

**THE ORIGIN OF THE CANON
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT:
AN HISTORICO-CRITICAL
ENQUIRY**

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The Origin of the Canon of the Old Testament: An Historico-Critical Enquiry by G. Wildeboer

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OF THE
Canon of the Old Testament.

An Historico-Critical Enquiry

BY

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

In publishing this investigation of the origin of the Canon of the Old Testament the author hopes in some measure to supply a lack. Of course, a great deal has been written about the Canon, as may be seen from the literature at the end of Strack's article, "Kanon" in Herzog's Real-Encyclopaedie [2 ed. VII. p. 45 f.], and every work on Introduction has something on the subject. To name only the best of much that is good, I refer to the close of the third part of Prof. Kuenen's Historisch-Kritisch Onderzoek naar het Ontstaan en de Verzameling van de Boeken des Ouden Verbonds, Leiden, 1865, III. p. 394-450. What is there given is almost absolutely complete, and it is needless to say that all the material has been subjected to most thorough criticism.

I have felt constrained, however, to offer something additional and something of a different kind. Something additional; because, naturally, a quarter of a century after Kuenen's excellent work, there is somewhat more to be said. But my purpose was, also, to publish a work of somewhat different character. I do not refer here to more or less considerable differences of opinion, but to the different plan of the work. I have tried to arrive

at a tenable conception of the history of canonization, and have given particular attention to the causes and motives which were operative in it.* Much which was out of place in an Introduction may be properly discussed here. To this fact paragraphs such as the eighth, on the Idea of Canonicity in the Jewish Schools, and the twelfth, owe their existence. I have also introduced some additional material, and, in particular, have treated with some fulness the evidence afforded by the New Testament. But in this respect the book may speak for itself.

It seemed to me desirable that a volume of moderate size should be published on the origin of the Canon of the Old Testament. I hope that it may prove to be a plain guide for students in their studies, and one that, at the same time, stimulates them to go further into the history of the origin of the books of the Bible. How closely both the external and the internal history of the Canon is connected with this, will be apparent at every step.

I hope that my book may come also into the hands of such as have already left the University. Many of them cannot spare the time to follow the isagogic studies about the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old Testament. But it is certainly possible to study a book

* I need not say—for reasons which will be obvious in the following pages—that I entirely disagree with Geiger, when he writes (*Nachgelassene Schriften*, 1876, IV, p. 17): "So ist die ganze weit ausgespinnene Untersuchung über den Kanon und die kritische Resultate, die man daran knüpfte, ein Schaumgebilde." I believe that the historical evidence, properly examined, enables us to form an idea of the history which in the main satisfies the demands of science.

like this of scarcely a hundred and fifty pages. And a good insight into the way in which the books of the Old Testament were brought together is a solid basis for a sound idea of the Bible.

I am aware that this volume contains many truths which are unwelcome to many even among Theologians. What do I expect of them? Let me not answer this question, but rather say what I hope from them. I hope that they will seriously examine such views as I present, and if they think it their duty to do so, will controvert them with solid arguments.

Finally, whatever may be done, I still steadfastly believe with the author of 3 (1) Esdras the words which he makes Zerubbabel address to King Darius (3, 12): "Truth is victorious over all." And the word of the people (4, 41), which has passed into a proverb, remains true: "Great is truth, and exceeding powerful."

GRONINGEN, May 11, 1889.

G. WILDEBOER.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

When, in Autumn of 1889, my investigation of the Origin of the Canon of the Old Testament appeared, I thought that by the publication of it a lack would be supplied. I hoped that my work would be appreciated by students of theology, and that some ministers also might take note of it.

This hope has not been disappointed; indeed, the result has far surpassed my expectation. In our own country and beyond our borders, the book has been kindly received and favorably criticised. It sold so rapidly that within a year the publisher began to talk of a second impression; and now after less than a year and a half, I send out this second edition.

For this edition I have gratefully made use of the observations and animadversions of my various critics. In part I could not but recognize the justice of these criticisms, and to them my work is indebted for many improvements. In part they gave me occasion to express myself more clearly or to give my reasons more explicitly. For this, too, notwithstanding our difference of opinion, I am under obligations to them.

I have been able also to take note of the latest work

on this subject, by Professor Frants Buhl, Kanon und Text des Alten Testaments, Leipzig, 1891. On many points he expresses his agreement with me; on some he is of a different opinion. His arguments have not convinced me, for reasons which I have given in their place. Various additions and corrections, of greater or less magnitude, which upon reperusal appeared to me necessary, have been embodied in this second edition.

What is now offered to the theological public may thus properly be called a revised and enlarged edition.

With gratitude and confidence I commend my work to the attention of all who are interested in Old Testament investigation.

GRONINGEN, Jan. 3, 1891.

G. WILDEBOER.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

Professor Wildeboer's Historico-Critical Enquiry into the Origin of the Old Testament Canon has deservedly received high commendation from scholars of different countries and various schools. Since its first publication in 1889 it has passed through a second edition in the original (1891) and has been translated into German (Gotha: Perthes, 1891); and the wish has been frequently expressed that it might be made accessible to English students also. When it first came out there was no other work of the kind which satisfactorily represented the present state of Old Testament learning. Buhl's excellent little book, Den Gammeltestamentlige Skriftoverlevering, &c. (Kopenhagen, 1885), seems hardly to have been known outside the limits of his own country. Since that time have appeared Professor Buhl's Kanon und Text des Alten Testaments (Leipzig, 1891), and Professor Ryle's Canon of the Old Testament (London & New York, 1892). The former has also been translated into English, by the Rev. John Macpherson; Canon and Text of the Old Testament (Edinburgh, 1892). The scope and plan of these works are, however, so different from those of the present volume that they do not render a translation