There is no question that in the few years in which Jesus and his disciples were together, something profound occurred that would forever change the world and the course of history. A prevailing assumption among New Testament scholars is that the closer you get in time to Jesus’ life, the more authoritative the information is about Jesus and his mission. Ideally, the best case would be to have writings from Jesus himself. As far as we know, Jesus left no writings . . . at least, not while he was a mortal on earth . . .

Now fast-forward 2000 years . . .

In the early part of the twentieth century, writings claiming to be by Jesus were received through the spiritual gift of automatic writing. The medium was an attorney and Methodist Sunday School teacher in Washington D.C. named James E. Padgett, a man with an impeccable reputation for pursuing truth.

This discourse will take a close look at these messages and examine their authenticity, in comparison with the authenticity of the New Testament writings. The New Testament will be examined under the lenses of various forms of modern Biblical criticism, including form, source, textual, historical and redaction criticism.

The evidence is virtually overwhelming that pseudonymity (attributed authorship [literally “false name”], anonymity, and editorial additions run rampant in the New Testament, so what determines the truth and authority of these ancient written documents? How did the early Christian Church during the formative years before and during the formation of the canon of the New Testament distinguish or decide between writings considered heretical, or false, and those considered sacred, or true? Who was the authority, and what was this authority based on? What circumstances influenced the formation of a canon, or standard of authoritative books, of the New Testament? What were the criteria for selection of writings to be included? And perhaps the most important question posed by this essay: Are there any circumstances under which writings should be added to or taken away from the canon?

AUTHENTICITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

American scholars Dennis C. Duling, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Religious Studies and Theology at Canisius College (specializing in social-scientific criticism of the New Testament), and Norman Perrin, Associate Professor of New Testament at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago (specializing in redaction criticism) authored the textbook The New Testament: Proclamation and Parenesis, Myth and History. In this text they clearly make the point that early Christians did not accept all of the traditions about Jesus. They describe various kinds of groups that emerged: ultratraditionalists, who stressed Temple and Torah purity; traditionalists willing to forgo circumcision but not meal purity; moderate traditionalists, like Peter (who had been eating with Gentiles when his peers weren’t watching); reformers like Paul, who preached freedom from the Torah; and radical reformers, like the Hellenists, who attacked both Temple and Torah traditionalists outright. There was not a clear consensus on how the life and teachings of Jesus should be interpreted, even among his close disciples. There were numerous writings to choose from, representing different groups and individuals, and oral traditions that were considered by some to be superior to the written word.
Helmut Koester, a German-born American scholar and leading authority on the gospels in early Christianity, has been teaching at Harvard Divinity School since 1958. Currently he is Professor of New Testament Studies and Ecclesiastical History and has been editor of the Harvard Theological Review since 1975. In his book Introduction to the New Testament (Vol 2), Koester writes:

Beginning with the last decades of 1 CE, the use of the written medium for new communication and for transmitting the tradition became more prominent, but this did not mean the end of the ongoing oral transmission. As late as about 130, Papias of Hierapolis still placed a higher value on the oral tradition from the apostles that was passed down by their successors than on written gospels.\(^3\)

No one can report any event except through his or her own presuppositions and previous experience. In the Gospel According to John, for example, the Christian faith is developed out of an independent Jesus tradition that relates only slightly to the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.\(^4\)

The history of oral traditions shows that as the settings and functions changed, the forms of the sayings and stories changed, and in the process, the content shifted. The parables of Jesus provide good examples. These stories, which originally challenged accepted religious and social attitudes in a particular context, were often transformed in the early church into symbolic allegories for moral teachings.\(^5\)

Redaction criticism assumes that the Biblical writers were more than simple compilers of tradition, but they were creative authors who intended to put forth their own perspectives or theologies. Combining form criticism, source criticism and redaction criticism can allow one to observe how authors of Matthew and Luke, for example, made use of Q, Mark, oral traditions, and perhaps other written traditions.

Setbacks from Pseudonymity

We do not actually know who the writers were for most of the New Testament books (the most notable exception being Paul). In the New Testament writings we see a great deal of evidence for the existence of schools such as the Johannine School and the Pauline School, where a later author puts John's name or Paul's name on it to give it authority. This is called pseudonymous writing, and it was a widely practiced phenomenon in antiquity. They had not developed the modern notion of intellectual property. Writers in groups that highly regarded the person whose name was put on their documents fostered pseudonymity. This phenomenon was not unique among the early Christians. Pseudonymous Jewish apocalypses written in the period before, during, and just after the rise of Christianity were attributed to ancient ancestors such as Abraham and Moses.\(^6\) Various reasons are given by Duling & Perrin for the occurrence of pseudonymity:

Books were associated with an author’s opinion, books were believed to have been written by an author, and books were named with the conscious intention to give them authority. In some cases it is difficult to be sure which reasons apply. Indeed, all three reasons could simultaneously apply: conscious attribution of an author, belief that the author wrote, and association with the author’s opinions.\(^7\)

In short, pseudonymity was a common early Christian phenomenon, with important implications for interpretation of the New Testament gospels. They were not written simply because Jesus’ disciples heard his message, memorized it, and then wrote about it in their memoirs. Rather, unknown authors used some written source or learned it from familiar oral or liturgical traditions.\(^8\)

Charles E. Carlston, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Andover Newton Theological School, writes very strongly about the problems of pseudonymity in his article "The Canon — Problems and Benefits":

Both parts of the Christian Scripture give ample evidence of the constant revision and re-appropriation of tradition: the re-telling of the Exodus story through the ongoing history of the Hebrew people, the changing portrait of King David, the revising of prophetic utterances (Isaiah and Jeremiah, e.g.), the creation of several accounts of the ministry of Jesus, and of course "pseudonymous" works continuing a particular line of thought in a subsequent generation. The ability to preserve tradition by re-creating it is thus both attested and "legitimized" by this phenomenon within the canon itself....For many moderns — and for most modern students — it is self-evident that a pseudonymous writing is a pure and simple forgery.\(^9\)\(^[]\)

In addition to the problems posed by pseudonymity, textual criticism shows us that throughout hundreds of years, many accidental changes have taken place in the New
Intentional additions and editing also occurred. It is estimated that in the approximately 4,000 fragments and manuscripts to the New Testament some 200,000 variations exist. According to critical analysis, when sharp breaks or dislocations occur in ancient texts with different vocabulary or ideas, they usually signal insertions by an author or later editor. An example is Mark 4:1-35, where the introduction (4:1-2a) and conclusion (4:33-35) portray Jesus teaching a large crowd at the Sea of Galilee. These sections have been determined to be the writer's vocabulary and style by redaction critics. However, Mark 4:10-12, which gives the reason for speaking in parables, has a setting in which Jesus and his followers are alone, in sharp contrast with the introduction and conclusion — a dislocation.

