CHAPTER 6

THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

[These notes are adapted from those of Allan A. MacRae; see also his excellent discussion in "The Canon for of Scripture: Can We Be Sure Which Books Are Inspired of God?" ch. 4.5 in *Evidence for Faith*, ed. by John Warwick Montgomery, pp. 215-28.]

Definition of canon

This important subject involves the question of which books actually were inspired by God and are therefore the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Originally the term "canon" did not mean a list of books. The Greeks used the word for a standard of excellence. In NT Greek κανών *kanon* ("limit, area, rule, principle") is used in 2 Cor 10:13-16 (three times) as limit, or geographical area of ministry, and in Gal 6:16 as a rule or principle of conduct. Later, "canon" meant authority (as R. C. "canon law"). The term eventually developed into "which books" are a part of the Bible.

Biblical evidence of a canon

It has already been seen that the Jews accepted the OT books as canonical, the word of God (see above, ch. 3, "OT View of Itself"). Likewise, that the NT accepted these books as divine Scripture, along with the other NT books (ch. 3, "NT View of the OT," "NT View of Itself"). We especially note that neither Christ nor the apostles contradicted the Jewish concept of the canon; rather, they confirmed it. Christ and the apostles called the people to follow the Scriptures, not other traditions (cf. Mark 7:13).

Jewish identification of the canon

The best non-biblical evidence for the Jewish definition of the canon in the time of Jesus is not found in the Talmud, since that was written much later. Rather, Josephus is the best authority, being a contemporary writer during the first century.

Josephus was born about the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. He was very familiar with many sorts of Jews. He took part in the Jewish rebellion of A.D. 66-70, was captured, befriended by Titus, and made a ward of the Romans. His *Wars of the Jews* is historically more valuable than his *Antiquities of the Jews*, since in the *Wars* he related events to which he was an eyewitness. He also wrote *Against Apion*, a reply to Apion, an anti-Semitic writer from Alexandria; in this writing Josephus defended the Jewish people and explained their customs; this book was intended for wide distribution. In it he mentions the Jewish canon:

> "(7) . . . Everyone is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer [of Scripture], nor is there any disagreement in what is written, they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration. And others have written what has happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also.
>
> "(8) For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but 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, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years. But as the to time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were 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 has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has 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, or to make any change in them. But it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them." (*Against Apion* 1:7-8; Whiston ed., p. 609)

Josephus makes several statements about these books. He describes their general contents, declares that Jews would all die for any of them, and states that the books were completed by the time of the reign of the Persian king Artaxerxes I (ca. 400 B.C.). According to Josephus, the Jews believed that, in order for books to be included in this group, they must have been inspired by God and given by prophets to be a part of Scripture.

Scholars are agreed that the twenty-two books of Josephus are the same as the thirty-nine books in our present Protestant OT. We must remember that the Jews kept the OT on scrolls, each scroll being considered one book. There is firm evidence confirming most of the following arrangements, with only one being conjectured:

12 Minor Prophets = one book

1 & 2 Samuel = one book [some MSS have different dividing place between 1 & 2 Samuel]

1 & 2 Kings = one book

1 & 2 Chronicles = one book

Jeremiah & Lamentations = one book

Ezra & Nehemiah = one book

[Conjectured] Judges & Ruth = one book

It is obvious that Josephus' canon fits perfectly with our present OT canon. On the other hand, it could not possibly be made to fit the Roman Catholic OT canon of forty-six books.

It is even more important that the NT itself frequently quotes the OT, but never quotes the Apocrypha or other books as the authoritative Word of God.

Determining principle of the canon

The true principle for inclusion in the canon is that the book be written by men inspired by God for the purpose, and that the resulting book is totally authoritative as the word of God.

