



Lecture # 16 Part 1

The Continuation of the Doctrine of Inspiration to the Reformation

Just as the Old Testament claim for inspiration finds support in the New Testament, so the New Testament claim for inspiration finds support in the testimony of early Christian writers, the church Fathers. Although the testimony of the Fathers is not authoritative or inspired, it does reveal the orthodox doctrine of inspiration that prevailed throughout the history of the church. Their testimony, with hardly a dissenting voice, reflects the traditional view of the origin and nature of Scripture from apostolic times to the rise of Deism and Rationalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

THE EARLY CHURCH (C. A.D.70-C.350)

Even as the New Testament writers *assumed* the inspiration of the Old, the church Fathers *assumed* the inspiration of the New. **This fact is observable in the two major periods of the development of the old Catholic church prior to about A.D. 350.**

THE APOSTOLIC AND SUB APOSTOLIC FATHERS (C. A.D.70-C.150)

These writers indicate an early and widespread acceptance of the New Testament claim for inspiration. Several examples should suffice to bear witness to that conclusion.

The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (c. 70–130).

So designated because it was falsely ascribed to Paul's first associate, this writing cites the gospel of Matthew ([26:3](#)) after stating that it is what "God saith" ([5:12](#)).

The same writer refers to the gospel of Matthew ([Matthew 22:14](#)) by the New Testament title "Scripture" in [Matthew 4:14](#).

[Matthew 22:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴"For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

Clement of Rome

Clement, a contemporary of the apostles, wrote his epistle *Corinthians* (c. 95–97) after the pattern of the apostle Paul. In it he quotes the synoptic gospels ([Matthew 9:13](#); [Mark 2:17](#); [Luke 5:32](#)) after calling them "Scripture" (chap. 2). He urges his readers to "act according to that which is written (for the Holy Spirit saith, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom')" (chap. 1, quoting [Jeremiah 9:23](#)). He further appeals to "the Holy Scriptures, which are true, given by the Holy Spirit" (chap. 45). The New Testament is included as Scripture by the formula "It is written" (chap. 36) and as being written by the apostle Paul "with true inspiration" (chap. 47).



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Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius (d. c. 110) wrote his seven epistles en route to martyrdom in Rome. Although he did not give references to particular citations from the Scriptures, he did make many loose quotations and allusions to them.

Polycarp

The disciple of John, Polycarp referred to the New Testament several times in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (c. 110–135). He introduces [Galatians 4:26](#) as “the word of truth” (chap. 3) and citations of [Philippians 2:16](#) and [2 Timothy 4:10](#) as “the word of righteousness” (chap. 9). In [chapter 12](#), Polycarp cites numerous Old and New Testament passages as “the Scriptures.”

Hermas

The so-called (c. 115–140) follows the pattern of the Apocalypse, although no direct quotations of the New Testament appear in its text.

Didache

Such is the case of the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve* (c. 100–120), as it too makes loose quotations and allusions to the New Testament.

Papias

In about A.D. 130–140 Papias wrote five books entitled *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*, which included the New Testament. That is precisely the title ascribed to the Old Testament by the apostle Paul in [Romans 3:2](#).

[Romans 3:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Epistle to Diognetus

Finally, the so-called *Epistle to Diognetus* (c. 150) makes loose quotations and allusions to the New Testament; however, no direct title is given to them.

The above material illustrates the early (by c. 150) and widespread (West and East) acceptance of the New Testament claim for inspiration. The Fathers looked upon those books with the same regard as the New Testament writers did the Old Testament Scriptures. Where no direct reference is given nor title presented, the loose quotations and allusions lend support to the esteem extended the New Testament writings. That is especially true considering the scarcity of available copies during this early period.



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THE ANTE-NICENE AND NICENE FATHERS (C. A.D. 150-C. 350)

These add further support to the New Testament claims for inspiration.

***Justin Martyr* (d. 165).**

In his first *Apology* (c.150–155), Justin Martyr regarded the gospels as the “**Voice of God**” (chap. 65). He further stated of the Scriptures, “**We must not suppose that the language proceeds from men who were inspired, but from the Divine Word which moves them**” (*Apology* 1.36). Elsewhere, he went on to say that Moses wrote the Hebrew character by divine inspiration “**and that the Holy Spirit of prophecy taught us this, telling us by Moses that God spoke thus.**”