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Outline for a History of the Old Testament Canon

By RUDOLPH GEHLE

At one time or another all of us have picked up a magazine to find an advertisement screaming at us that we now have a chance to buy the missing pages from our Bible, pages that for centuries have been forbidden or lost, but now available for a few cents. As a result many have asked the question: Is our Bible really complete? Is something essential perhaps missing from our Bible as we have it?

Again, we are reminded that the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church contains books that are not in the Bible of the Protestants. Is our Bible complete? Does it contain everything that God has given to man by inspiration? Can we know the whole will of God from our Bible?

These are some of the questions that will come to mind whenever we think of our Bible from the viewpoint of history. And there are other questions that come to mind in this connection also: Why are the books which we call our Bible united in one Volume? When and how did this come about? Do all the books which we find in our Bible rightfully belong there?

The importance of having an answer to these and similar questions is very aptly stated in the *Concordia Bible Teacher* (January, 1940, p. 54): "If our Christian faith is to rest on a firm foundation, we must be certain that the whole Bible is the Word of God and that it contains everything that God has revealed to His Church for the salvation of man. It is therefore important for us to know how the 66 inspired writings

got into the Bible and why we can be sure that we have the complete Holy Scriptures."

It is the purpose and aim of this essay to trace the history of the Old Testament Canon, and to show that all of the inspired writings are in that canon, as we have it. It will be self-evident that within the scope of this essay we cannot possibly touch on all of the details involved in a scientific presentation of the subject, but we shall try to present as clearly as possible all that is necessary to prove our position. We will divide the subject-matter into these four chief parts: I. The formation of the canon; II. The division of the canon; III. When and by whom the canon was collected; IV. The extent of the canon.

I. THE FORMATION OF THE CANON

1. THE TERM CANON

It will be well to become clear on the term *canon* before we go into the discussion of our subject proper. The term is derived from the Greek word *κανών*, which means, simply, a reed, or a straight rod; next it is applied to a rod used in measuring. Metaphorically it is applied to anything that serves as a rule, or standard, or principle. The word occurs several times in the New Testament, *e. g.*, Gal. 6:16; 2 Cor. 10:13-16.

We also find this word in combination with the term *Scripture* — Canon of Scripture. This term became the accepted designation of that body of writings which constitutes the inspired rule of faith and practice. *Concordia Cyclopedia* (p. 73) defines the term thus: "The authoritative standard of faith and life, composed of those writings which have been given for this purpose by divine inspiration." Whether, when first used, the term implied simply a "catalog," or "list," of sacred books is a debated question, but there is no doubt that in ecclesiastical usage the idea of a regulative norm is associated with it. So today the essential meaning of the term *Canon of Scripture* is: A divine standard "by which we decide all questions of faith and duty, religion and ethics."

2. THE TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE

In discussing the history of the formation of the canon we naturally turn first to the Bible itself to see what is said there that bears on the subject. The Bible does not claim to give all the historical evidence on any particular subject, and it does

not give us a complete history of the canon. But it does give us some important statements which cannot be ignored in our study.

In the books of the Pentateuch, always ascribed to Moses by conservative scholars and critics, we read the command of God to Moses many times: "Write this for a memorial in a book" (Ex. 17:14). "Write thou these words" (Ex. 34:27). And almost as often we read, "And Moses wrote" (Ex. 24:4), showing that Moses was an obedient servant and did just as the Lord commanded. And when the end of Moses' life drew near, we are given this information:

Deut. 31:9: "And Moses wrote this Law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel."

Deut. 31:24-26: "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this Law in a book until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the Law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

Through Moses the people of Israel were instructed to regard the books which he had given them as the revealed will of God, the Law of their Lord, which was to rule all their actions. Looking forward to the time when a king should rule over Israel, Moses issues these instructions: "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this Law in a book out of that which is before the priests, the Levites" (Deut. 17:18-19). In other words, every king of Israel was to make this Law, written by Moses and delivered by him to the priests for safekeeping, his guide for his own life and for ruling the people.

To the priests this command is given: "At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord, thy God, in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this Law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear and that they may learn and fear the Lord, your God, and observe to do all the words of this Law and that their children, which have

not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord, your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deut. 31:10-13). This instruction of Moses plainly states that *all* the people are to learn the contents of this Law that they may know what God demands of them and how they may serve the Lord, their God.

Later on, when Joshua took over the leadership of Israel, he is instructed, in no unmistakable terms, closely to follow the requirements of the Law which Moses had given the people. He is told: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the Law which Moses, My servant, commanded thee. Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1:7-8).

In the years that followed, this Law of Moses was regarded by the people of Israel as divinely authoritative. This was true even in the most degenerate times of the history of Israel. Whenever and wherever this Law was presented, the people regarded it as the Law of God, a law that had divine authority. Even a cursory reading of Israel's history will illustrate this point. (Cp. these passages: Josh. 11:15; Judg. 3:4; 1 Sam. 15; 1 Kings 2:3; 3:14; 2 Kings 14:6; 22:13; 23:25.)

Of the kings who ruled after Josiah we read that they "did evil in the sight of the Lord." And the evil which they did was that they did not live according to the Law which Moses had given. So God began His threatened punishment of the people by sending them into the Babylonian captivity. During these years of captivity the people did not change their estimate of the Book of the Law given them by Moses. It was still the Law of God, which had to be obeyed. And when the first colony of these exiles returned to Canaan, they brought with them the Book of the Law of Moses and submitted to it as having divine authority. (Cp. Ezra 3:2; 6:16-18; Neh. 8; 10:28-29; 13:1-3.)

For all practical purposes the Book of the Law was complete when Moses delivered it to the priests and Levites for preservation in the sanctuary. And this Law was never

changed or revised. We do, however, read of an addition to the Book of the Law by Joshua. But this addition did not change anything that had been previously written. When at the end of the conquest of Canaan Joshua gathered the people together and rehearsed the wonderful works of God, he pledged them to worship and serve this Lord Jehovah, and a stone was set up as a memorial to remind the people of their pledge. Then we are told: "And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God" (Josh. 24:26). We might call this an appropriate appendix to the Book of the Law. After this we find no mention of any further addition.