Another example of intentional additions or editing can be found in the Gospel of John. The author is not identified in the book itself except by reference in the title: "The Gospel According to John". In fact, none of the four gospels identifies its author within the book. The superscriptions (or titles) of the gospels with their formula ("According to X") were added to distinguish one from the other according to second-century opinion. If we look for information about the author of "John’s" gospel within the book itself, we find some curious clues. At the end of John 21, the author says, "this is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true." This implies that a group, a Johannine School, was writing from their recollections of the testimony of a "disciple" who had written things down, and that they were certifying that it was true. Another possible explanation is that the phrase "and we know that his testimony is true" was tacked onto the original writer's sentence "this is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them". In either case, we see the presence of more than one writer.

Stronger evidence for a Johannine School of writers is found in Chapters 20 and 21 where we find two different endings (John 20:30-31 and John 21:24-25). Differences between the Greek of Chapters 1-20 and Chapter 21 lend further evidence. Another odd feature that implies a later writer added Chapter 21 includes the resurrection appearance of Jesus, which is located in Jerusalem in John 20, but in John 21 it takes place in Galilee.

Letters written by the Apostle Paul were not immune to these corruptions either. A feature of some of Paul's letters are radical breaks in the flow of thought which in some cases can be explained by his own deviations in the course of his argument. In a few instances, however, there are later insertions by either a student of Paul's or a later scribe. For example, the attitude that women should keep silent in the churches (1 Cor 14:33b-36) contradicts his views in 1 Cor 11:5-12. Women may need to keep their heads covered "because of the angels", but they are praying and prophesying along with the men. Other radical interruptions come from parts of letters that are accidentally misplaced — one can pick up the flow of thought a few verses, or even chapters, later.

Six letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament are candidates for pseudonymity because of the differences in vocabulary, ideas, style and social relationships from the seven undisputed letters of Paul. The Pastorals — 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus — are judged by almost all scholars to be pseudonymous. Ephesians is considered pseudonymous by most scholars, and Colossians and 2 Thessalonians by some. Hebrews certainly is not by Paul, and is not part of any other known movement. Before the fourth century, Hebrews was not considered to be by Paul. Origen, a theologian and scholar of Alexandria in the third century, made a famous statement about Hebrews: "But who wrote the letter, God really knows". However, in the late fourth century it was attributed to Paul, hence Hebrews was included in the canon when Augustine supported the canon of the eastern bishop Athanasius. Jerome, the famous translator of the Vulgate edition, added his agreement.
The writers of some of these pseudonymous letters were probably disciples of the apostle who consciously imitated their teacher, wrote in his name, and identified themselves with him — a Pauline School, similar to the many schools of learning that existed in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, from the rabbis to the Stoics. Early Christianity also developed schools, especially those who followed the ideas of Paul and the writer of the Gospel According to John. Helmut Koester states:

The model of the Pauline letter was first taken up and further developed in the circles of his students. The result is the creation of the so-called deutero-Pauline letters: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus), Laodiceans, and 3 Corinthians. Not only do all of these use the model of the Pauline letters, they also continue the Pauline tradition under his authority. But soon other authors began to write under their own names, or under the names of other apostles, still using the model of the Pauline letter for their own purposes.

THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON

What distinguished writing as sacred versus heretical when the canon of the New Testament was formed? There was a large quantity of diverse Christian literature in use by the early Christian communities that was eventually rejected by the orthodox churches. These writings, today known as the Apocrypha, included numerous other gospels, letters attributed to Paul, acts of various apostles, and apocalypses. The archeological discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library contains, among other writings, the Gospel of Thomas (sayings attributed to Jesus), the Gospel of Peter (an account of Jesus’ resurrection), and the Secret Gospel of Mark (probably a longer version of Mark). Why weren't these writings included in the official canon?

The Gnostic Dilemma

In the second century, a large contributing factor to the formation of a Christian canon of authoritative texts was the increasing challenge of Gnostic ideas (gnosis is Greek for knowledge). Gnosticism placed great emphasis on secretly revealed knowledge about God; the world; and the origin, condition and destiny of humanity. Those who have this knowledge have experienced rebirth and become part of a privileged few who will be able to achieve salvation: liberation from our evil bodies and this evil world to return to the world of Light. This gnosis can be taught or transmitted through a secret ritual, but must ultimately come from above as a call, highlighting the importance of individual spiritual experience and real inner transformation, a new birth. They insisted that physical baptism did not make one Christian, whereas orthodox Christianity placed increasing importance on the physical act of ritualistic baptism.

Gnosticism included a body-soul dualism (mortal body-immortal soul), with an evil creator god as distinct from the good god of Light. Many Gnostics identified the Jewish creator god of Genesis with the evil god, since they saw the world as evil. This led them to reject the Jewish scriptures, and, since Gnosticism stressed that the world and body were evil, they could not accept a Savior who could assume a human body, suffer, and die. A Gnostic myth has a Redeemer who descends from the world of Light, disguises himself in a human form without becoming bodily, teaches gnosis, and then ascends back to the world of Light. This belief conflicted with the view that Jesus was a divine being who incarnated in the flesh, an idea that became a major part of belief for most Christians.

As this problem grew more intense, the orthodox church responded in several ways. First, it gathered an authoritative body of literature, which excluded Gnostic texts and interpretations. It also formulated an authoritative statement of faith that the Gnostics could not accept. Finally, it claimed that its leaders were real descendants of the apostles and these leaders became the source of authority in the church. The similar claim of the Gnostics, they said, was false.

