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ARTICLE IV.

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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THE Greek word for canon (*κανών*) has an interesting history. Its original meaning was a straight rod or ruler. Then, as being itself straight, it came to mean something that measured or tested straightness in other things, both material and immaterial. It stood, especially, for the norm, or regulating principle. Grammatical rules, for example, were called "canons." The monochord used as the basis of musical intervals was styled their "canon." Great epochs in history, made to serve in the determination of intermediate dates, were entitled "chronological canons." And in a still more pertinent sense, a certain higher class of Greek authors, taken collectively, were spoken of as forming a literary canon, that is, as furnishing a worthy model of good taste in composition. This last usage marks the final stage in one line of development, the word going over at this point from an active into a passive sense. From being used to measure something, it was used for something that had been itself measured and so had passed into the category of approved standards.¹

Now, if our information ceased here, we should infer that the present somewhat extraordinary technical use of the term canon arose in this way. But it is not at all probable, since the word, even in its Greek form, has gone through almost precisely the same series of changes in biblical and ecclesiastical literature. In the original of the apocryphal book of Judith,² for instance, where we first find it, it is employed in its primitive sense of a

¹ See Liddell & Scott's Greek Lex. s. v.

² xiii. 6. Cf. textual note in my Apocrypha, New York, 1880, p. 191.

straight rod, improperly rendered in the common version "pillar." In the New Testament it twice occurs with the meaning of measure or norm,² and in the second of the two passages (2 Cor. x. 13) there is already a foreshadowing of the later patristic usage. Clement of Rome³ still adheres, in general, to the New Testament definition; but Clement of Alexandria,⁴ who speaks of the "canon of truth," and others of his contemporaries we find broadening it to signify, not a single rule alone, but the leading, fundamental principles governing the church of Christ. So, little by little, the word took on the higher meaning of a rule of doctrine, a certain correct type of teaching as over against that which was erroneous or heretical. From this point the transfer of the title from the doctrine itself to the collection of books supposed to contain it was not far off.

At first parts of books only, such as came frequently into use at church festivals, were referred to as "canonized." That is, they were understood to form a part of the established law and order of the discipleship. The term canon as applied to the Bible as a whole to designate its proper contents, we first meet with about the middle of the fourth century, nearly simultaneously in Athanasius⁵ and in one of the utterances of the council of Laodicea (A. D. 363).⁶ Uncanonical books, by which were meant those outside the current catalogue of the sacred Scriptures, were declared to have no authority within the church. Near the same time Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (from A. D. 375), in a list of biblical books imputed to him remarks towards its close: "This should be the most correct canon of the divinely inspired Scrip-

² Gal. vi. 16, "as many as walk by this rule."

³ Ad Cor. i. vii. xli.

⁴ Strom. vi. 15; vii. 16.

⁵ Epistolae Festales, xxxix.

⁶ Patrologia Graeca (Ed. Migne, 1857), xxvi. Col. 1456, canon fifty-nine. It is given in full by Westcott, Can. of the N. T., p. 482 f.

tures."* Shortly after this period numerous witnesses testify to the common adoption of the term in this technical sense, namely, as indicating the proper measure of the contents of the Bible and since then, to the present day, it has been well-nigh universal.

By the canon of the Old Testament, then, we desire to be understood as meaning those books which, in their collective form, properly make up the Old Testament. It should be said however, by way of limitation, that, in this paper, we shall use that most significant word "properly" almost exclusively in an historical sense. We propose to treat the subject, as far as is well possible, from a purely historical point of view. It would be perfectly legitimate, of course, and is far more common, to discuss it on a much broader platform. There are many persons, indeed, who carelessly employ the epithet canonical as though it were necessarily identical with genuine and authentic, or with inspired and authoritative. But this is really confounding two very dissimilar things, and the confusion is to be the more regretted, because it is so likely to bring what might be a calm, historical inquiry largely under the influence of dogmatic considerations. The questions we now propose to ourselves are much simpler. What books, historically considered, formed the Old Testament collection of the Jews? How and when did that collection originate? When, especially, was it concluded? Was there more than one such final collection? Did it, if but one, include within itself the sum of the Hebrew literature of its time? It would be, it is true, a quite fair, and very practical question to debate among other related questions, on what principle books were admitted to the Jewish canon or excluded from it, and so what kind of authority and how much of it is to be allowed to a book we find embraced within the Old Testament collection? But we must insist, in the face of a very prevalent habit to the contrary, that such questions are by no means logically

* See Westcott, l. c., p. 497.

involved in the others. They would certainly greatly complicate an inquiry which will be found none too easy when carried on purely as an historical one.

It is admitted on all sides that the Jews had a canon of Scriptures a collection of books, definitely segregated by them from all others and held in peculiar esteem. In seeking to answer the question what this canon was, and how it arose, two natural and justifiable courses are open to us. We may start with the books themselves, and the very distant period which the earliest of them represent, carefully tracing, within themselves, or in contemporaneous literature, any indications presupposing or demanding such a collection, and from there move downward to the time when there is no longer any doubt concerning either the existence, or the completed contents of it. Or we may begin with a completed and acknowledged canon, and from that point move backward along the whole course of its development in pursuit of the same object. The one method, if consistently and thoroughly applied, is as practicable, and for all that we can see, as scientific, as the other. The special advantages of the latter, which we adopt, would seem to be that there is more likelihood of one's learning the exact truth in proceeding from the clear to the less clear than by reversing the process. The best way to discover the actual sources of a river is to follow the channel upward till those sources are reached and identified. Nor need that hinder the explorer from carefully noting the river's course, whether straight or tortuous, the incoming streams which here and there increase its volume, or any supposable uncertainty there may be about its real starting point. It might be expected, rather, in comparison with other methods, to be the one best adapted to facilitate correct conclusions in all these respects.