However, in 1 Sam. 10:25 we find a statement which has a very important bearing on our subject. In this passage we read: "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the Lord." Israel was embarking upon a new form of government. For the first time in their history they were having a king at their head. So Samuel, having been their leader in the past and being God's Prophet, expounded to the people the regulations for this new form of government. He did not do this only orally, but also wrote the regulations and then deposited this document in the tabernacle for safekeeping. In this connection Green remarks: "It has sometimes been inferred that what was thus done with a paper of national importance must *a fortiori* have been also done with each fresh addition to the volume of God's revelation; and as a complete canon of Scripture was preserved in the second temple, so the pre-exilic sanctuary must have contained a standard copy, not merely of the law of Moses, but of the whole Word of God, as far as it was written. There is, however, no historical confirmation of this conjecture" (*General Introduction to the O. T. Canon*, page 14).

These books were kept somewhere in the tabernacle, and the priests were the custodians of this sacred library. After the Temple was built by Solomon, the sacred writings were also transferred to the Temple, the priests remaining the custodians. These books were probably not kept "in" the Ark of the Covenant, but "by the side" of the ark. This seems to be the better translation of קִיָּבָה (Deut. 31:26), as is also indicated by 2 Kings 22:8 and 1 Kings 8:9.

The copy or copies of these books that reposed in the

Temple probably perished when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and burned the Temple. (2 Kings 25:9.) But this fact does not necessarily involve the destruction of the Book of the Law itself. Many copies of the Law must have existed besides the official copy kept in the Temple. According to Deut. 17:18 every king was to have a copy made for his own personal use, and many of the kings are commended for keeping the Law. They must have had personal copies to become acquainted with its requirements. From time to time the people are admonished to walk according to the Law of the Lord (1 Kings 8:61), and there are many expressions in the Psalms which indicate a general affection for the Law among the people (Ps. 1; 19:7 ff.). Now, the people could not have been very well acquainted with the Law if there had been only one copy, and that reposing in the Temple. Or when we note the warnings and rebukes and exhortations of the prophets addressed to the people, these certainly imply that the people were acquainted with the Law and that it was an acquaintance which could be produced only by its widespread diffusion among them. Then, when the exiles returned from the Babylonian captivity, they brought with them copies of the Law and regarded them as having divine authority. (Ezra 3:2; 6:18; 7:14.) And, finally, 1 Macc. informs us that in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 175—164 B. C.) many of the people possessed copies of the Law. 1 Macc. 1:56-57: "And when they had rent in pieces the Books of the Law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And wheresoever was found with any the Book of the Testament, or if any consented to the Law, the king's commandment was that they should put him to death."

Thus we find that through all these years of varying conditions and fortunes of the people of Israel the Law neither perished nor lost its authority. God, who gave this Law, and commanded it to be written, also wonderfully preserved it from destruction.

But we know that the Law was not the only book in the Old Testament Canon given by inspiration and invested with divine authority. There were also the books of the Prophets and the other miscellaneous books, all gathered together in the canon. We must remember that the Prophets were the acknowledged messengers of Jehovah and that the

people accepted them as men who spoke the Lord's bidding. What these Prophets uttered was the Word of Jehovah and the Law of God. The people accepted their messages as just that, and the Prophets claimed this authority. (Is. 1:10.) These messages naturally carried the same authority whether delivered orally or committed to writing. And so the books of the Prophets that were written from time to time also formed a part of the revealed will of God and of necessity belonged to the canonical Scriptures, which were accepted by the people as the authoritative revelation of the divine will.

Summarizing this section, we note that the Book of the Law, which God commanded Moses to write, was carefully preserved in the tabernacle under the watchful eyes of the priests as custodians; that numerous copies of the Law were made and became widely distributed among the people, so that they were generally quite well acquainted with it; and that it never ceased to be regarded as having divine authority. The other books which form a part of the Old Testament Canon were no doubt preserved in the same manner as the document mentioned in 1 Sam. 10:25, though we have no confirmation of this conjecture in the Bible or in history. And since the Prophets were the recognized messengers of Jehovah, their messages, oral or written, necessarily belonged to the Canon of Scripture; and it is only natural that a real effort should have been made to preserve these messages for future use and study.

3. THE CRITICAL THEORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE CANON

Now that we have considered the testimony of the Bible with respect to the formation of the canon, it behooves us to turn also to the testimony of those who hold the extreme opposite view, namely, the testimony of the higher critics and their theory of the formation of the canon. In this section we cannot go into all the details and reasonings of the critical theories. We intend to give you the theory only in broad outline and as simply as possible. Our presentation of the critical theory will be condensed from the condensed report of Green (*op. cit.*, p. 19 ff.).

Eichhorn is usually called the "Father of Higher Criticism." In the beginning he admitted that the laws of Moses were actually written by Moses and deposited by him in the sanctuary and were divinely authoritative. But it was not long

until the critics had entirely abandoned the belief in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and the attitude of the critics changed as often as a new theory was evolved.

