

Canon of the Old Testament

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Overview

The word *canon* as applied to the Scriptures has long had a special and consecrated meaning. In its fullest comprehension it signifies the authoritative list or closed number of the writings composed under Divine inspiration, and destined for the well-being of the Church, using the latter word in the wide sense of the theocratic society which began with God's revelation of Himself to the people of Israel, and which finds its ripe development and completion in the Catholic organism. The whole Biblical Canon therefore consists of the canons of the Old and New Testaments. The Greek *kanon* means primarily a reed, or measuring-rod: by a natural figure it was employed by ancient writers both profane and religious to denote a rule or standard. We find the substantive first applied to the Sacred Scriptures in the fourth century, by St. Athanasius; for its derivatives, the Council of Laodicea of the same period speaks of the *kanonika biblia* and Athanasius of the *biblia kanonizomena*. The latter phrase proves that the passive sense of *canon* — that of a regulated and defined collection — was already in use, and this has remained the prevailing connotation of the word in ecclesiastical literature.

The terms *protocanonical* and *deuterocanonical*, of frequent usage among Catholic theologians and exegetes, require a word of caution. They are not felicitous, and it would be wrong to infer from them that the Church successively possessed two distinct Biblical Canons. Only in a partial and restricted way may we speak of a first and second Canon. *Protocanonical* (*protos*, "first") is a conventional word denoting those sacred writings which have been always received by Christendom without dispute. The protocanonical books of the Old Testament correspond with those of the Bible of the Hebrews, and the Old Testament as received by Protestants. The *deuterocanonical* (*deuteros*, "second") are those whose Scriptural character was contested in some quarters, but which long ago gained a secure footing in the Bible of the Catholic Church, though those of the Old Testament are classed by Protestants as the "Apocrypha". These consist of seven books: Tobias, Judith, Baruch, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom, First and Second Machabees; also certain additions to Esther and Daniel.

It should be noted that *protocanonical* and *deuterocanonical* are modern terms, not having been used before the sixteenth century. As they are of cumbersome length, the latter (being frequently used in this article) will be often found in the abbreviated form *deutero*.

The scope of an article on the sacred Canon may now be seen to be properly limited regarding the process of

- what may be ascertained regarding the process of the collection of the sacred writings into bodies or groups which from their very inception were the objects of a greater or less degree of veneration;
- the circumstances and manner in which these collections were definitely *canonized*, or adjudged to have a uniquely Divine and authoritative quality;
- the vicissitudes which certain compositions underwent in the opinions of individuals and localities before their Scriptural character was universally established.

It is thus seen that canonicity is a correlative of inspiration, being the extrinsic dignity belonging to writings which have been officially declared as of sacred origin and authority. It is antecedently very probable that

according as a book was written early or late it entered into a sacred collection and attained a canonical standing. Hence the views of traditionalist and critic (not implying that the traditionalist may not also be critical) on the Canon parallel, and are largely influenced by, their respective hypotheses on the origin of its component members.

The canon among the Palestinian Jews (protocanonical books)

It has already been intimated that there is a smaller, or incomplete, and larger, or complete, Old Testament. Both of these were handed down by the Jews; the former by the Palestinian, the latter by the Alexandrian, Hellenist, Jews.

The Jewish Bible of today is composed of three divisions, whose titles combined form the current Hebrew name for the complete Scriptures of Judaism: *Hat-Torah, Nebim, wa-Kéthubim*, i.e. The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. This triplication is ancient; it is supposed as long-established in the Mishnah, the Jewish code of unwritten sacred laws reduced to writing, c. A.D. 200. A grouping closely akin to it occurs in the New Testament in Christ's own words, Luke 24:44: "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me". Going back to the prologue of Ecclesiasticus, prefixed to it about 132 B.C., we find mentioned "the Law, and the Prophets, and others that have followed them". The Torah, or Law, consists of the five Mosaic books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The Prophets were subdivided by the Jews into the Former Prophets [i.e. the prophetic-historical books: Josue, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel (I and II Kings), and 1 and 2 Kings (III and IV Kings)] and the Latter Prophets (Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and the twelve minor Prophets, counted by the Hebrews as one book). The Writings, more generally known by a title borrowed from the Greek Fathers, Hagiographa (holy writings), embrace all the remaining books of the Hebrew Bible. Named in the order in which they stand in the current Hebrew text, these are: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticle of Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Esdras, Nehemias, or II Esdras, Paralipomenon.

Traditional view of the canon of the Palestinian Jews

Proto-Canon

In opposition to scholars of more recent views, conservatives do not admit that the Prophets and the Hagiographa represent two successive stages in the formation of the Palestinian Canon. According to this older school, the principle which dictated the separation between the Prophets and the Hagiographa was not of a chronological kind, but one found in the very nature of the respective sacred compositions. That literature was grouped under the *Ké-thubim*, or Hagiographa, which neither was the direct product of the prophetic order, namely, that comprised in the Latter Prophets, nor contained the history of Israel as interpreted by the same prophetic teachers--narratives classed as the Former Prophets. The Book of Daniel was relegated to the Hagiographa as a work of the prophetic *gift* indeed, but not of the permanent prophetic *office*. These same conservative students of the Canon--now scarcely represented outside the Church--maintain, for the reception of the documents composing these groups into the sacred literature of the Israelites, dates which are in general much earlier than those admitted by critics. They place the practical, if not formal, completion of the Palestinian Canon in the era of Esdras (Ezra) and Nehemias, about the middle of the fifth century B.C., while true to their adherence to a Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, they insist that the canonization of the five books followed soon after their composition.

