

Teacher Training.

TEXT-BOOK: HOLBORN'S "THE BIBLE, THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEXT-BOOK."
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CHAPTER II.

ON THE FORMATION OF THE CANON: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SEVERAL BOOKS.

I. INTRODUCTION. The term *canon*, denoting a straight rule, is applied to a testing standard. The adjective *canonical* was used before the noun, to declare the quality of a book as part of the rule of God, the collection of which books constituted the canon. Non-canonical books, in danger of being confounded with the canonical, were called apocryphal. Such were some valuable books of narrative and precept, such as those of the Maccabees, and Wisdom, written after the time of Old Testament inspiration, and some spurious gospels, and useful epistles, such as those of Clement and Barnabas, belonging to the New Testament times.

II. The Canon. A. OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

1. Was formed gradually during a period of a thousand years.

2. In three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, the Writings.

3. *The Law.* Read Deut. 31: 24-26, and compare 1 Kings 8: 9, to learn that the Law was placed by Moses *beside* the ark. This was the five books of Moses, which received additions after his death. It was for a long time the sole canon, and received peculiar reverence as the Law. Yet it had long been neglected when found by Hilkiah, the high priest, in the reign of Josiah, 2 Kings 22: 8-13.

4. *The Prophets.* These were historical and prophetic books written between the entrance to Canaan and the Captivity, some of which were of the nature of State records. The canon of these was not formed until Ezra and Nehemiah revived the law. Then (2 Macabees 2: 13) they added the acts of the Kings and the Prophets, and the Psalms of David. But, properly speaking the prophets included only Joshua, Judges, Samuel 1 and 2, Kings 1 and 2, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets, from Hosea to Malachi. The historical books were supposed to have been written by earlier prophets.

5. *The Writings.* After the Captivity, the spirit of prophecy died. Amid much worldliness, godly men sought out inspired writings of the past other than the Law and the prophets. These they called in Hebrew *C'tubim*, the Writings, in Greek, Hagiographa, Sacred Writings. They included Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Song, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles 1 and 2. The collection was made gradually by the Great Synagogue, founded by Ezra about 450, and continuing till 200 B. C. The persecution of Antiochus (168 B. C.) proscribed The Law; hence the prophets were read instead, and The Writings became venerated, yet not so much so as the other divisions, for many rabbins doubted the inspiration of Esther and Solomon's Song, which have not the name of God.

6. *The Synod of Jamnia, 90 A. D.* finally settled the O. T. Canon as we have it, but,

7. *The Canon of Josephus* is the same, and it was settled long before, as witness the Septuagint or Greek version made in the third century B. C. Josephus, of the first century A. D., reckons 22 books; the five of Moses; thirteen, between Moses' death and the reign of Artaxerxes of Persia; and four of hymns and precepts. The thirteen books of the prophets are got by counting the 12 minor prophets as one; by combining Ruth with Judges, and Lamentations with Jeremiah; and by regarding the double books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles as one, and adding Ezra to the latter. Josephus, in his apology against Apion, asserts their inspiration and the Jews' reverence for them.

B. OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. 1. *Was formed gradually.* Its books were in existence before the end of the first century, but were scattered abroad. They were first known in the