There are several false theories about how canonical books are recognized:

a. Age of book

Age determines canonicity. But the OT and the NT refer to other books not canonical. Examples:

> "As for the other events of Ahab's reign, including all he did, the palace he built and inlaid with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?" (1 Kgs 22:39)
>
> "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." (1 Cor 5:9)

Biblical books were preserved because people considered them authoritative.

b. Language of book

Many Hebrew and Greek works were produced which were not a part of the canon. In addition, parts of the OT are written in Aramaic (half of Daniel, part of Ezra, a verse in Jeremiah).

c. Content of book

Just because a book agrees with the OT or NT does not make it canonical.

d. Religious value of book

Many books have greatly blessed people spiritually. Perhaps certain individuals have been greatly blessed by a particular religious book, even more than by some of the canonical books. But that does not make these books a part of Scripture. Other books have religious value as they agree with Scripture.

e. Church gathering

Some suggest that at certain times the church or the people of God gathered and officially canonized particular books of the Bible. They point to 2 Kgs 22-23 (book of Deuteronomy) and to Neh 8 (Pentateuch) as examples.

But these examples only illustrate a <u>rediscovery</u> of the law. When it was rediscovered after a period of neglect, the people recognized it as God's word and the predictor of judgment for them. They merely recognized its authority; they did not confer on it its authority. Likewise in the early church, no one claimed authority to make a book canonical, only to recognize which books the Lord himself had given (more detailed examination in notes below).

The true theory of the canon seems to be <u>the consensus of the invisible church</u>. If the Holy Spirit leads the elect to recognize the Bible as the Word of God, then those believers would recognize which books constitute the Bible. The consensus of believers should be uniform.

"We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the holy scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, <u>our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts</u>." (WCF 1:5)

This process took place in OT times, and Christ recognized the result as correct. In the same way the NT believers recognized their Master's voice in the NT books, and had widespread agreement among themselves.

The marks of canonicity would then be the following:

1. Claim of the author or book
2. Confirming sings or miracles (prophecies)
3. The Holy Spirit giving faith

A true Christian will have the witness of the Spirit to the Word of God. His own remaining sin and ignorance may cause him to question the canon to some extent or come to a mistaken conclusion, but the consensus of other Christians will overcome his individual mistake. This consensus will be valid for the true, invisible church. The visible church, according to its relative purity, will thus bear witness to the true canon of Scripture.

Completion of the OT canon

It is apparent that the canon of the OT was complete by the time of Artaxerxes I (ca. 400 B.C.) for the following reasons:

Statement of Josephus

(See above) Josephus dates the last OT book as being completed by this time. Artaxerxes was a contemporary of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.

Testimony of 1 Maccabees

When 1 Maccabees was produced (ca. 200-150 B.C.), there was the belief that there was no prophet in Israel.

> "Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary. He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned. And they thought it best to tear it down, so that it would not be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them." (1 Macc 4:41-46)

> [time after death of Judas; Jonathan now the leader] "So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them." (1 Macc 9:27)
>
> [time after death of Jonathan; Simon now the leader] "The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise." (1 Macc 14:41)

We notice in these three quotations that it was believed that there was a time in their past when "prophets ceased to appear among them." Likewise, at three different times during these years it was believed that there were no prophets among them at those times.

Lack of evidence for later date

Efforts to find portions of the OT dated after 400 B.C. have failed. Examples:

1) "Late" psalms and elephants

Syrians used war elephants in intertestament period. Cf. 1 Macc 6—elephants struck terror in soldiers; but no psalm mentions elephants as strength. Horses are mentioned (Ps 20; 33:17; 147:10), but as early as the second millennium B.C. the Hyksos used horses in Egypt.

2) Daniel's predictions

Critics usually date Daniel in the second century B.C. because of the accuracy and detail of the predictions in that book, along with other factors. They claim the book was written to strengthen the Maccabee revolt (ca. 168 B.C.). These arguments all can be adequately answered and refuted (cf. courses in OT introduction and in OT prophetic literature). Christians can accept the book of Daniel to be written by him as claimed. God is able to reveal the future to his prophets.

Collection of the OT books

Importance

The manner in which the books were collected is not of great importance for determining their canonicity, but it is of interest for understanding their text and background.

Traditional belief

While the OT states that the Torah was preserved in the Holy of Holies, it does not mention the fate of the other books. Later tradition recorded by David Kinche (1160-1232) and Elias Lavita (1538) says that Ezra collected the books. Second Maccabees says Nehemiah collected the books, while 2 Esdras says all the books were lost and Ezra rewrote them with divine inspiration.

Tradition evaluated

It does seem probable that Ezra did collect the books. Previous collections had been made (Jer 26:17-19; Dan 9:2). Historically Ezra was in a position to desire and accomplish such a collection. This fits with his description as a skillful scribe and a scribe of the commandments (Ezra 7:6, 11). By his time most or all the books would have been written, and the resettled Jews would have need of them.

