restorationist movement that justified its origins and explained its new practices as a continuation of the early church, as a work of the Spirit. For that reason, the gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*) were purportedly restored to the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement. Early Pentecostalism also claimed that they followed the early church in its hermeneutical prerogatives of reading the Bible through the lens of their charismatic practices. The article poses the question whether Pentecostalism in its restorationist urge should not reconsider its canon, since it differs from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used by the early church, to include the books found in the Septuagint, the translation used by early non-Jewish Christians. It suggests that Pentecostals reconsider their biblical canon in the light of their restorationist urge rather than groundlessly following the Protestant canon as their predecessors did by using the Apocrypha as deuterocanonical, implying that it is accepted for personal and ecclesial edification but not for judging the genuineness of gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not (1 Cor. 12.10) and establishing the authority of ecclesiastical doctrines.

Keywords

canon – Hebrew Bible – Septuagint – Protestant canon – restorationism

1 Introduction: Canon

Providing an account of biblical canon formation involves the task of telling an untold story because no ancient writer or source delineates in detail the

* Marius Nel (PhD, Radboud University) is Research Professor and Chair of Ecumene: Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism in the Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the SA Society at the North-West University, Potchefstroom, 522 South Africa.

processes of how the Bible came to be.¹ Confusion even surrounded the definition of ‘canon’ and prevails to the present day, because of a lack of clarity and agreement regarding its use. The semantic domain of the word canon (κανών) contains two major nuances in the history of its usage in terms of the Bible. It was originally a Semitic loanword (*qāneh*) meaning ‘straight rod, measuring stick or ruler’ and by figurative extension, the term came to imply the normative idea of ‘rule, standard or guide’. One measured something with or by a κανών, implying a standard for making judgments as well as rule of law or rule of faith.² The word occurs in the New Testament only four times (Gal. 6.16; 2 Cor. 10.13, 15–16; cf. Phil. 3.16), and it is used in the sense of norm or standard, as illustrated by Gal. 6.16, ‘As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God’ (NRSV; καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τοῦτω στοιχήσουσιν). This sense of the term represents the first and most dominant nuance of the term during the first centuries CE.³

During the Patristic period (from the end of New Testament times or end of the Apostolic Age, c. 100 CE, to either 451 with the Council of Chalcedon or to the Second Council of Nicaea in 787), another sense in which the term was used is as ‘list, register or catalogue’; for instance, κανών was used at the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) for the official list or catalogue of clergy who were attached to a given church.⁴ The canon represented an enumeration of the collection of writings, with the meaning of canon as a list, based on the authoritativeness granted by the church, with the Bible serving as a rule of faith.⁵ By the fourth century, the term κανών became the way the Christian church described the collection of the Old and New Testament. Today the term is used to denote either a binding ‘norm, guide or rule’ or an ecclesiastically approved ‘list’ of inspired books, as standardized and enumerated by the church.

1 Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), p. 9.

2 Horst R Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 249.

3 Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading*, p. 16.

4 According to Frank M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 219, Flavius Josephus writing in the last decade of the first century CE was the first to use the term ‘canon’ in the sense of a fixed list of books or scripture. The use of the term Christian ‘canon’ before the fourth century is an anachronism; it was only at the church synods that the term was applied to the books of the Bible, Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading*, p. 35.

5 F.F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), p. 18.

2 Pentecostals and the Canon

Early Pentecostals thought of the outpouring of the Spirit in the Pentecostal revival, which justified and defined their origins and existence, as a new movement, and in ecumenical terms, as a renewal of Christianity as a whole.⁶ Initially they were not interested in establishing churches or organisations because they viewed themselves as part of the restoration of the early church by the Spirit who is uniting all Christians in a last outpouring of the Spirit, the 'latter rain'.⁷ They were biblically directed for the same reason, because of their restorationist-primitivistic ethos, justifying their existence as a continuation of the establishment by the Spirit of the early church.⁸

Pentecostals are part of the Protestant tradition, as their predecessors, Evangelical Protestantism, especially the Wesleyan Methodist variety, the American

6 Walther J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 34, remarks that Pentecostalism started with a self-perception that it was an ecumenical renewal movement, because the experience of Spirit baptism represented a renewal of the Day of Pentecost that established the early church that functioned in unity across boundaries. Cecil M. Robeck, 'Pentecostals and Ecumenism: An Expanding Frontier', *Conference on Pentecostal and Charismatic Research in Europe* (Kappel, Switzerland, 5th July 1991), pp. 1–17 (1), insists that even 'a cursory reading of the earliest pentecostal publications is sufficient to validate [the] claim'. Instead of renewing and uniting existing historical denominations, the new movement and its experience were rejected, reviled and booed as a sect and became alienated from main-line churches. Established churches provided stinging condemnation of the movement as a whole, Cecil M. Robeck, 'Pentecostals and the Apostolic Faith: Implications for Ecumenism', *Pneuma* 9.1 (1986), pp. 61–84; Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995), p. 48.

