

LESSON 5

CANONIZATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

The process of canonization of the Old Testament is almost as obscure as the origin of the literature. By the time of Jesus, the Jews recognized certain books as divinely inspired and authoritative. These books were referred to as the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The purpose of this lesson is to investigate the process by which the biblical writings came to be recognized officially as the authoritative Word of God. Why were particular writings selected as sacred and others rejected?

The Meaning of Canon

The word canon came from the Greek which borrowed it from the Semitic language. The root meaning of the word is "reed." Reeds or canes were used as measuring rods; thus canon came to mean "rule of faith," "normative writings," or "the authoritative Word of God." In A.D. 350, the "kanon of the Church" was applied by Athanasius to the Bible, referring to the books which the Church officially recognized to be the standard of conduct and faith. By officially acknowledging some books as containing divine inspiration and authority, the Church recognized her authoritative guide in matters of faith and practice.

Canonization means "to be recognized officially as an authoritative guide or rule in matters of faith and practice."

The Relation of Canonicity and Biblical Authority

There is a distinction between the canonicity of a book of the Bible and its authority. A book must contain divine authority because of its divine inspiration before it is qualified for canonization. A book did not receive authority because the Church decided to include it on the sacred list, but the Church recognized those books which gave evidence of containing divine authority because of their divine inspiration.

The Relation of Canonicity, Revelation, and Inspiration

The process of the origin and development of the Old Testament Canon involved three steps:

1. Revelation—the disclosure of knowledge of God and His will to man;
2. Inspiration—the recording under the leadership of the Holy Spirit the truth which God made known in revelation;
3. Canonization—the recognition of those writings which contain divine revelation and which are divinely inspired.

The problem we face is how the books of Holy Scripture came to obtain recognition as a sacred and authoritative Canon.

H. E. Ryle, in *The Canon of the Old Testament*, states there are three stages in the process of canonization: (1) the oral proclamation and formation of the content of the Old Testament books; (2) the redaction of these books to their present form; and (3) the selection of these books for positions in the national Canon of Holy Scripture. The first two stages are directly related to the

The word canon originally referred to

_____, which were used as _____

_____. The early Christian meaning of the word canon was "_____,"

"_____, " or "_____."

(reeds, measuring rods, rule of faith, normative writings, the authoritative Word of God)

Canonization means to be _____

officially as an authoritative _____

or rule in matters of _____ and

_____.

(recognized, guide, faith, practice)

Give the three steps involved in the Old

Testament canonization. _____,

_____, _____.

(revelation, inspiration, canonization)

REDACTION means "putting into literary form."

Give the key words in the three stages of the process of canonization.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

(oral proclamation and formation, redaction, selection for Canon)

inspiration of Scripture and indirectly related to canonization. The third is directly related to canonization and indirectly related to inspiration. The official recognition of authoritative writings cannot be strictly separated from the divine inspiration of those books. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit to guide men in recognizing the inspired writings.

The Bible is authoritative for the Church in matters of faith and order because it contains divine revelation. The authority is actually God who has spoken and who speaks through His Son and through the words of Scripture. Canonization is the recognition of those sacred writings through which God authoritatively speaks.

The Recognition of Divinely Inspired Books

Practical and official recognition

The problem in following the history of canonization of the Old Testament arises at the point of determining what type of recognition constitutes canonization. The Canon might be defined as "a definite body of sacred literature which has been officially recognized as divinely inspired and authoritative." What constitutes the official body which determines the books to be included? The divine authority of most Old Testament books was recognized by the people long before any official body made a decision regarding the extent of the Canon. Do the attitudes towards the practical use of certain books acknowledged as sacred literature with divine authority constitute canonicity? Scholars are not agreed on this question.