Helmut Koester writes:

Gnostic sects and schools used the names of individual apostles abundantly as the authorities for their teachings. A number of gnostic writings or revelations claim the names of apostles...writings of theological instruction also appear under apostolic names.... Since the formation of the concept of apostolicity, which became basic for the canon of the NT, took place in the ongoing controversy with the gnostic sects, it must be assumed that it was exactly the gnostic appeal to apostolic authority which prompted the fathers of the church to emphasize on their part the apostolicity of the orthodox writings. However...the actual theological basis of the formation of the NT canon did not quite agree with such an emphasis.
hersies. In the process of choosing some gospels over others during canonization, important insights about Jesus’ message were left out. For example, the feminine aspect has been largely missing from the New Testament. The Gnostics did not have this setback. They considered Mary Magdalene a key figure, even claiming that Mary (not Peter) was the primary apostle.

The Challenge of Marcion

Marcion of Sinope, the son of a bishop of the Church in Asia Minor, played a major role in influencing the orthodox churches to form a canon. Marcion forced the issue of whether or not it was proper to continue to redact the gospel writings — to add to, edit and re-write according to the special concerns of a later writer. The formation of a canon of New Testament books put a stop to that practice. Even though Marcion was excommunicated and condemned as a heretic by the emerging orthodox churches because of his radical beliefs, his missionary church during the last half of the second century was the only serious competitor to the orthodox Catholic Church.

In 144 CE, Marcion held a hearing before the clergy of the Christian congregations in Rome where he flatly rejected the Old Testament for Christians. He believed Jesus had revealed the Supreme God, the God of love, and that this God of love was a different god than the creator deity of the Old Testament because the creation was evil. He further believed that the teachings of Jesus had been hopelessly corrupted by the Twelve but preserved by the one true apostle, Paul. Marcion saw a distinction between Paul, the thirteenth apostle, elected directly by Jesus Christ and by God, and the twelve apostles elected by the man Jesus. Marcion maintained that this made Paul superior to the Twelve. Marcion saw the opposition between the one true apostle, Paul, and the “false apostles” as the conflict of authority that existed between Paul and the emerging Christian church in Jerusalem. He held the Twelve in very low esteem because he thought they ignored the truth. Paul was the only apostle of Jesus Christ, and his message the only true gospel. Marcion held that false Christians had concocted the other gospels and had altered a written gospel of Paul’s until it became unrecognizable as the “Gospel of Luke”.

To support his teaching, Marcion depended on the ten-letter collection of the Pauline corpus and an edited version of the Gospel of Luke that he believed was Paul’s gospel, written by Paul’s companion. He apparently edited his text of Luke, and perhaps also that of the Pauline letters, attempting to smooth away all contradictions according to the principle that the god preached by the New Testament was different from the god of the Old Testament. In the process, something new occurred: a set of authoritative writings distinct from the Jewish scriptures. Helmut Koester sheds more light on this issue:

Marcion, however, came to the conviction that these writings were not preserved in their original form. He therefore made a critical edition to purify the books of his canon from all later additions. Before censuring Marcion because of his critical purification of the Pauline letters, one should remember that Marcion’s opponents also tried to correct the image of Paul transmitted in the genuine letters, not least by the addition of the Pastoral Epistles... Marcion’s new edition of Luke conforms with a widespread custom of his time: Luke itself (as also Matthew) was already a new edition of the older Gospel of Mark. Thus Marcion’s treatment of the Christian writings which he used for his canon was quite in agreement with the general attitude of his time.

Marcion’s uniqueness was in elevating his newly edited Christian writings to the status of Holy Scripture, while at the same time rejecting the Old Testament. He was convinced that he was continuing a development started by Paul, the only true apostle. The result was Marcion’s canon — the first Christian canon of Scripture. Koester states:

Marcion’s canon was not new in the sense that it replaced a canon of New Testament writings that the church already possessed — there is nothing to indicate that such a canon existed at this time — rather, it was new because it was designed to replace the generally recognized canon of the church, the Old Testament.

Marcion maintained that Christ’s body was a deceiving apparition — therefore, Christ did not die and did not rise from the dead. He also held that Jesus Christ was not the Messiah that the Jews were looking for and denied that the Old Testament could have been a systematic forecast of the coming of Christ. No wonder he was excommunicated! His views simply did not mesh with the orthodox Church’s emphasis on Jesus in the flesh, the resurrected Christ, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The Impact of Montanus

Shortly after Marcion forced the issue of a canon, in the middle of the second century, a
A former priest named Montanus forced the issue of a closed canon where no more books could be added. Montanus had a spiritual experience which formed the basis for an apocalyptic movement called Montanism. His spiritual experiences included falling into a trance and speaking in tongues. He claimed to be the mouthpiece of God and a successor to Abraham and Moses, among other prophets of the Old Testament. He announced that he was the inspired instrument of a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the ‘Paraclete’ promised in the Gospel of John.

American scholar Paul J. Achtemeier, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Interpretation at Union Theological Seminary, is a widely respected authority on the Bible and author of fourteen books. In his epilogue "The New Testament Becomes Normative", in Howard Kee's Understanding the New Testament, he states:

> Because Montanus claimed powers promised in a writing that was widely accepted as authoritative (the Gospel of John) and seemed to renew the early fervor of the Christian movement, he represented a significant alternative to the other Christian communities, which were becoming increasingly institutionalized.

Montanism arose when the church was consolidating its authority in bishops, creed, and canon. The movement spread quickly and was soon in Rome as well as in North Africa. The Montanist movement produced a large body of literature and won many converts, among them the Church Father, Tertullian. At first perplexed, the majority of Church leaders in Asia Minor declared the new prophecy to be the work of demons, and excommunicated the Montanists. The question of new revelation was at the center of the debate in North Africa and Rome. Ronald E. Heine, Professor of Bible and Christian Ministry at Northwest Christian College, writes in his article "Montanus, Montanism" that Tertullian and the Catholic Church both acknowledged continuation of the operation of divine grace in the Church. Tertullian, however, accused the Catholics of fixing “boundaries for God.” Heine further writes about Tertullian:

> The Paraclete was sent, he [Tertullian] argues, because the mediocrity of man could not grasp everything at once. Christian discipline, therefore, is being brought to perfection gradually through the continued activity of the Paraclete. He defines the Paraclete’s task as follows: ‘To direct discipline, to reveal the Scriptures, to reform the understanding, to advance the understanding to better things.’