We may outline the present theory about like this (Green): The work of Moses was not the writing of laws and regulations for the people, but merely the establishing of institutions and customs. After his death attempts were made to reduce his laws and ordinances to writing for public or private use. But the idea of these men was not to produce a body of laws that should be complete and be universally accepted as authoritative. This point was important because, as time went on, other and more complete collections of these laws and regulations might be made. And when in the time of King Josiah, who began to rule about 639 B. C., the Book of the Law was found (2 Kings 22:8), this book was the culmination of all the attempts made to that time to write down these ordinances for the people's use. In this book the past experiences of the people and the instructions of the Prophets were adapted to present needs. The book which was found at that time was Deuteronomy. This was the first written Law with canonical authority.¹ Then, during the exile, the Pentateuch was completed. This was the Book of the Law that was brought to Jerusalem by Ezra and was read to the people, and the people pledged themselves to observe its commands. (Neh. 8—10.) This action of Ezra and the people made the Pentateuch canonical. This, the Pentateuch, the critics say, was the first canon. It was all that was regarded as canonical and authoritative in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The books of the Prophets form a second canon, and they were incorporated with the first at a later date. At first these books of the Prophets were privately circulated. They were highly esteemed by the people who read them. But these books of the Prophets possessed no public official authority until they were united with the canon. Quite some time after the formation of the first canon this second canon, containing the books of the Prophets, was completed and added to the first. So now the canon contained the Law and the Prophets. For some time to come these were all the books that were reckoned as canonical.

¹ Made canonical by the king and the people pledging themselves to obey the commands contained in this book. (2 Kings 23:1-3.)

Still later a third canon was formed. This canon contained books that were thought worthy of being associated with the two preceding collections. Since the books in this last group were of a somewhat miscellaneous character, they were simply called *Ketubim*, "writings"; or in Greek ἀγιόγραφα, "sacred writings." And so, by successive steps in the course of time, the canon reached its final form — containing the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

This is the *theory* of the critics. And the critics themselves admit that they have no historical evidence proving these successive stages in the formation of the canon. Listen to one of them (Wildeboer, *The Origin of the Canon*) say (p. 114): "We have not at our command for the history of the canonization of the second division of the Old Testament books any such historical testimony as we have for those of the Law." Page 136: "Direct historical statements about the third collection of the Old Testament Scriptures are wanting, as in the case of the second."

If the critics have no historical testimony, on what do they base their theories for the formation of the canon? Here are a few of the points advanced by the critics to *prove* their theory:

1. A number of the books of the O. T. were not in existence at the time of Ezra, when the Law was made canonical. And books not in existence could not possibly have been included in the canon. So, for example, Ezra, Chronicles, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, and some of the psalms are referred to later periods.

2. The threefold division of the O. T. affords a clue to the forming of the canon.² This division is of such a nature that it can't possibly represent anything except three distinct and successive stages in the work of collecting the canon. For in this threefold division there is no consistent principle of classification of the books, as one would expect if the canon had been arranged at one time by one man or by one group of men. There are some books in the third division that should have been classed in the second; *e. g.*, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles contain history and should be in the second division with Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Again, Daniel should

² Law, Prophets, Writings.

properly be in the second division with the rest of the Prophets. But, as it is, we find all of these books in the third division. And the only possible solution the critics can find for this phenomenon is this: The first two canons were already closed when these books were written and could not be reopened, hence they had to be placed at the end of the third canon, the only one still open for further additions.

3. The Samaritans recognized only the Pentateuch. From this the critics infer that their reception of the Pentateuch dates from a time when this was the *only canon* of the Jews. Later on, their hostility toward the Jews prevented the Samaritans from accepting the further additions to the Jewish canon.

4. The lessons that were read in the synagog were at first taken exclusively from the Pentateuch. Afterwards some were added that were taken from the Prophets. The Ketubim were used only on special occasions, and not in the regular Sabbath reading of the Scriptures. This fact the critics can best explain in this way: The Law was canonical first, then the Prophets became canonical, and finally also the Ketubim were added.

This is the theory which the modern higher critics offer on the formation of the canon, and these are some of the points which they set down as proof that their theory is correct or, at least, feasible. But this theory lacks conviction. Even with only a superficial examination some mere assertions, personal opinions, and speculative statements can be detected. This theory will not stand up under careful scientific investigation of the historical facts. This has been brought to light many times by conservative, believing scholars and critics. Some of the claims of the critics and the proofs they offer for their position will be looked into in later sections and exposed.

4. THE DETERMINING PRINCIPLE IN THE FORMATION OF THE CANON

The critical theory which we have just discussed rests on a false notion regarding the real character of the Canon and regarding the determining principle followed in making the collection. The fundamental error of the critics is the assumption that the books of the Old Testament were not written with the express design and purpose of being held sacred and

divinely authoritative; but that gradually, in the course of time, they came to be treated with veneration and so received their sacred and authoritative character.

Ewald remarks (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 26): "It lies in the original nature of all sacred writings that they became sacred without intending it and without, in human fashion, being planned to become so. . . . When the first active life ceases and men have to look back upon it as the model, conform their lives to its regulations and prescriptions, repeat its songs, and carefully consider its whole history, then they look about eagerly for the best writings which can be serviceable in this respect; and for the most part these have already imperceptibly, by their own merit, separated themselves from the less suitable, have already been gathered piecemeal, and it only requires some superior oversight to combine them in an enduring manner and consecrate them more definitely for their present purpose. In respect to a few of the less necessary there may for a time be uncertainty and strife; but the need of the time and their own intrinsic value will long since have decided in respect to the principal books. And so what was not itself intended to be sacred nevertheless became sacred as the vehicle of sacred truths and spiritual forces."

If the critics missed the point in selecting the principle according to which the canon was formed, then what was the guiding or determining principle? A number of different answers have been given to this question. Let us look into a few of them.

Some say that the Canon was simply a collection of early national literature, collected to keep alive in the people a spirit of national patriotism. So Eichhorn, *Einleitung* (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 28): "Soon after the end of the Babylonish Exile . . . and in order to give to the newly built second Temple all the advantages of the first, a library of its own was founded in it of the remains of Hebrew literature which we commonly call the Old Testament." But we find some disturbing factors here. For example, in a number of places in the Books of the Chronicles the readers are referred to other books of history for more detailed information on the subject mentioned. 1 Chron. 9:1: "So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah." In similar manner other books are referred to.

(1 Chron. 29:29; 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 20:34.) These books must have been of an earlier date than Chronicles, yet Chronicles is in the canon, these books are not. Evidently the canon is not just a collection of early Hebrew literature.