Again, by making such a collection, Ezra would not have claimed to declare these books canonical; he only would have been making the canonical books available to his fellow Jews.

Critical theory of the OT canon

Definition of the critical theory

Critics believe the OT was formed in three stages, corresponding to the three parts of the Hebrew Bible (Law, Prophets, Writings).

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Order of books in Hebrew Bible:

<u>The Law</u>

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

<u>The Prophets</u>

The Former Prophets:

Joshua
Judges
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings

The Latter Prophets:

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

<u>The Writings</u>

Psalms
Job
Proverbs
The Megilloth:

- Ruth (Pentecost)
- Song of Solomon, "Canticum" (Passover)
- Ecclesiastes (Tabernacles)
- Lamentations, "Threni" (9th of Ab)
- Esther (Purim)

Daniel
Ezra
Nehemiah
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles

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Stage 1: first Josiah made Deuteronomy canonical in 622 B.C.; then Ezra made the five books of the Law canonical in 400 B.C.

Stage 2: ca. 200 B.C., the Prophets were adopted as canonical in a public meeting

Stage 3: ca. 100 B.C. - A.D. 100, the Writings were adopted in a public meeting (Council of Jamnia) [It used to be thought the Council of Jamnia of A.D. 100 made the big step of canonizing the Writings; now the canonization of the Writings is usually placed earlier, ca. 100 B.C.]

Note that the critical theory of the OT canon completely destroys the real basis of authority. It also adversely affects our attitude toward certain books, especially Daniel (included in the Writings).

Arguments used for the critical theory

1) Threefold division

The threefold division of the Hebrew OT cannot reasonably be explained as an arrangement according to a logical division. It must be the result of a historical development.

According to the Talmud: Law came by Moses, who saw God face to face; Prophets spoke with Spirit of prophecy; Writings written by others with Holy Spirit.

Critics say: not logical division, but evidence that OT canonized in three stages.

2) Bible records first stage

(Referring to 2 Kgs 22 and Neh 8)

3) Samaritans and the Law

The fact that the Samaritans accept only the Law proves that none of the other books was assumed canonical in the time of Nehemiah (Samaritan Scriptures: almost identical Law and different Joshua).

4) Daniel not in the Prophets

Daniel is not included in the books of the Prophets from which the lessons were taken. This fact, critics say, is explained by Daniel's late authorship, after the second section had been canonized.

5) Synagogue readings

Synagogue reading selections were made only from the canonical Law and Prophets, no Writings. This indicates that the Writings had not been canonized when these lessons were established.

6) Term "The Law and the Prophets"

This term, used for the entire OT in various NT references (e.g., Matt 22:40; Luke 24:27), shows that there was a time when there existed only the Law and the Prophets.

7) Talmudic disputes

The disputes of the Talmud as to the canonicity of certain books point to a time when these books were not canonical.

Answers to critical arguments

These arguments, while impressive when heard at once, can each be answered fully.

1) Threefold division

[This is the argument requiring the most detailed answer; this answer is given in the next section.]

2) Bible records first stage

[Answer already given; see section above, "Determining Principle of the Canon."]

3) Samaritans and the Law

Cf. 2 Kgs 17:24-41 and Neh 13:6-9, 28, for nature of Samaritan religion and purification ordered by Nehemiah. Critics say that Tobiah or someone like him took the OT as it then was when fleeing from Jerusalem, and that this OT consisted only of the Pentateuch (and perhaps Joshua).

Actually, the thread of evidence at this point is extremely thin. It is much more likely that the Samaritans, being anti-Jewish, opposed the bulk of the OT, which gave directions to the Jewish nation and exalted it above its neighbors. The Samaritans liked Joshua, son of Nun, who was from the tribe of Ephraim (Num 13:8).

4) Daniel not in the Prophets

The Writings were grouped together as those books written "by the Holy Spirit" (see above); Daniel was considered a very special book, and its inclusion with the Writings was a custom developed more regarding its usage than its time of composition (for time of composition, cf. other material given in OT introduction).

