

# The Rule of Faith and Life

by

Robert Dick Wilson, Ph.D., D.D.

[4 February 1856 – 11 October 1930]

This paper by Dr. Wilson first appeared  
in the *Princeton Theological Review*,  
Volume 26, Number 3 (July 1928)  
on pages 423 – 450.

This electronic edition has been prepared by  
the staff of the [PCA Historical Center](#),  
February 17, 2003 - All Rights Reserved.

Original pagination has been maintained, beginning with page 423.  
Line breaks and other formatting features of the original  
have been preserved or closely approximated.

The [Robert Dick Wilson Papers](#) are housed at  
the PCA Historical Center and include many of  
his publications, printer's galley proofs, notebooks  
and correspondence for the years 1884 through 1930.

PCA Historical Center  
12330 Conway Road  
St. Louis, MO 63141  
(314) 469-9077

## THE RULE OF FAITH AND LIFE

There is no use of discussing the subject of a divinely-given rule of faith and life with one who really believes that there is no God. It is doubtful, however, if there is anyone in a Christian country so unreasonable as not to believe in a Creator and Upholder of the universe. And to one who believes in a Creator, the questions inevitably come: Can I know Him? How can I know Him? How much about Him can I know? Why did He make the universe, including mankind and me—with all my longings after perfection and immortality and Him?

The great Apostle in the second chapter of First Corinthians rightly argues from the analogy of man that no one can know the things of God save the Spirit of God that is in Him. Again, he agrees with Isaiah that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.” The Old Testament claims to contain a series of revelations from God and the whole New Testament is full of statements declaring that the Old Testament contains a reliable record of revelations of God and that all the Scriptures were inspired by Him. The Lord asserts that the Scriptures cannot be broken and Christianity rests upon this belief. All the Churches and Creeds of Christendom are based upon the supposition that the Scriptures are true.

In the present article, I shall consider some of the objective, or evidential, grounds for concluding that this opinion of the Church *semper et ubique et ab omnibus* is correct and especially that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are reasonably to be considered as a part of the God-given Rule of Faith and Life.<sup>1</sup>

And first, let us look at the reasonableness of this belief to one who acknowledges that there is a God and that He

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Westminster Confession*, Chap. I.

alone can reveal His will to us as a rule, or canon, of faith and life. It seems to me that it is no more than what we, in the case of men, call commonsense for God to provide that any revelation that He might make to the human race for all time to come would be correctly written and preserved. Just as you may be sure that a royal proclamation of King George of England, or a presidential proclamation, will be correctly published and transmitted to the persons for whom it is designed; so you may be sure, that God, when speaking to and through the prophets for the instruction and benefit of the whole human race, would see to it that what He had to say was correctly recorded and transmitted to that race. Further, it would inevitably follow that these records would at some time be collected in proper form and that this collection would be handed down in a sufficiently correct condition to those for whom it was intended. It is a surprising fact of history that not merely the Jewish people but, with possibly one exception, all branches of the Christian Church always and everywhere, have agreed in accepting all the books of our Hebrew Bible as constituting a part at least of the inspired word of God. This gives me great confidence in undertaking my task of defending the position that the right books were selected and handed down. And most of all do I undertake my task with a feeling of joy that I may do something at least to remove the doubts of honest believers in the teaching of the New Testament, when confronted with the assertion, said to be the result of scientific investigation, that the Old Testament is not what Christ and the Apostles thought it to be.

In this article, I shall restrict myself to a statement of some of the direct evidence calculated to show that the indirect evidence alleged by many critics of the Old Testament to prove that the completion of the Canon was not made till about A.D. 90 is inadequate. The evidence to be given bears especially upon seven allegations.

#### THE SEVEN ALLEGATIONS

1. That the Samaritans accepted as canonical the Pentateuch alone.

2. That the term “Law” being used at times in the New Testament and in Jewish writings to denote the whole Old Testament and the phrase “Law and Prophets” at other times, shows that there was a time when the Law constituted all of the Canon and later when it consisted of the Law and the Prophets alone.<sup>2</sup>

3. That several books in the present Bible were not written until after the time of Ezra and even as late as Maccabean times.

4. That the canonicity of certain books was not finally decided among the Jews till the Council of Jamnia about A.D. 90.

5. That the synagogue lessons were taken exclusively from the Law and the Prophets because the canonicity of the other books was not acknowledged when these lessons were selected.

6. That there are indications in the order of the books in both the Prophets and the third part of the Canon tending to show that these divisions of the Old Testament were formed gradually.

7. That the “three-fold division of the Canon itself affords a clue to the mode of its formation.”<sup>3</sup>

#### DISCUSSION OF THE ALLEGATIONS

When and by whom the present divisions in the Old Testament Hebrew Bible were made, we do not know. We do know, however, that many of the books of the Old Testament were written centuries before their canonicity was generally acknowledged. The Church has always held that these books were canonical from the time that they were written and that their authority depends upon the fact that they were written by inspiration of God. They are a rule of faith and life for all men, whether these men accept them as such, or not. But, as to many of them, we are ignorant of their authors, the time when they were written, and the

---

<sup>2</sup> Cf. W.H. Green, *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon.* (1899), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-25.

time when they were accepted. We do not know what were the divisions in the earliest collections, but we do know that there must have been divisions; because the whole Old Testament could not have been written on one portable leather or papyrus volume nor on less than numerous tablets. Whether these divisions were consciously made or commonly received, we do not know; nor, what was the number or order of the different books in these divisions. We do know, however, that in our Hebrew Bible, we have the books that were acknowledged by the Jews of the time of Christ as canonical and that Christ and the Apostles recognized the same canon of Holy Scripture.

