

The Orthodox Canon: Applying Brevard Childs' Tradent Supposition to Unveil Orthodox Hermeneutics and Define the Extensive and Expansive Canon

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And let no one interrupt me, by saying that what we confess should also be confirmed by constructive reasoning: for it is enough for proof of our statement, that the tradition has come down to us from our fathers, handed on, like some inheritance, by succession from the apostles and the saints who came after them.

Gregory of Nyssa.¹

Introduction

In this article I unveil the widely undefined hermeneutics of Eastern Orthodoxy by applying the criterion of Brevard Childs' tradent supposition. This study investigates Childs' Canonical Critical methodology and takes the tradent supposition further in defining internal and external workers in relation to the Biblical Canon. From this formative work the study then shows the 'Canon' is defined in wider terms of Eastern Orthodoxy to include the voices of the Church Fathers and Mothers. This evidence shows a working within and external to the current accepted wide corpus of Eastern Orthodox canonical texts.

Concentrating on the Bible as a final form, Childs set about defining what would become known as Canonical Criticism.² This hermeneutical methodology enabled discernment of a tradition's individual voices that are carried through time and presented in a holistic final work. This article will show the intricacies of Canonical Criticism and examine the tradents that are referred and inferred within Childs' work. The basis of this investigation is to apply the tradent supposition to Eastern Orthodoxy, showing there is use

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¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 5.6 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*), p. 163.

² Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (London: SCM, 1984), p. 8.

in the methodology to unveiling an undefined hermeneutical method that has remained under-investigated. There is no shortage of Orthodox theologians but few speak in the terminology of a hermeneutical framework, and this article seeks to fill that gap. This investigation will depict the view of scriptural authority of Orthodoxy unveiled in the works of Orthodox theologians who reach beyond the bounds of the Biblical Canon. Due to the limited size of this study there, will be a concentration beyond Scriptural Canon limited to the flow of authority in works of the Fathers and Mothers. This concentration will be on the work of Orthodox voices within the Canon, the anonymous work of *The Way of the Pilgrim*,³ along with examples from modern Eastern Orthodox theologians such as John McGuckin, John Chryssavgis, Georges Florovsky and Mario Baghos.⁴ The application of the Childs' tradent supposition, when applied to Eastern Orthodoxy, will unveil a working within the Canonical extension of the Fathers and Mothers. This will assist in defining internal and external tradents shown in the *Philokalia* and Origen of Alexandria's works, therefore showing Childs' methodology is suitable to discern the hermeneutical methodology of Eastern Orthodoxy.

Canonical Criticism

Childs concentrated his lifelong work on the premise that text cannot, and should not, be separated into portions of description and construction. Accordingly, the past and present separated into different strands works against the intended aspiration of the Bible itself.⁵ The movement of the past few centuries to a wider adoption of scientific reasoning and explorative analysis of texts, with historical investigations, and the study of language through the philosophical lens were viewed to miss the mark on the intention of the Biblical end product. He found that diverse Biblical work and theological reflection is only possible through a unique understanding of the

³ Anonymous, 'The Way of a Pilgrim', in *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way*, trans. Olga Savin (Boston: Shambhala, 2001).

⁴ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine and Spiritual Culture* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 101; John Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 2003), p. 18; Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), p. 108; Mario Baghos, 'The Conflicting Portrayals of Origen in the Byzantine Tradition', *Phronema*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2015), pp. 69-104.

⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 141-142.

Canon in its entirety.⁶ The end product of the text, the purposeful organisation within the corpus and inclusion of books side by side, is the product that is the subject of investigation.⁷ The answer to the question of countless and diverse textual critical accounts that look at the form, historical or reader response analysis was to seek an understanding of what is the intention of the collected work as a final product. To this end Canonical Critical methodology came to be defined. The modern hermeneutical endeavour concentrated in a corner of Biblical scholarship in the past few decades, was thought by Childs to be a resurgence of what he considered as the historical interpretive methodology of former communities.⁸

According to Childs, in modern times interpretive methodologies are dominated by efforts to unveil a historical narrative, form or reuse of the work through new interpretations. The reason for the texts, Childs argues, is not entirely historical. To understand the Biblical 'truths' and purpose of the holistic text, the Canonical Critical methodology was defined. Textual portions served in isolation provide little power in the explorative methodology of the Canonical critic. Instead the interpreter combines methods of exposition when reading the text using historical, literary and theological interpretations bookended by a specific collection of works.⁹ Canonical criticism was founded on the basis of attempts to overcome the loss of meaning when works are considered in isolation, for only as a whole can a rich, and therefore more authentic, meaning be discerned. This investigation of the entirety of the Canon holds both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament side by side. "By reading the Old Testament along with the New as Christian Scripture a new theological context is formed for understanding both parts which differs from hearing each Testament in isolation" says Childs.¹⁰ Historically questionable portions of the Bible are glossed over by the holistic tradition that flows through the text. It is a holistic study that proves most fruitful with historical meanings and discernible discrepancies removed from the forefront of the Canonical critical methodology.