We will, accordingly, make the first century of the Christian era our point of departure. It is generally agreed that the canon of the Old Testament was closed

from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty years before this time. Dissentients from this view among biblical scholars and critics may be truthfully said to be somewhat rare. Nevertheless they shall not be overlooked. We do not wish to leave any thing to mere assumption. It can be shown from three wholly independent, though mutually complementary witnesses, that before the year one of our era there was a fixed collection, a definite *corpus*, of highly sacred Old Testament books and that there is every reason to suppose that it included all the Old Testament literature now regarded by us, Protestants, as canonical and that it included only that. Let us begin the investigation with the New Testament, which, without prejudice to our possibly varying theories of inspiration, may here be cited simply as credible history on the point under review.

The statement is indubitable, and would be universally admitted, that the Old Testament is continually referred to in the New as an established and generally recognized body of sacred ancient writings. The Master charged his countrymen with disobeying what he called the "Scriptures," nullifying and bringing them into disrepute by their traditions; but we do not discover that he ever so much as hinted that they did not possess them or had shown any want of care in their preservation or transmission. As well to justify his own extraordinary claims, as to confound the machinations of his enemies, he made his appeal, severally and collectively to them. Nor do we learn that any objection ever arose in his time to such a practice, or that there was any dispute whatever among those who immediately surrounded him, touching either the latitude or the limitation of the list of books so referred to. It was with him and with them, if we may judge from their common attitude and usage, not something that was in process, but already an entity and an entirety, mutually acknowledged as a revered standard of conduct beyond which there was no appeal. Besides naming these writings

“the Scriptures,” he also called them “the Law,” “the Law and the Prophets,” and once “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke xxiv. 44), employing terms to designate the books in their collective form which seem to have been common both in his day and much earlier, and actually representing the natural and historical division and sequence of their several constituent parts. It is the same peculiar, threefold distribution—I do not say title—of the books that we find in the earliest extra-biblical reference to the Old Testament collection about two centuries before.*

What was true of the recorded words of the Master, was no less true of all New Testament writers. The Old Testament was almost their sole literary dependence. There is no principal phase of its teachings, ceremonial, ethical, or spiritual, which they do not take up and adapt to their new conditions. There is scarcely one of its great characters who is not vividly reproduced in person or doctrine. One of the most recent books treating of the subject of Old Testament quotations in the New reckons their number at about six hundred.¹⁰ But this makes no account of a multitude of passages which have simply taken on the familiar coloring of the ancient Scriptures without directly citing them. It is not too much to say that the whole warp of the New Testament is borrowed from the Old. The golden woof only is Christian. “*Novum in vetere latet: vetus in novo patet.*” Jesus, it will be remembered, said: “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. v. 17).

The only books of the Old Testament not expressly quoted in the New seem to be Judges, Ruth, Chronicles,

* Ecclus. Prologue. It is surprising that so good a scholar as our friend, Dr. Briggs, should translate the τῶν ἄλλων πατρῶν βιβλίων here, afterwards changed by the writer himself to τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων, by “other books of our fathers,” and then proceed to draw the inference from it that an *undefined* number of writings is referred to. Biblical Study, p 131, foot note.

¹⁰ Toy, Quotations in the New Testament, New York, 1884.

Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Canticles, Lamentations, Obadiah, and Jonah. To the contents of several of these, moreover, there are such specific allusions as to lead us to suppose that they were not only well known, but held in equal honor with the rest.¹¹ The only reason, probably, why they are not more particularly mentioned is, that it did not fall in with any writer's special line of thought to refer to them. There is certainly no evidence that a single book of our present list was intentionally omitted by New Testament writers, or that they were in the least influenced in their actions by the discussions that, to a limited extent, were going on among the rabbins of their time respecting the ethical character of some of them. This is sufficiently shown by the fact that, while in the very small number of books they do not quote there are some that never came into such discussion, there are others, like Ecclesiastes,¹² cited, it would appear, in both Gospel and Epistles that were most hotly discussed. Their whole treatment of the matter, in short, is thoroughly informal. No attempt is ever made by them to catalogue the sacred writings. It is extremely doubtful whether they even knew that they had failed to notice some of them, to say nothing of colluding to do so. If, accordingly, it can be proved from other sources that certain books not cited by them actually formed a part of the collection of their day, the most of which they do cite, then their simple failure informally to cite these few cannot fairly be used to prove that they rejected them from the list, or that they considered the canon of the Old Testament to be in a state of flux.

But this is not all. There is positive evidence from another quarter that the New Testament writers looked

¹¹ This is at least true of Judges (cf. Heb. xi. 32 f.); of Ruth, (the genealogy, Matt. i.); of Jonah (Matt. xii. 39-41); of Chronicles (Luke xi. 51), and possibly of Esther (? Rev. xi. 10); while Lamentations may well have been included in the many clear references to Jeremiah.