7 The improbability, and even impossibility, to perceive the conditions and values of the early church correctly in order to replicate it is acknowledged while it is also true the early church was probably idealized. Pentecostals vindicated their existence as a movement by calling it the work of the Spirit in restoring the early church.

8 Marius Nel, *An African Pentecostal Hermeneutics: A Distinctive Contribution to Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), p. 8. 'Restoration' is interpreted in terms of a number of characteristics: a longing for the revelation of the power of God as a sign with eschatological significance, the importance of the biblical significance of Pentecost as described in Acts 2, tangible evidences such as conversions, powerful experiences of sanctification, and moving experiences of being filled with the Spirit, a tension with traditional Christianity, and the expectation of the unity of the church, with God recollecting his people from all denominations and walks of life. The Latter Rain motif provided the Pentecostal movement a sense of having a key role in the approaching climax of history as a means by which God was preparing the 'bride' of Christ to meet her Lord. Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 28.

Holiness movement,⁹ Reformed revivalism of Jonathan Edwards and the ‘Oberlin Perfectionism’ of revivalists Charles Finney and Asa Mahan, the Keswick movement with Dwight L. Moody, Reuben A. Torrey and Andrew Murray, and the healing movement of Christoph Blumhardt, Dorothea Trudel, Charles Cullis, A.B. Simpson, Carrie Judd Montgomery and Maria Woodworth-ETter. They accepted mostly without question or further consideration the canon of the Reformation.¹⁰ However, it is submitted that the different lists of canonical books found in Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian Bibles necessitate that the issue of the boundaries of the canon be attended to by Pentecostals, not in terms of their historical antecedents but their restorationist urge. Canonical criticism shows the fluidity of the canon throughout the first few centuries of the Christian church’s existence which at times experienced intense canonical debates.

The Reformation used the criterion of apostolicity for determining the canon of the New Testament *contra* the Roman Catholic Bible. And for determining the canon of the Old Testament, the reformers in their rejection of the Catholic Bible accepted the Jewish canon. For that reason, the Protestant Old Testament has the same books as the Jewish Bible although it follows contradictorily the order of the books of most Septuagint (LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament) manuscripts.¹¹

9 There were three distinct groups of Holiness adherents, the Wesleyan Holiness position typified by Phoebe Palmer that described ‘entire sanctification’ or ‘perfect love’ as the ‘second blessing’ or Spirit baptism, identified with moral purity; the Reformed and Keswick position, exemplified by R.A. Torrey, who held that Spirit baptism was an endowment with power for service; and the ‘third blessing’, a radical fringe position which distinguished between the ‘second blessing’ of sanctification and a ‘third blessing’ or ‘baptism with fire’. All these groups made mission service their highest priority. Allan H. Anderson, ‘Keswick Movement’, in A. Stewart (ed.), *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity* (DeKalb: NIU, 2012), pp. 128–30.

10 L. William Oliverio, *Theological Hermeneutics in the Classical Pentecostal Tradition: A Typological Account* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 231–34, bases the ethos of early Pentecostalism upon four core interpretive assumptions, which explain its orientation. The first is that the Protestant Scriptures were the sole ultimate authority for Christian belief and living which functioned dialogically with the religious and general experiences of early Pentecostals to form a theological understanding of their world and circumstances. Second is their restorationist beliefs, centring on the narrative of God’s plan for humankind coming to pass with the outpouring of the Spirit in the Latter Rain. Third is the four – or five-fold ‘full gospel’ that served as the doctrinal grid that oriented Pentecostal beliefs and living and as doctrinal hypotheses which explained Scripture and spiritual experiences. And lastly, a pragmatic naive realism formed early pentecostal rationality, integrated with an understanding of the primacy of the supernatural.

11 The order of the Jewish canon is important, consisting of the *Torah* or Instruction of Moses, the *Nebi'im* or Prophets, and the *Ketubim* or wisdom writings (*TaNakh*). The Torah

Western Christianity (what eventually became the Roman Catholic Church) generally accepted what is now the Catholic Old Testament as canonical from at least the fourth century CE onward.¹² That does not mean that there were no conflicting voices. Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin, found many discrepancies between the Hebrew text and the Septuagint translation. However, Augustine (354–430 CE), the influential bishop of Hippo, and several ecclesiastical synods declared the longer list including the deuterocanonical books (what Protestants would later call the apocrypha) to be canonical.¹³