⁶ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 205-206.

⁷ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), pp. 74-77.

⁸ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 226.

⁹ Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: an Introduction*, p. 38.

¹⁰ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 671.

Whilst not short of critics, who are purported to have misunderstood the purpose of Childs work, his defined methodology seeks to provide some use of text in the context of a holistic corpus.¹¹ It is also worthy to note there have been efforts to rescue parts of the methodology including from proponents, such as his former students. Christopher Seitz, a student of Childs, claims his methodology is brilliant and ground-breaking, yet flawed, and was willing to apply his work to alternate conclusions.¹² There have also been significant moves to adopt the method of Canonical Criticism to traditions outside of the Christian corpus, such as the efforts of Tzvi Marx. He applies the method to unleash an understanding of the expanded Rabbinical corpus, including the Oral Torah and extensive commentaries. These additions to the Torah are respected, not as a replacement of the Torah but an extension within the same strand and considered within the same Canonical framework.¹³ While outside the scope of this study, the Rabbinical Jewish extension of the methodology provides credence to the Orthodox application that will be embarked upon below.

The usefulness in understanding Canonical Critical methodology is not so much in the bookending; rather it is the availability in which meaning can be found through alternative authoritative voices. These voices within the text are given space and not overwritten to adhere to the single package. The benefit is highlighting differentiation within passages based on the collection of works. Childs refers to this as the ‘diachronic dimension’ of the text that is presented in the final form of the Canon.¹⁴ The multilayered

¹¹ Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), p. 325.

¹² Christopher Seitz, *Word Without End: the Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Baylor University Press, 1998), p. 109. For further on the critics who argued for the reappropriation of Childs including Seitz see Daniel Driver, ‘Childs and the Canon or Rule of Faith’, in *The Bible as Christian Scripture: the Work of Brevard S. Childs*, eds Christopher R Seitz and Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), pp. 243-278.

¹³ Tzvi Marx, ‘Judaic Doctrine of Scripture’, in *Holy Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam Hermeneutics, Values and Society*, eds H M Vroom and J D Gort (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), p. 44. In adopting the Canonical approach of Childs, Marx explores the application of understanding the Midrash tradition of Rabbinical Judaism where the lines of Commentary and text are blurred. “Oral Torah” is not subordinate to the “Written Torah.” Flexibility exists, so long as the text is understood within the tradition. Further, it is flexibility within the broad Canon that ensures survival.

¹⁴ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 104.

meanings are upheld and protected within the collection of this work ready for discovery. The additional benefit of the surviving collection of works is the availability to shed light on the timing of different accepted meanings that were fluid, resulting in books written for specific audiences and multiple voices within passages.¹⁵

The multiplicity that is bound within the rich textural tradition is made possible through the efforts of an overarching choice of transmitters of the text into a final form. Childs terms these transmitters as the tradents, it is to these tradents that this article now turns.

The Tradents Shaping the Canon

According to Childs the Canon exists due to a continuum of a consistent theological flow.¹⁶ The currently organised works were not created *ex nihilo* but show a continuity of a community with differing voices that were provided space in both Testaments. It is through this continuity that Childs refers to the tradents who were at work in forming the Canon and that become apparent when discerning the text.¹⁷ The wide variety of text within the Hebrew Bible organised in a certain way is presented with a choice to unveil theological clarity. According to Childs, this organisation constitutes an active decision by tradents who make conscious and lasting choices in terms of arrangement, as well as the selection and expansion of the received tradition.¹⁸

The community, for Childs, was not passive but took upon an active role in the transmutation of the text.¹⁹ In this regard he is a proponent of the documentary hypothesis, the theory that numerous voices make up the Biblical text. Childs sees the community's expectations through tradents exercising a role in combining texts such as the Priestly, Yahwist, Elohist and Deuteronomistic voices that become apparent if discerning the end product of the Pentateuch. These *internal* tradents are discernible within the text and are apparent while investigating the passages with care. "To distinguish the Yahwist source from the Priestly in the Pentateuch often allows the interpreter to hear the combined texts with new precision. But it is the full,

¹⁵ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 105.

¹⁶ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 74.

¹⁷ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 75.

¹⁸ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 76.

¹⁹ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 663.

combined text which has rendered a judgment on the shape of the tradition and which continues to exercise an authority on the community of faith” says Childs.²⁰ The tradents, discernible in the differentiation within the text, hold greater weight as a holistic package as they shed light not only on the individual workers but the holistic tradition.