¹² Cf. Rom. iii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 29.

upon their collection of Scriptures as a unique, and for the time complete, collection. It is well known that the Bible of their time was no longer the Hebrew. More than two centuries before, Hebrew had altogether ceased to be vernacular in Palestine. Nor was their Bible Aramaic, although a few scholars have recently risked such an hypothesis.¹³ There were, it is true, oral targums in Aramaic current in these times. They were employed in the synagogues and were absolutely necessary to an intelligent popular participation in the synagogue services. But there is no evidence that any targum existed in a written form, before that of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, which arose about the year A. D. 150. The written Bible of the first century and for a considerable period before and after was in the Greek language: that is, it was the translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. By far the largest portion of the six hundred quotations made from the ancient Scriptures by New Testament writers were made directly, *verbatim et literatim*, from this Alexandrian version. It had been in circulation already two centuries when Christ was born, and had come to be held in high esteem by the Jews of Palestine, and of the wide dispersion, as, from the first, it had been so esteemed by those of the Egyptian metropolis. To such an extent was it employed by the early Christians in their debates with their Jewish neighbors, that the latter became singularly suspicious of it, as though, somehow, it had been unfairly won over to the Christian side of the argument. They accordingly had a new version made, the slavishly literal one of Aquila, to take its place (cir. A. D. 150). Now, in connection with this Septuagint version of the Old Testament which, practically, was the Bible of Christ, his apostles, and the early church generally, there were to be found, not simply the so-called

¹³ Zunz, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden*, pp. 5-10, 330 f.: Böhl, *Forschungen nach einer Volksbibel*, etc. (Wien, 1873); *Altest. Citate im N. Test.* (Wien, 1878).

canonical books but, side by side with them, quite a number of others which we term "apocryphal." They were religious works by Jewish authors of repute, some of them, like *Ecclesiasticus*, the *Book of Wisdom*, and the *First Book of Maccabees*, of a very high order of merit, approaching in some parts so near to the biblical in their general style and spirit, that many persons, even in our own day, fail to discover much difference between them. These works, as we have no reason to doubt, were uniformly bound up with the canonical, circulated just as freely as they, were well known in their contents, and must have been held in no little regard by the ordinary Bible reader and expounder of that day. Judging from extant manuscripts and editions of the Septuagint, there was nothing whatever to distinguish, externally, a canonical book from a so-called uncanonical in this Bible of the first century. First Esdras, it is likely, preceded, as it now does, the Book of Ezra, and the Wisdom of Solomon and of Sirach followed, in a natural order, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. This being the case, it is to be noted as a remarkable fact, a fact, moreover, which is admitted to be such on all sides, that not one of these dozen or more books, or parts of books, is ever quoted by our Lord or his disciples, or the least notice taken of them as standard Jewish literature.

It is admitted that in the Epistle of Jude there is a statement concerning Enoch and a certain prophecy of his which harmonizes with what is said of him in the *pseudepigraphical* Book of Enoch, although, for aught we know, both Jude and the Book of Enoch—which do not differ so very much from one another in age—may have been alike dependent for it on a common oral tradition.¹⁴ And in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the thought has such a coloring as to lead some to suppose that the thrilling history of the Maccabæan heroes is floating vaguely before

¹⁴ See my *Apocrypha*, p. 665 f.; and cf. Gardiner, *The Old and New Testaments*, etc. (New York, 1885) p. 276 ff.

the mind of the writer. But it must not be overlooked that the Book of Enoch did not at that time, or ever afterward, form any part of the *apocryphal* books of the Old Testament, properly speaking, much less of the Alexandrian version of the Old Testament. Nor will any one assert that the reference to the Maccabees, if there be one, is any thing more than an obscure recognition of their sufferings and heroism, which, as matters of actual occurrence, no one would be supposed to call in question, then or since. There is no history of the distant past better accredited than that of the First Book of Maccabees. Still, of this history, there is no actual citation; whether there be any allusion to it, is extremely questionable.

Moreover, this peculiar attitude of the New Testament writers toward their Greek Bible, and their nice discrimination among the books of which it was made up, attracts our attention the more from the fact that it was far enough from being that of the apostolic and early church fathers. No sooner do we pass beyond the bounds of the New Testament than we discover, at once, a wide-spread recognition and citation of the apocryphal books, and that without much reference to their relative value. Not only so, but we find men of the highest standing in the church applying to them terms which otherwise were especially reserved for what they, *par excellence*, styled "Holy Scriptures."

How is this attitude of the New Testament writers toward the apocryphal literature of their times, so conspicuous by contrast with even the Christian writers who immediately followed them, to be accounted for? Certainly on no theory of expurgation. From the men to whom we should look for such expurgation, had it taken place, that is, the early church fathers, we might expect something very different, if they had ventured to give any coloring of their own to the New Testament books.

There is but one fair conclusion, consequently, to be drawn from this noteworthy fact: the New Testament

writers, one and all, regarded those books of the Old Testament which we call canonical as being in a different category from the apocryphal with which they were associated. To what degree and in what precise sense they so regarded them, it is not necessary for our purpose to determine. The acknowledged fact is sufficient. They freely quoted the one class, treated them, as we have said, as the very warp which made with their golden woof one fabric; while from the other, in a mere literary respect scarcely less attractive, list they selected, they accepted, nothing. It is clear, although as a mere technical term it could have had no force for them, that the idea of a canon, at least historically considered, must have been already operative.

There existed for them an evident line of demarcation separating into two classes their national literature. They had no disposition to transgress even here the ancient statute which forbade the removal of landmarks which they of old time had set in their inheritance (Deut. xix. 14). We say nothing now of the bearing of this circumstance on questions of inspiration, of genuineness, or of authenticity. But on the question of the contents of the so-called canon of the Old Testament, what it included, when it was concluded, it has a most important bearing. It must never be overlooked that the broad current of history which floated down such masses of literary stuff, good and bad, from pre-christian times parted at this point, and through the clear-cut channel of the New Testament books, a channel as definitely marked as that of its own Jordan, there set alone this single and unique stream from Palestine.