Others say that the determining principle was the language in which the books were written. Those books written in Hebrew were considered canonical, while those in Greek or other languages were not. But we are reminded that the "books of the kings of Israel and Judah," and those others referred to in Chronicles, must have been written in Hebrew. Yet these books were not admitted to the canon, while Chronicles was. Also some of the Apocrypha were written in Hebrew, but *never* had a place in the canon. Thus we must conclude that it could not have been the language that determined whether a book should have a place in the canon.

Most critics will confess that the religious character of the books must be taken into consideration when the determining principle in the formation of the canon is sought. But the influence that is assigned to this characteristic varies with the attitude of the individual critic. Robertson Smith in *The O. T. in the Jewish Church*, p. 181, says: "The ultimate criterion to which every book was subjected lay in the supreme standard of the Law. Nothing was holy which did not agree with the teaching of the Pentateuch." Though this is much better than the attitude and statements of many other critics, even this is seriously defective and completely inverts the order of cause and effect.

St. Paul says, 2 Tim. 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." This is true because the books which form the Scriptures are inspired of God. It was not the religious profit derived from these books that caused them to be included in the canon; but they were included in the canon because they had been inspired of God to be profitable for the people, to guide the faith and practice of the Church. It is this inspiration of God that makes them canonical, and their canonicity *makes* them profitable to religious life; not, vice versa, their religious profitableness makes them canonical. When we have considered all angles of this question, we must conclude with Green: "They were

included in the canon because they were written by men inspired of God for this very purpose" (*op. cit.*, p. 31).

To get the true import of the canonization of the Old Testament, we shall have to examine two points: (1) The claims which the books themselves make and (2) the esteem in which these books were held by the people.

1. *Exodus 20:2-3*: "I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Here Jehovah announces Himself as the God who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and He tells them to have no other gods beside Him. The people enter into a covenant with Him to keep His Law and to be His people. In subsequent periods of their history the people of Israel are reminded often of this covenant with Jehovah to serve Him as their God. As we read the Old Testament, nothing becomes plainer than the fact that Jehovah was the God of Israel and Israel was His people. The Law of Moses claims in all its parts to be the Law of Jehovah, given through Moses. The whole Pentateuch asserts this fact in a very positive way. After Moses followed an array of Prophets, all of whom claim to speak the will of Jehovah in the name of Jehovah. How often do not the Prophets introduce their message with the words "Thus saith Jehovah!" And the historical books, as well as all historical parts in any of the other books, reveal most emphatically the hand of God in all the affairs of His people Israel. Thus all these books make the claim that they come directly from God through the instrumentality of the inspired writers.

2. And the very fact that these books were received into the canon by the people was a recognition of the rightfulness of their claim to be a revelation of the will of God. The Israelites placed these books in the canon because they were convinced that the writer had been inspired by God and was therefore imparting to them instruction for their service to God.

So when in the time of King Josiah the people bound themselves to keep the Law that had been found in the Temple, this was not an act by which the Law became canonical, but merely the recognition that the Law was of

long standing and just as binding on them as it had been on their fathers before them. And the Law which Ezra read, and which the people pledged themselves to obey, was not a new book of laws then accepted for the first time as sacred and made canonical by the pledge of the people. (Neh. 8:1.) This was the Book of the Law of Moses, given by Jehovah through Moses, which the people had ever pledged to obey. And it was the people's disobedience to *this* Law that had caused all the calamities that had befallen them. The people now pledged to obey this Law *because* it was already canonical since the days of Moses.

Furthermore, as already stated in a previous section, the Prophets were recognized by the people as the expounders of the will of God, commissioned by Jehovah to deliver His messages. In the minds of the people their writings and messages were associated with the Law as forming the divine standard obligatory on all people. The later Prophets also bear testimony to the divine commission of their predecessors. Thus the Prophet Jeremiah refers to a passage in the Prophet Micah.

Jer. 26:17-18: "Then rose up certain of the elders of the land and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying: Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest." Micah 3:12: "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." So each book of an acknowledged Prophet of Jehovah was received immediately as the Word of God and included in the canon at once.

Green remarks, *op. cit.*, p. 35: "Thus the canon gradually grew, as such books were produced from time to time, until the last was written, when consequently the canon was complete. . . . This view of the formation of the canon is not a theological speculation, but a necessary historical deduction." In this essay we are not concerned with the reality of the inspiration of these books, but with the faith of Israel on the subject. Israel accepted only those books as divine standards of their faith which were written for this definite purpose by those whom they believed to be inspired of God. It was this

which made them canonical. Green: "The later public official action attested but did not initiate their canonicity." Concerning this point Robertson Smith also says: "When the Jewish doctors first concerned themselves with the preparation of an authoritative list of sacred books, most of the Old Testament books had already established themselves in the hearts of the faithful with an authority that could neither be shaken nor confirmed by the decision of the schools" (*op. cit.*, p. 163).

The question, then, which determined whether a book should be included in the canon was not: Is it written in Hebrew? Or, Does it belong to the early literature of Israel? Or, Does it express religious sentiments? But the deciding question was: Is this book inspired of God and given to us by His representative as a guide for our faith and our service to our God?

5. THE COMPLETION OF THE CANON

In discussing the problem of the formation of the Canon, we are interested in one more question, namely, When was the Canon completed?

Josephus, the great Jewish historian, born in Jerusalem 37 A. D., gives us some information. In his treatise "Against Apion" he says this: "We have not tens of thousands of books, discordant and conflicting, but only 22, containing the record of all time, which have been justly believed. And of these, five are the books of Moses, which embrace the laws and the traditions from the creation of man until his (Moses') death. This period is a little short of 3,000 years. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes, the successor of Xerxes, king of Persia, the Prophets who succeeded Moses wrote what was done in thirteen books. The remaining four books embrace hymns to God and counsels for men for the conduct of life. From Artaxerxes until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the Prophets ceased. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared either to add anything to them or to take anything from them or to alter anything in them. But it is instinctive in all Jews at once from their very birth to regard them as commands of God and to abide by them and, if need be, willingly to die for them." (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 37.)