The position on the documentary hypothesis, or similarities between books separated by generations, is inconsequential to the main thrust of the tradent supposition of Childs’ hermeneutics. Regardless of the subscribed list, the thrust of Canonical Criticism enables an investigation of the product and creation of the tradition.²¹ The tradent supposition allows future interpreters to discern not only single voices but also an entire community. It is the community that builds upon the creations of its inheritance, calculated towards a single end. This end according to Childs is not to find the original voice, but in the acceptance of tradents recognises the importance of the canonical formative process. The end product remains the focal point and its creation is the distinctive choice of a formative process. This puts great trust in the honesty of the tradents and demonstrates faith in the end product, value in the work that has passed, been organised and given to the generation in which the reader is based.²²

The acceptance of Canonical Criticism and recognition of tradents results in the reader being less concerned with the historical or ‘rationalistic’ interpretation, and instead focusing on the greater meaning of the text. For example, the reorganisation of the prophecies of Isaiah into ordered form and separate books shows evidence of tradents who upheld the prophecies, according to Childs.²³ The purposeful reorganisation and collection of the

²⁰ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 76.

²¹ For further the formation of the Documentary Theory by Julius Wellhausen and the significant impact on Biblical formation theories see Ernest Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: the Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Beyond the legacy of Wellhausen, modern texts such as Joel S. Baden, *J. E. and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009) and Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) have provided ongoing investigations into the tradent sources. While the studies differ, with Nicholson revisiting the Jahwist and Elohist separations, and Polzin extrapolating the literary aspects of the Priestly source society, these authors have not only kept the debate alive but have provided further questioning based on modern processes and evidence.

²² Stephen Fowl, ‘The Canonical Approach of Brevard Childs’, *The Expository Times*, vol. 96, no. 6 (1985), pp. 173-176.

works shows the community adopting a non-historical approach to the text, allowing further meaning beyond the time of the prophet, while ensuring the variety of forms to survive. This same community is seen to have touched the book of Micah, editing the work using expressions from Isaiah.²⁴ The fact that the term “from now and ever more” which occurs in the Psalms (113:2, 115:18 and 121:8) also occurs only in Isaiah (9:6 and 59:21) and Micah (4:7) unveils for Childs a working within the text and a continuity of message by a community due to the rarity of the phrase. It is worthy to note that Childs also saw the role of tradents extending beyond collecting, organising or forming the text, to include making decisions about the alternate language used in different versions of books, such as Hebrew and Greek, or the differing versions of works such as the book of Jeremiah.²⁵ The Canonical texts that were formed and held together throughout time demonstrate the continuum of belief of a community who recognise that the God of Daniel, Job and Deuteronomy is the same God represented in continuity.²⁶

The differentiation of communities is evident in the text, yet the greater usefulness of Childs’ Canonical Criticism is the understanding of shaping and transmutation shown in multiplicity. It is a sensible presupposition to recognise the communities of Second Temple interacting with the text, merging the works into a discernible whole.²⁷ It is this point that Childs’ supposition of tradents unveils a method to discern the community at work. As there is no overarching meeting or decision that can be proven to exist which resulted in the creation of the Hebrew Bible Canon in a final form, the working towards a completed whole is evident within the text from the work of *internal* tradents. The fragmentary evidence from the ancient communities shows the multitude of papers existing at a time with canons of differing groups being overshadowed by the larger forms of Christian and Jewish traditions. Choices were made and the results are evident, whilst the minutes of meetings showing a decision may be lacking, it is evident for Childs that within the text, a formative process took place.

²³ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 336.

²⁴ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 436.

²⁵ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 95.

²⁶ Stephen B. Chapman, ‘Brevard Childs as a Historical Critic: Divine Concession and the Unity of the Canon’, in *The Bible as Christian Scripture: the Work of Brevard S. Childs*, eds Christopher R. Seitz and Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), pp. 63-84, 63.

²⁷ Chapman, ‘Brevard Childs as a Historical Critic’, p. 80.

The New Testament is similarly recognised by Childs to reveal the creative expression of the early Christian Church, whose tradents chose to use the Hebrew Bible within the work. Childs recognises this elusive nature of these tradents and notes a lack of consensus on the formation of the books within the New Testament.²⁸ It is the decision of different voices to record original eyewitnesses, with further differentiation when looking at events recorded side by side, which is enough proof of the supposition of New Testament tradency for Childs.²⁹ However, a theological disconnection is evident between the existing Hebrew faith and Christianity, with tradents of the newer faith forming a split based on the uniqueness in the personhood of Christ. According to Childs “clearly the tradents of the Gospels did not see the pre-Easter Jesus as simply a Jewish rabbi, but as a unique servant of God through whom faith in God was awakened and channelled.”³⁰ While this point is outside of the scope of this study, it is nevertheless worthwhile to note the acceptance of Childs view that tradents were active not only in the Hebrew Bible but also the New Testament. Childs’ view of tradents existing after Christ who formed a theological differentiation denotes an understanding and acceptance of a community that would not have shared the view. Thus, collections of documents exist from the tradents of different theological positions side-by-side in the final form of Christian and Rabbinical Jewish Canons.

Childs, from his own tradition, sees the final canonical form as a completed piece and defends the finality to maintain a ‘critical norm’.³¹ He finds this as protecting the historical dimension along with the theological standing of the tradents who passed the inheritance of community views on from former communities. The juxtaposition of the two testaments side-by-side was an active decision and differs from the interrelated and connected texts of the Hebrew Bible.³² The reorganisation and acceptance of books are the result of efforts by early Christians, yet there is little evidence of additions and redaction of works within the Hebrew Bible at this time.³³ Although Childs finds this striking, the maintenance of the Canon as a completed finality without extension is also striking. Aside from writing from the

²⁸ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 224.