3 Greek Old Testament

The Jewish *diaspora* saw Jewish communities in most Greek-speaking cities. Shortly after Alexander founded Alexandria in Egypt in 331 BCE, Jews settled there, facilitated by the fact that the province of Judaea formed part of the kingdom of the Ptolemies that succeeded Alexander's empire in Egypt, until 198 BCE. It did not take long before the Alexandrian Jews spoke Greek only, requiring a Greek translation of their sacred Scriptures. Translations of various parts were made available in the century between 250 and 150 BCE, with the *Torah* being first translated as it served as essential primary reading in the synagogue worship. It might be that the first translations were oral, done after the reading of the Hebrew original during the synagogue worship service, for the

served as the main canon while the Prophets served to interpret the Instruction, and the Wisdom writings served to interpret the Prophets, showing a distinction in the authority and value of the different parts of the canon, John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004), pp. 2–10.

- 12 Their canon also contains 1 Esdras (Vulgate's 3 Esdras); 2 Esdras (Vulgate's 4 Esdras); Tobit (a Jewish copy was found at Qumran – EWTN, 'The 7 Books Removed by Martin Luther', *EWTN Faith* [2019]. <http://www.ewtn.com/v/experts/showmessage.asp?number=438095>); Judith; rest of Esther (Vulgate's Est. 10.4–16.24); Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus (also known as Sirach; a Hebrew copy of Sirach was found at Qumran – Emeth, 'Why Were Deuterocanonical Books Rejected in the Reformation?', *Christianity* (2018). <https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/3189/why-were-deuterocanonical-books-rejected-in-the-reformation>); Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah (all part of Vulgate's Baruch); Song of the Three Children (Vulgate's Dan. 3.24–90); Story of Susanna (Vulgate's Dan. 13); The Idol Bel and the Dragon (Vulgate's Dan. 14); Prayer of Manasseh; 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees (Collins, *Introduction*, p. 5). The reason for arguing that it happened from the fourth century on is because only then did the church decided about the boundaries of the canon; what the practice was before the era of church councils is unclear although it seems that the boundaries were not strictly defined.
- 13 Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible: A Popular Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist, 1985), p. 150.

sake of those Jews who did not understand the Hebrew language fluently. In time, a written Greek version would then have developed.

In time, a legend was attached to the translation, found in the *Letter of Aristeas* and summarized by Justin Martyr (100–165 CE), relating how 70 (or 72) Jewish elders of Israel were brought to Alexandria by the Greek king of Egypt, Ptolemy II, to translate their Scripture into Greek, completing the work, in combined fashion or separately (Philo), in 70 (or 72) days.¹⁴

While the Hebrew canon was limited to 24 (or 22) books comprising the Law, Prophets and Writings (*Tanakh* from *Torah*, *Nebi'im* and *Ketubim*), the Alexandrian canon of the Hebrew Bible was more comprehensive.¹⁵ However, no evidence exists that supports the notion that the Alexandrian Jews ever promulgated a canon of scripture, and that it included other books.¹⁶ All the Septuagint manuscripts in existence were produced by Christians, with a few fragmentary exceptions, and the longer canon of the Old Testament may probably also be a creation of the Christian church.¹⁷

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE), a significant representative of Alexandrian Judaism, did not describe the Jewish canon but it is clear from his writings that the books that he acknowledged as Scripture were the books included in the Hebrew canon and he also showed no signs of accepting the authority of any of the books known as the Apocrypha. Titus Flavius Josephus (born Yosef ben Matityahu) (37–100 CE), a first-century Roman-Jewish scholar, historian and hagiographer, depends on the Septuagint and precisely delimited the canon and also referred only to the 22 books of the Jewish canon, although it is almost certain that he relied on Palestinian sources.¹⁸

14 Håggholm, 'Why did Protestants Remove Some of the Books from the Bible?', *Quora* (2018). <https://www.quora.com/Why-did-Protestants-remove-some-of-the-books-from-the-Bible>. Septuagint means 'seventy' in Greek.

15 Only four Jewish copies of the Septuagint survived, of the period between the second century BCE and the second century CE, Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, p. 45.

16 Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, pp. 44–45. The Jewish rabbis used the term 'holy scripture' (*ktby qwdš*) for 'books that contaminate the hands' (*hsprym hwṭm'ym 't hydym*), Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, p. 219.

17 Hans Von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (trans. J.A. Baker; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1972).