According to Josephus, then, the period in which the books of the Old Testament Canon were written extended from Moses to Artaxerxes I of Persia. After this there were no further additions to the Old Testament Scriptures. Artaxerxes Longimanus reigned from 465—425 B. C. It was in the seventh year of his reign that Ezra came to Jerusalem from the captivity (Ezra 7:7), and in the twentieth year of his reign Nehemiah came (Neh. 2:1). Now there is no good reason to doubt or to discredit this statement of Josephus. Let us remember that Josephus was a learned man, a respected historian; that he was arguing with Apion, a grammarian of Alexandria, who was a scholar of no mean abilities; and that he had at his disposal every facility to acquaint himself with the history of his nation.

The conservative scholars are also inclined to agree with Josephus. The common sentiment of these scholars is expressed by Ryle, *The Canon of the O. T.*, in these words: "We must remember that Josephus writes as the spokesman of his people, in order to defend the accuracy and sufficiency of their Scriptures, as compared with the recent and contradictory histories by Greek writers. In this controversy he defends the judgment of his people. He does not merely express a personal opinion, he claims to represent his countrymen. . . . In the first century A. D. the impression prevailed that the books of the canon were all ancient, that none were more recent than Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes), and that all had long been regarded as canonical." (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 39.)

The most serious objection to Josephus, if it could be proved, is that some books in the Old Testament were written long after the time of Artaxerxes. This claim of the critics rests on conclusions deduced entirely from supposed criteria in the books themselves but having no external historical support whatever. Let us examine a few of these critical conclusions as given by Dr. Driver, *Literature of the O. T.*

The critics claim that Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah could not have been written earlier than 350 B. C. For proof they point to the genealogy of 1 Chron. 3:17-24. They point out that this genealogy goes to the sixth generation after Zerubbabel, hence it could not have been written before 350 B. C. But the fact is that this genealogy goes only two generations after Zerubbabel, namely, Zerubbabel, Hananiah,

Pelathiah. Then there are added four families whose origin, and relation to the rest, is not stated.³

Again, the critics point out that in Ezra and Nehemiah the phrase "king of Persia" is employed, and Driver says: "The addition 'of Persia' would, during the period of the Persian supremacy, be at once unnecessary and contrary to contemporary usage; the expression used by Ezra and Nehemiah, when speaking in their own person or in passages extracted from sources written under the Persian rule, is simply 'the king.'" But this assumption will not account for the facts of the case. Both designations occur in contexts that cannot be divided. If we read the first chapter of Ezra, we note that in verses 1, 2, and 8 we have the term "Cyrus, king of Persia," and we note particularly that in the proclamation issued by Cyrus he gives himself that designation: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia." Yet in that very same context, in verse 7, we read simply, "Cyrus the king." Or compare Ezra 7:1 with 7:7. Ezra 7:1 we read: "Artaxerxes, king of Persia," and in 7:7: "Artaxerxes the king."

Thus it is with all the claims of the critics. When they are examined, they point to no date later than the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, or 425 B. C. Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Daniel are other books which the critics want to place in periods long after Ezra and Nehemiah. But all their argu-

³ This genealogy of 1 Chron. 3:17 ff. offers a number of difficulties, but we are concerned with only one aspect of the problem. Luther's translation of this passage would give the critics a basis for their claims. Beginning with verse 19 Luther translates: "Die Kinder Zerubabels waren: Mesullam und Hananja. . . . Die Kinder aber Hananjas waren: Platja und Jesaja, des Sohn war Rephaja, des Sohn war Arnan, des Sohn war Obadja, des Sohn war Sachanja." The King James Version translates more accurately. Beginning at the same place, we read thus: "The sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah . . . and the sons of Hananiah: Pelathiah and Jesaiiah: the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah." This agrees with the Hebrew text. We examine verse 21 in the Hebrew Bible, and we note that an "Atnach" has been placed under the name Jesaiiah, indicating a definite division or break in the sentence. The next part of the sentence begins with רֵפְיָהּ, a plural noun in the construct state, translated: "the sons of Rephaiah. . ." The construction of the sentence makes it clear that the last part of the verse has no direct connection with the first part and that therefore the Masoretic punctuation is correct.

ments are unsatisfactory when examined with care and without prejudice. We agree with the conclusion reached by Green, *op. cit.*, p. 78: "The statement of the historian Josephus that no addition was made to the canon after the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and the current belief of the nation of the Jews that Malachi was the last of the Prophets and that after him the Holy Spirit departed from Israel, thus remain uncontradicted, except by critical theories which rest on no solid foundation."

II. THE DIVISION OF THE CANON

The first notice we have anywhere of the canon being completed is in the prolog to Ecclesiasticus. The writer of this prolog is the grandson of Jesus, the son of Sirach. He translated Ecclesiasticus into Greek. In the prolog he speaks of the sacred books as "the law and the prophets and the other books that followed after them." This prolog was written in the 38th year of Ptolemy Euergetes II, or 130 B. C. At this time, and also at the time of his grandfather, some 50 years before, the sacred books of Israel formed a definite and well-known collection. This collection was arranged in three divisions, known as "the law and the prophets and the other books," or "the rest of the books." This division of the Old Testament Canon existed ever after, and it is found in the Hebrew Bible now.

Some find difficulties and inconsistencies in this division, but when the principle underlying the division is understood, all difficulties vanish. The threefold division is based on the personalities or official status of the writers, not on the contents of the books. Thus the books of Moses very appropriately stand first and by themselves, for Moses occupied a unique position among the Jews. Next come the Prophets. These men were universally recognized as the immediate messengers of God to declare His will to the people. Their writings are divided into two groups: the historical, also called the former Prophets; and the prophetic, also called the latter Prophets. Finally, in the third division, the Ketubim, are the writings of inspired men who were not Prophets in the technical and official sense of the term. Green remarks (*op. cit.*, p. 81): "The principle upon which the classification is made is thus a clear and obvious one; the three divisions contain respectively the

writings of Moses, of the Prophets, and of inspired men not Prophets."