This whole matter of the order and divisions of the books of the Old Testament might be considered one of minor importance, were it not for the fact that many critics write as if they knew when these divisions were made and the content of them, and are using this presumed knowledge to cast suspicion upon the date and reliability of many of the books. I think, therefore, that it may guard the faith of believers, if I state the main evidence on the ground of which I am convinced that the critics are wrong in their view as to the formation of the Canon of the Old Testament.

In the first place, the Bible itself is not so devoid of information on this subject, as some would have us conclude. Long before the time of Moses, Adam and Noah and Abraham had received commandments and visions from God that were the rule of their faith and life, and were handed down for the guidance and observation of future generations. The code of the Covenant was accepted by the people at Sinai<sup>4</sup> and the whole law at Shittim<sup>5</sup> and re-adopted at Shechem.<sup>6</sup> The books of Joshua,<sup>7</sup> Judges,<sup>8</sup> Samuel,<sup>9</sup> Kings,<sup>10</sup> and

---

<sup>4</sup> Ex. xx-xxiv.

<sup>5</sup> Num. xxv. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Josh. xxiv. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Josh. xxiv. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Jud. ii. 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Passim*, Cf. Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> *Passim*, Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Nehemiah<sup>11</sup> show that the Law of Moses was accepted by the people of Israel and their only rule of faith and life. This rule was to be taught by fathers to their children<sup>12</sup> and by the priests to the people<sup>13</sup> and the king was expected to observe it.<sup>14</sup> The prophets, also, encouraged and emphasized the obligation and beneficent results of the keeping of the Law, and enforced their preaching by new messages of threatening and grace from the God of Abraham and Israel, and their messages were accepted by the faithful as the rule of their faith and life. Filled with the Spirit of Jehovah the poets and wise men of Israel wrote psalms and idylls and proverbs and philosophies of life in praise of God and of His law and in commendation of the godly life and condemnation of the wicked. What men were to believe concerning God and sin and death and judgment, and the necessity of a God-wrought redemption was repeatedly and in many ways set forth; so that the Scriptures of "divine origin and excellence" and "inspired of God" were "profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction which is in righteousness." "At sundry times and in divers manners, God spake unto the fathers by the prophets" and what He spake was for them and their descendants a rule of faith and practice and life. God's law given at Sinai was the Magna Carta of Israel's rights and obligations. The Prophets and the other writings that were added to this law must be in harmony with it and must serve the purpose of showing its most profitable use and the danger of its neglect.

Such works written by men inspired by the Spirit of God needed no council, nor senate, of great men to cause their acceptance. The people of God themselves recognized the works of the prophets and wise men as a part of the infallible rule of faith and life which God designed for them; and by selection and elimination the present Canon of the Old Testament was formed under the special guidance of

---

<sup>11</sup> Neh. viii.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. xviii. 19, Ex. xiii. 11, Deut. vi. 20, *et. al.*

<sup>13</sup> 2 Chron. xv. 3, xvii. 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> Deut. xvii. 18.

the prophets and the enlightening influence of the Spirit of God. The Jews have taught that a book to be canonical must be in harmony with the Law and have been written before the succession of the prophets ceased. This seems to be reasonable and, as far as anybody knows, it is agreeable to the evidence.

But notwithstanding the fact that the critics admit there is no direct, nor explicit, evidence that any of the books were written after 400 B.C., nor that the divisions of the Canon recognized in our Hebrew Bible as Law, Prophets and Hagiographa (or Writings), were constituted and closed one after the other by enactment of some body of men in authority, they all persist in affirming that the Law was the first officially declared to be canonical by Ezra and his contemporaries, the Prophetical Books, consisting of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets by some unknown authority about 200 B.C., and all the books at the council of Jamnia in A.D. 90. With all due deference to the learning of the leaders of these critics, it is my judgment that the *prima facie* evidence of the documents bearing upon the matter, as well as of the traditions of the Jews, is against the critics affirmations and conclusions in reference to the origin and formation of the Old Testament Canon.

And, first of all, this judgment of mine is based upon the consideration that, in order to accept the allegations of the radical critics as correct, we will have to conclude that almost every document of the Old and New Testaments rests upon false assumptions and is itself a witness in favor of what should have been known to be false. It is only as we conceive of the Bible as written by the inspiration of God that we can speak of it as one book with a single author. If we believe that it is such a book, it would be impious, or blasphemous, for us to think that it was full of errors and misstatements as the critics allege. If on the other hand, we look at the human authors, we will find at least forty different men involved in a general accusation of forgery and

falsehood, or of a blameworthy and inexcusable assumption of a knowledge and piety which they did not possess. Besides, the men who wrote most of the Old Testament were not the mean and unknown and uneducated men of their day and generation. One author alone of all the writers of the Old Testament disclaims any special preparation for his work, except the call of God. Only two authors of books of the New Testament can possibly be charged with a lack of literary education; yet those two who wrote three of the smallest letters had been specially trained by the Lord Himself. But all the other authors, both of the Old Testament and of the New, had the finest education which the times afforded. God chose the brightest and the best to do His work of providing a divine library for the world of men in all time and in every land. Egypt furnished the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, trained in all the wisdom of that land of letters and arts, to be the mediator of the old covenant and the founder of the Israelitish government and religion. Assyria bowed before the threats of Jonah. Daniel was taught the letters and science of the Babylonians; and Mordecai, Ezra and Nehemiah were prime ministers of the kings of Persia. Isaiah and Jeremiah directed the policy of Judah. And what shall one say of Samuel, the king-maker, and of David, the sweet singer of Israel, and of Solomon in all his glory? And how can we depreciate John, the beloved, and Paul, the matchless proclaimer of the mysteries of God? And where in all history and literature can we find a body of writers who make the burden of their themes the highest thoughts and noblest deeds that ever entered the mind of man? Men of such character and intellect and high sense of sin and reverence for God can be safely trusted not to have been false in the solemn and reverent statements which they have made about the will of God and the duty of man.