Since the traditionalists infer the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch from other sources, they can rely for proof of an early collection of these books chiefly on Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 24-26, where there is question of a book of the law, delivered by Moses to the priests with the command to keep it in the ark and read it to the people on the feast of Tabernacles. But the effort to identify this book with the entire Pentateuch is not convincing to the opponents of Mosaic authorship.

The Remainder of the Palestinian-Jewish Canon

Without being positive on the subject, the advocates of the older views regard it as highly probable that several additions were made to the sacred repertory between the canonization of the Mosaic Torah above described and the Exile (598 B.C.). They cite especially Isaiah 34:16; 2 Chronicles 29:30; Proverbs 25:1; Daniel 9:2. For the period following the Babylonian Exile the conservative argument takes a more confident tone. This was an era of construction, a turning-point in the history of Israel. The completion of the Jewish Canon, by the addition of the Prophets and Hagiographa as bodies to the Law, is attributed by conservatives to Esdras, the priest-scribe and religious leader of the period, abetted by Nehemias, the civil governor; or at least to a school of scribes founded by the former. (Cf. Nehemiah 8-10; 2 Maccabees 2:13, in the Greek original.) Far more arresting in favour of an Esdrine formulation of the Hebrew Bible is the much-discussed passage from Josephus, "Contra Apionem", I, viii, in which the Jewish historian, writing about A.D. 100, registers his conviction and that of his coreligionists--a conviction presumably based on tradition--that the Scriptures of the Palestinian Hebrews formed a closed and sacred collection from the days of the Persian king, Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-425 B.C.), a contemporary of Esdras. Josephus is the earliest writer who numbers the books of the Jewish Bible. In its present arrangement this contains 40; Josephus arrived at 22 artificially, in order to match the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, by means of collocations and combinations borrowed in part from the Septuagint. The conservative exegetes find a confirmatory argument in a statement of the apocryphal Fourth Book of Esdras (xiv, 18-47), under whose legendary envelope they see an historical truth, and a further one in a reference in the Baba Bathra tract of the Babylonian Talmud to hagiographic activity on the part of "the men of the Great Synagogue", and Esdras and Nehemias.

But the Catholic Scripturists who admit an Esdrine Canon are far from allowing that Esdras and his colleagues intended to so close up the sacred library as to bar any possible future accessions. The Spirit of God might and did breathe into later writings, and the presence of the deuterocanonical books in the Church's Canon at once forestalls and answers those Protestant theologians of a preceding generation who claimed that Esdras was a Divine agent for an inviolable fixing and sealing of the Old Testament. To this extent at least, Catholic writers on the subject dissent from the drift of the Josephus testimony. And while there is what may be called a consensus of Catholic exegetes of the conservative type on an Esdrine or quasi-Esdrine formulation of the canon so far as the existing material permitted it, this agreement is not absolute; Kaulen and Danko, favouring a later completion, are the notable exceptions among the above-mentioned scholars.

Critical views of the formation of the Palestinian Canon

Its three constituent bodies, the Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa, represent a growth and correspond to three periods more or less extended. The reason for the isolation of the Hagiographa from the Prophets was therefore mainly chronological. The only division marked off clearly by intrinsic features is the legal element of the Old Testament, viz., the Pentateuch.

The Torah, or Law

Until the reign of King Josias, and the epoch-making discovery of "the book of the law" in the Temple (621 B.C.), say the critical exegetes, there was in Israel no written code of laws or other work, universally acknowledged as of supreme and Divine authority. This "book of the law" was practically identical with Deuteronomy, and its recognition or canonization consisted in the solemn pact entered into by Josias and the people of Juda, described in 2 Kings 23. That a written sacred Torah was previously unknown among the Israelites, is demonstrated by the negative evidence of the earlier prophets, by the absence of any such factor from the religious reform undertaken by Ezechias (Hezekiah), while it was the mainspring of that carried out by Josias, and lastly by the plain surprise and consternation of the latter ruler at the finding of such a work. This argument, in fact, is the pivot of the current system of Pentateuchal criticism, and will be developed more at length in the article on the Pentateuch, as also the thesis attacking the Mosaic authorship and promulgation of the latter as a whole. The actual publication of the entire Mosaic code, according to the dominant hypothesis, did not occur until the days of Esdras, and is narrated in chapters viii-x of the second book bearing that name. In this connection must be mentioned the argument from the Samaritan Pentateuch to establish that the Esdrine Canon took in nothing beyond the Hexateuch, i.e. the Pentateuch *plus* Josue. (See PENTATEUCH; SAMARITANS.)

The Nebiim, or Prophets

There is no direct light upon the time or manner in which the second stratum of the Hebrew Canon was finished. The creation of the above-mentioned Samaritan Canon (c. 432 B.C.) may furnish a *terminus a quo*; perhaps a better one is the date of the expiration of prophecy about the close of the fifth century before Christ. For the other *terminus* the lowest possible date is that of the prologue to Ecclesiasticus (c. 132 B.C.), which speaks of "the Law", and the Prophets, and the others that have followed them". But compare Ecclesiasticus itself, chapters 46-49, for an earlier one.