The Palestinian Canon

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, Jewish scholars moved to Jamnia for the study and teaching of the Scriptures. A council of Jewish leaders in A.D. 90 (later called the Council of Jamnia) discussed the question of which books to include in the Old Testament Canon. After some disagreement, the Council officially recognized the 24 books of the Hebrew Old Testament (our 39 books in the English Bible). These books had already been brought together by a process of selection based on popular use and value. They were recognized as containing authority not possessed by other literature. Did the previous use and practical selection of inspired books or the decision of the Council constitute canonization? Some scholars have questioned whether the Council had the authority to make such a decision. The Council may have been made up of scholars who did not officially represent Judaism. Nevertheless, the books recognized at the Council have continued to constitute the Hebrew Bible. The Protestant Church, in the sixteenth century, was greatly influenced by the decision of the Council to recognize the same books as canonical.

The Alexandrian Canon

A large group of Greek-speaking Jews lived in and around Alexandria in Egypt. They too had a temple and produced religious literature. Their selection of religious writings included Greek as well as Hebrew works. They regarded as sacred all the books of the Hebrew Bible, but they also included additional books which are known today as the *Apocrypha*. The Protestant and Catholic Old Testaments today are the results of the different choices of the books in the Hebrew Bible of Palestine and the books of the Greek Bible of Alexandria. It is not certain whether the books in the Greek Bible were ever officially recognized as the Canon. Nevertheless, the attitude towards and practical use of certain books, including the Apocrypha, set them above other religious writings.

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Write the definition for Canon.

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(See text for definition.)

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The Council of Jamnia officially recognized the _____ books of the Hebrew Old Testament as the Palestinian Canon.

(24)

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The Alexandrian Canon contains additional books written in _____.

(Greek)

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Divine guidance

Theologians recognize that the process of canonization was not only an official human act of the Church but also the providential work of the Holy Spirit. Historians may conclude the Canon was not given by God but was devised by man. Theologians contend that canonization with regard to certain books is the result of recognizing the authentic voice of religious authority speaking to man concerning the will of God.

Human activity

The divine guidance in the selection of the books does not rule out the human activity. Those books which were most frequently used in the spiritual community and which made a contribution to the spiritual lives of the people were selected. For the books to be spiritually beneficial, they must contain the authentic voice of authority. It has already been mentioned that authority is based on divine revelation and inspiration. Over a period of several generations, certain books of the sacred literature of Israel came to be esteemed by the people as containing the authoritative Word of God. Not until about A.D. 90 were certain books officially recognized as authoritative. Religious literature which was rejected has come to be known as *apocryphal* and *pseudepigraphal* books.

It was not an easy task to determine which books should be included in the Canon. As late as the latter part of the second century A.D., a Christian bishop, Melito of Sardis, was puzzled concerning the exact number and order of the Old Testament books, and he undertook a journey to the East to determine accurately what the truth of the matter was. The Jews themselves did not agree completely with the collection finally decided upon.

Biblical implications

Although we do not know the full details of how the books of the Old Testament were selected, a few Old Testament Scriptures give some information.

1. According to Exodus 20:1–24:8, certain law codes were placed under religious sanction. These laws were kept in the Ark of the Covenant and were especially venerated (revered). The Ark itself was the symbol of Yahweh's presence among His people. The laws had come from Him to guide His people in the covenant relationship. It was the custom for official documents to be placed in the sanctuary (cf. Deut. 31:9ff.; Josh. 24:25–26; 1 Sam. 10:25).
2. During the reign of Josiah, about 621 B.C., the High Priest Hilkiah discovered a book of law in the sanctuary during its repair (cf. 2 Kings 22:3ff.). After Shaphan had read the book to the king, Josiah "rent his clothes" and commanded Hilkiah and his associates to beseech the Lord for mercy because the king and the people had not been obeying the words of the book. Although 700 years were to pass before an official canon was recognized, the actions of Josiah and the people reveal that they recognized divine authority expressed in the sacred book.
3. Upon his return from Babylon in 458 B.C., Ezra brought the Law to the people in Jerusalem. The Law contained the wisdom of God (cf. Ezra 7:25) and was to be followed in organizing the official leaders and judges of the people. The Law contained authority over the lives of men to the extent that those who broke it would be punished by death or banishment. The reverence of the people for the Law is revealed by their standing when Ezra read from the book (Neh. 8:5ff.). The Law was the guide for the spiritual and civil life of the community.