Besides, we are met by the astounding and inexplicable fact, that Israelites and Christians alike, scribes, rabbis, Origen, Jerome, Eusebius, Calvin, Melancthon, Heng-

stenberg and scores of other scholars as learned and brilliant as any whom the critics can muster, have recognized these records as true and trustworthy.

And there are five great items of evidence that are existing today and which nobody can deny or fail to recognize which support the trustworthiness of the Bible. The first is the Jews. The second is the Christian Church. The third is the Bible itself. The fourth is the appeal which the Bible still makes to the millions of believers. And the fifth is the effect which it has produced and still produces on the peoples who have accepted the Bible and have tried to obey its precepts, to fear its God, and to follow in the footsteps of the strong Son of God whom it portrays.

When, then, we come to investigate these literary products, let us admit at least that we are coming in contact with the thoughts and descriptions of men who have never been surpassed in the exaltation of their ideals and in their fitness for their task. And, if we are Christians, let us not hesitate to adopt as true to fact the accounts of miracles and the prediction of future events, inasmuch as the whole Christian system is itself a miracle from the creation to the constitution of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Of course, we freely admit that, if the critics could *prove* that the books of the Old Testament are unreliable, we would be obliged to revise our views of it. But, we do not know of any valid proofs the critics have to offer. In our judgment the religions outside the Bible present no literature that can rival that of the Old Testament merely as literature; and when it comes to religion, they fail to satisfy us on the main points of what God is and what He requires of man. Further, the history of all other nations outside of Israel shows us that they were without the knowledge of the true God, except as they had derived this knowledge from Israel itself. Besides, in our opinion, the history of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia, so far as it is known, corrobo-

rates and harmonizes with the facts recorded on the sacred pages of the Bible.

Again, in the second place, not merely is the theory of the critics out of harmony with the *prima facie* evidence of the Scriptures themselves and, also, entirely unsupported by comparative religion and history; it is contrary, also, to the facts as revealed in the language in which the books of the Old Testament are written. This I have sufficiently and, I think, conclusively shown in three articles already published in this REVIEW. In the first of these,<sup>15</sup> I endeavored to show that the use of Aramaisms in the Old Testament literature corresponds exactly to what we would have expected, if the records are true. In the second,<sup>16</sup> I answered the objections to the *prima facie* and traditional account of the origin and age of the Old Testament documents so far as these are affected by the alleged presence in some of them of so-called New Hebrew words. In the third,<sup>17</sup> I took under consideration all the Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian and other foreign words and found that their occurrence in the literature of the Old Testament is such as we would have found only if that literature is historically correct as to the time and place of its origin.

In the third place, my readers must notice, that the canonical authority of a book of the Bible does not depend upon the time when all the books were collected into one. God made the books canonical, not man. But, neither does the canonical authority of a book depend upon the time at which it was acknowledged as such by the church at large. The failure of the Jewish church until A.D. 90 to acknowledge finally that Ezekiel and Ecclesiastes were canonical would not prove that they had not been a part of the Canon until that time. Much less would it show that these books had not been written before the first century A.D.

---

<sup>15</sup> "Aramaisms in the Old Testament" (Vol. XXIII, pp. 234-266).

<sup>16</sup> "Evidence in Hebrew Diction for the Dates of Documents" (Vol. XXV, pp. 353-88).

<sup>17</sup> "Foreign Words in the Old Testament as an Evidence of Historicity" (Vol. XXVI, pp. 177-247).

In the fourth place, let me refer my readers to my *Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*<sup>18</sup> and my articles on the Psalms in this REVIEW<sup>19</sup> for an answer to the assertions of the critics that several books of the Old Testament were written after the time of Ezra.

In the fifth place, the term "law" was used in two senses: to denote the whole rule of faith and life, i.e., the whole Canon of the Old Testament; and, also, in a narrower sense of the books of Moses alone. This double sense and use of the word "law" is true, also, of the words "prophets" and "scriptures." Since, therefore, every one of these was employed at times to denote a part and at times to denote the whole of the Old Testament, it is hard to see how the mention of one of them alone should have anything to do with the question of their order when taken together; much less how it could show which was written first and which last.

In the sixth place, we must remember that books consisting of folios, as ours do, did not come into existence until the second century A.D. Before that time, they were written on rolls (hence the word "volume"), or tablets, and every man's collection might be arranged by himself into what divisions and order he saw fit. This will be apparent from the evidence given under the next section.

Lastly, in proof that the order and divisions of the books were never fixed by law and that the age and authorship did not necessarily determine the position of a book in the Canon, but that they were arranged to suit the convenience or the whim of the owners or users, I present the evidence found in the ancient documents bearing on the case.<sup>20</sup>

I am aware that the fact that the Law of Moses always is put first is likely to seem to be against this statement. But

---

<sup>18</sup> *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (The Sunday School Times Co., 1926)

<sup>19</sup> "The Headings of the Psalms" (Vol. XXIV, pp. 1-37, 353-395).

<sup>20</sup> Most of the evidence from Greek and Latin sources given below will be found in my article, "The Book of Daniel and the Canon," in this REVIEW, Vol. XIII, pp. 353-408. In that article the lists of Jerome were inadvertently omitted.

it is not, for the good and sufficient reason that frequency of sue as well as the fact that its content are the natural and preliminary requirement for a correct understanding of all the other literature and history render its right to the first place a necessity for any principle of division. We shall find, however, that the order of books in this division is not always the same.

The order of the books in the Pentateuch is not mentioned in the Old or New Testaments, though the references to events recorded in Exodus succeed those mentioned in Genesis in the various psalms where they occur as they do in the speech of Stephen and in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. No reference to any one of the five books by name and no order of the books occurs in any place until after the time of Christ.