The Kéthubim, or Hagiographa Completion of the Jewish Canon

Critical opinion as to date ranged from c. 165 B.C. to the middle of the second century of our era (Wildeboer). The Catholic scholars Jahn, Movers, Nickes, Danko, Haneberg, Aicher, without sharing all the views of the advanced exegetes, regard the Hebrew Hagiographa as not definitely settled till after Christ. It is an incontestable fact that the sacredness of certain parts of the Palestinian Bible (Esther, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles) was disputed by some rabbis as late as the second century of the Christian Era (Mishna, Yadaim, III, 5; Babylonian Talmud, Megilla, fol. 7). However differing as to dates, the critics are assured that the distinction between the Hagiographa and the Prophetic Canon was one essentially chronological. It was because the Prophets already formed a sealed collection that Ruth, Lamentations, and Daniel, though naturally belonging to it, could not gain entrance, but had to take their place with the last-formed division, the Kéthubim.

The protocanonical books and the New Testament

The absence of any citations from Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles may be reasonably explained by their unsuitability for New Testament purposes, and is further discounted by the non-citation of the two books of Esdras. Abdias, Nahum, and Sophonias, while not directly honoured, are included in the quotations from the other minor Prophets by virtue of the traditional unity of that collection. On the other hand, such frequent terms as "the Scripture", the "Scriptures", "the holy Scriptures", applied in the New Testament to the other sacred writings, would lead us to believe that the latter already formed a definite fixed collection; but, on the other, the reference in St. Luke to "the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms", while demonstrating the fixity of the Torah and the Prophets as sacred groups, does not warrant us in ascribing the same fixity to the third division, the Palestinian-Jewish Hagiographa. If, as seems certain, the exact content of the broader catalogue of the Old Testament Scriptures (that comprising the deutero books) cannot be established from the New Testament, a fortiori there is no reason to expect that it should reflect the precise extension of the narrower and Judaistic Canon. We are sure, of course, that all the Hagiographa were eventually, before the death of the last Apostle, divinely committed to the Church as Holy Scripture, but we know this as a truth of faith, and by theological deduction, not from documentary evidence in the New Testament. The latter fact has a bearing against the Protestant claim that Jesus approved and transmitted *en bloc* an already defined Bible of the Palestinian Synagogue.

Authors and standards of canonicity among the Jews

Though the Old Testament reveals no formal notion of inspiration, the later Jews at least must have possessed the idea (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). There is an instance of a Talmudic doctor distinguishing between a composition "given by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit" and one supposed to be the product of merely human wisdom. But as to our distinct concept of canonicity, it is a modern idea, and even the Talmud gives no evidence of it. To characterize a book which held no acknowledged place in the divine library, the rabbis spoke of it as "defiling the hands", a curious technical expression due probably to the desire to prevent any profane touching of the sacred roll. But though the formal *idea* of canonicity was wanting among the Jews the *fact* existed. Regarding the sources of canonicity among the Hebrew ancients, we are left to surmise an analogy. There are both psychological and historical reasons against the supposition that the Old Testament canon grew spontaneously by a kind of instinctive public recognition of inspired books. True, it is quite reasonable to assume that the prophetic office in Israel carried its own credentials, which in a large measure extended to its written compositions. But there were many pseudo-prophets in the nation, and so some authority was necessary to draw

the line between the true and the false prophetic writings. And an ultimate tribunal was also needed to set its seal upon the miscellaneous and in some cases mystifying literature embraced in the Hagiographa. Jewish tradition, as illustrated by the already cited Josephus, Baba Bathra, and pseudo-Esdras data, points to authority as the final arbiter of what was Scriptural and what not. The so-called Council of Jamnia (c. A.D. 90) has reasonably been taken as having terminated the disputes between rival rabbinic schools concerning the canonicity of Canticles. So while the intuitive sense and increasingly reverent consciousness of the faithful element of Israel could, and presumably did, give a general impulse and direction to authority, we must conclude that it was the word of official authority which actually fixed the limits of the Hebrew Canon, and here, broadly speaking, the advanced and conservative exegetes meet on common ground. However the case may have been for the Prophets, the preponderance of evidence favours a late period as that in which the Hagiographa were closed, a period when the general body of Scribes dominated Judaism, sitting "in the chair of Moses", and alone having the authority and prestige for such action. The term *general body* of Scribes has been used advisedly; contemporary scholars gravely suspect, when they do not entirely reject, the "Great Synagogue" of rabbinic tradition, and the matter lay outside the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim.

As a touchstone by which uncanonical and canonical works were discriminated, an important influence was that of the Pentateuchal Law. This was always the Canon *par excellence* of the Israelites. To the Jews of the Middle Ages the Torah was the inner sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, while the Prophets were the Holy Place, and the *Kéthubim* only the outer court of the Biblical temple, and this medieval conception finds ample basis in the pre-eminence allowed to the Law by the rabbis of the Talmudic age. Indeed, from Esdras downwards the Law, as the oldest portion of the Canon, and the formal expression of God's commands, received the highest reverence. The Cabbalists of the second century after Christ, and later schools, regarded the other sections of the Old Testament as merely the expansion and interpretation of the Pentateuch. We may be sure, then, that the chief test of canonicity, at least for the Hagiographa, was conformity with the Canon *par excellence*, the Pentateuch. It is evident, in addition, that no book was admitted which had not been composed in Hebrew, and did not possess the antiquity and prestige of a classic age, or name at least. These criteria are negative and exclusive rather than directive. The impulse of religious feeling or liturgical usage must have been the prevailing positive factors in the decision. But the negative tests were in part arbitrary, and an intuitive sense cannot give the assurance of Divine certification. Only later was the infallible voice to come, and then it was to declare that the Canon of the Synagogue, though unadulterated indeed, was incomplete.