A second witness whom we would cite for the fact of the completion of the Old Testament collection before the first century, A. D., is Philo, a contemporary of Christ and his apostles. He was born of priestly ancestry at Alexandria, in Egypt, about B. C. 20, and made that city ever afterward his home. He was a representative character among his countrymen there, brother of their presi-

dent, and himself honored by them with important trusts. He was also a voluminous author and his works were mostly on biblical topics. In fact, his one great aim in life seems to have been to discover and emphasize any points of harmony there might be between the Scriptures and Greek philosophy. Unfortunately, in his case, it was an unfair effort to make the Scriptures what they were not, in order to accommodate them to current opinions and theories, and, like all such compromises in human history, proved a signal failure. On the Greeks, whom his reasoning was especially intended to affect, its influence was inconsiderable; on thinking Jews who adopted his views, it was disastrous. If, for example, the Mosaic law could, with Philo, be *understood and interpreted* allegorically, why could it not, with the luxurious Greeks, be *kept* allegorically?

Philo nowhere refers to the Old Testament collection as a whole, a work heretofore ascribed to him, in which this is done, having been recently shown, with great probability, to be from another and a considerably later pen.¹⁵ His citations of individual books, however, and his other less direct references to them, under titles and in terms showing that he regarded them as forming a distinct and peculiarly sacred class, are most abundant. The only books not so referred to are claimed to be Ezekiel, Daniel, and the five so-called megilloth (*i. e.*, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther).¹⁶ By comparing this list with those found to be apparently unrecognized

¹⁵ De Vita Contemplativa. Cf. Lucius, Die Therapeuten, etc., Strassb., 1880.

¹⁶ We are still largely dependent for a searching examination of Philo's works, with respect to this matter, on Hornemann (Observationes ad Illustrationem Doctrinae de Canone V. T. ex Philone. Copenhagen, 1775), a full abstract of whose work appears in Eichhorn's *Einleitung in d. A. T. i.* Hornemann, however, overlooks the fact that Philo (ii. 525, ed. Mangey) cited Chronicles (see Herzfeld, *Geschichte d. Volkes Is.*, iii. p. 96) in its Greek translation. Philo cites but two of the Minor Prophets, but the twelve were obviously regarded as one book (see *Ecclus.* xlix. 10).

in the informal references of the New Testament writers, we find that only two of them, Lamentations and Esther, are the same, and the former of these may, in both instances, well have been tacitly included in the frequent citations of Jeremiah's prophecy.

It is to be borne in mind, moreover, that Philo's citations, like those of the New Testament, are quite incidental and made solely with the purpose of gaining support from them for his own positions. He never sets out to give a complete list, or even a general description, of the books of which the Old Testament was in his day composed. Consequently, we have no right to say that his simple failure to adduce a book is proof that he was not acquainted with it, or rejected it from the list, especially if it can be shown that such book did actually form a part of this unique collection in his day. Siegfried, of whom Professor Strack says that he is the scholar most thoroughly acquainted with Philo ("bedeutendste Philo-kenner") in our day, declares that the canon of this Alexandrian writer was essentially the same as our own.¹¹

But this is only the positive side of the argument. Philo, as we have said, was an Alexandrian Jew. His Bible, like that of the New Testament writers, was, in form, the Septuagint. It was from this that he uniformly quoted. It has been seriously questioned whether he knew Hebrew at all. He was indubitably well acquainted with the apocryphal literature which formed no inconsiderable part of the current Alexandrian roll of the Scriptures. He occasionally appropriates single thoughts and expressions from them. But quote them, allegorize them as he was accustomed to allegorize the Scriptures proper, or attempt to maintain his peculiar views by them, he never does. One would suppose that no books were better suited to his purpose than were, for example, Ecclesiasticus, or the Book of Wisdom. Some have even

¹¹ See s. v. "Kanon d. Alten Testaments" in Herzog's Encyk., 2te Aufl. Cf. Siegfried, Philo, als Ausleger d. A. T., Halle, 1875. p 161.

maintained, though without finding wide acceptance for the theory, that Philo himself wrote the Book of Wisdom. Still, so far from ascribing to these books the least authority, he does not even pay them the honor which he accords to a Plato, Solon, Hippocrates, and other Greek authors, from whom he often borrows long passages." To the other Scriptures, however, he habitually applied such terms as the "Oracles," the "Sacred Writings," the "Prophetic Word." Their writers he styled "Prophets," "Hierophants."

Such epithets, whatever else they may indicate as to Philo's estimate of the authority of the Scriptures, do certainly show, what is more important for our present purpose, that he regarded them as a peculiarly distinct class, an exclusive, an already old, and a highly revered library of works to which, by universal consent, appeal might be taken in reasoning on the topics of which they treated. This collection was with him, as with the writers of the New Testament, nothing new, but a sacred inheritance from the past. To both alike, if we have any right to draw inferences from their uniform conduct, it was so fixed in its limits, and so far recognized as an authoritative standard, that these things had long since ceased to be *with them*, matters of discussion. They were the "Holy Scriptures" to the Jews not only of Palestine, but of the wide dispersion: the highest ethical and religious resource and the unquestioned arbiter in debate.

