

[The Origin and History of the Bible]

Lecture VII¹

When and Where did the Hebrew Bible Become a Canonical Text?

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1. Recapitulation

First. Amos, 750 B.C., and the prophetic movement caused a beginning of putting into written form the ancient tradition of the Hebrew people. J and E and JE resulted. Eighth century B.C.

Second. The Prophetic Party under Josiah in 623 [B.C.E.] brought about the first step towards a Canonical Bible.

Third. During the exile and in the Persian period down to 385 [B.C.E.] the Pentateuch as we know it was given canonical standing.

Fourth. Between 300 B.C. and 165 [B.C.E.] or thereabouts the prophets were included, making the Law and the Prophets.

Fifth. Between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. the other writings were added, as a result against the reaction of the Christian movement.

Sixth. The Christian Old Testament included, besides the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible, several that were rejected in the Hebrew but were found in the Septuagint translation, which was the Bible of the Early Christians.

2. A. The Old Testament Canon

It is commonly accepted that there was a definite time when a certain fixed number of books known as the Old Testament were set aside and marked off from all other literature as peculiar in character, supernatural in origin, and designed for a special and peculiar purpose in the economy of man.

¹ There is a hand-written note on the top of the first page of this lecture, "April 24, 1951." This is evidence that Davis was using these materials during the winter/spring of 1951. It is not clear when he wrote them.

We have followed the history of the various elements which entered into the makeup of these books, and up to this point we have not found any such moment in history in which the people became conscious that they were handling a peculiar and fixed and authoritative collection of books such as might be called "Scripture." For a moment it seemed as if we had stumbled upon such a moment when the people accepted the Book of Instruction under Josiah—621 B.C., 2 Kings 22:1-10—after it was discovered in the Temple. But later events indicated that while a few prophets may have held to that view of the book, the majority of the people were not enough impressed to compel recognition of its peculiar teaching.

In this lecture we are seeking definitely to set forth the history of the events and present the time and place when the Hebrew people acknowledged in some way, or expressed by some act, a recognition of the limits and characteristics of the Hebrew Bible.

As might be expected this also is a process of evolution. There are faint and obscure traces of some such recognition of such a book, its qualities and its characteristics, but the clear definition is a very late event. We often hear people speak as if the Jewish people before the time of Christ were constant readers of the Old Testament. Such is not the case.

3. B. Canon

The word "canon" comes from the Greek "Kanon," which means "rule or law." In the sense in which it is used when we speak of the Bible Canon, or the Old Testament Canon, or the New Testament Canon, it means, "The Books of the Bible recognized by the Church as the inspired rule of faith and practice; also, the catalogue or list of these books, or one such book." (St. Dic.).

In other words, the dividing line between the canonical books and the ordinary books is one [of] the question of inspiration. To use the explanation given in Bennett and Adeney's introduction, "A Canon, or a collection of books distinguished from all others by unique inspiration and religious authority."²

² W.H. Bennett (1855-1920) and Walter F. Adeney (1849-1920), *A Biblical Introduction*, New York: Thomas Whittaker Inc., 1899, p. 12.

It is commonly accepted today that this idea of a peculiar collection of books, inspired and having special authority, had developed among the Jews by the time of the Christian era. But this general acceptance of a group of inspired books did not go so far as to come to an agreement upon the list of books to be included in the Canon until a century later. There was a great division of opinion between the Palestinian Jews and the Alexandrian Jews, with their Greek influence, as to what books should be included in the Canon. Among the Palestinian Jews the question as to whether Ezekiel, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther, Proverbs and the Song of Songs should be included in the Canon was a subject of debate until the Synod of Jamnia in 90 A.D.