The canon among the Alexandrian Jews (deuterocanonical books)

The most striking difference between the Catholic and Protestant Bibles is the presence in the former of a number of writings which are wanting in the latter and also in the Hebrew Bible, which became the Old Testament of Protestantism. These number seven books: Tobias (Tobit), Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I and II Machabees, and three documents added to protocanonical books, viz., the supplement to Esther, from x, 4, to the end, the Canticle of the Three Youths (Song of the Three Children) in Daniel 3, and the stories of Susanna and the Elders and Bel and the Dragon, forming the closing chapters of the Catholic version of that book. Of these works, Tobias and Judith were written originally in Aramaic, perhaps in Hebrew; Baruch and I Machabees in Hebrew, while Wisdom and II Machabees were certainly composed in Greek. The probabilities favour Hebrew as the original language of the addition to Esther, and Greek for the enlargements of Daniel.

The ancient Greek Old Testament known as the Septuagint was the vehicle which conveyed these additional Scriptures into the Catholic Church. The Septuagint version was the Bible of the Greek-speaking, or Hellenist, Jews, whose intellectual and literary centre was Alexandria (see SEPTUAGINT). The oldest extant copies date from the fourth and fifth centuries of our era, and were therefore made by Christian hands; nevertheless scholars generally admit that these faithfully represent the Old Testament as it was current among the Hellenist or Alexandrian Jews in the age immediately preceding Christ. These venerable manuscripts of the Septuagint vary somewhat in their content outside the Palestinian Canon, showing that in Alexandrian-Jewish circles the number of admissible extra books was not sharply determined either by tradition or by authority. However, aside from the absence of Machabees from the Codex Vaticanus (the very oldest copy of the Greek Old Testament), all the entire manuscripts contain all the deuterocanonical writings; where the manuscript Septuagints differ from one another,

with the exception noted, it is in a certain excess above the deuterocanonical books. It is a significant fact that in all these Alexandrian Bibles the traditional Hebrew order is broken up by the interspersing of the additional literature among the other books, outside the law, thus asserting for the extra writings a substantial equality of rank and privilege.

It is pertinent to ask the motives which impelled the Hellenist Jews to thus, virtually at least, canonize this considerable section of literature, some of it very recent, and depart so radically from the Palestinian tradition. Some would have it that not the Alexandrian, but the Palestinian, Jews departed from the Biblical tradition. The Catholic writers Nickses, Movers, Danko, and more recently Kaulen and Mullen, have advocated the view that originally the Palestinian Canon must have included all the deuterocanonicals, and so stood down to the time of the Apostles (Kaulen, c. 100 B.C.), when, moved by the fact that the Septuagint had become the Old Testament of the Church, it was put under ban by the Jerusalem Scribes, who were actuated moreover (thus especially Kaulen) by hostility to the Hellenistic largeness of spirit and Greek composition of our deuterocanonical books. These exegetes place much reliance on St. Justin Martyr's statement that the Jews had mutilated Holy Writ, a statement that rests on no positive evidence. They adduce the fact that certain deuterocanonical books were quoted with veneration, and even in a few cases as Scriptures, by Palestinian or Babylonian doctors; but the private utterances of a few rabbis cannot outweigh the consistent Hebrew tradition of the canon, attested by Josephus--although he himself was inclined to Hellenism--and even by the Alexandrian-Jewish author of IV Esdras. We are therefore forced to admit that the leaders of Alexandrian Judaism showed a notable independence of Jerusalem tradition and authority in permitting the sacred boundaries of the Canon, which certainly had been fixed for the Prophets, to be broken by the insertion of an enlarged Daniel and the Epistle of Baruch. On the assumption that the limits of the Palestinian Hagiographa remained undefined until a relatively late date, there was less bold innovation in the addition of the other books, but the wiping out of the lines of the triple division reveals that the Hellenists were ready to extend the Hebrew Canon, if not establish a new official one of their own.

On their human side these innovations are to be accounted for by the free spirit of the Hellenist Jews. Under the influence of Greek thought they had conceived a broader view of Divine inspiration than that of their Palestinian brethren, and refused to restrict the literary manifestations of the Holy Ghost to a certain terminus of time and the Hebrew form of language. The Book of Wisdom, emphatically Hellenist in character, presents to us Divine wisdom as flowing on from generation to generation and making holy souls and prophets (7:27, in the Greek). Philo, a typical Alexandrian-Jewish thinker, has even an exaggerated notion of the diffusion of inspiration (*Quis rerum divinarum hæres*, 52; ed. Lips., iii, 57; *De migratione Abrahæ*, 11,299; ed. Lips. ii, 334). But even Philo, while indicating acquaintance with the deuterocanonical literature, nowhere cites it in his voluminous writings. True, he does not employ several books of the Hebrew Canon; but there is a natural presumption that if he had regarded the additional works as being quite on the same plane as the others, he would not have failed to quote so stimulating and congenial a production as the Book of Wisdom. Moreover, as has been pointed out by several authorities, the independent spirit of the Hellenists could not have gone so far as to setup a different *official* Canon from that of Jerusalem, without having left historical traces of such a rupture. So, from the available data we may justly infer that, while the deuterocanonicals were admitted as sacred by the Alexandrian Jews, they possessed a lower degree of sanctity and authority than the longer accepted books, i.e., the Palestinian Hagiographa and the Prophets, themselves inferior to the Law.