18 What is important is that Josephus accepted that there was a fixed and immutable number of justly-accredited (*ta dikaios pepisteumēna*) books, 22 in number and in line with the Hebrew alphabet with its 22 letters. Their authority rests in their derivation from a period of uncontested prophetic inspiration beginning with Moses and ending in the era of Nehemiah, argued Josephus. He believed that the precise text of these works was fixed to the syllable, Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, p. 220. Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, pp. 221–22, mentions that scholars are able to reconstruct an old canonical list, the common source of the so-called Bryennios List and the Canon of Epiphanius, dated to the end of the first

4 Christians and the Greek Old Testament

Melito of Sardis (died 180 CE), Origen (184–253 CE), Athanasius (296–373 CE) and the Canons of Laodicea (363 CE) agreed that the canon of the Old Testament consists of the books of the Hebrew Bible (apart from Esther) while other books that belong to the so-called ‘Septuagintal plus’ are relegated to a second grade, although they are quoted freely in the same manner as the canonical books. This remained the status quo in the Eastern church with the exception of the Syriac Old Testament that lacked Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.¹⁹ In 1642 and 1672 respectively, Orthodox synods at Jassy (Iasi) and Jerusalem confirmed, as genuine parts of Scripture, the contents of the Septuagintal plus, and specifically 1 Esdras (in Vulgate, 3 Esdras), Tobit, Judit, 1, 2 and 3 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah. The Septuagint remains the authorized version of the Old Testament in Greek Orthodoxy until today. Where it deviates from the Hebrew Bible, it is ascribed to divine inspiration. In practice, however, most Orthodox scholars place the books of the Septuagintal plus on a somewhat lower level of authority than the proto-canonical writings.²⁰

In the copies of the Septuagint at our disposal, the order of books differ from the traditional order of the Hebrew Bible, although it must be remembered that before the codex became fashionable in the first century CE, writings were found on scrolls that can be ordered in any way.²¹ After the Pentateuch, the second division of the Septuagint corresponds largely with the Former Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, although Ruth is inserted between Judges and 1 Samuel, and Samuel and Kings (called the four books of Kingdoms or Reigns) are followed by Chronicles (called *Paraleipomena*, ‘things left over’),

or the beginning of the second century CE, representing the 22 books found in Josephus and echoed in the independent canonical lists of Origen and Jerome, eliminating pseudepigraphical works in the name of Enoch, Melchizedek, the sons of Jacob, Amram and the like which became popular in Hellenistic times and filled the Qumran library, Stephen M. Miller, ‘The Gallery – Mavericks and Misfits’, *Christian History Magazine* 43 (1994).

19 The Eastern Orthodox Church has traditionally included all the books of the Septuagint in its Old Testament, using the word ‘*Anagignoskomena*’ to describe those books of the Greek Septuagint that are not present in the Hebrew *Tanakh*. Regional differences have generally been based on different variations of the Septuagint. The books included the deuterocanon plus additional texts: 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, Odes which includes the Prayer of Manasseh and Psalm 151, New World Encyclopaedia Contributors, ‘Deuterocanonical Books’, *New World Encyclopaedia* (2017). http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Deuterocanonical_books&oldid=1007379.

20 Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, p. 82.

21 See C.H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), for the story of the birth of the codex in the first century CE.

1 Esdras (a variant Greek edition of 2 Chron. 35.1–Neh. 8.13), 2 Esdras (Ezra–Neh.), Esther, Judith, and Tobit. The Greek Esther is a considerably expanded edition of the Hebrew Esther.

The third division contains Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus (the book of Jeshua ben Sira). Wisdom was originally written in Greek and Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew. An additional Psalm 151 is appended to the Psalter; it was also known at Qumran.

The fourth division consists of the twelve Minor Prophets (preceding in the early uncial manuscripts the others), followed by Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, then Daniel that is amplified with the story of Susanna at the beginning and the story of Bel and the Dragon at the end, and the books of Maccabees (two, three or four in number) as a sort of appendix to the Septuagint. Works appearing in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible are sometimes referred to as ‘Septuagintal plus’ and have commonly been called the Apocrypha since Jerome’s (347–420 CE) time. It is acknowledged that they are the last books of the Old Testament written, composed in the last two centuries BCE.²²

It is accepted that Jesus (and his disciples) used the scrolls of the Hebrew Bible when they quoted texts. Fact is, however, that the Old Testament was still very much in flux in the time of Christ and there was no fixed canon of Scripture in the apostolic period.²³ As soon as the gospel was carried into the Greek-speaking world, the apostles and new believers used the Septuagint as their sacred text. Quotations of the Hebrew Bible in the (Greek) New Testament is mostly from the Septuagint with some exceptions²⁴ while many references to books from the Septuagintal plus are also found.²⁵

22 EWTN, ‘7 Books Removed’.

23 Mark P. Shea, ‘5 Myths About 7 Books’, *Envoy Catholic Education Resource Center* (2001). <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/religion-and-philosophy/apologetics/5-myths-about-7-books.html>.

24 Etymological studies of 300 quotes from the Old Testament made by New Testament writers can be traced back to the Septuagint version, Cordelias Black, ‘When Did Catholics Add Books to the Bible?’, *Black Cordelias* (2019). <https://theblackcordelias.wordpress.com/2009/12/03/when-did-catholics-add-books-to-the-bible/>.