Perhaps the best notion that we can get of the nature of the Canon as viewed in the past, and the easiest way to get a starting point in developing this line of thought tonight, will be to tell the legend of Ezra and the Great Synagogue, and the Book of Scripture. This legend is, however, the foundation of the popular belief concerning the time of closing [of] the Old Testament Canon. The substance of the legend, whether related directly to Ezra or indirectly through the great Synagogue is substantially the same. It is found in Second Esdras, or 4 Esdras.³

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, or as they were called more frequently, the Chaldeans, offered the explanation for a lack of an ancient Scripture. Tradition says that "The Law was Burnt." So, Ezra offered the prayer, "If I have found grace before Thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning which were written in thy law."⁴ Ezra's prayer is heard.

Thus, is the revelation which came to Ezra described in Esdras, 2 Esdras 14:

So, I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we went into the field, and remained there. And the next day, behold a voice called me, saying, Esdras, Open thy

³ According to Bennett and Adeney, "The Hebrew title of Chronicles is Dibhrê hay-Yamîm, or 'Annals;' whence E.V., Chronicles. ...In Hebrew and E.V. the other two books are styled Ezra and Nehemiah, originally Ezra-Nehemiah when by the name Ezra; when they were divided Nehemiah was a natural title for the second book. The Vulg. Styles them i. and ii. Esdras; ..." p. 108.

⁴ 2 Esdras 14:22.

mouth, and behold he reached me a full cup, which was full as it were with water, but the color of it was like fire. And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk of it, my heart uttered understanding, and wisdom grew in my breast, for my spirit preserved memory: And my mouth was opened and shut no more. The Highest gave understanding to the five men, and they wrote the wonderful visions of the night that were told, which they knew not (or, in letters which they understood not): and they sat forty days, and they wrote in the day, and at night they ate bread. As for me, I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue by night. In forty days they wrote ninety-four other readings, 204 books. And it came to pass when forty days were fulfilled, that the Highest spake, saying, The first that thou hast written publish openly, that the worthy and the unworthy may read it: But keep the seventy last, that thou mayest deliver them only to such as be wise among the people: For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge. 2(4) Esdras 14:37-47.

This legend was written at about 90 A.D. Whether it is an old legend, dating to a much earlier date, or simply a story arranged by the writer of 2 Esdras cannot be determined. It is the foundation, however, for the Orthodox idea that the Old Testament Canon was closed by Ezra. But a story of that character does not have very much weight in fixing an alleged historical fact of some 500 hundred years earlier. While this legend was accepted as history by later Christians, no mention is made in the Rabbinic Literature of the legend that Ezra was supernaturally empowered to recall to memory the destroyed scripture, but tradition says that he committed to writing a pure copy of them and deposited the copy in the Temple Courts. Irenaeus⁵ knows of some [of] the tradition. Circa 170 A.D. Origen⁶ says,

Either Ezra recalled these psalms also to memory along with the rest of the Scriptures, or the wise men of old among the Hebrews collected those that were current as each man's memory happened to serve him. Ryle 242.⁷

⁵ Irenaeus (c.130 A.D.-c.202) Greek Bishop known for among other things defining proto-orthodoxy.

⁶ Origen of Alexandria (c.185-c.253) early Christian scholar and theologian.

⁷ Herbert Edward Ryle (1856-1925) English Old Testament scholar and Anglican bishop. This quote is from his book, *The Canon of*

Passages from theologians and church historians all along the line down to the reformation hold to this legendary origin of the Old Testament Canon.

Another variation of this legend is in the form that the work was done by the men of the Great Synagogue. Thus, as an illustration, Brian Walton, Bishop of Chester, 1600-61:

The first and most famous edition of the books of the Old Testament was that of Ezra (whom the Jews call a second Moses) and the Great Sanhedrim, or the men of the Great Synagogue, after the return from Babylon. For as there no longer existed either the Temple or the Tabernacle, where the authentic copies had formerly been deposited, the sacred volumes were negligently kept all through the period of captivity. This being the case, Ezra and his companions collected the MSS from the various quarters, arranged them in order, and reduced them to the compass of a single volume. They removed the corruptions from which the text had suffered and restored it to its former pure state; and thus, they established the Canon. Their work of establishing the Canon possessed truly divine authority; for there belonged to the that council not only Ezra but also the last of the Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and (as some think) Daniel, etc. Ryle 252.⁸

Just one more illustration to see this idea carried to the limit.