Our third witness to the Jewish canon in the first century is Flavius Josephus. He was born of wealthy and distinguished parentage in Jerusalem, A. D. 37 or 38. While still a youth he joined the sect of the Pharisees and in his twenty-sixth year was sent by his countrymen on an embassy to Rome. Two years later being drawn, contrary to his better judgment, into a revolt against the Romans, and appointed governor of Galilee, he was made prisoner by Vespasian. A little later, however, on the

¹⁸ So Hornemann quoted by Eichhorn as above.

latter's becoming Emperor, he was set at liberty and, taking up his residence at Rome, he devoted himself to literary pursuits under the especial patronage of the Flavian dynasty.

The language in which Josephus wrote was Greek, though not exclusively so. His work on the Jewish Wars first appeared in Aramaic and was afterwards translated into Greek by its author. The Jewish Antiquities, a history of the Jewish people down to the year A. D. 66, was, for the most part, culled from the Old Testament together with the additions of the Septuagint, and appeared about A. D. 94. Six years later appeared his Autobiography in which, with considerable haste and heat, he sought to justify, against the accusations of one Justus, of Tiberias, his attitude towards the Romans in the rebellion of 66. A fourth work, and, most probably, the only other authentic production of Josephus, was his apology for Judaism, published under the title, *Against Apion*. According to so competent an authority as Emil Schürer,¹⁹ it is a "careful and conscientious work:" and it is here that we find by far the most important testimony of this century to the Jewish canon. It is all the more valuable that it is spontaneously given, and, as we have reason to believe, unaffected by any peculiar coloring of dogma or passion.

His object is to set forth the trustworthiness of the Hebrew history, as documentarily supported, in contrast with the works of Greek authors. He affirms that the Hebrews had, what the Greeks had not, public records, and that they had taken special pains to make these records correct. The Greeks, on the other hand, were behind even the Egyptians and Babylonians in this respect. "We must yield," he says (i. 5), "as it regards language and eloquence of composition; but we shall give them no such preference as it respects the truthfulness of ancient history, and, least of all, as to that part which concerns the affairs of our several countries." He states,

¹⁹ Herzog's Encyk. 2te Aufl. s. v. "Josephus."

what we all know to be true, that among the Hebrews, as also among the Babylonians and Phoenicians, the matter of recording and perpetuating a correct history had been committed to the prophets and priests of the nation, by whom, he declares, such history had been written "with the utmost accuracy." Then occurs, two sections later (i. 8), the famous passage, which, although so familiar, is worthy of being quoted in full.

"For we have not myriads of books among us, contradicting and out of harmony with one another, but twenty-two books only, containing the records of all past times and justly confided in as divine. . . . Moreover, of these, five are from Moses, containing his laws together with what had been handed down concerning the origin of mankind as far as to his own decease. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years. But as it concerns the time from Moses' decease to the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets who followed Moses wrote what took place in their times in thirteen books; while the four remaining books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. True it is, that since the time of Artaxerxes, our history has been recorded in detail, but it has not been thought worthy of a like confidence with the former, because there has been no exact succession of prophets. Now, it is evident from what we do, how trustworthy we hold our own writings. For albeit so many ages have already passed, no man has ventured to either add anything to them, take anything from them, or to make any change in them. It has been implanted rather in all Jews, as soon as ever they are born, both to regard them as teachings of God, and to abide by them, yea, if need be, gladly to die in their behalf."

Now, one of the first things that occurs to us as we read this testimony is, that it fixes, by positive statement, that which, from the attitude of New Testament writers, and of Philo, we had all along been led to infer,

that the Old Testament collection at this time was not only a peculiarly unique and carefully limited one, but that it had been brought to a formal conclusion a long time previous to the period we have been considering. A second thing that is especially noticeable is that Josephus is engaged in no dispute concerning the canon. What he has to say upon it is introduced as a matter of secondary importance in a plain narrative of events which he assumes to be well-known and universally admitted among his compatriots in all lands. So little concerned is he lest his statement on this point should be called in question, that he does not even pause to *name* the canonical books, but thinks it sufficient to indicate them by their number. Is it possible for us to determine what those books were? By far the larger proportion of them, certainly, from his own use of them as authorities in other works of his which, as we have said, are almost exclusively based on these very Scriptures. Along with Moses, he especially names Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Nahum, Haggai, Zechariah as prophets, says Joshua was kept amongst the temple archives: puts the Book of Kings on a level in authority with the first of Moses, and calls the psalms as well "psalms of God" as "psalms of David." The only books of our present list, in short, which he fails to indicate specifically, either by name or contents, are these four: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and Job. Two of them, it will be noticed, are books that are directly ascribed in the Bible to Solomon. Josephus knows and speaks of Solomon as a writer, though without indicating what he wrote.²⁰

On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that the only two books of our present canon to which no reference is made in either Philo or the New Testament, Lamentations and Esther, are expressly adduced by Josephus (*Antiq.* x. 5, 1), the latter even marking for him the *terminus ad quem* of the sacred literature. The testimony of

²⁰ Cf. Hornemann or Eichhorn as cited above.

the two preceding witnesses is thus nicely supplemented and made formally complete. Mark that these witnesses are conspicuously independent of one another. They represent as many great religious and social classes among the Jews of the first century. Their testimony is evidently incidental and perfectly free. Collusion among them was impossible, yet they one and all hold the same attitude towards the ancient Scriptures. They all evidently look upon the collection as one long before finished, two of them directly stating that this was the case, and declaring that nothing had been since added to it. Among them they make use in the way of *incidental* quotation only, and with no polemic aim, as far as the canon is concerned, of every book of our present list without exception.