As has been pointed out, the critics find in this threefold division a proof that there were three distinct canons, and they point out certain changes that would have to be made were this not so. In the third division of the Hebrew canon we find the following books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. Now, the critics point out that some shifting ought to be done here.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles contain important history and ought to be placed with the historical books: Judges, Samuel, Kings, in the second division. But Ezra was a scribe and Nehemiah a governor. Neither was a Prophet. And it is supposed (with good reason) that Chronicles was written by Ezra. Hence, according to the guiding principle, these books were classed with the writings of inspired men who were not Prophets.

Daniel seems to create a greater difficulty. Daniel is called a Prophet by Jesus. Matt. 24: 15 and Mark 13: 14: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet," etc. His book contains some of the most remarkable predictions found in the Bible. Why was he not placed with the Prophets?

We find here, not a departure from, but a rigorous carrying out of the controlling principle. There is a distinction between the *donum propheticum*, the prophetic gift; and the *munus propheticum*, the prophetic office. Daniel had the prophetic gift in a remarkable degree, but he did not hold the prophetic office. This position is also supported by Hengstenberg, Haevernick, Keil, Oehler, Delitzsch, and others. Daniel occupied a high position in the Babylonian and Persian empires, but he was not officially a Prophet among Israel, as, e. g., Ezekiel, his fellow captive and contemporary. Daniel is called a prophet in the same general sense in which the term is applied to David (Acts 2: 29-30).

The revelations of Daniel certainly were of great importance for the Church of his own day as well as for the Church of the future. But Daniel does not occupy himself with rebukes of sin or inculcations of duty as is usual in the Prophets

and as one would expect. Even Driver says (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 56): "It is remarkable also that Daniel—so unlike the Prophets generally—should display no interest in the welfare or prospects of his contemporaries." But then he draws the false conclusion that the book does not belong in the period when it claims to have been written. Dillman also objects to the position of Daniel in the canon, arguing that his messages were certainly for the Church, even though for the Church of the future. But while discussing another aspect of this question, he answers his own objection by saying (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 85): "The Old Testament Canon was fixed by the Jewish Church, so that the only thing of consequence is, What idea did the Jewish Church connect with this division?"

Some critics claim that Amos overthrows the theory that this principle was followed in classifying the books. For does not Amos himself say: "I was no Prophet, neither was I a Prophet's son; but I was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit"? (7:14.) So they say Amos should not be among the Prophets, but with the Ketubim. But the call of Jehovah "Go, prophesy unto My people Israel" (7:15) certainly made Amos a Prophet in the true technical and official sense.

In the present arrangement of the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations and Ruth are found in the Hagiographa; but there is good reason to believe that they were originally in the second division. Origen, Jerome, and other early writers testify that Ruth and Lamentations were sometimes counted as separate books and sometimes appended to others: Ruth to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah. These two books also properly belong in the second division, for Lamentations was written by Jeremiah, an official Prophet; and Ruth is an integral part of the historical section of this division. Without Ruth the genealogy of the most powerful race of kings—that of the house of Jesse—is lacking. These two books were probably transferred to the Hagiographa later for liturgical reasons. Bleek (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 90) states the probable facts in the case, though his statement is made in too positive a form, when he says: "Ruth and Lamentations had this position (*i. e.*, after Judges and Jeremiah) even in Hebrew manuscripts in early times, and the Hebrew Jews subsequently, after the second century A. D., put them among the books of the third class

with the other Megilloth with reference to their use in public worship" (*Einleitung in das Alte Testament*).

Having now examined the problem of the division of the canon, we find no indication that the three divisions were formed at widely separated periods of time. There is no imperfection in the classification of the books. There are no books in the third division which should have been in the second but could not be placed there because the second division had already been closed. The second division was closed only because there were no other books entitled to be placed into it. It is true that in the LXX we find Daniel placed beside Ezekiel in the second division. But that fact cannot be used as an argument here, since the principle of classification in the LXX was different and demanded this position for Daniel. The Hebrew Canon is accurately classified on a principle of its own, and so Daniel is in the Ketubim and not among the Prophets. We have seen that this is the case also with other books in which the critics claim the principle has been violated. No departure from the principle, mentioned above, can be proved. The classification is such that it bears the marks of having been done by a single mind and without interference by any disturbing cause.

III. WHEN AND BY WHOM COLLECTED

The books which we find in the Canon of Scripture are authoritative, whether they are in a collection or whether they stand alone. But it was important that these books be collected, for if they were in a collection, this would guard against any of them being lost, and it would also prevent the intrusion of other books which did not belong there. And, being collected, they could then be certified to future generations as the writings that were received by inspiration from God. So we find that this important step in the preservation of these sacred books was taken. Consequently our next question is: *When and by whom was this collection made?*

We are accustomed to answer this question in this manner: The books of the Old Testament were collected by Ezra, perhaps with the help of some assistants, about the year 425 B. C. Just what proof do we have that this answer is substantially correct? Probably the chief reason for our answer is the fact that this position was taken by Luther and other theologians

of his time. Green says that a certain distinguished rabbi of the time of the Reformation, Elias Levita by name, stated that Ezra and the Great Synagog (120 men appointed to assist in the conduct of public affairs) collected the canon. This was then repeated by some of the theologians of the Reformation period as incontrovertible fact, based on ancient and uniform tradition. But, according to Green, there is only one passage in early Jewish literature which connects Ezra and the Great Synagog in any way with the formation of the canon. This passage is in the Talmudic treatise, "Baba Bathra," written in the second century A. D., and reads as follows (Green, *op. cit.*, p. 94): "Moses wrote his book and the section about Balaam and Job; Joshua wrote his book and eight verses in the Law; Samuel wrote his book and Judges and Ruth; David wrote the Book of Psalms at the hands of the ancients, Adam the first, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, Heman, Jeduthun, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah; Jeremiah wrote his book and the Book of Kings and Lamentations; Hezekiah and his associates wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. The men of the Great Synagog wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve (Minor Prophets), Daniel, and the Book of Esther. Ezra wrote his book and the genealogies of Chronicles to his time."