5) Synagogue readings

Even though the Writings are not included in the weekly lessons, the Megilloth ("Rolls"), containing five books of the Writings, are read on the most important holy days. In addition, many synagogues have daily services with readings from the Psalms.

6) Term "The Law and the Prophets"

This phrase in the NT is not the only one used. Sometimes the simple term "Law" stands for the whole OT; and in Luke 24:44 the full term "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" is used. This argument proves too much, for no one questions that the OT, including the Writings, was completed when the NT was written.

7) Talmudic disputes

The critical claim is that first century disputes show that the canon was not settled. But there is no evidence of disputes in the NT or in Josephus. The only evidence is found in the Talmud (3rd-7th centuries A.D.). To describe canonical books it uses the terms *gonaz* ("hide")—to put a book out of circulation in a store room, and "defile the hand"—must wash after touching a holy book. However, other books besides the Writings are discussed this way in the Talmud—e.g., Ezekiel and Jonah; Proverbs also was discussed early.

Concerning this discussion in the Talmud, we note the following:

a) The nature of the evidence is very slim and flimsy.

b) This evidence says nothing of an act of canonization.

c) There is no evidence of any discussion of adding to the canon, only of withdrawing books from the canon.

d) There is no evidence that any book was actually withdrawn.

e) These disputes were not confined to the third division alone. Jonah was discussed, and Ezekiel was discussed considerably.

f) We must remember the situation in which the Talmudic Jews disputed: they were preparing to answer objections and preserve their actual beliefs. Therefore they had to rigorously question every facet of their understanding of the canon.

The threefold division of the OT canon

This phenomenon of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible, and the books that make up each part, is a difficult one to explain. Obviously, there must be some historical explanation to account for the present divisions. Yet, it is not necessary to conclude that the three divisions were canonized at different times.

1) Traditional Jewish explanation

Moses Maimonides said that the different sections are accounted for by different levels of inspiration. This is hard to maintain, especially understanding the nature of inspiration ("It either is or it isn't").

2) Traditional conservative Christian explanation

The divisions are accounted for by holding that they reflect different kinds of authors—Moses, the prophets (historical and direct), and other inspired men not technical prophets.

This explanation also is difficult to maintain. There is no ancient evidence for such a distinction of authors; the NT calls Abraham, David, and Daniel prophets. There is no ancient evidence that this is the reason for the threefold division. These categories break down on further investigation: Joshua is never called a prophet. Who wrote Judges? Ezra was not in the prophetic office. And what about Kings (in the Prophets) and Chronicles (in the Writings)? Daniel certainly would be classified a prophet, yet is in the Writings. And certainly we would expect Lamentations to be in the Prophets, not the Writings. Another explanation is necessary.

3) Synagogue service explanation

The best solution appears to be that the Jews in their synagogue services used different books at different times, and switched two books (Ruth and Lamentations) to the Writings, for convenience in using them in the five major celebrations. This final arrangement into the three sections we have today seems to have taken place between A.D. 100 and the third to fourth centuries A.D. [see Appendix on the order of books in the Hebrew Bible]

Five major celebrations:

Passover	Song of Songs
Pentecost	Ruth
9th of Ab	Lamentations
Tabernacles	Ecclesiastes
Purim	Esther

Extent of the canon

A major question relating to the canon is that of the extent of the canon—i.e., exactly which books did God inspire, and which books should we then accept as our authority? There is little debate today concerning the NT canon; nearly all Christians accept the present NT of 27 books (with some notable exceptions). The greatest controversy involves the OT apocryphal books, which the Roman Catholic Church teaches are a part of the Bible. Of course, various cults have other books they regard either officially or practically as canon. In this section, our

primary emphasis will be on the OT Apocrypha; discussions of various OT or NT books that have been disputed will be taken up in appropriate courses in the seminary curriculum.

The canon of the Jews

1) First century consensus

This canon was definite and fixed by the first century. Josephus and various references in the NT concur in our present OT canon. Disputes among Jews of the first century do not show the contrary.

2) Accepted all books in Protestant canon

This is evident in Josephus and in the *Baba Bathra*. Most of our OT books are quoted in Josephus and Philo. There is no evidence of any question on this point. All groups of Jews accepted this canon, even the Sadducees (for complete evidence on this point, see Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism*, 1985).