²⁹ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 277.

³⁰ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 603.

³¹ Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, p. 76.

³² Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 75.

³³ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 75.

membership of a Christian tradition that defines the Canon as limited to certain books, Childs' reasoning for concentrating on the Bible as an immovable completed work is on the basis that it represents a break from the historical Hebrew tradition.³⁴ The preservation of the final form of the Bible on the basis of breaking from a community is not only weak but also questionable. Historic standardisation of text gives little reason for Biblical solidification. The respect of the work has resulted in the Bible's elevation to the point of immovability. This flows against Childs' understanding of the Canonical formative work prior to its closure. The working is evident within the completed Canon but changes remain unacceptable after the Canon formation. In the end the pulling of the textural tradition towards an altered position is an accepted reality of the Hebrew Bible for Childs, but the Canon is finalised due to the attained perfection.

An important point on the formation of the Canon is the differentiations of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant versions of the Bible. Childs notes the different formation and respects the alternate versions.³⁵ He is comfortable with the Church as a whole expressing a search for the authentic Bible, although he recognises that no expression has achieved a decisive standardisation. He does not answer the differentiation with the development of his own Canon. Instead Childs recognises the Canon as a theological representation of the community, "the complete canon of the Christian church as the rule-of-faith sets for the community of faith the proper theological context in which we stand, but it also remains continually the object of critical theological scrutiny subordinate to its subject matter who is Jesus Christ."³⁶ Childs shows that respect is seen for the theological position garnished from the Canon, and in reverse, the Canon as an expression of the theological stance of the relevant community.

Turning now to the Orthodox understanding of scriptural authority the pivot point of Childs will be shown, at least from Eastern Orthodoxy, as a measure that inadequately stops the boundary short of what is an ever-present continuum of the age of the Fathers and Mothers.

³⁴ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, pp. 104-105.

³⁵ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, pp. 65-66.

³⁶ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, pp. 67-68.

Orthodox Scriptural Authority

In the Eastern Orthodox tradition the Biblical Canon remains a central pillar of the faith however this should not be seen as linked to the sole collection of Biblical works. The esteem towards the written works is not confined to a limited collection of Scripture. According to Stanley S. Harakas, the Orthodox tradition professes “reverence and respect the written word of the Scriptures, but also the word of holy tradition which in small and great expressions, embodies and reflects in concrete and specific ways the mind of the church, as the primary witness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷ Orthodoxy looks back to the moments of history defining the books acceptable to the faith as expressions of the communities of a set time, not necessarily a dictation to be applied perpetually. Recognition of truth and perfection should not be confused with historicity or limitation. There is no doubt that the works within the Bible are not solely historical accounts, the differences point to alternate expressions that recollect the mystery of Christ. The differences should never be seen as measures of one-upmanship of the Apostolic Fathers.³⁸

In the modern sense the accepted Orthodox Bible, as an entirety, is extended from both the Protestant and Catholic versions. The so-called deuterocanonical works, or Apocrypha as referred to by the Western tradition, are accepted within the Canon as well as within parts of Church services.³⁹ To understand why the Canon is extended, beyond mere historicity, it is that for Orthodoxy the ‘Canon’ is seen not so much as a closed list, rather it is understood as an expression of authority and holiness within the tradition.

This modern view of the Canonical books of the Orthodox faith has some backing historically and proof can be seen from the Early Church itself. The references of the Biblical books in historical documents shows that they were recognised as Canonical books not as a Canonical limited list.⁴⁰ From

³⁷ Stanley S. Harakas, ‘Doing Theology Today: an Orthodox and Evangelical Dialogue on Theological Method’, *Pro Ecclesia*, vol. 11, no. 4 (2002), pp. 435-462, 445.

³⁸ Andrew Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), p. 50.

³⁹ John Meyendorff, ‘Doing Theology in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective’, in *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Daniel B Clendenin (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), pp. 79-96, 82.

⁴⁰ Eugen J. Pentiuc, *The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 105.

late antiquity the historian and Church Father Eusebius notes that there were books that were not widely accepted are still used and understood.⁴¹ This denotes a wider circulation of works, not necessarily included in the Western Canon. Further, the accepted works that Eusebius catalogued for the purpose of noting quotations by heretics also included ecclesiastical works that were considered both inside and outside of the Canon, also noted as being known to the Church hierarchy.⁴² This quantitates an understanding of a Canon represented in a set moment of time for a set audience.

The historical recognition of the extended Canon is modernly relevant and still referenced further with Byzantine voices cited by John Meyendorff including Basil the Great, John of Damascus and the Quinisext Council.⁴³ Meyendorff recognises the relatively late formation of the Canon as a whole with the inclusion of extended books of the Hebrew Bible being included in 692CE. The extended books are recognised but are referred to as deuterocanonical. They remain in the Canon but are somewhat marginalised. Nevertheless, in the end all of these texts for Meyendorff are within the Church.