Religious literature which was rejected for the Canon has come to be known as

_____ and _____
books.
(*apocryphal, pseudepigraphal*)

It (was, was not) an easy task to determine which books should be included in the Canon.

(*was not*)

Give a Scripture reference for each of the Old Testament indications of the recognition of the divine authority of the Law.

1. _____ *implies the Law was immediately recognized as authoritative.*
2. _____ *reveals a recognition of the authority of the Law in the time of Josiah.*
3. _____ and _____ *show a reverence for the authority of the Law.*

(*Exod. 20:1–24:8, 2 Kings 22:3ff., Ezra 7:25 and Neh. 8:5ff.*)

Determining Factors in Canonization

The work of the Holy Spirit was the criterion by which a book was determined to be divinely inspired. The Talmud, in *Seder Olam Rabba 30*, states, "Up to this point (the time of Alexander the Great) the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit; from this time onward incline thine ear and listen to the things of the wise." This statement implies two things: (1) the prophets were able to speak the Word of the Lord because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. According to another section of the Talmud, the Holy Spirit was removed from the world during the fourth century B.C.; therefore, no additional divinely inspired word could be uttered and recorded. (2) Additional inspired utterances and writings were not needed since the people had the Law to guide them in their relationship to God. No more books would be eligible for the Canon after the third century B.C.

Only books written in the Hebrew language were qualified for the Palestinian Canon. The books of Daniel and Ezra, however, contain some passages in Aramaic. The Alexandrian Canon was open to some books written only in Greek, for example, 1 Esdras, Tobit, The Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, and 2 Maccabees.

According to a statement in the Talmud (*Baba Bathra 14b*), Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, and the prophets were credited with having written the compositions attributed to them. Moses was also credited with Job, Samuel with Judges and Ruth, Jeremiah with Kings and Lamentations, and Ezra with Chronicles. David and Solomon were joined to the unbroken line of prophets from Moses to Malachi as authors of the sacred books. Esther alone was not attributed to a prophetic author. It is not surprising that prophetic authorship was a determining factor in selecting the books of the Canon since the primary qualification of a prophet was to be possessed by the Holy Spirit in order that God could speak His Word through him.

The Divisions of the Old Testament Canon

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into three parts: Law (Torah), the Prophets, and the Writings. These divisions appear to represent stages in the process of canonization. It is undetermined whether these expressions refer chronologically to the sequence in which the books came into being or to their position in the Canon.

The Alexandrian Greek Bible (Septuagint) arranged the books differently and included the books of the Apocrypha. The four divisions of the Greek Bible are followed by our English Bibles. They are arranged according to subject matter: Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy. Our primary concern in the study of canonization relates to the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible and the question of the books of the Apocrypha.

The Law

It is uncertain when the Law was formally or officially recognized as a document containing divine authority. Perhaps some of the laws were recognized to contain divine authority from the time they were given. The instructions given by priests, the words of advice given in rules of conduct, the judgements from a judge or lawgiver, and the sayings of the prophets were recognized very early as coming from the Lord and carrying divine authority. However, there is no definite statement before the Exile to indicate that a *collection* of sacred writings had been formally recognized or declared canonical.

The Torah marked the beginning of the collection of material which constituted expression of the divine will for the Hebrew people. Even though books in the Prophets and Writings

The work of the _____ was
the criterion by which a book was determined
to be _____ inspired.

(Holy Spirit, divinely)

Only books written in the _____
language were qualified for the _____
Canon.

(Hebrew, Palestinian)

A determining factor in selecting the books
of the Canon was _____ authorship
since the primary qualification of a
_____ was to be possessed by the
_____ in order that God
could speak His Word through him.

