

**GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
TO THE OLD TESTAMENT;  
THE CANON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649388332

General introduction to the Old Testament; the canon by William Henry Green

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BY

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NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1906

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TROW DIRECTORY  
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY  
NEW YORK

## PREFACE

ANY ONE who addresses himself to the study of the Old Testament will desire first to know something of its character. It comes to us as a collection of books which have been and still are esteemed peculiarly sacred. How did they come to be so regarded? Is it due simply to a veneration for antiquity? Is this a collection of the literature of ancient Israel, which later generations prized as a relic of early ages? Is it a body of Hebrew literature to which sanctity was attributed because of its being written in the sacred tongue? Is it a collection of the books containing the best thoughts of the most enlightened men of the Israelitish nation, embodying their religious faith and their conceptions of human duty? Or is it more than all this? Is it the record of a divine revelation, made through duly authorized and accredited messengers sent of God for this purpose?

The first topic which is considered in this volume is accordingly that of the Canon of the Old Testament, which is here treated not theologically but historically. We meet at the outset two opposing views of the growth of the canon: one contained in the statements of the Old Testament itself, the other in the theories of modern critics, based upon the conception that these books gradually acquired a sacredness which did not at first belong to them, and which did not enter into



the purpose for which they were written. This is tested on the one hand by the claims which the various writers make for themselves, and on the other by the regard shown for these books by those to whom they were originally given. The various arguments urged by critics in defence of their position that the canon was not completed nor the collection made until several centuries after the time traditionally fixed and currently believed are considered; and reasons are given to show that it might have been and probably was collected by Ezra and Nehemiah or in their time.

The question then arises as to the books of which the Old Testament properly consists. Can the books of which it was originally composed be certainly identified? And are they the same that are now in the Old Testament as we possess it, and neither more nor less? This is answered by tracing in succession the Old Testament as it was accepted by the Jews, as it was sanctioned by our Lord and the inspired writers of the New Testament, and as it has been received in the Christian Church from the beginning. The Apocrypha though declared to be canonical by the Council of Trent, and accepted as such by the Roman Catholic Church, are excluded from the canon by its history traced in the manner just suggested as well as by the character of their contents, which is incompatible with the idea of their authors being divinely inspired.

PRINCETON, N. J.,  
October 3, 1898.

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