The canon of the Old Testament in the Catholic Church

The most explicit definition of the Catholic Canon is that given by the Council of Trent, Session IV, 1546. For the Old Testament its catalogue reads as follows:

The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), Josue, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, two of Paralipomenon, the first and second of Esdras (which latter is called Nehemias), Tobias, Judith, Esther, Job, the Davidic Psalter (in number one hundred and fifty Psalms), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Canticle of Canticles, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias, Jeremias, with Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, the twelve minor Prophets (Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggeus, Zacharias, Malachias), two books of Machabees, the first and second.

The order of books copies that of the Council of Florence, 1442, and in its general plan is that of the Septuagint. The divergence of titles from those found in the Protestant versions is due to the fact that the official Latin Vulgate retained the forms of the Septuagint.

The Old Testament canon (including the deuterios) in the New Testament

The Tridentine decrees from which the above list is extracted was the first infallible and effectually promulgated pronouncement on the Canon, addressed to the Church Universal. Being dogmatic in its purport, it implies that the Apostles bequeathed the same Canon to the Church, as a part of the *depositum fidei*. But this was not done by way of any formal decision; we should search the pages of the New Testament in vain for any trace of such action. The larger Canon of the Old Testament passed through the Apostles' hands to the church tacitly, by way of their usage and whole attitude toward its components; an attitude which, for most of the sacred writings of the Old Testament, reveals itself in the New, and for the rest, must have exhibited itself in oral utterances, or at least in tacit approval of the special reverence of the faithful. Reasoning backward from the status in which we find the deutero books in the earliest ages of post-Apostolic Christianity, we rightly affirm that such a status points of Apostolic sanction, which in turn must have rested on revelation either by Christ or the Holy Spirit. For the deutero-canonicals at least, we need must have recourse to this legitimate prescriptive argument, owing to the complexity and inadequacy of the New Testament data.

All the books of the Hebrew Old Testament are cited in the New except those which have been aptly called the *Antilegomena* of the Old Testament, viz., Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles; moreover Esdras and Nehemias are not employed. The admitted absence of any explicit citation of the deutero writings does not therefore prove that they were regarded as inferior to the above-mentioned works in the eyes of New Testament personages and authors. The deutero literature was in general unsuited to their purposes, and some consideration should be given to the fact that even at its Alexandrian home it was not quoted by Jewish writers, as we saw in the case of Philo. The negative argument drawn from the non-citation of the deutero-canonicals in the New Testament is especially minimized by the indirect use made of them by the same Testament. This takes the form of allusions and reminiscences, and shows unquestionably that the Apostles and Evangelists were acquainted with the Alexandrian increment, regarded its books as at least respectable sources, and wrote more or less under its influence. A comparison of Hebrews, xi and II Machabees, vi and vii reveals unmistakable references in the former to the heroism of the martyrs glorified in the latter. There are close affinities of thought, and in some cases also of language, between 1 Peter 1:6-7, and Wisdom 3:5-6; Hebrews 1:3, and Wisdom 7:26-27; 1 Corinthians 10:9-10, and Judith 8:24-25; 1 Corinthians 6:13, and Ecclesiasticus 36:20.

Yet the force of the direct and indirect employment of Old Testament writings by the New is slightly impaired by the disconcerting truth that at least one of the New Testament authors, St. Jude, quotes explicitly from the "Book of Henoch", long universally recognized as apocryphal, see verse 14, while in verse 9 he borrows from another apocryphal narrative, the "Assumption of Moses". The New Testament quotations from the Old are in general characterized by a freedom and elasticity regarding manner and source which further tend to diminish their weight as proofs of canonicity. But so far as concerns the great majority of the Palestinian Hagiographa--a fortiori, the Pentateuch and Prophets--whatever want of conclusiveness there may be in the New Testament, evidence of their canonical standing is abundantly supplemented from Jewish sources alone, in the series of witnesses beginning with the Mishnah and running back through Josephus and Philo to the translation of the above books for the Hellenist Greeks. But for the deutero-canonical literature, only the last testimony speaks as a Jewish confirmation. However, there are signs that the Greek version was not deemed by its readers as a closed Bible of definite sacredness in all its parts, but that its somewhat variable contents shaded off in the eyes of the Hellenists from the eminently sacred Law down to works of questionable divinity, such as III Machabees.