25 To name a few, Mt. 2.16 may refer to Wis. 11.7; Mt. 6.19–20 to Sir. 29.11; Mt. 7.12 to Tob. 4.15; Mt. 7.16, 20 to Sir. 27.6; Mt. 9.36 to Jud. 11.19; Mt. 11.25 to Tob. 7.18; Mt. 16.18 to Wis. 16.13; Mt. 22.25 to Tob. 3.8; 7.11; Mt. 24.15 to 1 Mac. 1.54; Mt. 24.16 to 1 Mac. 2.28; Mt. 27.42–43 to Wis. 2.12–20; Rom. 1.19–25 to Wis.12–13; Heb.11.35 to 2 Mac. 7; 1 Cor. 15.29 to 2 Mac. 12.44; and Jesus and the apostles held the feast of Hanukkah, based on 1 and 2 Maccabees. There are many other possible references, Scripture Catholic, ‘Deuterocanonical Books in the New Testament’, *Scripture Catholic* (2019). <https://www.scripturecatholic.com/deuterocanonical-books-new-testament/>. For a full list, see Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland (eds.),

Christians eventually appropriated the Septuagint as their version of the Old Testament, to such an extent that the Jews became disenchanted with it.²⁶ Jews also produced new Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible for their own use, in particular the literal rendering of Aquila and a more idiomatic rendering by Theodotion.²⁷ The Christians appreciated Theodotion's version of Daniel to such an extent that almost all manuscripts of the Greek Bible used this version and not the original, older Septuagint version.

In the Western church, the Bible began to be translated into Latin in the second half of the second century CE, with the province of Africa being Latin-speaking and requiring a Latin version of the Bible decades before a similar need was felt in Rome. The Latin Old Testament was a rendering of the Septuagint, including the Septuagintal plus, with nothing indicating to readers that they should distinguish between the books of the Jewish canon and the Septuagintal plus books.²⁸ The same is true of Tertullian (160–220 CE) of Carthage and the other Latin church fathers before the time of Jerome; the Bible they used and the way they used it did not distinguish different parts of the canon, indicating a difference in their authority for Christians. In many cases, their copies of the Latin version included Baruch appended to Jeremiah, and at times Baruch is quoted while the words are ascribed to Jeremiah.

Pope Damasus (305–384 CE) asked Eusebius Sofronius Hieronymis (Jerome, 346/7–420 CE), a distinguished grammarian, to revise the existing Latin Bible, of which there were almost as many different forms of text as there were copies.²⁹ From 382 CE, Jerome produced several versions of the Psalms as well as the rest of the Old Testament, from the original Hebrew (or Hebrew 'verity', as

Novum Testamentum: Graece et Latine (Münster: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 27th edn, 1993), pp. 800–804.

26 Another argument Jewish rabbis used to denigrate the Septuagint was that they, in rather xenophobic fashion, regarded it as 'too Gentile-tainted' (Shea, '5 Myths'). However, Ethiopian Jews still use the Septuagint version, not the shorter Palestinian canon, including the seven deuterocanonical books. They added the following: Jubilees, Enoch, Synodicon, *Diddascalia Apostolorum*, Testament of the Lord, Qalementus, and 4 Baruch, Håggholm, 'Why did Protestants Remove'.

27 Aquila, for instance, translates the contentious Hebrew *'almāh* in Isa. 7.14 used by Christians to vindicate Christ's birth from a virgin (Septuagint *parthenos*) with *neanis* ('young woman or girl') in reaction to Christians' Septuagintal use.

28 Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, pp. 83–84.

29 Miller, 'Gallery'. The decisions of the Council of Rome of 382 CE, under the authority of pope Damasus, is normally viewed as the final settlement of the canon of the Christian Old and New Testament, reaffirmed at the Council of Hippo in 393, the Council of Carthage in 397, in 405 by Pope Innocent I in a letter to Bishop Exsuperius of Toulouse, and the Council at Carthage in the year 419, Michael Lofton, 'Know the Faith: The Deuterocanonical Books', *Church Militant* (2015). <https://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/>

he preferred to refer to it). Fellow Christians criticized him for the decision to translate from the Hebrew 'original' since they viewed the Septuagint as divinely inspired, specifically in those places where it differs from the Hebrew text.³⁰ What did Jerome do with the Septuagintal plus that is not found in the Hebrew texts? He called these books the 'Apocrypha' and added that they should be read by Christians for edification but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical dogmas.³¹ He added the Septuagintal plus as it stood in the Old Latin and explained that although these books may not be used for the establishment of doctrine because they are not in the canonical proper, they retain great ethical value which makes them suitable for reading in the course of Christian worship. Although Jerome's translation was met with distrust and suspicion due to his use of the 'Hebrew verity', the translation in time earned the title 'Vulgate' or 'common' edition, gradually ousting the Old Latin (*Vetus Latina*) version.³²