(prophetic, prophet, Holy Spirit)

Write the three divisions of the Hebrew Old
Testament. _____,
_____.

(Law, Prophets, Writings)

Write the four divisions of the Greek Old
Testament. _____,
_____.

(Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy)

The English Old Testament divisions are the
same as the (Hebrew, Greek) Old Testament.

(Greek)

were recognized as divinely inspired, none equalled the authority of the Law in the life of the nation. R. K. Harrison points out the Law was so deeply rooted in the antiquity and sanctity of the Mosaic tradition that the term Torah was applied not only to the first books of the developing Canon, but also to the entire body of Hebrew Scriptures at a later period (cf. Esdras 19:20; John 10:34).¹ An indication of the reverence of the people towards the Law is found in Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8. Ezra approved of the statement of King Artaxerxes of Persia who referred to the Law as "the wisdom of thy God that is in thine hand . . ." (Ezra 7:25). The king commanded that anyone breaking this law or the Law of God would be executed. The Law was recognized as a collection of material containing divine authority.

The Prophets

Like the Law, the sayings of the prophets were recognized very early as coming from the Lord and carrying divine authority. The words of the true prophets were Spirit-directed and were recognized when spoken as "the Word of the Lord." However, the books of the Prophets were not collected and officially recognized as canonical until several centuries later. References to a collection of the Prophets came after the return of Ezra.

The second division of the Canon was further subdivided into two parts. The *Former Prophets* consisted of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The *Latter Prophets* were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. The importance of the Former Prophets lies in their description of the provisions of the covenant agreement between God and His people. Some people recognized the importance of the Latter Prophets at the time the words were spoken. Others came to recognize the authority of words which the prophets spoke when the predictions of disaster were fulfilled in the Exile. The prophets themselves had no question but that they spoke "the Word of the Lord." Many of their utterances were placed in written form during the lifetime of the prophets.

The Writings

The Writings of the Hebrew Old Testament may be further divided into the *Books of Poetry* (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), the *Five Rolls* (Megilloth—the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, and Ecclesiastes); and the *Books of History* (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles). The Writings are diverse in character, and they originated from several authors; however, the entire group may have been referred to on occasions as "the Psalms" (see Luke 24:44). Josephus referred to four books of the group as "Hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life" (*Against Apion II. 8*).

Like the books in the two previous sections, these books were recognized as containing the Word of God long before they were collected as a body of material and officially recognized as part of the Canon. The canonization of the Writings was later than that of the Prophets. Whether the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Esther should be included or not continued to be debated during and after the time of Jesus (cf. *Yad. 2:5*).

The Apocrypha

A number of religious writings which were not recognized as canonical by the scholars at Jamnia but were revered and used by other groups are referred to as the *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha* (false writing). Apocrypha means "secret" or "hidden." Perhaps the idea was that they should be made

¹ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 265.

The superior position of the Law is indicated by the fact that the term _____ was frequently applied to the entire body of Hebrew Scriptures.

(Torah)

List the Former Prophets.

(Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings)

List the Latter Prophets.

(Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve)

Give the 3 divisions of the Writings in the Hebrew Old Testament.

(Books of Poetry, Five Rolls, Books of History)

Apocrypha means _____.

Pseudepigrapha means _____.

(secret or hidden, false writing)

available only to the initiated, the spiritually mature person. They were to be excluded from public use.

Apocryphal literature was widely read, even in Palestine. The New Testament authors were acquainted apparently with all the books of the Apocrypha as well as many books of the Pseudepigrapha. The books of the Apocrypha were so popular among the Greek and Latin-speaking people that they were attached to the Old Testament Canon. Jerome favoured the Canon adopted by the Palestinian Jews and distinguished between the books contained in it and the Apocrypha. However, he translated the books of the Apocrypha into Latin and attached them to the Hebrew Canon. The books were used throughout the Middle Ages by the Latin Church, and often no distinction was made between the Canon and the attached apocryphal books. At the Council of Trent in 1546, the Roman Catholic Church officially declared the canonical status of the apocryphal books and referred to them as "deutero-canonical." All the books found in the Latin translation (Vulgate) of Jerome were declared canonical.