It is a fact now dwelt upon by the critics that MS 124 of Kennicott gives the order of the books of the Law as Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers; and that the list of Melito and that of Leontius give the order as Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy. This is especially noteworthy in the case of Melito, who was bishop of Sardis in A.D. 180 and gives the earliest complete list of the books of the Old Testament that we possess; and further, because he expressly says that when he came East "he learned accurately the books of the Old Testament" and sent a list of the books to Onesimus who had desired to have an accurate statement of the ancient books, as regards their number and their order." Thus, it is evident, that the order of the books of the Pentateuch was not fixed, seeing that, counting the usual order, there are three orders known from ancient documents.

The fact that both the Hebrew and Aramaic recensions of the Samaritan Pentateuch have the common order is, we think, decidedly in favor of its being the most original. For, whether the Samaritans received their copy of the Pentateuch in the time of the Assyrians<sup>21</sup> (seventh century B.C.)

---

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs. xviii.

or in the time of Sanballat<sup>22</sup> (fifth century B.C.), it represents its condition centuries before any other source of information.

Ben Sira, in his great work *Ecclesiasticus*, speaks many times of the *Tora*, or Law; but he does not give the order of the books, nor even refer to a five-fold division of them. He cites his heroes of Israel in chronological order, without regard to where they are described. His order of citation is, for the books outside the Law, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, and Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job (whom he calls a prophet), the Twelve (without defining who they were)<sup>23</sup> and Nehemiah. It is to be noted that he makes the order of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Job and the XII.

In the prologue to the translation of *Ecclesiasticus* into Greek, made by Ben Sira's grandson about 130 B.C., the latter three times speaks of three divisions of the Old Testament, as follows: the first division he three times calls "the Law"; the second division, three times, "the Prophets"; and the third division, first, "the other books which follow them"; secondly, "the other ancestral books"; thirdly, "the rest of the books." It is to be noticed that he does not give the name of anyone of the books, nor the numbers in any division, nor, the order, nor the time nor place of composition, nor, the time when they had been acknowledged as part of the Canon, nor why.

The First Book of Maccabees represents Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees as making a speech in 169 B.C., in which he calls "to remembrance the acts which their father did in their time." In his speech (ii. 49-61) he mentions in order the deeds of Abraham, Joseph, Phinehas, Joshua, Caleb, David, Elijah, Ananias, Azarias, Misael and Daniel.

---

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Nehemiah (*passim*)

<sup>23</sup> At this time, Jonah may have been a part of the book of Kings; or Zechariah and Malachi may have been counted as one; or Daniel may have been included among the Twelve, as the use of the word *comforted* (סל םח, literally, to cause to dream, or "see dreams") might indicate.

It will be noted, that he follows the chronological order of the canonical books and that he seems to consider the accounts of the three children and of Daniel just as reliable as what is said about Abraham, David and Elias.

The Second Book of Maccabees, written in 124 B.C., tells of "the records and commentaries of Nehemiah and how, founding a library, he gathered together the books concerning the kings and the prophets and those of David and epistles of kings concerning votive offerings" (ii. 13). The Syriac translation says that he "collected and arranged in order these books." Unfortunately, the author of this book does not state what this order was nor what books were included in the various divisions. Counting the Law, which all of these divisions cite, this would make five divisions in all in the collection of Nehemiah: his books of "Kings" would include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, and probably Chronicles, Esther and Ezra. "David" would probably be the Book of Psalms. "Prophets" might embrace Job and Daniel, so that Solomon's three books alone would be omitted from this collection.

Philo of Alexandria (1st cty. A.D.) says in his *De Vita Contemplativa* that the Therapeutae received "the Law and the oracles uttered by the prophets and the hymns and other (writings) by which knowledge and piety are augmented and perfected." Here are three, or possibly four, divisions, but no indication of the books in each division, nor of the order in which they were arranged, nor of their number, or names. The phrase, "the other" (writings, or books, or poems) by which "knowledge and piety are augmented and perfected" probably were the same as are meant by Josephus when he says, after mentioning the Law and the thirteen books of the Prophets, that the remaining four books contain "hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life."

In Luke xxiv. 44 the Lord speaks of those things that were written concerning Him "in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms." There is no doubt from this statement that the Psalms might be put in a division

separate from the Law, or the Prophets. Nevertheless, there is no warrant elsewhere for supposing that "Psalms" was thought to be a suitable designation for a division containing Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles and Daniel. The word "Law" might include and often did include the prophets and all the other sacred literature, since it was all looked upon as canonical, that is, as a rule, or law, of faith and life. The word "Prophets" might be used for all the Old Testament and, as a matter of fact, was so used; for the Law was written by Moses, the greatest of the prophets, and it was a principle of the Jews that a book to be canonical had to have been composed by, or sanctioned by, a prophet. But, the word "Psalms" is never elsewhere used for the whole division; nor, anywhere else but here, as a possible heading of a third division. But, in view of the fact that Philo and Josephus use the synonym "Hymns" to denote the third division, let us wave this evidence aside as being hyper-critical. Remember, however, that neither Philo nor Josephus classed Esther, Ezra, Chronicles or Daniel under the heading "Hymns." Let us remember, also, that both Ben Sira expressly and Josephus by implication put Job among the Prophets and that the Lord speaks of "Daniel the prophet" and Josephus calls him the greatest of the prophets. The common-sense view, then, seems to be, that by "the Psalms" the Lord meant the same as we do when we use the designation. He probably singled them out from the "other writings," because they of all the books of the Old Testament say the most concerning Him and His kingdom. In conclusion, let it be noted that this passage in Luke, while recognizing three divisions, does not give the order nor the number of the books in anyone of the divisions; nor does it mention the name of any book, except the Psalms.