Hottinger, in 1649, published *Thesaurus Philologicus*⁹ in which he says,

It has been an incontrovertible principle as well with Christians—those indeed who have not a fungus for a brain—as with Jews, that the Canon of the Old Testament

the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture, London: Macmillan and Co., 1895, p. 254.

⁸ Herbert Edward Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1895, pp. 262-263.

⁹ Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620-1667) Swiss philologist and theologian. His book *Thesaurus Philologicus seu Clavis Scripturae*, was first published in 1649.

was all, at one and the same time, established, with an authority absolutely divine, by Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue. Ryle 252.¹⁰

Such was the prevailing idea concerning the manner and the date of the closing of the Canon of the Old Testament. Here and there the historic accuracy of the explanation was questioned, but not with any great success until the latter part of the 19th century. It all rested on this story of a second Esdras written about 90 A.D. some five-hundred years after the events are said to have taken place.

4. C: [Historical Forces on the Evolution of the Bible, 621-0 B.C.E.]

Such is the old theory then, that the Canon was closed by Ezra and that he was supernaturally inspired in what he did.

There is no good foundation for that notion. Just what did take place may be obscure, but certainly that which has been held to have taken place did not.

In 621 [B.C.E.] Hilkiyah found the Book of the Law in the Temple while certain repairs were being made. This caused a great reformation that was very short lived. In 597 [B.C.E.] the first group of Hebrews went to Babylon on the Exile. In 586 [B.C.E.], after the city of Jerusalem had been sacked and the Temple burned, a second, and very much larger number went to Babylon. While there is no direct evidence, yet there is every reason to believe that these exiles had with them in some form or other the JE document, and the Book of Instruction, the kernel of Deuteronomy. They also doubtless had books of the prophetic writings, like some of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, etc. But neither these old documents nor the Book of the Law had any particular standing among the people at large. The burden of the exilic prophets is the apostacy of the people. Among those who belonged to the Prophetic Party, the Book of Instruction probably was held in peculiar regard, and used as the modern Orthodox Christian uses the bible, as authority that cannot be questioned. In 536 [B.C.E.] Cyrus captured Babylon, and the next year issued a decree which permitted the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, very few of them availed

¹⁰ Herbert Edward Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1895, p. 263.

themselves of this opportunity, upon which fact there hangs many interesting threads of speculation.

At this point it is necessary to make a general observation. In studying the history of the Bible, the Bible people, and the development of Christianity, students in the past have paid very little attention to the last four hundred years before Christ, for they regarded them as barren and profitless period of history. The reason why these four centuries were neglected was because they believed the Legend about Ezra and the Old Testament Canon. They thought that by 444 B.C. the Old Testament as we know it now was completed and handed forth to the Jews. So, in ancient biblical history this period remains a blank. As a matter of fact, most of the books of the Old Testament were written after that date, and practically speaking every single book was edited and put into the shape in which we now know it after that date.

But the new point of view has made this period one of the most interesting and fascinating periods of ancient history. In the movements of this period, we not only find our understanding of the formation of the Bible, but also, we see working the forces that produced Christianity. This latter will be one of the points that must come to light somewhat tonight.

The period from 536 B.C. to the time of Christ is naturally divided into three parts.

First, 536 to 333 [B.C.E.], during which the Persians were the controllers of the destinies, and the political masters of the Jewish people. During this period of two hundred years the interplay of the one people upon the other, and the influence of the Persian religion upon Jewish thought, were profoundly significant forces. For example, the idea of the resurrection, which was prominent in Christianity, came into the Jewish line of development from the Persian religion.

In 333 [B.C.E.] or thereabouts Alexander of Macedon defeated the Persians and Palestine, and the Jewish people had a new master, the great Greek nation. Greece thus held sway until 63 B.C. when Pompey appeared in Syria, and Rome became the master, and in 40 B.C. Herod was appointed King of Judea by the Roman Senate. During this Grecian period the changes and developments of the most interesting character, and most far-reaching significance were taking place. Two ideas of profound significance in early Christianity are traceable to this period. One, is the Messianic idea, and the other the Logos idea. The one is probably natural

to Judaism, and the other is a contribution of Greek philosophy to Christian thought.