A battle ensued over the right of the Montanists to spread their teachings by appealing to the authority of the Spirit. In the end it was this issue of authority which made Montanism declared a heresy. Achtemeier states:

> The Christians could not deny that the Holy Spirit had been promised to them, but they could, and did, deny Montanus’s claim that the Spirit spoke as authoritatively through him as it had through the apostles of Christ. But to do that, the Christian community had to affirm that the apostolic period set the standards for the understanding of any further communications from the Spirit. Since the followers of Montanus also produced a body of literature, the Christian communities that opposed him had to affirm that only those writings which drew directly on apostolic traditions were authoritative, and were therefore the norm for the faith of the community.

In Phrygia, the debate about the Montanist prophecy revolved around the manner in which it was done — the possibility of prophecy itself did not enter the debate. Heine writes:

> The opponents in Phrygia attempted to prove that Montanus was a false prophet because he prophesied in a state of ecstasy. Epiphanius sets this as the major topic. ‘Let us examine,’ he says, ‘what constitutes prophecy and what constitutes false prophecy.’ He argues that true prophets in both the OT and NT were always in possession of their understanding when they uttered their prophecies.

Since Montanus had an apocalyptic outlook and had used the Gospel of John and Book of Revelation to support his claims to be the Paraclete, some Christian communities no longer gave these writings the authoritative status they had enjoyed for a century or more. It is interesting to note that none of the numerous writings of Montanus and the movement called Montanism have survived. Bruce M. Metzger, famous American New Testament scholar and translator of the 1990 New Revised Standard Version of the Bible and author of dozens of books on Biblical study, speculates that the writings were probably eliminated because of later imperial decrees that ordered the destruction of all Montanist codices.

The Clout of Constantine
Powerful and prosperous people with personal and political ambitions had a large influence over the execution, dissemination, preservation and content of written documents in early Christian times. Writing was very expensive and laborious, and could only be undertaken by those with time and financial resources.

About 332 CE the Roman Emperor Constantine directed Eusebius, a former church historian who had become bishop of Caesarea, to have fifty copies of the "sacred Scriptures" produced, promising to pay all expenses. Constantine was aware of the great political power to be gained by uniting the various Christian factions. He pushed for a compilation of their writings into one book in a way never previously agreed to by these various churches or by Eusebius himself. Roy Hoover, Professor of Biblical Literature and Professor of Religion Emeritus, Whitman College, and author of How the Books of the New Testament were Chosen, states that the New Testament canon "was settled for all practical purposes when Constantine gave the order to create 50 Bibles. Palpable evidence of the unity of the church, their publication also symbolized the unity of the empire."[42]

Hoover reveals that Eusebius used historical, literary and doctrinal criteria when he drew up his list of canonical books:

...whether writings had been mentioned by earlier generations of Church leaders (a historical criterion), whether a book's style comports well with those known to have been written early in the history of the church (a literary criterion) and whether their content is consistent with established orthodoxy (a doctrinal or theological criterion).[43]

Hoover further asserts that the fourth century canon "has been durable, but it has never been universal."[44] He cites the Syrian Church's differing canon and Martin Luther who, in the sixteenth century, "thought James, Jude and Revelation unfit to be included among the canonical books." Hoover points out that it was not until 1546 at the Council of Trent that the Roman Catholic Church finally issued an authoritative statement about the contents of the Bible. With a vote of 24 to 15, with 16 abstentions, the writings in Jerome's fourth century Latin Vulgate version were declared to be the Church's official canon. Hoover writes: "In short, no single canon has ever been accepted by all Christians. In fact, the status of the New Testament canon today resembles what it was in Eusebius' day: a question that attracts both a considerable consensus and continuing differences."[44]

Implications for Modern Times

Many sincere Christians today accept the New Testament books as being etched in stone like the Ten Commandments. Clearly, this is not so. They have fallen victim to many of the same forces that branded Jesus and his teachings blasphemous and heretical in his own time: religious and political leaders, dogmas, and rituals. If Jesus were to present himself in our day, would we recognize him or his teachings? A New Testament scholar, Father Raymond E. Brown, whose Jewish and Christian research in nearly a dozen ancient and modern languages, in addition to assessing the work of more than 2000 scholars for his 2-volume study The Death of the Messiah, writes:

Jesus was widely seen as a disturber of the religious structures of his time. Were Jesus to appear in our own day, he would probably be arrested and tried again. Most of those finding him guilty would identify themselves as Christians, and think they were rejecting an imposter.[45 (1)]

Concerning the grounds on which Jesus was arrested Brown states: "Jesus did something to threaten the temple, which was at the center of Jerusalem's economic life. And any threat to the temple was of grave political concern to Rome."[46]

In the life and ministry of Paul, we have an example of a pious Pharisaic Jew who also happened to be a Roman citizen, righteously attempting to protect and defend his own sacred tradition by punishing and trying to stop a radical band of blasphemers, the Christians. Suddenly, in the midst of this zealous persecution, Paul (then known as Saul) succumbs to a spiritual experience that reveals information and authority from the spirit of Jesus himself.

For I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal 1:11)

And in 1 Cor 15:8, after noting resurrection appearances to Cephas, the Twelve, five hundred brethren, James, and "all the apostles", Paul states, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

The power of this intense spiritual experience transformed him to the point where he eventually became a foremost leader and authority among the Christians he had been formerly persecuting, without any formal training in the teachings of Jesus or certificate of ordination given to him. In fact, Paul had never known Jesus as a man, which was apparently a necessary component for being an apostle for the author of Luke-Acts
(Acts 1:21-26), Paul encountered delicate problems in his claim to be an apostle to the Gentiles because of this fact and his authority was often challenged, especially in Galatia and Corinth. Paul argued that his apostleship was not of human origin: "Paul an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal 1:1).

Outside agitators of Jewish background (2 Cor 11:22) with "letters of recommendation" (2 Cor 3:1-3) came to Corinth. Paul sarcastically labeled them "superlative apostles" (2 Cor 3:1, 11:4-5, 11) and said they were really "false apostles". Paul accused them of being "deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ" (2 Cor 11:13). They, too, claimed to be apostles, and thus competitors for leadership at Corinth. Paul said they preached "another Jesus" and had "a different spirit" (2 Cor 11:4). These "super apostles" were also performing miracles, and Paul's response was that he, too, was a miracle worker.47

For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. (2 Cor 11:13-15)

These "super apostles" were most likely apostles such as Peter or James who carried great authority in the Jerusalem church. Paul was possibly accusing original disciples of Jesus of being workers of Satan!