Augustine counted 44 books in his 'Old Testament',³³ including the books of the Septuagintal plus and counting the twelve Minor Prophets separately. In 393 CE, a church council in Augustine's see of Hippo determined the limits of the canonical books; its proceedings were lost but a provincial council held at Carthage summarized the Hippo decisions, *inter alia* that the Apocrypha is part of the Old Testament, also confirmed by Pope Innocent I in 405 CE in a letter to Exsuperios, bishop of Toulouse.

know-the-faith-the-old-testament-canon. It did not distinguish between the use and authority of the Septuagint and Septuagintal plus.

- 30 Jerome's friend Rufinus accused him of hiring help from 'the synagogue of Satan' and ended their friendship because the authority of the Seventy (Septuagint translators) was supposed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by the apostles; he argued that Jerome intended to overthrow the Septuagint's authority.
- 31 Same as footnote 53. The different words used by the early church to refer to these books are confusing. For instance, Athanasius (296–373 CE) distinguished three categories of books, canonical, edifying but not canonical, and apocryphal. The edifying books were to be read by the church while the apocrypha ought to be avoided altogether. Rufinus of Aquileia (345–410 CE) called the second category 'ecclesiastical books' while Jerome referred to them as 'apocryphal', a term that originally meant 'hidden' or 'secret', American Bible Society, 'What Are the Apocrypha and Deuterocanonical Books?', *American Bible Society Resources* (2019). <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/what-are-the-apocrypha-and-deuterocanonical-books>. To add to the confusion, Jerome at times used the term 'apocryphal' in the same sense as Athanasius, referring to Athanasius' third category of books which have no place in the church.
- 32 Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, p. 98.
- 33 Augustine acknowledged that his use of 'Old Testament' has no apostolic authority or precedent in the New Testament. The only reference, in 2 Cor. 3:14, refers to the covenant at Sinai.

Eventually it became customary to add to copies of the Vulgate a few books that Jerome had not included among those which were to be read 'for the edification of the people', notably 3 and 4 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh.³⁴ What is important is that in practice readers of the Bible probably did not make any distinction between the apocryphal books and the others.

5 Protestant Canon

The Reformers decided to follow the Jewish canon rather than the canon decided upon by the synods of the early church for several reasons: since the Hebrew Bible originated among the Jews and the Christian religion comes out of Judaism, the shorter Hebrew Bible (thirty-nine books) was older and therefore more authoritative,³⁵ while the Apocrypha could no longer be found in Hebrew.³⁶ Another important factor in Protestant consideration was that Roman Catholicism justified some of its practices unacceptable to the reformers at the hand of the Septuagint, and especially books in the Septuagintal plus, holding that the apocryphal books are to be read for personal enlightenment but not for the formulation of doctrine, establishing enough reason for Protestants to lay the major emphasis on the Hebrew canon.³⁷

The Council of Trent (convened in 1545; it discussed the various forms of the biblical text in April 1546) decided that the ultimate appeal should be made to the 'ancient and vulgate edition', and that there should be no distinction

34 1 Esdras of the Septuagint is 3 Esdras of the Vulgate and other modern translations. 4 Esdras or the Apocalypse of Ezra, also called 4 Ezra, is 2 Esdras of modern translations and had never been part of the Septuagint.

35 American Bible Society, 'What Are the Apocrypha'.

36 Black Cordelias, 'When Did Catholics? As indicated, this is not true anymore. Luther used the argument that all books should be left out that was not written in Hebrew originally but Hebrew copies of most books of the Septuagint have since then been found, Häggholm, 'Why did Protestants Remove'.

37 Martin Luther, for instance, stated that the indulgence system that he fought with all his might was bound up with belief in purgatory and the practice of prayers for the dead, that was justified by quoting 2 Mac. 12.38–46 while Tob. 12.12 was used as a proof text for the Catholic doctrine of the intercession of the saints in heaven, Lofton, 'Know the Faith'. He placed the Apocrypha as a sort of appendix to the Old Testament in the Bible he translated (he used other translators to translate these books) although he also placed the letter of James, Hebrews, the letters of John and the book of Revelation in an appendix, EWTN, '7 Books Removed'. Ulrich Zwingli published the Apocrypha as a volume by itself, separate from the rest of the Old Testament. John Wesley relied much on the Apocrypha in his sermons, Henry Wansbrough, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible: A Brief History of Biblical Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), p. 129.

between the different books, setting aside Jerome's distinction between the books of the Hebrew verity and the books included for the edification of the people.³⁸ The Prayer of Manasseh as well as 3 and 4 Esdras were also included in the Clementine Vulgate of 1592. It also became customary during the sixteenth century to refer to the Apocrypha as the 'Deuterocanonical Books', maintaining Jerome's distinction in theory but not in practice.³⁹ The decree of Trent was promulgated by the first Vatican Council of 1849–1870, which added that the biblical books were acknowledged by the church as canonical, not because they had been produced by human intelligence but because God was their author, being inspired by the Spirit and then entrusted to the church.