Roman Period. With the Roman Period we have very little to do so far as the concerns of this lecture are concerned. It begins in 63 B.C.

In the discussion of the formation of the Canon we must bear in mind this background. Babylonian influence, Persian influence, Greek influence, and Roman.

Second. One other factor must be noted. The division of the Jews into two factions, those of the dispersion, and those who were left at home. The Samaritans, so looked down upon by the New Testament writers, were the Israelites who had remained in Palestine, the survivors of the old Northern Kingdom. They had not come in contact with the Babylonians, or the Persians, or the Greeks in any such manner as those Jews had who had been exiled. The power of intellectual absorption which has been the characteristic of the Jewish people of the dispersion registered itself in the evolution of the religious ritual, and religious literature that Judaism developed. We shall be dealing almost entirely with those Jews who had been under the influence of foreign people.

5. D: [Establishing the Pentateuch as Canonical Scripture]

As has been pointed out before, the Jewish Scripture, or the Old Testament, was divided into three sections.

The first section was the Law. It included the first five books of the O.T., or the Pentateuch, as it was called by the Greek-speaking Jews.

The second section was the Prophets. They were divided into the former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and the latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve.

Then came the "other writings," including the Psalms, Chronicles, Job, Proverbs, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther.

This constituted the Hebrew Bible. It contained 24 books, sometimes in the lists it was grouped as 22 because there were 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

We count the same number of books as 39, dividing them up, and counting the twelve minor prophets as one book each.

The Christians, i.e., the early Christians, included in the Bible many other books, 12 or 14 books which it has been the custom of the Protestant world to speak of as Apocrypha. They were accepted as scripture by the early Christian Church, and also by the Catholic Church, and are truly representative of that spirit of extra canonical Judaism that developed into Christianity.

As we have said, in the year 621 [B.C.E.] when Hilkiyah found the Book of Instruction in the Temple, we have the first trace of an authoritative book among the Jews. That was a small book, now a part of Deuteronomy.

In 597 [B.C.E.] the first contingent of Jews was taken to Babylon in exile. In 586 [B.C.E.] the second group went. Practically, the dominant and certainly the most influential portion of the Jews were now living in foreign lands under strange customs, and subject to new influences. The Prophetic Party of the exiles took great interest in the literary and ritualistic tradition of the exile. They gathered together, and probably re-edited and combined the J, E, and Deuteronomy into one book. It is possible that those who returned to Jerusalem after the fall of Babylon in 539 [B.C.E.] may have accorded to this collection of writings [an] authority akin to canonical power. That is not certain.

This is the period of Persian domination that we are dealing with. The important historical facts to be remembered [include] the dedication of the second Temple [in] 516 [B.C.E.]. Second, the mission of Nehemiah, when the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, and the promulgation of the Priestly narrative of the Pentateuch. These two events symbolize the development of Judaism during the Persian period. The best scholars date the rebuilding of the Temple at 385 [B.C.E.] and the promulgation of the Priestly laws at the same date.

Between 385 and 350 B.C. the Priestly Code was combined with the other documents of the Pentateuch and we have the Pentateuch substantially as it is today.

During this same period also, we have taking place that process by which the Pentateuch came to be recognized as Canonical Scripture. It was a gradual and almost unconscious process. At the beginning of the period parts of it did not exist. By the

close of the period, it had become a canonical authority. Just the details of the process we do not know. In the book of Nehemiah, chapters 8 to 10, there is given an account of an event which gives a hint as to what was taking place. Nehemiah was a clerk of importance under King Artaxerxes. It is not stated whether it was under Artaxerxes II or III, hence the difficulty of dating Nehemiah's activities. But it is the judgement of many of the best scholars that in the early part of the fourth century before Christ, 385, this rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem, and the promulgation of the Priestly code took place.