In Luke xxiv. 27, we read that the Lord, "beginning from Moses and out of all the Prophets expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." As "all the Scriptures" evidently means the whole Old Testament, it is most natural to suppose that "Law and Prophets" here denotes the

same; though it is fair to grant, that there is a possibility that other books in a third division may have been in the mind of the writer. However that may be, in John i. 45 we find Nathanael saying that Jesus of Nazareth was "he of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write," mentioning only two divisions. Neither number, order, nor names of books are given in these two passages.

In Mt. xxiv. 15 a prediction is cited by the Lord as having been "spoken of by Daniel the prophet." In Mt. xiii. 55, the 78th Psalm which in the heading is called "a maschil of Asaph" is said by Matthew to have been spoken by "a prophet." In Acts ii. 29-36 David, as author of the 110th Psalm, is by Peter called a "prophet." In Mt. iii. 3, Isaiah; in Mt. xii. 39, Jonah; in Acts ii. 16, Joel; and in Mt. xxvii. 9, Jeremiah are respectively called "the prophet." From these passages, we see that Jesus and the Apostles, Matthew and Peter, designate Daniel, David and Asaph as "prophets," and this in formal addresses where they must have known that their audiences agreed with them in their use of the designation. This should teach us all to be careful about accepting, without any direct evidence in its favor, the assertion of the critics that the Prophetical, or second, division of the Old Testament Canon was closed about 200 B.C. For we see that writers, whose works are in what later constituted for the Jews the Hagiographa, or third part of the Old Testament, were cited in the first century A.D. as prophets just in the same manner as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel and Jonah; and that the whole Old Testament was designated by Luke and by Nathaniel (on the authority of John) as the Law and the Prophets.

This caution appears to be more necessary, when we come to consider the testimony of Josephus, our other great witness from the first century A.D. Josephus says, "We have only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses. . . . but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who

reigned after Xerxes (i.e., from 466 to 424 B.C.), the prophets, who came after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes, very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them or take anything from them.”<sup>24</sup>

1. It will be seen that Josephus states expressly that the Jews of his time had only twenty-two books “justly believed to be divine.” Of these, five constituted the Law, or first division. The four in the third division are said to “contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.” These are probably the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. The thirteen books of the Prophets, or second division, would be Joshua, Judges (including Ruth), Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah (including Lamentations), Ezekiel, Daniel and the Twelve Minor Prophets (all in one volume).

2. He limits the time in which the authors of the Prophectical Books lived by the year 424 B.C. when Artaxerxes I died.

3. He further limits the time at which the last of the Old Testament books was written by the “exact succession of the prophets,” i.e., by the time of Malachi.

The greatest list from the second century A.D. is that of Melito, bishop of Sardis about A.D. 175 in his “catalogue of the books of the Old Testament which it is necessary to quote.” We have two copies of this catalogue, one preserved in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius;<sup>25</sup> the other, in the

---

<sup>24</sup> *Contra Apion*, I. 8.

<sup>25</sup> IV. 26.

*Syriac Fragments* of Cureton. The list of books given by Melito in the Greek recension is as follows: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, five books, Jesus Nave, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two of Chronicles, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon (which also is Wisdom), Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of Prophets; Isaiah, Jeremiah, the XII, Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras. The Syriac recension agrees with this, except that it speaks of "the book of Judges and Ruth," "the book of four Kings," "the book of two Chronicles."

Further, Melito, in his letter to Onesimus from which this list is taken, says in the former part of the letter: "Melito to his brother Onesimus, Greetings; since thou hast often, in thy zeal for the word, expressed a wish to have extracts made from the Law and Prophets concerning the Saviour and concerning our entire faith, and hast also desired to have an accurate statement of the ancient books, as regards their number and their order, I have endeavored to perform the task. . . . Accordingly, when I went East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Testament and sent them to thee as written below."

Notice, that this is the first attempt known to give the books of the Old Testament in their number and order. Notice, further, that Melito says that he endeavored "to make an accurate statement of the ancient books as regards their number and order." Again, he says that he went to the East, to the place where these things (recorded in the Old Testament books) were preached and done; and that he learned accurately the books of the Old Testament and sent them to Onesimus as given in the list.

Lastly, notice that this list contains at least four divisions: Law, Historical Books, Poetical Books and Prophetical Books, Esdras being counted as among the Prophets. If, however, we separate Esdras from the Prophets, it would be all alone in a fifth division. Job is placed among the Poetical books; Ruth and Chronicles, among the Historical; Daniel

and perhaps Esdras among the Prophetical. Numbers precedes Leviticus, and the order of the Prophets is Isaiah, Jeremiah, the XII, Daniel and Ezekiel.

The next witness we shall produce is Origen, who died in A.D. 254. He was the greatest critical scholar of the ancient Greek Church and certainly one of the most conversant with Hebrew. His list of the books in the Hebrew Bible is as follows: "Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut., Joshua, Judges and Ruth (in one), Kings a-d, Chronicles a-b, Esdras a-b, Book of Psalms, Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah with Lamentations and the Epistle in one, Daniel, Ezekiel, Job, Esther, and besides these is the Maccabees." Several features of this list are specifically important:

1. He certainly places Daniel among the Prophets and perhaps Job and Esther.

2. He seems to agree with Josephus in having four books of poetry, though he puts them into a different place.

3. He has no division corresponding to the Hagiographa, since he puts Ruth in with Judges and Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (1 & 2 Esdras) along with the Former Prophets, or Historical works.

4. He adds Lamentations to Jeremiah, instead of putting it among the Hagiographa, or Megilloth.

5. Job and Esther, also, seem to be classed as Prophets instead of being put among the Hagiographa.

6. In short, he recognizes neither the divisions, nor the order, of books as given in any known Jewish list, or manuscript; yet, it is hard to see, how he can have been ignorant of the divisions and order existent among the Hebrews of his time, especially if these had been fixed by the authority of the Jewish Church.