Are we at liberty then to question that they mean just those books, and that those, and those only, made up what they understood by the "Holy Scriptures," the "Oracles" of God, which are "justly confided in as divine"? The great mass of biblical critics and scholars, old and new, and of all shades of theological belief promptly answer—No! Eichhorn, Bertholdt, Oehler, Dillmann, and Strack are one, in this respect, with Ewald, DeWette, Bleek, Herzfeld, Bloch, and a host of others almost equally well known as representatives of biblical learning in modern times. To so large an extent is this the case that such exceptions as those of Oeder, Corrodi, and Semler, among the earlier, and Haneberg, Graetz, and some others¹ among the later

¹ It was scarcely to be expected that we should find Dr. Briggs giving his influence in favor of so extraordinary and poorly supported a theory (Bib. Study, p. 129). But Graetz seems to him "to come nearer the mark in excluding the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes from the list of Josephus." On the following page Dr. Briggs cites Zunz also as saying: "Neither Philo nor Josephus impart to us an authentic list of the sacred writings." From the connection in Dr. Briggs' book in which this citation is made, the impression is carried that Zunz did not regard the lists of Philo and Josephus as *trustworthy*. Nothing is further, however, from the thought of this "eminent Jewish scholar." He meant to say, simply, that neither of these men attempted an exact *list* of the sacred writings (Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden, p. 18 f.), which is certainly quite true and serves

critics, may be looked upon as comparatively solitary. Let us look, by way of example, at the objections of Graetz and how he supports them. He has been overwhelmingly refuted, among others by Bloch²² and Dr. C. H. H. Wright.²³

Josephus reckons the number of Old Testament books at twenty-two, that is, as most suppose, counting the Pentateuch (5), Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Minor Prophets, Daniel, Ezra, Chronicles, Esther, Job (the 13 historical), Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles (4), Ruth, it is inferred, was reckoned as one with Judges, Lamentations with Jeremiah, and Nehemiah with Ezra. These combinations are common, as in Origen's catalogue, and others,²⁴ the last one reaching even to the twelfth century of our era. Ruth and Lamentations, however, in other lists, as that of the Talmud, which followed doubtless the oldest tradition, were put among the Hagiography as separate books, so making the whole number twenty-four instead of twenty-two as Josephus does. As Strack and others have shown, the peculiar *order* of the Old Testament books as given by Josephus was probably due, first, to the influence of the Septuagint version; but, secondly, and, perhaps, chiefly, judging from the context in which the passage stands, to his desire to emphasize and establish the high character of

to enhance, rather than to diminish, the value of their incidental references. When Dr. Briggs admits, a little further on: "We doubt not that the canon of the Palestinian Jews received its latest addition, by common consent, not later than the time of Judas Maccabeus, and no books of later composition were added afterward," he practically admits what he seems to dispute just before. It is that canon to which we understand that Philo, the New Testament writers, and Josephus refer, since it was, unquestionably to them, a *closed* collection and which had the no less clear, though indirect, support of the Talmud and the most important witnesses of sub-apostolic times.

²² Studien zur Geschichte d. Sammlung d. althebräischen Literatur (Erste Aufl. Leipz., 1875), pp. 21-36.

²³ The Book of Koheleth (Lond. 1883), pp. 458-462.

²⁴ Cf. Jerome's Prologus Galeatus in Libros Regum.

the *historical* writings of the Jews. He classifies the prophets among the historians, as it was, and is, usual with the Jews, *vice versa*, to regard their historians as prophets.

Graetz, now,²⁵ disputes the position that Josephus reckoned Job among the historical books. His trouble, however, is evidently less with Job than with Ecclesiastes and Canticles, which, according to him, were not fully admitted to the canon at all, until the second synod of Jamnia, A. D. 118. Hence, he denies that Josephus in his list of twenty-two books included these two. Hence, also, he is obliged to say, to find some ground for his position, that Josephus could not have reckoned Job among the historical books, but among the Hagiography. Ruth he regarded as history and this book, as well as Lamentations, was separately counted, thus making out the full number he gives, without the two disputed and later canonized.

It is not strange that Graetz stands almost entirely isolated in this hypothesis. He has no more reason for excluding Job from Josephus' list of historical books than some others which he admits to that list, and even less reason. He has no reason, except his own theory, for classing it among the books said by Josephus to contain "hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life." It does not answer the description. Either the Book of Job, which is quoted by Philo as one of the sacred collection, forms one of the thirteen historical books enumerated by Josephus, or else it found no place in his list at all. Both Ecclesiastes and Canticles do answer to his description of what was contained in the third division of the canon; Job, most emphatically, does not. But, further, the enumeration which Josephus makes of the Old Testament books, is, as we have said, no idiosyncrasy of his. It was also that of Origen,²⁶ who, moreover, gives

²⁵ Kohéleth (Leipz. 1871), Anhang i.

²⁶ Eusebius, Hist. Ec. vi. 25.

the Hebrew name of each book, and makes out his twenty-two by uniting Ruth to Judges, and Lamentations to Jeremiah, as we have supposed Josephus did. It was the enumeration and the precise combination of Jerome, who, be it observed, avowedly followed, in so doing, the authority of the Septuagint. As far as the position of Ruth, next to Judges, and Lamentations next to Jeremiah, is concerned, it has, too, the support of the catalogue of Melito, Bishop of Sardis, who, during his residence in Palestine, had the best of opportunities for learning the contents of the Palestinian canon. There need be, consequently, no hesitation in accepting what is acknowledged to be a very general consensus of biblical scholars, that Josephus, in his twenty-two books, had in mind the books which now make up the Old Testament of our Protestant Bibles."