You are privileged to draw your own conclusions on the basis of this passage. The word *wrote* has been explained to mean "composed," "transcribed," "reduced to writing," or "inserted in the canon." You may have your choice. Evidently this is just an example of the fanciful conjecture of the Jewish doctors of that time about the origin of the Old Testament and is of no value whatever.

The modern theory of the process of canonization has been briefly touched upon. According to this theory the process began in a preliminary way about 621 B. C., when Josiah bound the people to obey the Book of the Law, which in this case was Deuteronomy. The process of canonization continued more effectively about 444 B. C., when Ezra pledged the returned exiles to obey the whole Pentateuch. From that time forward the Pentateuch, but the Pentateuch only, was canonical. Between 300 and 200 B. C. the Prophets were added to the canon. Still later the Ketubim were also added. The collection of this third part began in the era of the Maccabees, 160—140 B. C., and was finally ratified about 90 A. D. Some

place the final decision on the contents of the canon as late as 200 A. D.

But these transactions of Josiah and Ezra were simply a solemn and formal recognition of a divine authority inherent in these books from their very first appearance, not a canonization of the books. The fact that only the Law is mentioned does not prove that it only was canonical. 2 Kings 17:13 ff. the Law and Prophets are joined as being both alike binding on Judah and Israel, and it is stated that the people were exiled because they did not obey the Law or the Prophets. Ezra also traces the calamities of the people to their disobedience of the Law and their maltreatment of the Prophets (Neh. 9:26 ff.). In a number of other instances this same thing is done (Zech. 1:6, 4; 7:7, 12).

If the books of the Prophets were known and received as the Word of God by the returned exiles, then why did Ezra bind them to obey only the Law? Let us remember that this meeting had been called, not to define the full extent of the obligation of the Word of God, but for a particular and practical purpose. This purpose was best met by directing the attention of the people to the Law. There had been intermarriages with the heathen, the Sabbath had been disregarded, inadequate provision for the Temple worship had been made; and there were specific legal statutes covering these transgressions. Since the purpose of the meeting was to remedy these matters, the Law was presented to the people and they were pledged to obey it.

The fact that the Samaritans possessed only the Pentateuch does not strengthen the argument of the critics who argue that only the Pentateuch was canonical among the Jews when it was received by the Samaritans. The supposition is that the Pentateuch was brought to the Samaritans by a renegade priest, expelled by Nehemiah. But it is reasonable to suppose that the mutilated canon of the Samaritans originated like the canons of the early heretical sects in the Christian Church. They accepted only what suited their own peculiar views and arbitrarily rejected the rest. They changed Deut. 27:4 to sanction their temple on Mount Gerizim, and naturally they could not allow any book which spoke approvingly of worship at Shiloh or Jerusalem.

It is true also that the Synagog lessons were first taken

from the Law and that portions from the Prophets were added later, while the Ketubim were used only on special occasions. But this does not confirm the theory that these divisions were three separate canons, collected and accepted at long intervals.

Jehovah's covenant with Israel rested on the Law, and it is natural that lessons from the Law should have had a place in their worship from the very first. Soon the need was felt to emphasize these lessons of the Law by the teachings of the Prophets. The historical sections show how God blessed the people when they followed His Law and how He punished them when they disobeyed. The prophetic or didactic sections illustrate and expound the Law. As to the use of the Ketubim in early times we are but imperfectly informed. But by their very nature they were less adapted for regular synagog use and more appropriate for special occasions. The Psalms were sung in the Temple services. The five Megilloth were assigned to special festivals: The Song of Solomon was read at the Passover Festival, Ruth at Pentecost, Lamentations at the fast of the 9th of the month of Ab, Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, Esther at Purim. Selections from the Hagiographa were read throughout the night before the Day of Atonement and also in connection with some of the shorter Pentateuch sections on Monday and Thursday and at the vesper services on the Sabbath.

The critics bring many other arguments to defend their position. They point to the terms "the Law" and "the Law and the Prophets"; but that argument carries no weight, because the whole Old Testament may be designated as "the Law" (John 10: 34), since it contains God's revealed will; and the term *Prophets* may be used in a general sense to include all inspired men. The critics also point to discrepancies between Samuel and Kings on the one hand and Chronicles on the other, but the differences referred to arise from the differences in aim and scope of the respective histories. And they find it difficult to fix a place for Isaiah without going centuries beyond his own time. To this Green (*op. cit.*, p. 104) remarks: "So the critics first dissect Isaiah and then find it impossible to get the disjointed pieces together again without putting the collection of the canon at a date at variance with historical testimony and every reliable indication bearing on the subject."

After examining the arguments of the critics that the

Prophets were not admitted to the canon until long after the time of Ezra, we find nothing at all to militate against the belief that the writings of the Prophets possessed canonical authority from the moment they appeared. Thus the canon grew, as each successive book appeared, until the last one was published and the canon was complete. This second division was complete in every detail when Malachi wrote his book, and he was a contemporary of Nehemiah. So, according to all conservative scholarship, the first two divisions of the canon were complete and accepted at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

And, now, how about the Ketubim? The critics have maintained that no steps were taken to form the third division until the second had been completed and closed and that the formation of this division was not begun until quite some time after Malachi. It is argued that Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles would stand with the historical books, such as Samuel and Kings, and that Daniel would have been placed with the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel if this second division had not already been closed when these other books were accepted as canonical. But this argument has already been conclusively refuted in the previous section, in which the principle followed in the classification of the books of the Old Testament was discussed.