This Priestly code thus promulgated betrays great race consciousness such as the patriotic exiles would develop. It emphasizes the Temple worship, especially it emphasizes the sin of marrying with non-Jewish people. That was absolutely forbidden. The keeping of the Sabbath was enjoined. In other words, this event, both the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the reading of the Law, was an expression of race consciousness, race purity, religious exclusiveness. Of this spirit, the ancient traditions, as embodied in the documents J and E and in the Deuteronomy were the monument. And this new revised code of the ritual, with its new declaration of faith in Yahweh was the embodiment. The Pentateuch had now become the canonical Torah, whose authority carried great weight, if not final influence.

I have said that this first canonical Bible was an accomplished fact by about 350 B.C. It is possible to date it 75 years earlier, or shortly after 432 B.C. But many very difficult facts have to be overlooked in order to do this. In short, the first Canon of Scripture, the Pentateuch, was completed about 350 [B.C.E.]. Between the dates 623 and 385 [B.C.E.] the evolution of the written authoritative book of the Law or Torah was accomplished.

6. E. [Adding the Prophets to the Pentateuch as Canonical Scripture]

Meanwhile another line of literature had been collecting. It was not yet canonical. In fact, much of it, instead of being canonical, was regarded as very heretical and unpatriotic. These books were the Prophets. The historic books of the Prophets, Kings, Samuel, Joshua, Judges, had been collected and edited during the exile by the Deuteronomic and then by the Priestly Party. In proportion as these documents threw the glory of

Israel in relief against the background of heathen history, just in that proportion they were revered and loved by the patriotic Jew. For that reason, they came in time to have a place of great importance in the Jewish mind. As the political aspects of Jewish life seemed to become less encouraging, so its past history loomed larger and larger in their minds. They are not very good history, but they were well adapted to teach the Jews veneration for the law, and the God of the Jews. They found a place in the second group of writings that made up the Bible, the Prophets. They formed a group by themselves and were known as the "former Prophets."

Then the collection of writings or prophecies delivered at various times between 743 B.C. and 350 B.C. were collected in one book under the heading Isaiah. Jeremiah's prophecies and writings about him were collected under Jeremiah. The same may be said of Ezekiel. Then a number of other prophets were included in "The Twelve." Gradually these eight books came to have standing on a par with the Torah. The pressure that forced these into the canon is doubtless the influence of the early Greek period. Prior to 385 [B.C.E.] there is no evidence whatever of the prophets being regarded as inspired writers, and their writings quoted by the Jewish people as they had become in the habit of quoting their Torah in the years after exile. If the Torah, as canonical Scripture, was the product of the exile and Persian period, then we may say that the Prophets were accepted into the canon as a result of the Greek influence. This will appear more clearly a little later. Professor Ryle of King's College Cambridge, who writes from a conservative point of view, says that the earliest date at which the Prophets could have begun to be recognized as canonical could not be earlier than 300 B.C. He asks the question as to whether it might not have been the spread of Hellenic culture which contributed the crowing influence to the desire of the Jewish community to expand the limits of their sacred literature, and to admit the writings of the prophets, for purposes of public readings in the Synagogue.¹¹

But the first definite reference to any of these names is found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, one of the O.T. Apocrypha where Jesus, the son of Sirach, in his eulogy of famous men speaks of

¹¹ Herbert Edward Ryle (1856-1925) English Old Testament scholar and Anglican bishop. Davis likely is taking this from his book, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1895.

events as recorded in Joshua, Samuel and Kings, and refers to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve.¹² This book was written about 180 B.C. While it does [not] make any direct statement as to the relation of the two sections, the Law and the Prophets, yet it does not make any distinctions between them.

The second evidence is that Daniel, which was written 165 B.C., in referring to an incident in Jeremiah, speaks of "the Books."

Third. In the introduction to Ecclesiasticus, which was written in 132 B.C. the writer distinctly refers to "The Law and The Prophets," the earliest known use of the phrase.