3) Never accepted any other books into the canon

This point is true of all Palestinian Jews. It is also true for Alexandrian Jews, even though they used the LXX (copies of which from later centuries contain apocryphal books).

Evidence for Alexandrian Jews:

- A difference between Palestinian and Alexandrian Jews on such an important issue is unlikely.
- The prologue to *Ecclesiasticus* shows the same canon as the Palestinian Jews.
- Josephus wrote against the Alexandrian anti-Semite Apion.
- Philo never refers to the apocryphal books.
- The presence of apocryphal books in LXX manuscripts does not prove that Alexandrian Jews thought them canonical:
    - ✓ Manuscripts were on rolls before the Christian period.
    - ✓ Early LXX copies were produced by Christians, not Jews.

- ✓ LXX manuscripts are not uniform concerning the apocryphal books--none contains all of them; different manuscripts have different apocryphal books.

Canon of Christ and the NT

It is apparent that Christ and the NT writers shared the same canon as the Jews did. What Christ thought and taught are very important for the Christian. We accept the Bible on the authority of Christ.

Christ and the apostles treated the canon of the Jews of their day as a unit and authoritative. There is no suggestion of any difference between Christ and the Jews on the extent of the OT canon or concerning their attitude toward it.

While the NT occasionally quotes from books outside the OT, it never refers to them as authority. And the NT never quotes from any book of the Apocrypha. Even NT quotes from the LXX do not recognize the apocryphal books as authority.

The Apocrypha

Meaning of the term

"Apocrypha" means "hidden." The term was used of the Gnostic books, which were intended for the "initiated." Now generally the term has a bad connotation. Protestants use the term to describe the books that the Roman Catholic Church includes but the Protestant churches exclude from the canon. Roman Catholics use the term to designate other books which they do not accept.

A similar term, "Pseudepigrapha," means books written under a pseudonym; these were mainly produced 200 B.C. to A.D. 400.

The "NT Apocrypha" refers to historically unreliable books produced after the NT period.

Brief description of the apocryphal books

Ecclesiasticus—of Joshua, Son of Sirah (ca. 200 B.C.); devotional; grandson in Alexandria translated into Greek; Hebrew text lost; Jewish piety

Wisdom of Solomon—similar to Ecclesiasticus; about 1 B.C. or before; good book of OT piety; complicated Greek sentences; therefore probably originally written in Greek

1 and 2 Maccabees—1 Macc is first class historical book; 2 Macc deals with events before 1 Macc, persecution; 2 Macc has all sorts of fantastic things and deliverances

Judith—short book; Babylonian army come to conquer Jews; she fooled general; carried food in bag, later carried back his head; geography and history seem confused

Tobit—long book; one of earliest novels written; Jew in Nineveh, finds body of murdered Jew, buries it, becomes unclean, sleeps outside wall; became blind via a bird; problem

Baruch—Jeremiah's scribe who went with Jeremiah to Egypt; but book says this book is a letter from him in Babylon; devotional

While these books are not authoritative, they are valuable for reading. Also, the Apocrypha contains additions to some OT books:

Additions to Esther—since no mention of God or long expressions of piety; so it includes dreams, prayers, etc. (in LXX); an example: the prayer of Mordecai (4:9-18)

Additions to Daniel—other stories about Daniel in the court

Three other books were translated by Jerome in the Vulgate, but the Roman Catholic Church does not consider them canonical. 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh appear to be pseudepigraphal.

1 Esdras—contains most of Ezra and Nehemiah plus some other material

2 Esdras—"visions and dreams" of Ezra; shows men facing problem—how a man can be righteous before God

Prayer of Manasseh—prayer of the king when held captive in Babylon

Canon of the early Christian church

Whatever canon the Christian church adopted later in history is of relatively little importance. This information is interesting and valuable, but not decisive. The church could be wrong; e.g., in 1547 the Roman Catholic Church declared that the Apocrypha was canonical.

There are two major areas of consideration: Did the church accept all the books now in our Bible; and did the church accept any books that are not in our Bible?

Books now in our Bible

The Christian church has always accepted all the OT books accepted by the Jews of Jesus' day. This, however, is not true of every individual minister.