" Bloch, (l. c., p. 29 f.) has sufficiently shown the untenableness of the theory of the Roman Catholic bishop, Dr. Haneberg, who maintains that Chronicles, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah formed no part of the canon of Josephus, as Müller (*Belehrungen vom Kanon d. A. T.* (Leipz., 1774, p. 12) refuted the same hypothesis when advanced by Oeder, (*Halle, 1771, Freye Untersuchungen, etc.*) a hundred years ago. It has been said by some, however, that Josephus in this famous passage expresses merely his own private opinion on the subject of the Old Testament books. But this is just what Josephus disclaims doing. He testifies to what was generally credited or discredited by his countrymen, had become, in fact, a sort of second nature with them. Samuel Davidson (*The Canon of the Bible, Lond., 1877, p. 57*), while admitting (p. 34) that the list of Josephus agrees with our present canon and that Josephus is *not* giving his own private opinions merely, still seeks to depreciate the importance of his testimony by saying that it is "probably expressed in exaggerated terms and hardly tallies with his use of Third Esdras in preference to the canonical Ezra." And still further, he goes on to say that Josephus' "authority is small;" that "one who believed that Esther was the youngest book in the canon, who looked upon Ecclesiastes as Solomon's [this seems to be unfairly charged against Josephus] and Daniel as an exile production, cannot be trusted implicitly." We are far from trusting Josephus implicitly. His false view of the time when Esther was composed appears to have been shared by the Septuagint. It is true that he largely used our first book of Esdras in his *Antiquities* and as I have elsewhere shown (in my *Apocrypha, p. 69 f.*), probably, because it was written in much smoother Greek. This did not hinder him, however, from sometimes correcting its errors or occasionally leaving it for the more accu-

But what of certain disputed books, concerning which so much is heard in some quarters," and what of an Alexandrian canon in distinction from the Palestinian? It is admitted that there was a controversy in the Jewish rabbinical schools of the first century concerning three books, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and, to a limited extent, Proverbs. But the character and the limits of it have been greatly exaggerated and even misrepresented. No one thoroughly acquainted with the subject will be disposed to call in question the statement of Wright, who says:²⁸ "The matter in dispute was, not whether these books should be received for the first time into the canon of Scripture, but whether, having been admitted into the canon at an earlier date, they had properly been so admitted, and whether there was not sufficient proof from internal evidence to justify their exclusion from the canon."

Or the even more explicit statement of Strack:²⁹ "Objections to the canon of the twenty-four holy books [that is, of the Talmud list, the twenty-two of Josephus] were never made in sober earnest in ancient Judaism. Nor were books once adopted honestly called in question, or any effort whatever made subsequently to adopt a book not already adopted." In all their discussions, "the question was not concerning the reception of new books, nor the enlargement of the canon, nor even concerning the exclusion of a book on the ground of any *critical* question at all; but simply because some individual scholar gave reasons, derived from their contents, for the exclusion of one book or another, already long before

rate narrative of the canonical book. Besides, none of these things affect, in the least, the competence of Josephus to testify on the current opinions and practices of his countrymen, especially when supported by other unimpeachable witnesses of his own and subsequent times.

²⁸ Principally from Samuel Davidson and Graetz, whose vagaries have been accorded too much honor by Prof. Briggs, *Biblical Study*, p. 130.

²⁹ *Koheleth*, p. 471.

³⁰ Herzog's *Encyk. s. v. Kanon*.

adopted, but without any practical result following from it. On many accounts these discussions make the impression that objections were raised for the sole purpose of having them refuted; in other words, to exercise themselves, on the one hand, in hair-splitting; on the other, to show that the authority of the holy books was absolutely secure. It follows from no passage that there was ever any uncertainty in the religious consciousness of the people concerning the canonicity of a single one of the twenty-four books."

Quite too much, accordingly, has been made of these intellectual conflicts of the finical rabbis. They justify no such conclusions as have been based upon them. If such discussions served to show that there was no generally recognized canon of Old Testament books at that time, it would equally show that there never has been one; since there never has been a time when such discussions were not rife concerning individual books of the Bible, especially some of those impugned in the rabbinical schools of the first century.

But did the Alexandrian Jews recognize the same books as canonical which were so regarded by their Palestinian brethren? It has been disputed by some, but on grounds which can be shown to be wholly insufficient. Davidson, for example, says: "The Alexandrian canon differed from the Palestinian." The Greek translation commonly called the Septuagint contains some later productions which the Palestinian Jews did not adopt, not only from their aversion to Greek literature generally, but also the recent origin of the books, perhaps also their want of prophetic sanction. The closing line of the third part³¹ in the Alexandrian canon was more or less fluctuating—capable of admitting recent writings under the garb of old names and histories, or embracing religious subjects; while the

³¹ As I have noted above, the apocryphal books, as far as we can judge from extant manuscripts, were scattered among the other books of the Old Testament in the LXX.