No single text exists which covers the fullness of the Church. Basil the Great defines the duality of textual tradition and unspoken authority as δόγμα ('dogma') and κήρυγμα ('teaching').

"Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching (δογμαμάτων); others we have received delivered to us 'in a mystery' (κηρυγμάτων) by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force" says Basil.⁴⁴

The inclusion or exclusion of single texts is thus not the forefront of the argument for Orthodox thinkers. Rather, importance is seen in the continuity through the κήρυγμα of the tradition. Books are recognised as not predating the Church rather they are found in the continuum of the community. Biblical texts are seen as the expression of the Church with the tradition and text, not in competition but rather in partnership within the same faith. The Scriptures of the Church are the manifestation of the tradition *par excellence*. The extensive inclusion of the lines of Scripture throughout the variety of Church services are not included by chance, rather this is a conscious inclusion to

⁴¹ Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.25.5 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 81-387).

⁴² Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.25.6.

⁴³ Meyendorff, 'Doing Theology', p. 82.

⁴⁴ Basil, *On the Spirit*, 37.66 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1-50).

show the expression of the tradition from within the Church. It is therefore a misnomer to understand the Church from Scripture or the Scripture from the Church. The two are inseparable and are manifestations tilled from the same field. Tradition is the key to understanding the early Church, and the self-affirmed recipients, Eastern Orthodoxy. It is *through* tradition that the Biblical texts are understood, not *with* or *in addition*.⁴⁵ Tradition is the timeless membership; Biblical works are the expression in written form from this tradition.

Although the Bible is heralded in Orthodoxy, it is recognised that the Church existed prior to the acceptance of the New Testament, thus the elevation of Scripture is seen as an expression of the Spirit through attentiveness of adherents.⁴⁶ The integration of both Testaments within the Liturgical calendar throughout the year is a demonstration of this elevation.⁴⁷ If all Bibles were to disappear it is said that the reconstruction of the Gospels could be made from the liturgical books of Orthodoxy.⁴⁸ However the Scriptures link to authority does not stop at the single collection of the two Testaments. For in the timeless tradition the Scriptures are included in the wider κήρυγμα with the Authority of the Fathers and widely unrecognised Mothers.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ The early Church Fathers and Mothers approach to the Scriptures through tradition is further explored by an exposition of Sarapion of Thmuis by Oliver Herbel in ‘A “Doctrine of Scripture” From Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Reflection on the Desert Father Saint Sarapion of Thmuis’, in *What Is the Bible?: The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture*, eds Matthew Baker and Mark Mourachian (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 21-34

⁴⁶ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 101.

⁴⁷ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 102.

⁴⁹ Although ‘Patristic’ and ‘Patrology’ are usually used interchangeably with ‘Age of the Fathers’ and ‘Fathers’, the purposeful use in this article of ‘Fathers and Mothers’ is an attempt to recognise the overlooked female voices of the Orthodox tradition. The female ascetics, theologians and martyrs gave their lives to the tradition and the adoption of the term ‘Fathers’ in isolation denotes only part of the tradition is to be valued. Within the work of Andrew Kadel, *Matrology: A Bibliography of Writings by Christian Women From the First to the Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Continuum, 1995) the feminine term ‘Matrology’ is used to counter the masculine ‘Patrology’. Yet this denotes an implicit separation. Within this present study of a tradition represented through a continuing κήρυγμα it would be disingenuous to use a term of exclusion for the purpose of mere historicity.

The Authority of the 'Fathers and Mothers'

In this same strand of accepted authority from the Scriptures, the Apostolic works remain a central component for the Orthodox faith holding a unique and esteemed position within the tradition.⁵⁰ The Apostolic tradition is viewed as the link between the modern authority of the faith and the early Church connected both historically and spiritually within the tradition.⁵¹ The line of authority does not stop at the Apostolic generation but continues to the tradition of the Fathers and Mothers who are in turn viewed as being presently represented by Orthodoxy.⁵² Orthodox theologians often cite the flow from the Apostolic Age to the Byzantine era in an unbroken continuity. Within the tradition of Orthodoxy the view of the ancient Church is upheld in continuity to the present day in a ceaseless lineage.⁵³

On his journey the unnamed Pilgrim from the work of an anonymous Eastern Orthodox source *The Way of the Pilgrim* seeks a closer relationship with God. On this journey the Pilgrim is presented works from the Saints including the *Philokalia*,⁵⁴ which are purported to be works from a realm of "spiritual mysteries."⁵⁵ This is representative of the authority seen as flowing directly from the Apostolic Age, with the later voices representing a continuum of authority with divisible lines between Scripture blurred. Although the tradition does not define the works of the Fathers and Mothers at the same level of Scripture, there is no denigration of the voices to a lower level or separation into strands.⁵⁶ The Church Fathers and Mothers are seen as the embodiment of holiness, they are the indication of how to give ones life to the way of Christ. Their works are relevant both in the day they were written as well as throughout time. The written date becomes irrelevant and authority shines throughout the works.⁵⁷ The flow of Scriptural authority from the Canonical Gospels to the inclusion of the additional writings in an

⁵⁰ Meyendorff, 'Doing Theology', p. 83.