Melito, bishop at Sardis after A.D. 171, wrote and Eusebius copied that he traveled to Judea to make diligent inquiry to find which books were in the OT. His conclusion was the same as now; but the order follows the LXX order; there is not threefold division; and his canon does not mention Esther (his is the only canon to leave Esther out). It is suggested that the LXX Esther starts with Mordecai's dream, which is non-canonical, and that that led Melito to leave out the book.

In his commentary on Psalm 1, Origen cataloged the OT books. He said there were 22 books in the OT, a part of these being the books of Maccabees. However, his list has only 21; the Minor Prophets are left out; but there is no doubt he regarded them as canonical (this commentary is lost, but this section is quoted by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 25:1-2, *NPNF* 2:1, 272).

Books not now in our Bible

Individual men have sometimes been mistaken in their attitude, but the leaders of the church and the church councils in the early centuries were almost unanimous in accepting as authoritative only those books which the Jews so accepted.

One exception: latter part of fourth century. Augustine of Hippo had great influence in North Africa. From two councils in North Africa and in a statement of Augustine himself, there are lists that include almost the exact Roman Catholic Apocrypha (leaving out Baruch and adding Esdras). Explanation: the Manicheans attracted Augustine before his conversion. They had other books. Augustine fought their books, by comparing them to the good books of Jewish piety; he did not press that they were authoritative, though. He perhaps used the idea of canonical to mean good and helpful books. There is evidence for this inference:

> In fighting suicide group, Augustine said the only support they could find was in 2 Macc which he said was not authoritative, but only to be heard soberly (61st Epistle). He stated that suicide is never permitted in the "holy canonical books," in spite of its approval in 2 Macc 14:42 (see B. F. Westcott, *The Bible in the Church*, 188).
>
> In another place Augustine again states that Maccabees are not authoritative. (*Contra Donatists*, ch. 23)

Jerome opposed the worldly practices found in Rome and moved to Bethlehem. There he translated the OT from Hebrew into Latin (the Vulgate—"common" translation). Jerome studied Hebrew from the rabbis. As he translated the OT, people wanted a new translation of the

apocryphal books. Jerome refused because he did not consider them a part of the Bible. Finally he did translate Tobit, but very quickly (not carefully like the OT; Tobit he translated in only one day). He also translated Judith, but those are the only apocryphal books he translated. Later, when the apocryphal Vulgate was published, they used Jerome's translation of Tobit and Judith, but had to use the Old Latin translations of all the other books.

Even after 1500, when the head of the church of Spain (Ximines) published his collection of versions, dedicated to Pope Leo X, he thanked Jerome for making clear the non-canonical nature of the Apocrypha.

It was only in 1547 that the Council of Trent by majority vote said that the Apocrypha was canonical, and this was done largely to aid them in their campaign against the Protestants.

Insufficient support for the Apocrypha

The strongest arguments from church history favoring the Apocrypha are that the Apocrypha is found in early translations of the OT (not in individual manuscripts, but in collections), including the LXX, the Syriac, and the Latin; that the Apocrypha was used in public worship in the third through the fifth centuries; and that the Apocrypha is quoted by some early Christian writers as authoritative.

These evidences are insufficient to overcome the primary truth that the Jews, Jesus, and the apostles did not consider the Apocrypha as Scripture. These insufficient supports are not at all conclusive. The presence of a book in a translated Bible volume does not imply the translator considered it canonical (cf. Jerome). In the sixteenth century the Church of England used readings from the Apocrypha in Sunday and weekday services, yet that church rejected it as part of the canon. And many fathers gave lists of the canon which excluded the Apocrypha (e.g., Athanasius).

Errors in the Apocrypha

This point is not as decisive as the previous ones, since the Bible is our authority, not our opinion of its accuracy. However, this is a useful argument. Indeed, there are proportionally more difficulties in the Apocrypha than in the OT.

Conclusion regarding the canon

We accept the books that we do because of the attitude of Jesus Christ toward the accepted canon of the Jews. Jesus approved the method and result of Israel's accepting the OT as the Word of God. This position was a consensus of the whole OT church.

This same procedure is applied to the NT. The apostles supervised the church generally. They bore the authority of Christ as they led in the development of the church, including the production of the NT. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would lead individuals to learn the things the NT records (John 16:12-13; 14:26). The NT was produced in the same manner as the OT. There is also a similarity in the way the OT came to be recognized in Israel and the way the NT came to be recognized in the church.