This factor should be considered in weighing a certain argument. A large number of Catholic authorities see a canonization of the deuterios in a supposed wholesale adoption and approval, by the Apostles, of the Greek, and therefore larger, Old Testament. The argument is not without a certain force; the New Testament undoubtedly shows a preference for the Septuagint; out of the 350 texts from the Old Testament, 300 favour the language of the Greek version rather than that of the Hebrew. But there are considerations which bid us hesitate to admit an

Apostolic adoption of the Septuagint *en bloc*. As remarked above, there are cogent reasons for believing that it was not a fixed quantity at the time. The existing oldest representative manuscripts are not entirely identical in the books they contain. Moreover, it should be remembered that at the beginning of our era, and for some time later, complete sets of any such voluminous collection as the Septuagint in manuscript would be extremely rare; the version must have been current in separate books or groups of books, a condition favourable to a certain variability of compass. So neither a fluctuating Septuagint nor an inexplicit New Testament conveys to us the exact extension of the pre-Christian Bible transmitted by the Apostles to the Primitive Church. It is more tenable to conclude to a selective process under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and a process completed so late in Apostolic times that the New Testament fails to reflect its mature result regarding either the number or note of sanctity of the extra-Palestinian books admitted. To historically learn the Apostolic Canon of the Old Testament we must interrogate less sacred but later documents, expressing more explicitly the belief of the first ages of Christianity.

The canon of the Old Testament in the Church of the first three centuries

The sub-Apostolic writings of Clement, Polycarp, the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, of the pseudo-Clementine homilies, and the "Shepherd" of Hermas, contain implicit quotations from or allusions to all the deuterocanonicals except Baruch (which anciently was often united with Jeremias) and I Machabees and the additions to David. No unfavourable argument can be drawn from the loose, implicit character of these citations, since these Apostolic Fathers quote the protocanonical Scriptures in precisely the same manner.

Coming down to the next age, that of the apologists, we find Baruch cited by Athenagoras as a prophet. St. Justin Martyr is the first to note that the Church has a set of Old Testament Scriptures different from the Jews', and also the earliest to intimate the principle proclaimed by later writers, namely, the self-sufficiency of the Church in establishing the Canon; its independence of the Synagogue in this respect. The full realization of this truth came slowly, at least in the Orient, where there are indications that in certain quarters the spell of Palestinian-Jewish tradition was not fully cast off for some time. St. Melito, Bishop of Sardis (c. 170), first drew up a list of the canonical books of the Old Testament. While maintaining the familiar arrangement of the Septuagint, he says that he verified his catalogue by inquiry among Jews; Jewry by that time had everywhere discarded the Alexandrian books, and Melito's Canon consists exclusively of the protocanonicals *minus* Esther. It should be noticed, however, that the document to which this catalogue was prefixed is capable of being understood as having an anti-Jewish polemical purpose, in which case Melito's restricted canon is explicable on another ground. St. Irenæus, always a witness of the first rank, on account of his broad acquaintance with ecclesiastical tradition, vouches that Baruch was deemed on the same footing as Jeremias, and that the narratives of Susanna and Bel and the Dragon were ascribed to Daniel. The Alexandrian tradition is represented by the weighty authority of Origen. Influenced, doubtless, by the Alexandrian-Jewish usage of acknowledging in practice the extra writings as sacred while theoretically holding to the narrower Canon of Palestine, his catalogue of the Old Testament Scriptures contains only the protocanonical books, though it follows the order of the Septuagint. Nevertheless Origen employs all the deuterocanonicals as Divine Scriptures, and in his letter of Julius Africanus defends the sacredness of Tobias, Judith, and the fragments of Daniel, at the same time implicitly asserting the autonomy of the Church in fixing the Canon (see references in Cornely). In his Hexaplar edition of the Old Testament all the deuterocanonicals find a place. The sixth-century Biblical manuscript known as the "Codex Claromontanus" contains a catalogue to which both Harnack and Zahn assign an Alexandrian origin, about contemporary with Origen. At any rate it dates from the period under examination and comprises all the deuterocanonical books, with IV Machabees besides. St. Hippolytus (d. 236) may fairly be considered as representing the primitive Roman tradition. He comments on the Susanna chapter, often quotes Wisdom as the work of Solomon, and employs as Sacred Scripture Baruch and the Machabees. For the West African Church the larger canon has two strong witnesses in Tertullian and St. Cyprian. All the deuterocanonicals except Tobias, Judith, and the addition to Esther, are biblically used in the works of these Fathers. (With regard to the employment of apocryphal writings in this age see under APOCRYPHA.)

The canon of the Old Testament during the fourth, and first half of the

fifth, century

In this period the position of the deuterocanonical literature is no longer as secure as in the primitive age. The doubts which arose should be attributed largely to a reaction against the apocryphal or pseudo-Biblical writings with which the East especially had been flooded by heretical and other writers. Negatively, the situation became possible through the absence of any Apostolic or ecclesiastical definition of the Canon. The definite and inalterable determination of the sacred sources, like that of all Catholic doctrines, was in the Divine economy left to gradually work itself out under the stimulus of questions and opposition. Alexandria, with its elastic Scriptures, had from the beginning been a congenial field for apocryphal literature, and St. Athanasius, the vigilant pastor of that flock, to protect it against the pernicious influence, drew up a catalogue of books with the values to be attached to each. First, the strict canon and authoritative source of truth is the Jewish Old Testament, Esther excepted. Besides, there are certain books which the Fathers had appointed to be read to catechumens for edification and instruction; these are the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Esther, Judith, Tobias, the Didache, or Doctrine of the Apostles, the Shepherd of Hermas. All others are apocrypha and the inventions of heretics (Festal Epistle for 367). Following the precedent of Origen and the Alexandrian tradition, the saintly doctor recognized no other formal canon of the Old Testament than the Hebrew one; but also, faithful to the same tradition, he practically admitted the deuterocanonicals to a Scriptural dignity, as is evident from his general usage. At Jerusalem there was a renaissance, perhaps a survival, of Jewish ideas, the tendency there being distinctly unfavourable to the deuterocanonicals. St. Cyril of that see, while vindicating for the Church the right to fix the Canon, places them among the apocrypha and forbids all books to be read privately which are not read in the churches. In Antioch and Syria the attitude was more favourable. St. Epiphanius shows hesitation about the rank of the deuterocanonicals; he esteemed them, but they had not the same place as the Hebrew books in his regard. The historian Eusebius attests the widespread doubts in his time; he classes them as *antilegomena*, or disputed writings, and, like Athanasius, places them in a class intermediate between the books received by all and the apocrypha. The 59th (or 60th) canon of the provincial Council of Laodicea (the authenticity of which however is contested) gives a catalogue of the Scriptures entirely in accord with the ideas of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Oriental versions and Greek manuscripts of the period are more liberal; the extant ones have all the deuterocanonicals and, in some cases, certain apocrypha.