A complication in the Reformed acceptance of the Hebrew Bible as basis for their Old Testament (even though arranging the books according to the Septuagint)⁴⁰ is that the determination of the Jewish canon is later than the Christian Old Testament. It is clear that the canon of the Hebrew Bible was not established at a supposed synod at Jabne or Jamnia at the end of the first century CE, as many scholars assumed during the twentieth century. While the synagogue at Jamnia served as the centre of later rabbinic Judaism, there is no clear documentary evidence that it ever took a decision that was binding on all Jewish communities.⁴¹

Prior to Christianity, all Jews and Samaritans recognized the *Torah* or Pentateuch as the foundation of their religion. Some of the prophets were also revered, interpreted and accorded authority by many Jews but not all. The Sadducees and Samaritans, for instance, only accepted the *Torah*, even in Jesus's day (Mt. 22.23; Mk 12.18; Lk. 20.27; Acts 23.6–8).

38 Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, p. 104.

39 'Deuterocanon' refers not (as some may imagine) to a 'second rate' or inferior canon, but to books whose status as being part of the canon of Scripture was settled later in time than certain books that always and everywhere were regarded as Scripture (Shea, '5 Myths'). The term was first coined in 1566 by the converted Jew and theologian, Sixtus of Siena (New World Encyclopaedia Contributors, 'Deuterocanonical Books'). Catholics reserved the term 'Apocrypha' for the books that Protestants called 'Pseudepigrapha' (American Bible Society 2019).

40 Reformation Bibles arrange the Old Testament in four sections: law, history, lyrical books and wisdom books, and the prophets. This arrangement goes back to the Greek Septuagint and was the arrangement used by Melito; Bruce Waltke, 'How We Got our Old Testament', *Christian History Magazine* 43 (1994).

41 At most the rabbis discussed the status of marginal books of the canon, specifically Qohelet and Song of Songs and asserted that they 'defiled the hands'. However, the proceedings at Yabneh were not a council and the decisions taken there reflected earlier opinions, that Qohelet, Songs of Songs and Esther are 'included' books while Ben Sira is among the 'withdrawn' or apocryphal books, Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, p. 221.

First-century Christian believers were at first Jews but at least since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by Roman forces, the majority of Christian believers were non-Jews, using mostly Greek as *lingua franca*. They read the Scriptures in Greek, using the Septuagint with the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible and a further 15 writings composed in Greek. 'The Septuagint, not the Old Testament in Hebrew, was the Bible of the early church'.⁴² This is important to remember.

The early Christian writings that were later accorded with authority were also written in Greek. And since the Septuagint contained books that would eventually not be included in the Jewish canon, early Christians and their synods accepted these books as part of their Bible; since they had been using the Septuagint since the establishment of the church, it was not a matter of discussion for them which books to allow into the canon. First-century Christians saw themselves as the implied readers of these books; it spoke to their life situations.⁴³

Prior to the first century CE, the technology for binding books did not exist, and different books were found on different scrolls, making the question of which books should be bound together in the Bible and in what order a question that was not (and even could not be) asked or considered. When the Christian church eventually did answer the question, it was based on the practice of the early church and based on the book selection of the Septuagint.

In its eventual answer to the question of the boundaries of the canon, Judaism at a later stage (perhaps in the second century CE) decided to leave out such books as Maccabees with its apocalyptic militarism that presumably had contributed to Jewish militarism and the resultant destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Their decision to leave out some books was also related to their reaction to Christians' utilization of the Septuagint.⁴⁴ Their decision was determined

42 Richard N. Soulen, *Sacred Scripture: A Short History of Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), p. 20.

43 Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible*, p. 151.

44 The most contentious point was the Septuagint's rendition of Isa. 7.14, which referred to a 'virgin' (Greek *parthenos*) rather than *neanis* ('girl or young woman') who would conceive and bear a son (quoted in Mt. 1.23). The more ancient Hebrew version of Isaiah reads 'young woman' (Hebrew *alma*), not 'virgin', Bruce, *Canon of Scripture*, p. 53. By rejecting the Septuagint and reverting to the Hebrew texts, the rabbinic movement sought to counter the scriptural grounds Christians employed to defend Jesus as the Messiah as foretold by the Jewish prophets, Soulen, *Sacred Scripture*, p. 21. The Hebrew Bible's canon came into existence *inter alia* as a defensive reaction to the rise of Christianity, and its decision to reject the Septuagint was determined by Christians' acceptance of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (along with and including the apocryphal writings). Under the leadership of rabbi Akiba, the Jews condemned the Septuagint in 130 CE.

by their new self-understanding, as a post-temple rabbinic faith community.⁴⁵ Whatever the case, the Jewish canon was shorter, excluding some of the books that early western Christians accepted.