Luther had denied the infallibility of the Pope and certain doctrines of the Catholic Church which were based on the Apocrypha. He challenged the doctrine of purgatory by denying the right of allowing 2 Maccabees 12:46 in the Canon. He argued that the apocryphal books were not in the Hebrew Canon. He attached the books to the end of the German Bible in 1534, but he gave to them a lower status. Other Protestants have followed the decision of the Jewish Council at Jamnia, the distinction made by Jerome, and the position of Martin Luther in rejecting the apocryphal books as canonical.

Historical Evidences of the Process of Canonization

Conservative scholars point out:

- Canonization is based on the divine authority contained in a book.
- Canonicity is determined by God who inspired the writings.
- God also inspires men to recognize the canonical books.

It is true that a book should be recognized as canonical only if it contains the authoritative Word of God. It is also true that the Holy Spirit guided men in recognizing which books were inspired. Canonization is the human recognition under the leadership of the Holy Spirit of a definite collection of books as containing divine authority. The purpose of this section is to explore the earliest historical evidences available concerning the widespread recognition of certain books as canonical.

The Samaritan Pentateuch

During the religious reforms under Ezra and the rebuilding of the walls under the leadership of Nehemiah, about 450 B.C., the separation of the Jews from foreigners was required. Since the Samaritans had intermarried with foreign people, the Jews ceased associating with them (cf. Neh. 6,13). This action forced the Samaritans to establish their own place of worship. Religious leadership for the new Samaritan community probably was given by Eliashib, who was high priest and son-in-law of Sanballat. He was forced to leave Jerusalem because of his marriage to a foreigner (cf. Neh. 13:28). According to Josephus, a Samaritan temple existed at Mount Gerizim in 332 B.C. The Samaritan Bible consists only of the five books of Law. Many scholars have concluded that the Samaritans provided themselves with a text of

The _____ church, at the Council of _____ in _____, officially
date
declared the canonical status of the _____ books.

(Roman Catholic, Trent, 1546, apocryphal)

Three influences on Protestants with regard to acceptance of the Old Testament Canon and the rejection of the apocryphal books as canonical are:

_____, _____,
_____.

(Jewish Council at Jamnia, Jerome, Martin Luther)

Canonization is the human _____ under the leadership of the _____ of a definite collection of books as containing divine _____.

(recognition, Holy Spirit, authority)

The Jews refused to permit Samaritans to worship in the Temple of Jerusalem because of their foreign _____. The Samaritans established their own place of worship at _____ and adopted the P _____ as their Bible.

(marriages, Mount Gerizim, Pentateuch)

the Law after their breach with the Jews. The fact that they adopted only the Pentateuch infers that it was the only section of the Old Testament which was officially recognized as authoritative at the time of the breach.

The similarities of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Jewish books of Law indicate that the Pentateuch was not only recognized officially as authoritative but it had already approached a fixed form. This selection of only the Pentateuch indicates the high regard held for the books of Law. The fact the Prophets were not accepted by the Samaritans may indicate that the second division was not as highly esteemed or had not been recognized as an official collection of inspired writings. Caution should be exercised, however, with regard to assumptions based on the limitations of the Samaritan Canon to five books.

The Septuagint

A large Jewish community had developed in Egypt, especially around Alexandria. The Alexandrian Jews spoke Greek and needed a Greek version of their religious writings. The Law appears to have been translated by 250 B.C. The other books were translated into Greek by 150 B.C. The Hellenistic Bible contains all the writings that are in our Hebrew Bible plus additional material. We have actual fragments of it from as early as the middle of the second century B.C.