The gift of the Spirit in the Christian community in Galatia was one of the proofs that Paul used to assert his authority. Prophecy was considered to be a very high gift, and there is evidence that early Christians believed the "spirit of Jesus" or the "spirit of Christ" was speaking through their prophets. Helmut Koester writes:

...there was from the beginning an oral tradition which was transmitted under the authority of the 'Lord.' It comprised the sayings of Jesus as well as short narratives about him. The words of the 'Lord' were not restricted to sayings of the earthly Jesus, but also contained words of the risen Lord. At an early date the medium of written communication and transmission also came into use.48

Perrin and Duling also state the prominence of prophecy in earliest Christianity:

It is clear from our interpretation of the Son of Man that the Q community was eventually led, at least in part, by spirit-filled, eschatological prophets who spoke for the now departed, but soon to return, Jesus. Prophecy, then, was one of the chief characteristics of the emergent community, a conclusion that is supported by allusions to Old Testament prophetic and apocalyptic literature, explicit references to prophets, and various expressions of eschatological prophecy, such as warnings about impending judgment by John the Baptist and especially Jesus.49

If early Christians accepted these prophetic expressions as being inspired by the spirit of Jesus or John, why couldn't Christians today accept that the spirit of Jesus or John could still be operating through prophets in our own time? Isn't the spirit of Jesus still alive and functioning today as it was in Paul's time? Couldn't someone like Paul just as well appear in our own day?

According to the synoptic gospels, Jesus was a spiritualist. He exorcised demons and spirits (the original ghostbuster!) and received the Spirit of God at his baptism by John (Matt 3:16). He also spoke with spirits, like Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration stories in the gospels.50 He appeared to many after his death (1 Cor 15:8) and, as stated earlier, prophets in the early Christian communities stated words believed to be from the spirit of Jesus or Jesus Christ or John.

So here's the big question. What if there were contemporary writings of apostolic origin, or better yet, from the living spirit of Jesus himself? What if the material that's in the New Testament, which is about 1700 years old, could be updated and viewed with greater clarity and understanding? What if answers could be found to questions such as: What was Jesus' childhood like? Did Jesus ever regard himself to be God? Did Jesus' earthly body dematerialize at the resurrection, and, if so, by what means? Will Jesus ever return in the apocalyptic fashion expected by the early Christians and still believed by many Christians today?

The answers to all of these questions and many more are contained, in specific detail, in automatic writings claiming to be from Jesus through the mediumship of James E. Padgett at the beginning of the 20th century.51 Padgett's story must be told and the messages examined before one can answer questions regarding the authenticity of these writings.

THE MOMENTOUS PADGETT MESSAGES
Esq. Padgett’s mediumship developed at the age of 62 under a unique set of circumstances. In fact, he did not even believe in mediumship, but when his wife Helen died in February 1914, his grief, coupled with a continuing experience of her presence, led him to attend a séance held by a medium named Mrs. Maltby. She astonishingly told Padgett that he had the rare ability to receive automatic writings from spirits, that his wife Helen wanted to write to him, and she encouraged him to try. On his first attempt his pencil moved automatically, but only produced what he called “fish hooks” and “hangers”.

Eventually, after numerous tries, a message signed by his wife Helen was detected on the paper. This short personal note indicated that she was with him frequently and was pleased that she was able to communicate with him. Still, he questioned the source of these writings and demanded more proof. The writings that followed told of events in their lives that only the two of them could have known. However, Padgett felt that this information could be coming from thoughts originating in his own mind, although the writings came more rapidly than his own thought processes, and the author kept insisting that it was not his own mind but hers relaying the messages. She constantly wrote of her love for him and how happy it made her to be with him.

Intrigued and perplexed by these events, and wishing to set his mind at rest, he began a serious study of spiritualism. Much of the information differed from his orthodox Christian views and portrayed an after-life in a spirit world where one continued to learn and progress through various realms. He also learned that, if given the chance and under the right circumstances, spirit-mortal communication could occur.

Subsequently, he asked his wife what plane or sphere she was in. Helen wrote that she was in a plane of the second sphere where there was a degree of happiness and light, and that her ability to visit him and write by controlling his brain and hand was “quite easy”. As a result, at this time she wasn’t interested in attempting to progress to higher spheres. Esq. Padgett relayed to his close friend, Dr. Leslie R. Stone, that he could feel her presence intensely at these times and that it made him feel a happiness that was alien to him except when she wrote.

In his spiritual studies Padgett had discovered that a spirit could progress to greater happiness and higher spheres, and he encouraged Helen to do this. Helen did so, with the help of Padgett’s grandmother, Ann Rollins, who was later described by Helen as “a glorious spirit dwelling in the high celestial heavens”. Ann told her that in order to progress to these higher celestial realms one must “pray to the heavenly Father for His Divine Love through earnest longing of soul.”

These sessions, originally held to obtain writings from Helen, had become infused with a deep religious note, replacing much of the personal material. Helen prayed as she was instructed. Her prayers were soon answered and as this Divine Love of God entered her soul she experienced her thoughts and desires being purified. This, in turn, became reflected through a changed soul, causing her spirit body to become brighter and more ethereal. Helen had reached the third sphere, she said, and was considerably happier. She suggested that Padgett and his four friends who had witnessed these sessions (Dr. Leslie R. Stone, Mr. Eugene Morgan, Dr. Goerger, and Mr. Rollison Colburn), should also pray for God’s Love since “the soul is the same, whether in the flesh or spirit body, [and] it could be transformed by prayer to the Father for His Divine Love. Not by ordinary intellectual prayers that come from the head, but from the heart and soul.”

Padgett at first couldn’t believe this but was informed in subsequent writings that he should not doubt and that Jesus himself, still interested in helping mankind, would himself write through Esq. Padgett of this sacred truth, if Padgett would allow him to.

Though this did eventually happen, Padgett felt that it was absurd to believe Jesus had written and destroyed the first message signed “Jesus of the Bible”. One of the four witnesses, Mr. Colburn, was skeptical to the point of leaving the group. However, Goerger, Morgan and Stone shared an intuitive sense that the message was genuine. On September 28, 1914, Jesus delivered his first formal message through Padgett — a long message which urged Padgett to pray for God’s Love, and stated that certain passages in the New Testament, thoroughly believed in by Padgett, were false.