Thus, it seems probably that the Hebrew Scripture was enlarged by 180 B.C. so as to include within the sacred both the Law and the Prophets, thus making 13 books in all, as the Jewish Bible at this time.

The Samaritans never enlarged their Bible, but always clung tenaciously to the Torah or Pentateuch.

7. F: [Adding the Other Writings to the Pentateuch and the Prophets as Canonical Scripture]

That same introduction to Ecclesiasticus mentions also besides the Law and the Prophets, "Other Writings." This group consisted of the following, Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles or Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra (including Nehemiah), Chronicles.

Some of the dates of this group of books are interesting. For example, Proverbs, a collection of wisdom, literature and sayings, was completed about 200 B.C. Ecclesiastes, 180 B.C. The book of Daniel, 165 B.C. Ruth 350 [B.C.E.] or thereabouts.

The book of Ruth illustrates a fundamental principle in the development of a literature. It was written to express the idea of the beauty, and the right of marriage with non-Jewish people. In purpose and teaching it was directly opposed to the Priestly teaching concerning mixed marriages and was written to oppose

¹² See Herbert Edward Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture*, London: Macmillan and Co., pp. 119-120.

that idea. Yet a couple centuries later it is included in the Canon, and of inspired authority.

This third group of writings was included in the canon after 165 B.C. and prior to about 90 A.D. It is probably that the official action of the Jewish Church defining and limiting the canon of the Old Testament, and thus including the third group of writings, came about as a result of the growing opposition between conservative Judaism and heretical Christianity.

At least the first Rabbinical Council of Jamnia, about 100 A.D., passed on the Canon of the Old Testament, leaving it as we have just seen. 24 books, in three parts, Law, Prophets and Other Writings. In this council there was a difference of opinion over the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The Book of second Esdras, written about 90 A.D., gives the canonical list as 24. Josephus, writing about 90 A.D. gives the list as 22. Possibly running Ruth as a part of Judges, and Lamentations as part of Jeremiah, so as to have just 22 books. This reason is doubtful. Alphabet.

By the year 200 A.D. the question of the Hebrew Canon was settled, and probably much earlier than then any serious questioning of the right of the books to a place in the canon had ceased among the Hebrews. Ezekiel, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Esther were disputed books to a late day.

8. G: [Additional Old Testament Books in Bible of the Early Christian Movement]

I have said that the closing of the Old Testament canon was the reaction within the Jewish Synagogue of the Christian movement without. Outside of Palestine, the Christians were either Greek-speaking Jews or Gentiles. The language of the early Christian movement was Greek. Their Bible was a Greek translation of the Hebrew books. They represented the broad view of the travelling world as opposed to the provincial view of Palestinian Judaism. In their Bible, the LXX, the Greek translation, they included many books not found in the Hebrew Bible at all, but distinctly rejected by the Hebrews.

So, there were really two Old Testaments, one, the Palestinian, and the other, the Alexandrian Bible. The latter represented the Greek influence upon Judaism.

This larger, or Alexandrian, Old Testament is the Bible of the larger portion of the Early Christian Church. They accepted not

only those books which the Jews accepted but several others, Esdras 1 and 2, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, with the epistle of Jeremiah, the Song of the Three Children, the Story of Susanna, the Idol bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Mannassa, Maccabees 1 and 2.

In the Bible of the Catholic Church these are a part of the Bible and represent a true Christian tradition.

In the early Christian Church this LXX translation was used by the Christians.

The Church fathers quoted from these books as well as from the other Old Testament books. First and second Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius, and the Teachings of the Twelve contain allusions to the books with the same sort of introduction as is used in quotations from canonical books.

Except in such cases as where the scholars went back to the Hebrew Bible for authority, the Christian Bible has included these Apocryphal books. They represent the Hebrew Bible plus what the early Christian movement, or perhaps the Graeco-Jewish movement that culminated in Christianity, would by nature have added to the Old Hebrew Bible. An understanding of them is essential to a good understanding of the spirit of the early Christian movement.