⁵¹ David Wagschal 'Orthodox Canon Law: the Byzantine Experience' in *The Orthodox Christian World*, ed. Augustine Casiday (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 383-397, 387.

⁵² Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, p. 108.

⁵³ Benjamin D. Williams and Howard B Anstall, *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple and the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing, 1990), pp. 60-62.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, 'The Way of a Pilgrim', in *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way* trans. Olga Savin (Boston: Shambhala, 2001), pp. 1-57, 3, 29.

⁵⁵ Anonymous, 'The Way of a Pilgrim', pp. 36-37.

⁵⁶ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 110.

⁵⁷ Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers*, p. 18.

everlasting age of the Fathers and Mothers is represented by Christ's consubstantiality with the Church. The Fathers and Mothers writings along with the Scriptures are included within the same tradition that does not see itself as a surrogate of the apostolic faith, rather it is same faith in perpetuity.⁵⁸ The Fathers and Mothers, as well as the Scriptural texts and the written works point towards a mediation of the transformative experience of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁹ This is not to discount the historical points in which texts are recorded for intended audiences. The reading back of history and applying modern reflections for the purpose of rejection should never be a measurement against eternal inclusion.⁶⁰ The inclusion of the writings of the Fathers and Mothers within this Canonical tradition, even with the acceptance only noted by the author's recognised holiness, shows the Canonical fluidity when understood through the connectedness of the Church.

The Fathers and Mothers demonstrate the bonding of the authoritative works, not to be confused as infallible voices, through the collection of works.⁶¹ No single voice is diagnosed as being essentially correct and few authors escape overlooking in at least some parts. Yet the greater collection as a whole of Fathers and Mothers form part of a 'seamless robe' which along with liturgy and Scripture, form what is considered to be the Canonical written works of Orthodoxy.⁶² Thus the relegation of the Fathers and Mothers of the Church to secondary sources outside of a primary Canon in a hierarchical structure is against the Orthodox understanding of the oneness of the Church. It is a tradition that sees through multiplicity a truth represented by not one single doctrine.

It is therefore necessary to view the Fathers and Mothers writings as a whole. A collection of authoritative voices whose membership within the tradition affirms their Canonicity. There is no lasting all-encompassing list of works that are included or excluded in the Canon. When talking of the works of the Fathers and Mothers there are some works that are included and others excluded, even by the same author. The measure of the Canon of Orthodoxy may therefore escape our grasp unless a measurement or criterion

⁵⁸ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁹ Bingaman, 'Scripture as Divine Mystery: the Bible in the Philokalia' in *What Is the Bible?: the Patristic Doctrine of Scripture*, pp. 103-118, 109.

⁶⁰ Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers*, p. 22.

⁶¹ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 102.

⁶² McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 102.

may be applied to show their inclusion. To this end the criterion of inclusion as to the inherently accepted works within the tradition may be defined using Childs' methodology. The criterion that fits to show inclusion of Canonicity is through the supposition of tradents of the Canon. This purposeful backward engineering of Childs' methodology enables the definition of Orthodox tradents to therefore show the Eastern Orthodox Canon as wider and more fluid than an alternate set and immovable Canon. It must be said however that the supposition in terms of Orthodoxy should by no means stop at the works of the Fathers and Mothers. Orthodox written works also include ecclesiastical books, prayers and even iconography. The focus of this study however is purposefully limited to the Fathers and Mothers inclusion within the wider Canonicity. It is to the tradents of the tradition in relation to these works that this study now turns.

Identifying the Tradents of the Orthodox Canon

It is evident that the containment within covers of a book for Orthodox Canonicity is not possible, and a collection of acceptability is therefore defined by the κήρυγμα of the faith. The Canonical works that are included extend from the Bible and include the extensive liturgical texts. These include citations back to the Bible but also extensive prayers, hymns and guides of service as well as the later so called 'Symbolical Books'.⁶³ These works were collected in some cases by synods, in others created from hierarchs of the Church. Assumption of every Canon, hierarch or Church Father and Mother's works being included in the tradition is, however, a misnomer. Origen's works as the most glaring example are considered both within and outside the tradition, with adoption of methodology as well as his content, yet later literal burning of texts taking place after his passing.⁶⁴

Canonical Critical reading of the Scriptures highlights differing voices with measures of historical, inter-Testament and theological reflections. The measures of the Fathers and Mothers works are similarly grouped. John Chrysavgis defines these as Exegesis, Theology, Mystical Experience, Worship and History.⁶⁵ Defined not as an exhaustive list, it is nevertheless telling that there are parallels with the Fathers and Mothers

⁶³ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 111.

⁶⁴ Henri De Lubac, *History and Spirit: the Understanding of Scripture According to Origen*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), pp. 39-44.