The similarity of the Septuagint to the Hebrew Bible indicates that no great changes were made in the content after the translation was made into Greek. By the time of the completion of the Greek Bible, the Canon had taken rather definite form.

Josephus recorded an interesting tradition concerning the origin of the Greek Bible (cf. *Antiquities XII. ii. 1-14*). He described how the Egyptian king Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) desired to have the books of the Jewish Law for his library. His librarian Demetrius suggested that the Jewish books be translated into Greek. Demetrius implied they had already been translated, but the work was careless and inadequate. The king requested the High Priest, Eleazar, to send 72 translators (six from each tribe) from Jerusalem. Upon the arrival of the translators, they were honoured at banquets on seven successive days. They retired to the island of Pharos to translate the Jewish Scriptures. The task was accomplished in 72 days, and the Jewish population and the king were invited to approve the translation. After the king heard the reading of the Law, he was astonished at the deep meaning and wisdom of the one who wrote it. He asked Demetrius why the Law had not been discussed previously by the poets and the historians. Demetrius answered "that no one durst be so bold as to touch upon the description of these laws, because they were divine and venerable, and because some that had attempted it were afflicted by God."

The story reveals the Jewish reverence for the Scriptures. Although the historicity of the story has been questioned, there is no reason to doubt that the Pentateuch was translated into Greek about 250 B.C.

Ecclesiasticus

Jesus, the son of Sirach, wrote (190 B.C.) a book of wisdom (*Ecclesiasticus*) which was translated into Greek by his grandson about 132 B.C. The grandson stated in the prologue that his grandfather had industriously studied "the law, the prophets, and the other writings of our ancestors." The statement indicates the three sections of the Old Testament had become definite collections; however, the collections were probably not fixed nor closed. "The law" and "the prophets" appear to refer to definite bodies of literature; whereas, "the other books" implies a less

The Samaritan Pentateuch indicates the Law was probably canonized when the _____ and _____ divided, about _____ B.C.

(Jews, Samaritans, 450)

The Law was translated into Greek in _____, about _____ B.C.

The Greek translation is called the _____ (Seventy).

(Alexandria, 250, Septuagint)

The prologue of Ecclesiasticus indicates the Old Testament was divided into _____ sections, the _____ and the _____ appear to have been definite bodies of _____, and the _____ had long been regarded as Scripture.

(three, Law, Prophets, literature, Law)

definite group. The Writings were held in high esteem, but the number of books to be included probably had not been settled. The Book of Daniel was not included with the Prophets. No new book succeeded in getting into the second section of the Old Testament Canon after 200 B.C.

The author of Ecclesiasticus made a survey of the national heroes, and it is significant that he mentioned them in a particular order. In chapters 44 and 45, he followed the Pentateuch. Ecclesiasticus 46:1-13 refers to Joshua and Judges and 46:13 through 47:11 to Samuel. Ecclesiasticus 47:12 through 48:25 is based on Kings and Chronicles, and 49:7-16 makes reference to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve, and Ezra-Nehemiah. There is no mention of Daniel or Esther, but there are references to the praises of David (47:8), songs, proverbs, and parables of Solomon (47:17), and prophecies of Isaiah (48:22ff.).

The grandson who translated the original Hebrew into Greek explained that his grandfather had written the book to help the outsiders to come to a love and understanding of "the law, the prophets, and the other books (writings) of our fathers." The statement reveals several things concerning the early Hebrew Bible: (1) it was divided into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; (2) the Law and the Prophets appear to refer to definite bodies of literature; whereas "the other books" implies a less definite group; (3) the Law, the five books of Moses, had long been regarded as Scripture; (4) the Writings or "other books" were held in high esteem, perhaps as Scripture, but the number accepted had not been settled.

The Talmudic Tractate Baba Bathra

According to Harrison, the material in the Tractate may be of second century B.C. origin.² It states:

The order of the prophets is Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, the Twelve (Minor Prophets). That of the Kethubhim (Writings) is Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, the roll of Esther, Ezra, Chronicles.