The key to this process is the providence of God and the illumination of the elect to "hear his voice." God directed the church as a whole in the OT times to accept the true canon over a period of time; he did this also with the NT books. Later church councils only confirmed what God had done already through his guiding providence. Christ set his seal on the process of the OT's acceptance as canon, and thus on the process used for the NT.

Appendix on the order of books in the Hebrew Bible

A. Probability of lack of exact division in early times

We have no right to assume without evidence that the present arrangement was established in very early times.

1. Codex form

   We should not forget that present codex book forms were hardly known before the second century A.D.

2. Difficulty of keeping an order

   With smaller amounts of material per scroll, various books would not remain in a particular order, unless a special effort was made to keep them in a special order. Yet there is no evidence of any special effort to keep them in a particular order or in particular groups within the major divisions. Rather, the absence of any such special effort clearly is indicated by the variety of order found in the lists of the Prophets and the Writings in extant Hebrew manuscripts.

B. Early threefold division

There are some early references to the OT which suggest a grouping into three divisions.

1. Prologue to *Ecclesiasticus*

   The earliest reference is found in the prologue to *Ecclesiasticus* ("Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirah"). The Hebrew original was translated by his grandson in Alexandria, including an introduction in Greek, which has been preserved (ca. 130 B.C.). He mentions the Law, the Prophets, and Others who have followed in their steps; Law, Prophets, Other books of our Fathers; Law, Prophets, Rest of the Books. This may be simply his own mental division, or reflect an existing division.

2. Philo

   States that "the sect of the Therapeui accept the Law and the oracles uttered by the Prophets and the hymns and the other sacred writings."

3. Luke 24:44

   Jesus speaks of the things "which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me."

4. Josephus

Summarizes the 22 books of the OT as consisting of the Law first; then after the death of Moses until the time of Artaxerxes 13 books were produced by his successors, along with 4 books of hymns to God and counsels to men.

5. Talmud

The *Baba Bathra* (13b-15) mentions the Law, 8 Prophets, and 11 Writings (including Daniel); but these are not in the same order consistently, and suggested authors are unusual.

6. Jerome

(ca. A.D. 400) Issued books of *Vulgate* (Latin translation of the Bible) one at a time.

First issued Samuel and Kings (391), wrote a preface—said Hebrews have 22 letters and the OT has 22 books; 5 are double letters and 5 OT books are double (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra-Nehemiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations). Jerome said that there were three divisions: the Torah had 5 books, the Prophets (Joshua, Judges-Ruth, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve), and the Writings (including Job, David, Solomon, and Daniel). He said that some take Ruth and Lamentations and put them into the Writings, making 24 books.

In his Daniel preface (392) Jerome says: Daniel in Hebrew found not in the Prophets, but in the Writings; for the Jews have three divisions: Law 5, Prophets 8, and Writings 11.

C. Time of present division

Careful examination of the above evidence strongly suggests that in A.D. 100 our present threefold arrangement was not yet established.

1. Earliest statements

The earliest statement clearly giving the present grouping is not earlier than the second century A.D., perhaps not earlier than A.D. 391. It is possible that the *Baba Bathra* gives an earlier statement than Jerome's, but that would be sometime during or after the second century.

2. Different arrangements

The earliest statement from which precise information of a threefold arrangement can be found has a different arrangement from ours (Josephus: Moses 5, Prophets 13, Remaining 4).

Most often the early statements fit better with Josephus' arrangement than with the present one (Prologue of *Ecclesiasticus*, Philo, Christ).

3. Switching of two books

There is strong evidence that two of the books in the Writings were not included before the time of the use of codices (about second century A.D.). This is shown by Josephus' arrangement of 22 books (Ruth with Judges, Lamentations with Jeremiah). Origen also said there were 22 books (ca. A.D. 250). The first explicit statement mentioning this switch of Ruth and Lamentations to the Writings is that of Jerome (391). It is easy to see how these books were switched—convenience for reading on the Megilloth.

4. Conclusion from this evidence

This switching of the two books to the Writings provides a satisfactory explanation for the rise of the whole threefold arrangement we now have, whenever that arrangement was first made. It does not imply the truth of any theory of canonization.