Padgett was also still doubtful, however, because many of the ideas about soul progression, Divine Love (the essence of God), and falsehoods in the bible, went against what he had been taught and what he had been teaching others in Sunday school. Yet, in reflecting on this and discussing it with his close friend, Dr. Stone, he finally came to the realization that this being the case, there was no way these differing...
ideas could have come from his own mind, and that all these spirits, including Jesus, must be who they said they were. It was at this point that Padgett and his friends began to pray as they had been instructed:

...letting our soul longings go out to the Heavenly Father, and in time a feeling came glowing involuntarily into the region of our hearts. We felt this emotion grow stronger and stronger with continued fervid prayers and as we did so, our faith in God became solidified and absolute. Never before had he, nor I [Dr. Stone], felt so sure of the real existence of the Father and His Divine Love and mercy. The cold intellectual concept which we had entertained of Him had through prayers for His Love been transformed into a warm, glowing, living feeling of closeness, of atonement with the Heavenly Father, whose Love and mercy and goodness we could sense were personal and real.55

Padgett continued to follow the advice of ongoing messages from Helen, Ann Rollins, and, above all, from Jesus, encouraging him to keep praying for God's Love so that he could eventually receive messages of religious importance for humanity from the highest celestial spirits, including Jesus and his apostles. This progression in Divine Love was necessary in order to change the condition of Padgett's soul to more closely match that of the celestial spirits. In doing so, his brain would be changed enough to enable it to receive and his hand to automatically write the thoughts that they desired to impart regarding God, Jesus' mission on earth, the New Testament and Christianity.55

The following message from Jesus proclaims:

I Am Here, Jesus....I know that it will be difficult to make men believe in communications that may come through mediums, and that the churches will antagonize the reception of such communications, but I want to tell you that there will be such power exerted by the spirits of the Kingdom, that no efforts on the part of men or churches will be able to withstand these efforts of the spirits. Just as soon as mortals get in condition to receive these truths, they will be given all the powers necessary, and the truths will come with such force and exactness, that the erroneous beliefs will have to give way and let the truths that I speak of take their places.56

Another letter from Jesus asserts:

You are my friend and disciple. You are in me and I am in thee, and we are in the Father. You are in me for all eternity.

My kingdom is not of this world and you are not of this world — you are in me as I told my disciples of old. Only believe me and keep my commandments, and I will love you to the end, and the Father will love you.57

The preceding message certainly sounds like the Jesus in John 17:21: "...that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

The following statement in a letter from Jesus tried to reassure Padgett about the source of the material coming through his hand:

What you have written [are] my thoughts — you did not think any of these thoughts. There are many messages to be written and I am anxious that you receive them in order that they may be delivered to the world, for the world is now awakening to a greater realization of the fact that man is spiritual and must have spiritual food.

Jesus told Padgett he had not been selected due to his being less sinful than other men or that he was the best medium that had ever lived, but that it was because he had been willing to believe that Jesus could actually come to him and that he was willing to ask for, and open to receiving, the Divine Love as he had been encouraged. Jesus reveals:

There are certain qualities in your constitution, both spiritual and material, that render you susceptible to the influences of our powers and to the use by us for the purpose of our design and work, which determines one to choose you for the work in the way in which I and the other high spirits have heretofore used you; and it may seem strange to you that in all the long ages preceding, I have not found one human with the qualification to fit him for the work.

I have used others before, but they have failed to submit their minds and souls and beliefs and forethoughts to our influence and directions as you have so far done. Many humans have the qualified conditions of spiritual and material makeup to perform our wishes and work, but as they all have free wills, which we cannot compel, and as circumstances and environments and education and beliefs are elements which affect
and determine the possibility of our finding an instrument suitable for our purposes, we
have not been able to find a medium who was qualified to be used for our work.

All things in the spirit world, as well as on earth, are controlled by immutable laws, and
all spirits as well as mortals are subject to those laws. The law of rapport and
communication must be complied with by spirits, no matter how much elevated, and
also by humans; and no spirit, by reason of the possession of any supposed power, can
set aside this law. But while spirits have not this power, yet they may have such
knowledge of conditions that they can discern what qualities in the condition of a human
are susceptible to the influence, and molding by the spirits, so that as a result thereof,
the law may be brought into operation. And this briefly will explain to you why I selected
you as my medium and mouthpiece. For know this, that for a long time I have been
endeavoring to influence and mold your mind and beliefs, so that your soul might
become developed in such a way that conditions might be formed that would enable us
to make a rapport that would permit of our controlling your brain to convey these
messages of truth.\textsuperscript{58}

Jesus’ disciples also wrote through Padgett to corroborate, inform, and reassure him of
the source of his automatic writings:

I am the true Andrew of the Bible, and no other, and you must believe
that I am. I know that you may have doubts as to so many of the disciples
of the Master coming to you to write, but you must not be surprised at that
fact, for who are more interested in the great work that you are to do than
the disciples of the Master, who know that his teachings are the truth, and
that mankind needs them at this time, more than at any time in the history
of the world.\textsuperscript{59}

A letter from St. James, Apostle of Jesus, states the importance of God’s Love, Divine
Love, as the way to new birth and true immortality:

No founder of any race or sect has ever taught the new birth, or the
inflowing of the Divine Love in contradistinction to that of the natural love.
And the teachings of Jesus are the only ones that reveal to man the
existence of this Divine Love, and how to obtain it, so you see the
importance of this truth coming to man. I must say here, that without the
possession of this Love no spirit can enter the celestial spheres....The
teachings of the other founders will show men the way to a life of
happiness, and to what they may suppose is continuous existence. But
the teachings of Jesus are the only ones that declare and lead men to a
realization of the true immortality of the soul.\textsuperscript{60}

The importance of love is eloquently expressed by the Apostle Paul, who was knocked
off his horse and slain in the spirit by his encounter with the resurrected Jesus when
Paul (then Saul) was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians. This experience
transformed him into Christianity’s greatest evangelist. In his letter to the Corinthians,
Paul indicates that the highest gift of all is love:

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I
am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers,
and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so
as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (1 Cor 13:1-
3)

A few verses later, Paul makes a powerful statement of the indestructible nature of love,
even as prophecies and knowledge undergo change and obsolescence:

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for
tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we
know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete
comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a
child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an
adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but
then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know
fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love
abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor 13:8-13)

In his letter to the Romans, Paul expresses the conviction that nothing can separate us
from God’s Love:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor
things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor
anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of
God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:38-39)

AUTHENTICITY OF THE PADGETT MESSAGES
Many questions regarding the authenticity of these unprecedented, recently-channeled messages are answered within Padgett’s story and within the messages themselves. We can see by comparisons with the authenticity of the New Testament writings, particularly in regard to apostolic origin, and by comparison with the issues surrounding the formation of the New Testament canon, such as those brought up by Montanus and Marcion, that the extraordinary Padgett messages contain just as much authority and authenticity as the New Testament writings, if not more.