It continues by stating the authorship of the various books of the Old Testament. These have already been noted in previous lessons. Although the statement does not include the Pentateuch prior to the Former Prophets, in the next paragraph the writer mentions that Moses wrote his books.

The statement is interesting because of the order of the books of the Old Testament. There is a definite division into three sections, with Daniel included with the Writings instead of the Prophets. Chronicles is placed last. This is significant when compared with Matthew 23:35, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." Abel is mentioned in the first book of the Old Testament, and Zacharias is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20, the last book in Hebrew Scripture. The statement of Jesus in Matthew 23:35 refers to the entire Hebrew Old Testament in which Chronicles was placed last.

Second Maccabees

Second Maccabees is dated about 100 B.C. The writer regarded the Law of Moses to be fundamental to the whole social and religious life of his people. He stated that Judas encouraged

<p><i>The author of Ecclesiasticus (190 B.C.) refers to all the books of the Old Testament except _____ and _____</i></p> <p><i>(Daniel, Esther)</i></p>
<p><i>The Tractate, a Jewish Talmudic work, places Daniel with the _____ instead of the Prophets.</i></p> <p><i>(Writings)</i></p>
<p><i>The prologue of the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.) reveals that the three collections of the Old Testament books were the _____, the _____, and the _____.</i></p> <p><i>(Law, Prophets, other books)</i></p>
<p><i>According to Matthew 23:35, _____ was probably the last book of the Old Testament.</i></p> <p><i>(Chronicles)</i></p>

² Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 271.

his men "from the law and the prophets" (15:9). In 2:13-15, he said: "The same things were recorded also in the writings and memoirs about Nehemiah, how, in forming a library, he gathered together the books about the kings and the prophets, and those of David, and epistles of kings about gifts." The statement reflects a reminiscence of an early stage in the formation of a canon dating back to the time of Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C. "The kings and prophets" is a reference to the Former and Latter Prophets. "Those of David" refers to the Psalms. The fact Nehemiah's aim was to found a library inferred a collection which would preserve ancient national literature.

Second Esdras (4 Ezra)

This book is dated about A.D. 90. It contains an interesting legend about the destruction of the Law by fire and the restoration of the books under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Ezra reminded God that the world would remain in darkness because the books of the Law were destroyed with Jerusalem. He requested that the Holy Spirit descend to guide him in restoring the books. He was instructed to secure five scribes and a large quantity of writing materials. The next day the voice offered him a cup full of something like water, "but its colour was like fire" (14:39). After drinking it, his heart poured forth understanding in wisdom. He was inspired to dictate continuously for 40 days to the five scribes, producing 94 books. Twenty-four of the books (the Hebrew Old Testament or canonical books) were to be made public. The remaining 70 (the apocalyptic books) were to be kept secret and made accessible only to the wise.

Josephus

Josephus stated (about A.D. 100) that the Jews had only 22 books which contained the records of all the past and were justly believed to be divine. He mentioned five books of Moses which contained his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. Thirteen contained history from the death of Moses until the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia. The remaining four books contained hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life (*Against Apton I. 8*). Perhaps Josephus derived the number 22 by combining Lamentations with Jeremiah and Ruth with Judges.

The New Testament

The New Testament contains abundant evidence that the books of the Old Testament were regarded as sacred. They were called Holy Writings and regarded as God-given. There is no question about their authority (cf. Matt. 21:42; Rom. 11:2). The first two sections are referred to in Matthew 5:17 and Luke 16:16. The three divisions are referred to in Luke 24:44. On occasions, the Law seems to stand for the entire Old Testament.

Disputed Books

In the Mishnah (*Yad. 3:5*), questions are raised concerning the inclusion of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The Rabbis stated, "sacred books defile the hands." The meaning of the phrase is uncertain, but it implies a recognition of special sanctity for some writings and not for others. The special sanctity of books which "defile the hands" was a mark of canonicity. Some Rabbis argued that the Song of Songs rendered the hands unclean and others argued that Ecclesiastes rendered the hands unclean. At the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90, the Rabbis were agreed that both books are sacred Scripture.