Next, let us look at the testimony of Jerome, the greatest scholar of the early Latin Church and the author of the Latin Vulgate. Jerome wrote these lists about A.D. 400; but we know that he prepared himself for his work of translating by going to Palestine and studying Hebrew with the

best Hebrew scholars of his time. He has left us two lists. The first, in the letter to Paulinus, is as follows: Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut., five books = Pentateuch; Job, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, David, Solomon, Esther, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah.

The second list, in the so-called *Prologus Galeatus*, is as follows: I. (Gen., Ex.), Lev., Num., Deut. = Books of Moses = *Thora*, Law; II. Joshua, Judges-Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the XII; III. Job, David, Solomon (Prov., Koheleth, Song), Daniel, Chronicles, Ezra, Esther—22 books; IV. Apocrypha: Wisdom of Solomon, Jesus ben Sirach, Judith, Tobias and Pastor, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees.

Regarding these two lists the following points are to be noted:

1. The first list has five divisions, to wit: The Law (5 books); 6 Historical Books; 16 Prophetical Books; 2 (or by counting 3 for Solomon, 4) Poetical Books; and lastly 3 or 4 Historical Books. In the second list there are four divisions counting the Apocrypha.

2. Neither list agrees with Baba Bathra.

3. In the first list Job heads the second division: in the Second list it heads the third.

4. In both lists Ruth follows Judges.

5. In the first list the order of Prophets is: The Twelve, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. In the second list it is: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve.

6. The fact that Daniel follows Ezekiel in the first list indicates that it is classed with the Prophets. Otherwise it must be regarded as standing by itself or grouped with the Poetical Books (David and Solomon). In the second list Daniel follows the Poetical Books.

7. Ecclesiastes and the Song are both ascribed to Solomon.

8. In both lists, Jerome evidently included Lamentations under Jeremiah.

The testimony of the four great Greek Uncials—Vaticanus (B), Alexandrinus (A), Sinaiticus (S) and Basiliano-Venetus (B-V)—of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. is noteworthy:

1. All place Joshua immediately after Deuteronomy.
2. Judges and Ruth follow, but the Basiliano-Venetus reverses the order.
3. Next comes Kings followed by Chronicles, but S reverses the order.
4. B, S and B-V put Esdras a & b next; but A puts them between Judith and Maccabees.
5. In S and B-V, Esdras b is followed by Esther; but in B and A, it is put after the Prophetical and before the Poetical Books.
6. The order of the Poetical Books may be represented in a table as follows:
 

B.	Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Job.
C.	Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Sirach, Job.
A.	Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song.
B-V.	Psalms (?), Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Sirach.
7. In all the MSS., the order of the Minor Prophets is the same, except that in B-V, Micah is placed after Jonah.
8. In all the MSS., Isaiah is put at the beginning of the list of Prophets and is always followed by Jeremiah.
9. Baruch is omitted from S, but occurs in the others immediately after Jeremiah.
10. In B, A and B-V, the list of Prophets ends with Ezekiel, Daniel.

When we recall that the version of the Law and the Prophets was certainly made before the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus was written (i.e., before 130 B.C.), it seems clear that the translator would have followed the divisions and order of books in the original, if these had already been fixed by the authorities of the Jews. For the sake of convenience in the services of the temple and synagogues, the Jews afterwards put together the Prophets from which selections were

read every Sabbath day; but there was no necessity for the Christians to make a fixed arrangement, since they made a like use of all the Scriptures in their services and esteemed them all alike. The Greek, Aramaic, Syriac and Latin versions from the Hebrew were all made by scholars who knew thoroughly the Hebrew language and laws; and yet, in none of these is there the slightest inkling that the divisions of the Old Testament were fixed by law when they were made, nor that the books were to be placed in a certain fixed order.

The testimony of the lists found in the works of the old Greek and Latin Fathers and in the decrees of the early Councils corroborates what we have just said with regard to the manuscripts of the Septuagint. From these lists we conclude:

1. That there were no fixed divisions recognized throughout the Church Universal, nor even in any particular Church. The divisions range from two to seven, four or five being the most common.

2. Melito and Leontius give the order for the Pentateuch as Gen., Ex., Num., Lev., Deut.

3. In the order for the other divisions *no two* MSS. are exactly alike.

4. They all place Daniel among the Prophets.

5. Job is found in 13 different places in 32 lists, ranging from immediately after Joshua to the last but one of all the books. It is put among the Former Prophets, Latter Prophets, the Poetical Books, the Historical Books, the Apocryphal Books, and sometimes apparently in a class by itself.

6. It is passing strange that no one of these great writers should ever apparently have heard of a fixed order and of the three fixed divisions alleged by modern critics to have been fixed among the Jews two centuries before the time of Christ.

We shall next consider the testimony of the Syriac manuscripts. It is generally held that the Peshitto Version was made about A.D. 200. The evidence presented in the accounts

of the early bishops of the Syrians edited by Professor Sachau of Berlin and published by the Prussian Academy<sup>26</sup> would favor an earlier date for this translation. But whatever its date, there is no doubt that it was made directly from the Hebrew text. We would expect it, then, to give the order and divisions of the books found in the Hebrew original from which it was translated, if the order and divisions had been fixed before the version was made. That this was not the case is shown conclusively by the following evidence which I have gleaned from the catalogues of the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, the British Museum, and elsewhere.