The influence of Origen's and Athanasius's restricted canon naturally spread to the West. St. Hilary of Poitiers and Rufinus followed their footsteps, excluding the deuterocanonicals from canonical rank in theory, but admitting them in practice. The latter styles them "ecclesiastical" books, but in authority unequal to the other Scriptures. St. Jerome cast his weighty suffrage on the side unfavourable to the disputed books. In appreciating his attitude we must remember that Jerome lived long in Palestine, in an environment where everything outside the Jewish Canon was suspect, and that, moreover, he had an excessive veneration for the Hebrew text, the *Hebraica veritas* as he called it. In his famous "Prologus Galeatus", or Preface to his translation of Samuel and Kings, he declares that everything not Hebrew should be classed with the apocrypha, and explicitly says that Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobias, and Judith are not in the Canon. These books, he adds, are read in the churches for the edification of the people, and not for the confirmation of revealed doctrine. An analysis of Jerome's expressions on the deuterocanonicals, in various letters and prefaces, yields the following results: first, he strongly doubted their inspiration; secondly, the fact that he occasionally quotes them, and translated some of them as a concession to ecclesiastical tradition, is an involuntary testimony on his part to the high standing these writings enjoyed in the Church at large, and to the strength of the practical tradition which prescribed their readings in public worship. Obviously, the inferior rank to which the deuterocanonicals were relegated by authorities like Origen, Athanasius, and Jerome, was due to too rigid a conception of canonicity, one demanding that a book, to be entitled to this supreme dignity, must be received by all, must have the sanction of Jewish antiquity, and must moreover be adapted not only to edification, but also to the "confirmation of the doctrine of the Church", to borrow Jerome's phrase.

But while eminent scholars and theorists were thus depreciating the additional writings, the official attitude of the Latin Church, always favourable to them, kept the majestic tenor of its way. Two documents of capital importance in the history of the canon constitute the first formal utterance of papal authority on the subject. The first is the so-called "Decretal of Gelasius", *de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris*, the essential part of which is now generally attributed to a synod convoked by Pope Damasus in the year 382. The other is the Canon of

Innocent I, sent in 405 to a Gallican bishop in answer to an inquiry. Both contain all the deuterocanonicals, without any distinction, and are identical with the catalogue of Trent. The African Church, always a staunch supporter of the contested books, found itself in entire accord with Rome on this question. Its ancient version, the *Vetus Latina* (less correctly the *Itala*), had admitted all the Old Testament Scriptures. St. Augustine seems to theoretically recognize degrees of inspiration; in practice he employs protos and deuterocanonicals without any discrimination whatsoever. Moreover in his "De Doctrinâ Christianâ" he enumerates the components of the complete Old Testament. The Synod of Hippo (393) and the three of Carthage (393, 397, and 419), in which, doubtless, Augustine was the leading spirit, found it necessary to deal explicitly with the question of the Canon, and drew up identical lists from which no sacred books are excluded. These councils base their canon on tradition and liturgical usage. For the Spanish Church valuable testimony is found in the work of the heretic Priscillian, "Liber de Fide et Apocryphis"; it supposes a sharp line existing between canonical and uncanonical works, and that the Canon takes in all the deuterocanonicals.

The canon of the Old Testament from the middle of the fifth to the close of the seventh century

This period exhibits a curious exchange of opinions between the West and the East, while ecclesiastical usage remained unchanged, at least in the Latin Church. During this intermediate age the use of St. Jerome's new version of the Old Testament (the Vulgate) became widespread in the Occident. With its text went Jerome's prefaces disparaging the deuterocanonicals, and under the influence of his authority the West began to distrust these and to show the first symptoms of a current hostile to their canonicity. On the other hand, the Oriental Church imported a Western authority which had canonized the disputed books, viz., the decree of Carthage, and from this time there is an increasing tendency among the Greeks to place the deuterocanonicals on the same level with the others--a tendency, however, due more to forgetfulness of the old distinction than to deference to the Council of Carthage.

The canon of the Old Testament during the Middle Ages

The Greek Church

The result of this tendency among the Greeks was that about the beginning of the twelfth century they possessed a canon identical with that of the Latins, except that it took in the apocryphal III Machabees. That all the deuterocanonicals were liturgically recognized in the Greek Church at the era of the schism in the ninth century, is indicated by the "Syntagma Canonum" of Photius.