Still, we must look for outside corroborations or refutations to satisfy our private doubts. We must put any religious or spiritual revelation through a crucible of discernment. Due to the enormity of the question of discernment, a second essay entitled “Is There A Second New Testament? Part II: The Question of Discernment” deals with this subject. The authority of the Padgett messages are further examined through comparisons with: 1) the New Testament text, especially Paul’s writings and the Gospel According to John; 2) personal testimony, similar to Paul’s; 3) spiritualism and other channeled material; 4) outside sources, especially scholarly; and 5) David Lane’s “spiritual crucible” and other validity tests.

“The Question of Discernment” also explores the issue of true prophecy versus false prophecy, and why some people follow destructive, apocalyptic fanatics like David Koresh, Jim Jones or Charles Manson. Partially, the answer lies in the desperation that many feel about something, anything, to believe in and be part of. People who are vulnerable, alienated or ignorant are especially prone to becoming snared by a cult leader who makes them feel valued and part of something larger than life, but who eventually leads them down a fiery path of destruction. Unaware of the pacificistic components in Jesus’ message, they become victims of the kind of prophecies about the end of the world that have repeatedly brought disasters in the past, and still are in the present.

Another part of the answer may be that the Bible has become regarded as a sacred mystery and too hard to understand. Most modern-day preachers are not yet bridging the knowledge gap that exists between the common man and Biblical scholars.

What is desperately needed is something to believe in, and to have faith in, that is non-destructive, non-invasive, reasonable, and inspiring that will lead us to a relationship with God . . . like Jesus’ original message, only stated in contemporary times, in contemporary language. That is the promise of the profoundly exceptional Padgett messages.

Alfred North Whitehead, famous British scholar who contributed significantly to twentieth-century logic, philosophy of science and metaphysics, said that religion must face change in the same spirit as does science. The principles of religion may be eternal, but the expression of those principles requires continual development . . . an evolution of religious doctrine through revelation.

The important question regarding anything that claims to be revelation is: Does it add to our present understanding of and relationship with God? Paul states in 1 Cor 13:6,12: “...how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation or prophecy or teaching?... since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church.” “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” (Romans 14:19)

The essence of the Padgett messages is to help one to more fully understand Jesus and his profound and unique contribution to the world. These astonishing and pivotal communications offer a fresh revelation of the same basic communication that originally inspired Christianity . . . the message of God’s Divine Love being available to humanity, and the true path to immortality. Whether we believe it is from Jesus, as thousands of so-called New Birth Christians do, or from Padgett’s unconscious interpretation of Jesus, the value of his work is astounding and deserves serious study.

Some regions of nature we experience directly, others we do not. But even these hidden regions can get messages to us in round-about ways or we would not know that they exist.

— Huston Smith, Forgotten Truth

SHOULD THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON BE REVISED?

When Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968, a group of ministers brought up the question of whether the canon should be altered to include King’s ’Letter from a Birmingham Jail’, written when he was in solitary confinement for participating in a civil-rights protest. His letter was a response to white clergymen, including his good friend evangelist Billy Graham, who criticized King and his followers for extremism in provoking civil disturbances and urged him to withdraw from demonstrations. Instead of retreating, as he had done in the past, King wrote a letter from jail, as the apostle Paul of Tarsus had done, defending his actions and rebuking his critics. He began: “Seldom,
if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas." King went on to write an eloquent and convincing essay that justified the strategy of the civil rights struggle and confronted the conscience of mainstream America. In the process he wrote a convincing epistle for a distinct time and place that had universal meaning for all places and times.

According to Bruce Metzger, King’s letter was considered because it “conveys a strong prophetic witness, and interprets God’s will in the spirit of Christ.”63 It was decided the letter should not be added to the canon, however, because “the differences as to age and character between it and the books of the New Testament are far too great to warrant its being added to the canon.”63 Metzger further points out:

Suggestions that the canon might be enlarged by the inclusion of other ‘inspirational’ literature, ancient or modern, arise from a failure to recognize what the New Testament actually is. It is not an anthology of inspirational literature; it is a collection of writings that bear witness to what God has wrought through the life and work, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and through the founding of his Church by his Spirit.63

Something from the past like the Dead Sea Scrolls could still be unearthed, but Metzger asserts if it doesn’t substantially add to what’s already in the New Testament, it should not be added to the canon. An example of an ancient text that should possibly be included because it enhances our understanding of the gospel traditions circulating after Jesus’ death is the Gospel of Thomas. Though actually not a gospel, but a collection of 114 sayings attributed to Jesus and alleged to be written by the Apostle Thomas, it is important because it contains a very old gospel tradition not directly taken from our canonical gospels but derived from another source.