It is asserted also that some of the Ketubim were written long after Ezra, and special emphasis is placed on Daniel. The date of Daniel is set at about 168 B. C. But when all the arguments are examined, the assertion stands as an unfounded theory.

Nor does the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible favor the critical theory. There is good reason to suppose that Ezra is a continuation of Chronicles, but Ezra stands before Chronicles in the Hebrew Bible. Now, it is argued that Ezra became separated from Chronicles and was received into the canon before Chronicles. If the order of the books indicates the order of their reception into the canon, then Daniel should have been last according to the critical theory. The order of the Ketubim is this: First the three large books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job; next the five Megilloth in the order in which they were used: Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; then Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, in chronological order; and finally Chronicles as a sort of his-

torical appendix, a review of the entire period from the creation to the end of the exile.

There is nothing at all to support the contention of the critics that three distinct canons or collections were made at different, widely separated periods. There is nothing to weaken the evidence, afforded by the orderly distribution of the books into classes, that the arrangement was made at one time and according to a definite plan. But when all the evidence in the case is examined, we find *no positive information* as to when and by whom these books were collected and arranged.

The evidence of history points to the fact that the canon was completed by the Prophet Malachi, who wrote his book probably about 425 B. C. And the first authentic statement on the subject, showing that the books had been collected and arranged, appears in the Prolog to Ecclesiasticus, written about 132 B. C., which speaks of a definite body of writings, "the Law, the Prophets, and the rest of the books." The critics try to weaken this testimony to the third division of the canon. Dillman (*Green, op. cit.*, p. 112) says: "At that time a third series of highly prized writings had already been formed, which about corresponds with our third canon. But that this series contained only and entirely the same books which stand in the third canon can never be proved from these expressions, and therefore the passage cannot avail as a witness for a closed canon." But Josephus also testifies that nothing had been added to the canon since the time of Artaxerxes. It was also the uniform belief of the Jews that after Malachi the Spirit of prophecy departed from Israel. And the language of the Prolog to Ecclesiasticus is just what one would expect if the canon had long been definitely settled. Beyond these statements there is only legend and uncertain tradition on the person, time, or method of collecting and arranging the canon.

2 Esdras 14:21 ff., probably written toward the close of the first century A. D., states that the Law was burned when the Temple was destroyed but that Ezra was enabled to restore it by divine inspiration. In 40 days he dictated 94 books. 70 of these were to be delivered only to the wise men, and 24 were to be openly published for all. Quite a number of the early Christian fathers repeat this legend. (Clemens

Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and others.) There is no doubt that this is just a fable, but it *may* be founded on fact as far as it asserts that Ezra took a leading part in the collecting and arranging of the sacred books after the exile. Another tradition is given in 2 Macc. 1: 18 ff. and 2: 4 ff. (esp. vv. 13-14). This legend tells of the hiding of the fire of the altar and the Tabernacle when Jerusalem was about to fall and of their being found again by Nehemiah; and then it says of Nehemiah: "Founding a library, he gathered together the acts of the kings, and of the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts." Of this tradition Green (*op. cit.*, p. 114) says: "This curious compound of truth and fable attributes to Nehemiah an agency in collecting the sacred writings which, in itself considered, is altogether credible."

These intimations from legendary sources acquire greater significance from the fact that they are corroborated by certain other and independent considerations, to wit:

1. Ezra is repeatedly and with emphasis called "the scribe" (Neh. 8: 1, 4, 9, 13; 12: 26, 36; Ezra 7: 6, 11-12, 22). It appears that his professional occupation was with the Scriptures, of which he was both a student and an interpreter. He probably spent much time preparing copies for the people and certifying their correctness. And from Ezra dates that race of scribes so often mentioned in the New Testament as men learned in the Law, the conservators and custodians of the sacred text.

2. The period after the exile was devoted to restoring everything as much as possible after the model of former times. As a result of this effort the Scriptures would be searched and studied to see what their fathers had done. Green (*op. cit.*, p. 116) says: "Just what might be expected from the needs and longings of the time and from the nature of the work to which Ezra so energetically addressed himself—that the sacred writings would then be carefully gathered for the guidance and instruction of the people and for their own more secure preservation and transmission."

3. Evidently private and partial collections had already been formed, as is indicated by the fact that the Prophets often refer to the writings of their predecessors. These collections would naturally suggest the formation of a public and complete collection and would prepare the way for one.

4. As we have seen, all the books of the Old Testament were in existence at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, so that nothing would *prevent* them from collecting and arranging these books.

5. Zech. 13:2-5 and Mal. 4:5 indicate that prophecy would cease among Israel; and succeeding generations were aware of the fact that there was no Prophet among them. (1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41.) It would have been the height of folly on the part of Israel to delay the collection of their sacred books beyond the time when they felt the line of Prophets was coming to an end.

These considerations, in connection with the legends and traditions of the Jews, make it *highly probable* that the canon was collected and arranged by Ezra and Nehemiah. If it were not so, then, where did the legends and traditions come from?

In a second installment the extent of the O. T. Canon and a few other pertinent matters will be discussed.

Great Bend, Kans.

Our Missions in India and China

By O. H. SCHMIDT, Ex. Sec'y of the Board of Foreign Missions

(Written at the request of Synod's Centennial Committee)

The second century — a century of mission expansion! What an appropriate slogan this would be for the second century of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States! As we observe the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of this church organization, and as we give thanks to the Lord for the blessings of the past century, we should like to express the hope that the second century of our synodical existence will be made a century of mission expansion. And in order to stimulate interest and prompt action along this line, we beg our readers briefly to review with us the history and status of our missions in India and China.

Missionary interest was indeed in evidence in our Synod from the very beginning. At the very first meeting of Synod, in 1847, there was a good deal of discussion as to possible mission work among the heathen. To be sure, when the fathers that time spoke of work they desired to undertake