⁶⁵ Chrysavgis, *The Way of the Fathers*, pp. 137-138.

works from Orthodoxy and the Biblical works cited by Childs. When considering the Fathers and Mothers theology is taken from within the same flow of tradition as discussed above, the categories that are investigated through the Canonical Critical methodology are not only compatible but are akin to the same framework.

McGuckin recognises Orthodox hermeneutics as the acceptance of the authority from within the text that he marks as a differentiation from modern scholarship. The modern scholarship according to McGuckin largely seeks to investigate text in solitary methods, although conceding “by and large” he highlights no voices that lay claim to the contrary.⁶⁶ Whether this is a true representation of modern scholarship is not relevant to the present study. However, what is key, is the similarities between Childs’ Canonical methodology and the Orthodox understanding of textual tradition. Authority, which is defined by tradents within the text who uphold and shape the Canon, is what McGuckin points towards in an Orthodox framework. The root of the tradition in the liturgical movement connects biblical and pastoral theology within an inseparable connection that resists the separation into hermeneutical subfields.⁶⁷

There is no decision, council or overarching definition that defines the inclusions and exclusions of the collection of accepted works. No presiding voice sits clarifying what passage is to be included but there is clarity of a general membership. The broader Canon is evident, the workings are apparent and although the voices are undefined it is evident there is a working in constant shaping of the Canon. It is through the diversity being upheld and the extension of Canonicity that Orthodox tradents become apparent. Akin to the tradency internally working in the two Testaments, the collective works of Fathers and Mothers held within the Church are there for a reason. They flow forth from within the tradition and are not created *ex nihilo*. The Orthodox scholars investigated above may not use the terms of tradents or even hermeneutics but with care it is evident that the tradents are seen through the acceptability of continuum from within the tradition. Yet differentiation is seen through the Canon that Childs refers to, as it remains closed, but for Orthodoxy it is forever living in the oneness of the Church. If Childs’ tradents supposition is investigated side-by-side with Orthodoxy, along with a nuanced measurement of internal and external tradents, the

⁶⁶ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 108.

⁶⁷ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 110.

criterion of Orthodox tradents become apparent, thus defining the Orthodox Canon.

Internal and External Evidence of Tradents

Much has been said above regarding the internal tradents of both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. The players are evident regardless of one's position on the amount of tradents, and there is a consensus of evidence of differing voices within the text. This study purposefully takes this supposition and applies it precisely towards an end that Childs only illuminated, an addition to the historical Canonical Critical approach.

Within the Fathers and Mothers tradition, through the broadness of voices, it is difficult to discern the tradents working within the tradition. Evidence, however, can be seen as working with the text, particularly in collections such as the *Philokalia*. Compiled by Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and Makarios of Corinth in the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ The collection includes writings from known and mysterious voices from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries. The purposeful organisation from individual works provides illumination on achieving prayerful attentiveness in monasticism. The advantage of having the text provided from the eighteenth century means we are able to ascribe names to many of the texts even if the details of their lives may remain a mystery. These are tradents with names, Nikodimos and Makarios, who compiled the work into a form passed onto a future generation, akin to the compilation of the Bible. The living community of texts covering over a millennia, towards an ended work, continued to be built upon in further editions with additions from Patriarch Kallistos in 1782, a century after its initial publishing. The later English version uses contemporarily identified texts to give insights of the writers, or corrects inconsistencies by the original compilers. In light of the observations of Childs we can see that this is clearly internal tradency at work within the text not dissimilar to the internal tradents within the Bible. The external tradents are also evident through the works compiled in the *Philokalia* with open references along with intonations towards the Scripture evident on nearly every page.⁶⁹ The choices of these individual writers that adopt the Bible passages and rearrange them within the context of the continuing tradition is

⁶⁸ Nikodimos and Makarios, *The Philokalia: the Complete Text*, trans. G E H Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware. (New York: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 11.

⁶⁹ Bingaman, 'Scripture as Divine Mystery', p. 104.

pointing constantly towards the inner spirit hidden within the Scripture. The writers of the *Philokalia* show a way to understand the Scripture itself.

Evidence of the external tradents of the Bible can be seen with the solidification of the Christian list, as there were alternate views of lists, with some surviving as discussed above. Childs recognises this dichotomy within the Church with wider and narrower version accepted and reaching an apex defined in the works of Jerome and Augustine.⁷⁰ These external voices are apparitions of the tradents highlighted at times outside of the text. Recent work has unveiled the tradents external to the Hebrew Bible, with the scribes viewed as more than mere copyists.⁷¹ Similarly the later Christian Canon formation provides ample evidence of external tradents in relation to the Scriptures.