1. Ebed Jesu:<sup>27</sup> Law, Josh., Jud., Sam., Kings, Chr., Ruth, Pss., Song, Eccclus., Great Wisdom, Job, Is., Hos., Joel, Amos, Obad., Jonah, Mic., Na., Hab., Zeph., Hag., Zech., Mal., Jer., Ek., Dan., Judith, Est., Sus., Ezra, and Dan. the Less, and the Letter of Baruch, and the book of the Traditions of the Elders and that of Josephus the Writer. The Proverbs and Tales of the Sons of Samona and the books again of Macc. (3) and the Tale of Herod the King and the Book of the Second Destruction of Jerusalem through Titus, and the Book of Asyath the wife of the upright Joseph, the son of Jacob, and the Book of Tobias and Tobit the righteous Israelites.

2. Bar Hebraeus: (Cambridge Add. 2009) Law, Jos., Jud., Sam., Pss., Kings, Ez., Prov., Eccclus, Ecc., Song, Wisdom, Ruth, Sus., Job, Is., XII, Jer., Ek., Dan., Bel and the Dragon. *id.* Brit. Mus. XLV.

3. Brit. Mus. MSS. V, VI, VII: Law, Jos., Jud., Sam., Kings, Wisdom, Koh., Ru., Song, Eccclus, Job, Is., XII, Jer., Lam., Ek., Dan., Bel and the Dragon.

4. Bodleian, I (year 1627): Law, Job, Josh., Jud., Sam., Kings, Chron., Prov., Ecc., Song, Great Wisdom, Ru., Sus., Is., XII, Jer., 1 & 2 Bar., Ep. Jer., Ek., Dan., Bel and the Dragon, Est., Judith, Ezra, Eccclus, 4 books of Macc., Esdras, Tobith.

---

<sup>26</sup> *Kgl. Preuss. Akad. d. Wiss.* For 1919. [Ed.: orig. misnumbered "27" here]

<sup>27</sup> According to Assemani (Cat. III. 5).

5. Bodleian, II: Same as last as far as Susanna; then Little book of Daniel, Est., Judith, Ezra, Ecclus, 4 of Macc., Esd. and Tobith, Is., XII, Jer., Lam., Ep. of Baruch, Ep. Jer., Ek., Dan., Bel and the Dragon.

6. British Mus., I: Same as Bodl. I except that 1st and 2nd Baruch are put at the end of all.

7. Brit. Mus., XVI: has the order Josh., Jud., Sam., Kings, Prov., Ecclus., Koh., Ru., Song, the righteous Job.

8. Cambridge, Oo I. 7: Is., XII, Jer., Lam., Bar., Ek., Dan., Song of the Three Children, Sus., Bel and the Dragon.

9. Cambridge, Oo, I. 10: Same as No. 7 above except begins with Judges.

10. Cambridge, Add. 1963: Same as No. 7 as far as Prov.; then Koh., Ru., Song, Ecclus., Job.

11. Cambridge, Add 1969: Jos., Jud., Ruth, Sam., Kings, Prov., Song, Ecclus, Job.

12. Cambridge, Buchanan MS: Pent., Job, Jos., Jud., Sam., Pss., Kings, Chron., Prov., Koh., Song, Wisdom, Is., Jer., Lam., 1 & 2 Bar., Ep. Jer., Ek., XII, Dan., Bel and Dragon, Ruth, Sus., Est., Judith, Ezra, Ecclus., 4 books of Macc., 1<sup>st</sup> Esd., Tobit.

13. Wilson MS. A manuscript in my possession begins with Is., xliii 10 and continues: XII, (Hos., Joel, Amos, Ob., Jon., Mi., etc.), Jer., Lam., Prayer of Jer., Ezek.

14. Codex Florentinus has the order Lev., Num., Deut., Jos., Jud., Sam., Kings, Chron., Psalms.

15. Cambridge Ll. 2. 4 has the order: Is., XII, Jer., Lam., Ek., Dan., Song of Three Children, Bel and Dragon.

Codex Ambrosianus (at Milan): Pent., Job, Jos., Jud., Sam., Pss., Kings, Prov., Wisdom, Koh., Song, Is., Jer., Lam., Ep. Jer., 1 & 2 Bar., Ek., XII, Dan., Bel and Dragon, Ru., Sus., Est., Judith, Ecclus, Chr., Apoc. Of Baruch, 1st Esd. (= 4th in Latin), Ezra, 5 books of Macc.

1. It will be seen that all of these documents put Daniel among the Prophets.

2. That most of the Jacobite MSS. put Job immediately after the Pentateuch.

3. That three of the most important witnesses—the Cambridge Buchanan MS., the Ambrosian Codex, and Bar Hebraeus—put the Psalms between Samuel and Kings.

4. That Isaiah is always placed first among the Prophets and that it is followed commonly by the XII.

5. That Chronicles is placed by some of the best witnesses immediately after Kings.

6. That the Ambrosian and Buchanan Manuscripts put all the books about women together and others have two or more together.

7. That there is no evidence outside the Pentateuch of any fixed division or order of books, such as would indicate that the version was made from a Hebrew Bible with fixed divisions and a definite order.

The next item of evidence, which we shall consider, is the testimony of *Baby Bathra*.<sup>28</sup> This tract is an extra-canonical part of the Mishna, written by some unknown author at an unknown date, somewhere between A.D. 200 and 850.<sup>29</sup> It contains among other matters a list of the Prophets and Hagiographa and a statement as to who wrote the books of the Old Testament. The list is as follows: "The Rabbis have taught the order of succession in the books of the Prophets runs thus: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and the Twelve. The order of succession in the Hagiographa is: Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Lamentations, Daniel and the Book of Esther, Ezra and Chronicles." The statement about the authors is: "Moses wrote his own book and the chapter of Balaam and Job, Joshua wrote his own book and the last eight verses of the Pentateuch, Samuel wrote his own book and also Judges and Ruth. David wrote the Book of Psalms through the ten elders Adam, Melchisedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Juduthun, Asaph and the three sons of Korah. Jeremiah wrote his own book, as also the Kings and the Lamentations. Hezekiah and his company

---

<sup>28</sup> 14 b.