Second Maccabees implies that a canon was formed under _____ in the fifth century.

(Nehemiah)

According to 2 Esdras, Ezra produced 94

books: _____ were books of the Old

Testament Canon and _____ were apocalyptic books.

(24, 70)

Josephus said the Jews had only _____

books: _____ books of Moses, _____ books of history, and _____ books containing hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.

(22, 5, 13, 4)

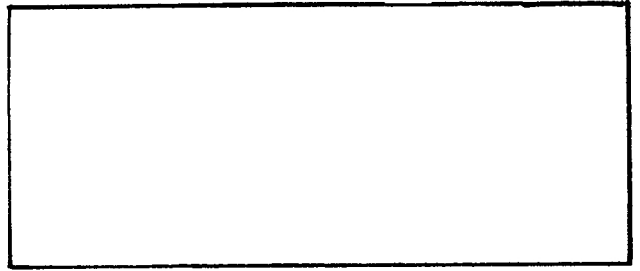
The New Testament contains abundant evidence that the books of the _____

were regarded as sacred: they were called _____

_____ and were regarded as _____-given.

(Old Testament, Holy Writings, God)

Harrison states that by the time of Christ the Old Testament existed as a complete collection.³ The fact that the Qumran community cited most of the Old Testament books, including those later classified in the third section of the Canon, supports his view. Controversy did not occur concerning the books of the Apocrypha, for everyone was agreed they were non-canonical.⁴ The attachment of the apocryphal books to the Greek and Latin Bibles and their recognition as canonical by the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent have already been discussed.



³ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 286

Home Study Exercises

Basic assignment (to be answered by Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. "Canon" originally referred to _____ which were used as _____
_____. In Christian usage, it came to mean _____
or _____.
2. (True or false?) The recognition of a book as canonical by the Church established its authority. _____
3. Define canonization. _____

4. How does the Palestinian Canon differ from the Alexandrian Canon? _____

5. (True or false?) It was no easy task for church leaders to determine which books should be included in the Canon. _____
6. List three Old Testament indications of the recognition of the divine authority of the Law.
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
7. List three factors which contributed to the determination of canonicity. _____

8. How does the arrangement and division of our English Old Testament differ from the Greek and Hebrew Old Testaments? _____

9. When and by whom were the apocryphal books officially recognized as canonical? _____

10. Name three influences on Protestants with regard to determining the Old Testament Canon. _____

11. What does the Samaritan Pentateuch indicate concerning the time of the canonization of the Law? _____

12. When and where was the Pentateuch translated into Greek? _____

13. List three facts about the canonization of the Old Testament which are revealed in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (132 B.C.).
(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
14. According to Matthew 23:35, which was probably the last book of the Old Testament?

15. How do Josephus and 2 Esdras differ concerning the Old Testament Canon? _____

Supplementary assignment (for Levels 2 and 3)

1. Discuss the relationship of revelation, inspiration, and canonization.
2. Write a summary of the probable process of canonization of the Old Testament.

Advanced assignment (for Level 3). Do one of the following activities.

1. Read pages 127–135 and 148–161 in Geisler and Nix and answer the following questions:
 - (1) What distinction do Geisler and Nix make in determination and discovery of canonicity? Do you consider their distinction valid? Why?
 - (2) What was the significance of prophetic authorship in determining the books of the Old Testament Canon?
2. Read and outline the article, “The Canon of the Old Testament,” by Arthur Jeffery in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 1, or an article on the same subject in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*.

Seminar Discussion

1. Why is the history of the canonization of the Old Testament filled with uncertainties?
2. When was the question of the Old Testament Canon settled?
3. How does our English Old Testament relate to the Hebrew (Palestinian) Canon and to the Alexandrian (Greek) Canon?