The surviving works of Origen that was protected through the years clearly unveils external tradents. Although destruction of pre-Nicene works is hardly unusual, the decree in 543 by Emperor Justinian to destroy Origen's works *en masse* added fuel to the pyre.⁷² There was a clear statement made from the Fifth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople II, that "anyone does not anathematize ... Origen, as well as their impious writings, as also all other heresies ... Let him be anathema."⁷³ Regardless of the lack of consensus on the date of the attached XV Anathemas on Origen,⁷⁴ it would seem on face value reasonable that Origen's works should remain outside of the camp and therefore the destruction would be a non-issue. However, what is present in the modern Orthodox Church, and the Church through the ages, is a myriad of theologians who value and uphold his work for a variety of reasons. Here we find evidence of external tradents at work within the Church, they choose not to work within the text but continue the Canonical shaping by ensuring the survival of texts unpopular at set points in time. In the modern context there is evidence from Orthodox theologians such as McGuckin who refer to Origen as one of the "most inclusive and sharpest thinkers of the patristic era,"⁷⁵ and Andrew Louth who recognises the fallacies of universal

⁷⁰ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 63.

⁷¹ Karel Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 109.

⁷² John Anthony McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), pp. 25-26.

⁷³ 'The Capitula of the Council', 314 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 312-7).

⁷⁴ 'The Capitula of the Council', 316.

⁷⁵ McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 123.

salvation⁷⁶ while giving credit to his work on the Hebrew Bible and definition on Creation.⁷⁷ These writers are not only providing historical commentary, rather they are actively choosing to use text from a Church Father who was and is officially outcast.

The work of Baghos, another Eastern Orthodox theologian, adds further evidence that the Church tradents are ever present and working with the text. Baghos shows that Origen and Origenism are at times mutually exclusive and therefore a fresh approach towards Origen in future may be in order.⁷⁸ This view backed by mounting evidence of Origen's contemporaries and later Fathers are in direct opposition to the XV Anathemas as well as the eleventh Canon of the Fifth Ecumenical Council.⁷⁹ Baghos, although unintentionally, becomes an exemplar for evidence of present day Orthodox external tradents, demonstrating a choice to uphold a text, therefore determining the shape of the wider Canon for the future community.

Conclusion

Canonical Criticism allows a holistic investigation, however the limitation of Childs to the investigation to the dual Testament Bible alone is inadequate for providing scope of understanding Orthodox accounts of Canonicity. If the tradent application is to be fruitful we must leave the aspect of Childs' limitation at the door. As shown by Orthodoxy's view of itself, the voices of the Fathers and Mothers are valued and heralded not as extensions of the Bible, nor replacements but further expressions within the same κήρυγμα. It is evident that the criterion of tradents can fit and expose Orthodox hermeneutics by enabling an understanding of the Canon as well as tradents working within the tradition.

This article has sought to fill a gap in the literature and show the wholeness of Orthodox faith can be defined hermeneutically through Canonical Criticism. The Canonical framework of Orthodoxy is unveiled through the often unnamed and barely discernible internal tradents along with external tradents represented by Orthodox theologians. The condemnation of Origen whilst his works are re-appropriated and accepted by Orthodox

⁷⁶ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p. 156.

⁷⁷ Louth, *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology*, p 12.

⁷⁸ Baghos, 'The Conflicting Portrayals of Origen in the Byzantine Tradition', pp. 103-104.

⁷⁹ For further reading on Origen's contemporaries who sought to defend the Church Father after his passing see Eusebius *Church History*, Pamphilus *Apology for Origen* and Rufinus *On the Falsification of the Books of Origen*.

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thinkers shows evidence of ongoing conscious working of the text. The tradents have ensured a tradition that builds upon itself as an organic and ever growing tradition. An understandable difficulty can be found in attempts to define the entirety of the Orthodox Canon. The criterion of tradency is unveiled through the working of the text providing an understanding of the Orthodox Canon.

Canonical Criticism proves useful to give context to Orthodox hermeneutical methodology that has since defied definition but gains interest in corners of the globe. The question, in the end, is to what marks the boundary of the book. If the definition of text is limited by covers of the set books of the Bible then Canonical Critical hermeneutics falls short of being appropriate to define Orthodoxy. Taking the extent of the Canonical Critical methodology outside of the covers of a set Bible may initially seem a stretch, however the Canonicity that Childs referred was always with a notation of respecting the tradition in which an adherent is home. As Childs states “The canonical form of this literature also affects how the modern reader understands the biblical material, especially to the extent in which he or she identifies religiously with the faith community of the original tradents.”⁸⁰ Thus the methodology of allowing voices to speak within the tradition, giving space to the tradents to make choices and looking at the holistic collection of works is evident with a subtle shift of perspective when looking at Orthodoxy.

Evidence provided by the criterion set by the Child’s tradency provides clarity in the space of Orthodox thinkers who remain vague on their hermeneutical method. Orthodox tradents are evident both within and outside of the text, akin to the Biblical formative tradents. Through the Fathers and Mothers of Eastern Orthodoxy we see that the tools of Canonical shaping were not downed at the fifth century but continued to toil. An understanding can therefore be found through the continuing age of the Fathers and Mothers, with voices building upon the ongoing text in a wider corpus of Eastern Orthodoxy.

⁸⁰ Childs, *Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments*, p. 71.