<sup>29</sup> Margoliouth puts it at the latter date.

wrote the books of Isaiah, Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes. The men of the Great Synagogue wrote Ezekiel, the twelve Minor Prophets, the book of Daniel and the book of Esther, Ezra wrote his own book a genealogy which belongs to the Chronicles.”

1. It will be remarked that these two citations are from the same section of Baba Bathra. They are presumably by the same author and from the same time. But the author is not known nor the time specified.

2. The critics generally deny almost every statement of the second citation, thus impeaching the reliability of their witness as to the veracity of the first citation. Thus, they deny even the existence of the Great Synagogue. They deem absurd the authorship of Psalms by Adam, Melchisedek, *et. al.* They reject the statement that Moses wrote Job, and that Hezekiah and his companions wrote Canticles and Ecclesiastes. Why, then, should they accept the statement as to the order of the books?

3. Especially noteworthy is it that there is no evidence to prove that the Jews in general followed this alleged teaching of the Rabbins with regard to the third division of the Old Testament; and it was certainly not considered obligatory with regard even to the second, inasmuch as about half of the manuscripts of Kennicott, which give the order of the Prophets, differ from the order given in Baba Bathra. If this section of Baba Bathra had been thought by the Jewish scribes to be genuine and binding, they would probably all have followed this order. The order of the books in the MSS. of Kennicott will bear out this statement. An examination of the lists of books given by him in his *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus*, Vol. II, shows, in fact, that only 23 out of 40 lists which give all the books have the order of Baba Bathra both for the Pentateuch and the Prophets and that only two (Nos. 228 and 252) agree with Baba Bathra in the order of the books of the third division. Fourteen of the MSS. have in the Prophets the order Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. The orders of books in

the Hagiographa in the 40 MSS. are almost as numerous as the MSS., making for the whole Old Testament 39 different orders out of a possible 40.

The last item of evidence to be now considered is the allegation that the closing of the second part of the present Old Testament Canon about 200 B.C. is proved by the fact that all of the Haftarothe, or lessons from the Prophets to be read on the Sabbath days, have been selected from the eight books now constituting the Prophets. The critics argue from this present content of the second part, as if it were always the same as now; and hence that Daniel was never among the Prophets. This is a stupendous *non sequitur*. For first, there is absolutely no evidence to show that the selections of the Scriptures outside the Law to be read every Sabbath day was fixed until long after the time of Christ. Wildeboer affirms that "the annual cycle was not adopted universally till the fourteenth century A.D."<sup>30</sup> Zunz and König say that Haftarothe were read from the time of the Maccabees on; and certainly, Luke iv. 17 and Acts xiii. 15 show that they were read in the first century A.D. But the passage in Acts speaks merely of "the reading of the Law and the Prophets" on the Sabbath day; and the selection which the Lord is said in Luke iv. 17 to have read is not found among the selections now read by the Jews. Thus, Bloch<sup>31</sup> finds only two references to the Haptarothe in the Talmud.<sup>32</sup> No copy of these selections is certainly of earlier date than the twelfth or thirteenth century. Buchler mentions 62 Haptarothe which were used by the early Jews and Karaites, but are not among the ones now in use. No one knows that the early Jews did not have selections from Daniel.

2. The principles upon which the selections now in use were chosen are clearly shown in the prayers which precede the reading of them in the Synagogue. These prayers, or

---

<sup>30</sup> *Canon*, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> *Studien zur Geschichte der Sammlung der althebräischen Literatur*, p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> *Megilla*, 24a, 25a.

blessings, show that the selections were meant to exalt the glories and privileges of the people of Israel. They turn about the words "Jehovah our God," Law, service, temple, Sabbath, Zion, Israel, Moses, David, Elijah, etc. They are and were meant to be, extremely nationalistic rather than universalistic, exclusive of the rights of the Gentiles rather than embracing all men in the promises to Adam and Abraham. An argument can be made from them as to the narrow views of the mediaeval Jews who determined the present selection, but not as to the age of a Biblical document written more than a thousand years before they were determined.

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the evidence of the Jews of the early centuries up to A.D. 400, we conclude that the Law was closed as early as the time of Ezra at the latest, but that the other testimony including Ecclesiasticus, Jesus in Matthew and Luke, Josephus, Melito, Origen, and the Greek and Syriac versions and lists and the Haptaroth is all in favor of a varying content and order and number of books for the other divisions of the Old Testament; that in the complete Hebrew MSS. listed by Kennicott the order and number of books in the Law is always the same, but that in the Prophets, while the number is the same, there are at least three orders; that in these same MSS., the order is the same as that in Baba Bathra in only two cases, making 39 orders in all out of a possible 40; that the MSS. in Syriac and in the Greek and its versions differ not merely from every known Hebrew original but also differ among themselves, so that no two are exactly alike in order or division and many of them not even in numbers; that Matthew and Josephus and Melito and the Syriac and Greek versions and one of the lists of Jerome all put Daniel among the prophets; that Ecclesiasticus and Josephus and many of the best of the Syriac MSS. put Job and Lamentations among the prophets, immediately after the Pentateuch; that the order of books in Melito, the oldest of the witnesses to give a list of the

books in order, puts Numbers before Leviticus; and that Ecclesiasticus, 2 Maccabees, the New Testament, Melito and Origen give from two to four different divisions, and the Greek and Latin sources from two to seven. We conclude, then, that the theory of the critics as to the three-fold divisions of the Old Testament and all the conclusions based upon the assumption of the same are without foundation in fact and evidence. The *prima facie* evidence of the books themselves and the traditional view of the Jews and of all the Christian Churches stand confirmed by the evidence in our possession; and thus, another attack upon the historicity of the Old Testament Scriptures should be eliminated from further serious consideration.

*Princeton.*

R.D. WILSON.