Palestinian collection was pretty well determined, and all but finally settled. The judgment of the Alexandrians was freer than that of their brethren in the mother country. They had even separated in a measure from the latter, by erecting a temple at Leontopolis; and their enlargement of the canon was another step of divergence." "

But this, as far as the canon is concerned, is pure hypothesis, for which not a shadow of valid reason is given, except one, proving on closer examination to be only a shadow. The Alexandrian Jews did compose and publish quite a number of semi-religious books which they unhesitatingly joined to their Greek translation of the Bible and put in circulation with it; but that they ever regarded either the translation, or the books associated with it, as canonical in any proper sense, is wholly incapable of proof. It has been often asserted, and by constant repetition has gained a currency and *quasi* authority that are wholly undeserved. Such a thing as a distinctively Alexandrian canon of the Holy Scriptures never, in fact, existed. The first condition of such a canon is that it be of the nature of a close and strictly guarded collection, which this Greek library, of which the Septuagint translation of the canonical books was the nucleus, never was. It was not only open, but open, as far as we can see, to almost every thing that offered itself, from the Book of Wisdom to the Book of Tobit, Susanna, and the extravagant Additions to Esther and Daniel. That these productions were held in no little esteem is undeniable; that they were held in equal esteem with the Hebrew books of the Old Testament collection cannot be sustained by a single witness; on the contrary, can be disproved as well by several direct witnesses as by many other important considerations.

There is, for instance, the vacillation of manuscripts of the LXX. There is no one form in which they appear, either as it respects the order of books, or their number. The Alexandrine manuscript, so called, not only contains

³² Canon of the Bible, p. 63 f.

a number of books not found in the Vatican, as the four books of Maccabees and the Prayer of Manasses; but the books that are common to both are found in a different sequence. This fact, cited by Frankel," Strack," and others as evidence that the Alexandrian Jews did not look upon the Septuagint version as canonical, seems, in itself, well-nigh decisive. How could they have looked upon a list of books as canonical for which they neither offered, nor, as far we know, attempted to offer, any fixed recension? We might almost as well apply that term to a modern Sunday-school library. Divergence is one thing; independence is quite another. It is true that the Jews of Egypt built a temple of their own at Leontopolis, where, until the time of Vespasian, they continued to maintain services, had their own priests, Levites, and landed property. Their council of seventy elders was only second in influence to that of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem; but it was second, and was always acknowledged to be so. From Jerusalem the regularly recurring national festivals were heralded with astronomical exactness. The high priest at Jerusalem ever remained, for the entire dispersion, the sovereign representative of Jewish national dignity and religion. The Sanhedrin at Jerusalem was the last court of appeal from supposed unjust decisions in the synagogues, whether on the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Tiber."

Then, notice the practice of prominent Alexandrians — and of all Alexandrians so far as we have information — when it came to the point of the comparative value of the Palestinian collection and their version with its additions. Philo, as we have seen, while well acquainted with the apocryphal literature, and while holding, as his works show, peculiar, and not strictly orthodox, views on the subject of inspiration, depends solely on the books of the

²³ *Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta*, p. 88.

²⁴ As above, Herzog, s. v. *Kanon d. A. T.*

²⁵ Cf. my *Apocrypha*, pp., 34, 40, 50.

Palestinian canon for incidental proof-texts and to them alone applies such epithets as the "Oracles," the "Prophetic Word." The author of the Second Book of Esdras, himself doubtless an Alexandrian Jew, in the legend of Ezra, which he dresses up in Greek for the delectation of his countrymen of that metropolis, carefully discriminates between the twenty-four books of the Hebrew canon and the apocryphal ones accompanying them. The one class was to be published openly, that the worthy and unworthy alike might read. The others were to be given out with judgment, and only to such as had wisdom to use them aright."

Josephus, it would seem, made use almost entirely of the Septuagint, and, when he chose so to do, of some of the apocryphal books. But no modern writer on the canon could have distinguished between them more intelligently than he has done.

It is especially in place to cite here the translator of the Wisdom of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus. He writes from Egypt and for Egyptian Jews. In making an apology in his preface for the imperfections of his work, a translation of a Hebrew book into the Greek language, which book in its Greek form was to take a prominent position in the current Bible, he incidentally expresses his comparative estimate of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures. "Let me entreat you now," he says, "to read it [his translation] with favor and attention, and to be indulgent, in that where, perchance, with all the care bestowed on the translation, we may seem to have failed in some words. For what was originally uttered in Hebrew has not the same force when translated into another tongue. And not only this book, but the law also, and the prophecies, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, uttered in the original." It is clear that such language as this is not in harmony with the hypothesis that the Jews of

²⁶ See my *Apocrypha*, p. 664. Cf. *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, c. xxviii. on the seventy apocryphal books.

Alexandria put their translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, as it respects canonical rank and authority, on the same plane as the Scriptures themselves. This is admitted by Kuenen, who remarks on this passage: "Thus, either the whole of the Old Testament which we now possess, or, at any rate, by far the greater part of it, was then translated, but, as it also follows from the words just quoted, as yet had no manner of authority, and was *tested by the original* by any one who had the power and the inclination to do so." "

Here, then, we may conclude our investigations as it relates to this, by far the most important, period of biblical history. If any fact with respect to the Scripture may be looked upon as established, this is one: that to the great body of Jews of the first century of our era, learned and unlearned, of Palestine and of the wide dispersion, there existed a highly revered canon of Old Testament books. This collection had been received and was treasured as a *sacred inheritance* from the distant past. It was composed of exactly the books, and no others, that we now find within it. The fluctuations alleged to have existed in this respect are more phantasmagorial than real; are fluctuations in the theories of our critics far more than in the historical attitude of ancient Judaism toward their own Scriptures. We have, accordingly, yet to discover when this ancient canon was not, how it arose and came to take on its present form.

⁷¹ The Religion of Israel (Lond., 1875), iii. 173, 174.