Charles E. Carlson, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Interpretation at Andover Newton Theological School, in his article “The canon - problems and benefits” affirms that the question of the Christian canon of scripture is still open today because the original justification for a canon has broken down. “Yet both scholars and ordinary church members go on using it, as if the theoretical problem were irrelevant — or even unknown!”64 Carlson expounds:

In the early church...the formation of the NT canon was a gradual process of both inclusion and exclusion, and it rested on a number of principles, which we might describe schematically as reducible to three: apostolic provenance, widespread use, and theological orthodoxy. In our very historically minded age, all three principles have been seriously (and rightly) challenged in a way that the earliest church could hardly have imagined.64

Carlston first addresses the principle of apostolic provenance: ‘Who today would argue seriously that all twenty-seven books of the NT come, directly or indirectly, from those close followers of Jesus that we call “apostles”?’64 He then cites convincing evidence for his viewpoint that of the twenty-seven NT books, not more than seven or eight are directly apostolic (or at most fourteen). Carlson makes the powerful statement:

Defenders of Matthean priority are (in spite of much rhetoric to the contrary) making very little headway, and it still looks to most contemporary interpreters as if Matthew rests on the Gospel of Mark, itself increasingly interpreted without any reference to Peter, its supposed “apostolic” source.65

The other two criteria don’t get much support from Carlson either. Regarding the criteria of use, he states that even though the underlying impulse is valid, this criterion is very hard to evaluate with any precision. He further reveals:

The churches of Eastern and Western Europe have never agreed on just which books meet this particular canon. And...it hardly seems appropriate to ignore the even more extensive canon of Ethiopic churches. So clearly ‘widespread use’ is elusive, however central it may be.66

Similarly, he considers the criterion of orthodoxy to be “elusive, probably even misleading”, because orthodoxy does not recognize the original roots of movements considered ‘heretical’ and therefore misunderstands their actual origin and development, while at the same time the orthodox church idealizes the unity of the early church. Carlson asserts:

Further — and worse — the ‘priority of orthodoxy’ criterion does not deal adequately with the fact that our present canon reflects political and social factors at work in the battle over Gnosticism and other movements in the second and third centuries.66

Carlston goes on to point out that, as we have seen earlier in this essay, the original decisions regarding the canon were based on many factors:

...scholarly judgments, episcopal decisions, liturgical acts in hundreds of congregations scattered in time and space, and so on. It was, so to speak, the mind of the church on what the church was and lived by. Its negative judgments were, to be sure, originally
directed against the marginal and the heretical, both as defined by the groups who eventually held power.67

Regarding the problem of re-defining and re-shaping the canon, Carlston states: “In the long run, a church that cannot be defined, or one that defines itself only from within, will be unable to lay claim to being a faithful transmitter of that tradition in which it purports to stand.”68

I don’t think the Padgett messages should be added into the canon of the New Testament, but rather, that they should be viewed as a supplement, a Second New Testament, in the same way that the New Testament was added on to the Hebrew Old Testament scriptures. The New Testament writings all come from early Christian times and should be viewed primarily from that context. The Padgett messages are contemporary writings that deal with the same subject of Jesus Christ and his life, teachings, death and resurrection. In addition, however, they shed light on many details not in the New Testament, and are a revelation by Jesus and his disciples about the founding of his Church by his Living Spirit. They are truly spirit-filled, a faith-builder and an important direct source for us to understand Jesus’ teachings. In these humble messages, Jesus gives us the key to immortality and the information we need to be alone with God. The salvation history context of the New Testament is still important and valid, but the Padgett messages amplify, augment and refine that salvation history, as this message from Jesus illustrates:

…in the Bible, which most of those professing to be Christians believe contains my sayings and teachings, is set forth this way to the Celestial Kingdom. The words are few and the way is plain, and no mystery prevents men from comprehending the meaning thereof. When I said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God,” I disclosed the only and true way to this kingdom….The only way then is simply this: that men shall believe with all the sincerity of their minds and souls that this great Love of the Father is waiting to be bestowed upon each and all of them, and that when they come to the Father in faith and earnest aspirations, this Love will not be withheld from them.69

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Notes


5. Ibid., p 17.


8. Ibid., p 11.


10. Koester, Intro to the NT, p 15.

11. Ibid., p 41.


15. Ibid., pp 127-8.

16. Ibid., p 179.

17. Ibid., pp 282-3.
18. Ibid., p 262.
19. Koester, Intro to the NT, p 3.
22. Koester, Intro to the NT, p 8.
24. Ibid., p 149.
25. Ibid., p 150.
26. Ibid., p 151.
27. Koester, Intro to the NT, pp 8-9.
29. Couliano, Tree of Gnosis, p 151.
34. Metzger, The Canon, p 100.
41. Metzger, The Canon, p 102.
43. Ibid., pp 46-7.
44. Ibid., p 47.
46. Ibid., p 51.
47. Duling, The NT, p 200.
48. Koester, Intro to the NT, p 1.
49. Duling, The NT, p 152.
52. Ibid., p VI.
53. Ibid., p VII.
54. Ibid., p 367.
55. Ibid., p IX.
56. James Padgett, True Gospel Revealed Anew by Jesus, Vol. II (Washington DC:
57. Ibid., p 23.
60. Padgett, True Gospel Vol I, p 158.
63. Metzger, The Canon, p 271.
65. Ibid., pp 33-4.
66. Ibid., p 34.
67. Ibid., p 35.
68. Ibid., p 40.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Patricia Doyle has been a student of spiritual and religious studies since 1963. Six full years of university studies recently included three years as a religion major at the University of Puget Sound, where her academic work was acknowledged as outstanding. In 1974 she had a near death experience and was enveloped in God’s Love and Presence. In 1976 she had a conversion experience with Jesus, much like Paul of Tarsus. Patricia has been president of the Foundation Church of the New Birth since 1984, after Jesus, confirmed by three ministers of the church, called her to the position.

The Foundation Church of the New Birth is a Christian Spiritualist church founded in 1958 upon a revelation delivered by Jesus and other spirits, received through the automatic writing prophecy of James E. Padgett, a lawyer who died in 1923. Esq. Padgett practiced law for 43 years, was an orthodox Protestant Sunday school teacher, and never used his gift of mediumship as a way to earn money or fame. In these messages, compiled in four volumes, entitled True Gospel Revealed Anew By Jesus, many subjects are illuminated, the most important being the relationship of our souls to God, that God is Love, and that each of us may be “born anew” in God’s Divine Love.

The New Testament, unlike the Old was revealed over a much shorter time, a sixty-year period, from A.D. 33 to 100. By the time of Jesus, the Old Testament canon was closed 450-years earlier. As Christianity spread into foreign lands, the need for translations of scripture was required, and since there was no “Bible” but individual New Testament books, there was a need to establish what books had apostolic authority and which did not. In the first we seek for the evidences of the growth in appreciation of the peculiar value of the New Testament writings; in the second we discover the clear, full recognition of a large part of these writings as sacred and authoritative; in the third the acceptance of the complete canon in the East and in the West.