6 Synthesis: Pentecostals and the Canon

It is contended that Pentecostals should revisit their unquestioning acceptance of the Reformed canon of the Bible. The question to be asked is whether the Protestant tradition was correct in following the Jewish canon, ignoring the practice of the early (eastern and western) Christians. Especially for Pentecostals with their restorationist urge to restore the early church and its practices and emphases, the question seems to be relevant. Because the Pentecostal community understands itself to be a primitivistic and restorationist movement,⁴⁶ it argues that it is the best representation of Christianity as an authentic continuation of the New Testament church.⁴⁷ For that reason, Pentecostals should reconsider introducing the Apocrypha to their churches but then the conception should be emphasized that these books are to be read only in terms of the guidelines provided in and under the standard of the other, unquestionably canonical books (as *deuterocanonical* books, with the canonical books serving as *norma normata*). The inner boundary of the canon is the minimal canon of the Reformation churches and does not admit of further reduction; the outer boundary, on the other hand and specifically in Pentecostal thinking, is not fixed and should be extended to include the apocrypha.⁴⁸ Pentecostal hermeneutics define the boundaries of the contemporary revelation of God in different terms than the Protestant tradition, allowing for 'further' revelation, at the hand of the Bible, in terms of the *charismata*.⁴⁹ What should be emphasised

45 Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible*, p. 152.

46 David T. Ngong, *The Holy Spirit and Salvation in African Christian Theology: Imagining a New Hopeful Future for Africa* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 127.

47 Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), p. 133.

48 Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (trans. Robert W. Yarbrough; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), p. 159.

49 I tend toward the view that the spirituality represented by Pentecostalism differs fundamentally from Protestantism and should rather be linked to the mystical tradition. The same is true for Pentecostal hermeneutics with its emphasis on ongoing or continued revelation (against an essential part of Protestantism's cessationist perspective). Roman Catholicism also allows for ongoing revelation but limits it to *ex cathedra* pronouncements from the seat of Peter (the pope), and reads the Bible in terms of church tradition rather than accepted exegetical practices.

consistently is that the perceived 'guidance of the Spirit' should include the *διάκρισις πνεύμα*, the separation, judgment, evaluation, and distinction of the spirits⁵⁰ in order to distinguish what represents the revelation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12.3), and the Bible should remain the main measure against which it should be measured. In deciding the boundaries of the Bible, it is submitted that Pentecostalism would be true to its original restorationist urge to represent the latter rain revival of Spirit baptism (with the early church as the early rain)⁵¹ by reconsidering the Apocrypha as deuterocanonical, implying that it is accepted for personal and ecclesial edification but not for establishing the authority of ecclesiastical doctrines⁵² or distinguishing between spirits.

50 Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), p. 363, suggest that the phrase should be translated, 'to another is given the ability to judge the genuineness of gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not'.

51 Craig S. Keener, 'Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation/Spirit Hermeneutics', in Michael J. Horman (ed.), *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), pp. 270–83 (277), correctly questions early Pentecostals' allegorization of Joel's 'latter rain' (Joel 2.23 according to the KJV) to refer to the contemporary outpouring of the Spirit, although their eschatological expectations as such rang true. The idea was that the showers of spring were followed in Palestine by the showers of autumn, the latter rain, which were greater than the showers of spring, Torrey, *The Fundamentals*, p. 138. According to Acts 2.17–21, Peter recognizes that Jesus' followers now live in a special, biblically promised time, the 'last days', when God will pour out his Spirit and save all who call on the name of Jesus. Pentecostals rightly grasped the sense of eschatological existence and anticipation that characterizes the church age, the period between the first and second comings of Christ, as attested to *inter alia* by Rom. 12.2; 1 Cor. 2.9–10; 10.11; 2 Cor. 1.22; 5.5; Gal. 1.4; Heb. 1.2; 6.5; 1 Pet. 1.20, Keener, 'Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation', p. 277).

52 For Pentecostals, the Bible serves as the inspired Word of God, determining doctrine and lifestyle through the mediation of the Spirit. Scripture has epistemic primacy and merits epistemic priority over and serves as the optimal resource for verifying or falsifying the claims of doctrinal statements, Craig S. Keener, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), p. 104). What is important is that Christians grant epistemic priority to what the exegesis of Scripture reveals rather than to the church's tradition.