The Latin Church

In the Latin Church, all through the Middle Ages we find evidence of hesitation about the character of the deuterocanonicals. There is a current friendly to them, another one distinctly unfavourable to their authority and sacredness, while wavering between the two are a number of writers whose veneration for these books is tempered by some perplexity as to their exact standing, and among those we note St. Thomas Aquinas. Few are found to unequivocally acknowledge their canonicity. The prevailing attitude of Western medieval authors is substantially that of the Greek Fathers. The chief cause of this phenomenon in the West is to be sought in the influence, direct and indirect, of St. Jerome's depreciating Prologus. The compilatory "Glossa Ordinaria" was widely read and highly esteemed as a treasury of sacred learning during the Middle Ages; it embodied the prefaces in which the Doctor of Bethlehem had written in terms derogatory to the deuterocanonicals, and thus perpetuated and diffused his unfriendly opinion. And yet these doubts must be regarded as more or less academic. The countless manuscript copies of the Vulgate produced by these ages, with a slight, probably accidental, exception, uniformly embrace the complete Old Testament. Ecclesiastical usage and Roman tradition held firmly to the canonical equality of all parts of the Old Testament. There is no lack of evidence that during this long period the deuterocanonicals were read in the churches of Western Christendom. As to Roman authority, the catalogue of Innocent I appears in the collection of ecclesiastical canons sent by Pope Adrian I to Charlemagne, and adopted in 802 as the law of the Church in the Frankish Empire; Nicholas I, writing in 865 to the bishops of France, appeals to the

same decree of Innocent as the ground on which all the sacred books are to be received.

The canon of the Old Testament and the general councils

The Council of Florence (1442)

In 1442, during the life, and with the approval, of this Council, Eugenius IV issued several Bulls, or decrees, with a view to restore the Oriental schismatic bodies to communion with Rome, and according to the common teaching of theologians these documents are infallible statements of doctrine. The "Decretum pro Jacobitis" contains a complete list of the books received by the Church as inspired, but omits, perhaps advisedly, the terms *canon* and *canonical*. The Council of Florence therefore taught the inspiration of all the Scriptures, but did not formally pass on their canonicity.

The Council of Trent's definition of the canon (1546)

It was the exigencies of controversy that first led Luther to draw a sharp line between the books of the Hebrew Canon and the Alexandrian writings. In his disputation with Eck at Leipzig, in 1519, when his opponent urged the well-known text from II Machabees in proof of the doctrine of purgatory, Luther replied that the passage had no binding authority since the book was outside the Canon. In the first edition of Luther's Bible, 1534, the deuterocanonicals were relegated, as apocrypha, to a separate place between the two Testaments. To meet this radical departure of the Protestants, and as well define clearly the inspired sources from which the Catholic Faith draws its defence, the Council of Trent among its first acts solemnly declared as "sacred and canonical" all the books of the Old and New Testaments "with all their parts as they have been used to be read in the churches, and as found in the ancient vulgate edition". During the deliberations of the Council there never was any real question as to the reception of all the traditional Scripture. Neither--and this is remarkable--in the proceedings is there manifest any serious doubt of the canonicity of the disputed writings. In the mind of the Tridentine Fathers they had been virtually canonized, by the same decree of Florence, and the same Fathers felt especially bound by the action of the preceding ecumenical synod. The Council of Trent did not enter into an examination of the fluctuations in the history of the Canon. Neither did it trouble itself about questions of authorship or character of contents. True to the practical genius of the Latin Church, it based its decision on immemorial tradition as manifested in the decrees of previous councils and popes, and liturgical reading, relying on traditional teaching and usage to determine a question of tradition. The Tridentine catalogue has been given above.

The Vatican Council (1870)

The great constructive Synod of Trent had put the sacredness and canonicity of the whole traditional Bible forever beyond the permissibility of doubt on the part of Catholics. By implication it had defined that Bible's plenary inspiration also. The Vatican Council took occasion of a recent error on inspiration to remove any lingering shadow of uncertainty on this head; it formally ratified the action of Trent and explicitly defined the Divine inspiration of all the books with their parts.

The canon of the Old Testament outside the Church

Among the Eastern Orthodox

The Greek Orthodox Church preserved its ancient Canon in practice as well as theory until recent times, when, under the dominant influence of its Russian offshoot, it is shifting its attitude towards the deuterocanonical Scriptures. The rejection of these books by the Russian theologians and authorities is a lapse which began early in the eighteenth century. The Monophysites, Nestorians, Jacobites, Armenians, and Copts, while concerning themselves little with the Canon, admit the complete catalogue and several apocrypha besides.

Among Protestants

The Protestant Churches have continued to exclude the deutero writings from their canons, classifying them as "Apocrypha". Presbyterians and Calvinists in general, especially since the Westminster Synod of 1648, have been the most uncompromising enemies of any recognition, and owing to their influence the British and Foreign Bible Society decided in 1826 to refuse to distribute Bibles containing the Apocrypha. Since that time the publication of the deutero-canonicals as an appendix to Protestant Bibles has almost entirely ceased in English-speaking countries. The books still supply lessons for the liturgy of the Church of England, but the number has been lessened by the hostile agitation. There is an Apocrypha appendix to the British Revised Version, in a separate volume. The deuterocanonicals are still appended to the German Bibles printed under the auspices of the orthodox Lutherans.



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