

The Old Testament

The Way the Scriptures have been Transmitted

David Gooding

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[About the Author](#)

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The Languages and Text of the Old Testament

On another occasion we concerned ourselves with the New Testament, its manuscripts, its text, its authenticity and the canon. We will now consider similar things for the Old Testament and we start off with the languages in which the Old Testament was originally written.

Hebrew and Aramaic texts

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew for the most part, but certain portions of Esther, Ezra and Daniel were written originally in Aramaic. Aramaic is a sister language of Hebrew, in the same sense that Spanish is a sister language to Italian. But Aramaic was the lingua franca for the big empires, particularly the Babylonian and then the Persian Empire. By the time of our Lord Jesus, Aramaic, not Hebrew, was the language of the general community of Israel in Palestine. So, two basic languages then of the Old Testament.

The next question we come to deal with is the text of the Old Testament. What evidence is there for the text of the Old Testament? The great majority of the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible follow a tradition that we call the Masoretic Text. The Masoretes were scholars who, from the late first century onwards, gave themselves to the meticulous study of the actual writing of the Old Testament manuscripts. They copied them out with extreme care, counting the very letters, and so the Masoretic Text rightly deserves its reputation.

For many centuries here in the West, the earliest copies of the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible that we had were dated around the ninth century AD, so that between then and back to the time when Moses was writing, there was a very, very long period. Then, around the middle of the twentieth century, a number of other manuscripts were discovered; first of all at Qumran and in the surrounding caves in the nearby hills and, subsequently, manuscripts of one kind and another were discovered in caves over a distance of some thirty kilometres on the West Bank of the Dead Sea. It is thought that there was at Qumran a community of the equivalent of Jewish monks, maybe, or a strict religious order. Many people thought that they were the Order of the Essenes, as they are called. Other people to this day dispute that theory and say that the buildings at Qumran were more like a summer palace for some wealthy individual. The idea that Qumran was a Scriptorium—that is a place where manuscripts are written out—has likewise been disputed. What were thought to be stone tables upon which the long, leather scrolls would be laid in order to be written upon were found to be hollow in the middle and curved, and it is therefore doubtful whether they were for scrolls to be laid on.

Those matters really need not concern you. But among the writings discovered were copies of all the books of the Old Testament, except Esther. Sometimes there were many copies, sometimes a few or only one. Some of the books of the Old Testament had survived in toto. Some of the first manuscripts to be discovered in pots in the caves were the big scrolls of Isaiah. Almost complete, they showed us that when compared with the manuscripts we had already, the earliest of which was in the ninth century AD, any differences with these far more ancient manuscripts were comparatively small and of very little import. This was a tremendous boost to the confidence of scholars as to the reliability of the transmission of the text because some of these manuscripts were dating to the first century AD, and some, perhaps a few fragments, to the second century BC. They therefore had narrowed the gap between the earliest copy and the original writings by some 700 to 800 years.

But then it was noticed that many of the manuscripts discovered in the Judaean Desert (the Dead Sea Scrolls area) were not of the Masoretic Text tradition but were what we now call of the proto-Masoretic tradition. Let me explain what we mean by that. When the Masoretes gave themselves to the very careful editing and copying of manuscripts, they had a wealth of manuscripts before them. They carefully chose what they felt were the better manuscripts and the ones that had been written out with more care. Then they added the vowel points. In original Hebrew, like modern Hebrew, words are written in consonants and without vowels, because it's pretty obvious what vowels are to be supplied, and therefore newspapers in Israel to this present day don't bother to print them. It would be more difficult in English to write with only consonants and not with any vowels. But in Hebrew by and large, vowels were then indicated by the Masoretes with a system of dots or other marks below, above or inside the letters. If you look at a modern Hebrew Bible you will see these vowel points. If you look at an older manuscript, you will find it is in a different script—what we call the old script, Paleo-Hebrew—and you won't find any vowel points beneath it. When the Masoretes added the vowel points, guiding the reader as to how the text should be pronounced, they weren't making up the pronunciation for the first time. The Hebrew manuscripts had been read in synagogues for centuries and there was a tradition as to how the words were to be pronounced, and an implicit tradition, therefore, of the implied vowels. The Masoretes doubtless followed the traditional pronunciations.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls, manuscripts were discovered that weren't completely of the Masoretic type but were very close to it, and we call them the proto-Masoretic type. They have differences, but not considerable differences. But then there were some manuscripts—mostly very fragmentary little bits of Hebrew manuscript—which are classified now as non-Masoretic because they vary considerably from the Masoretic Text. A famous example of the non-Masoretic type is the three or four fragments from a scroll of the prophecy of Jeremiah. So let me turn aside to point out certain features of Jeremiah.

In the three big Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—there is a group of chapters that are called the 'oracles against the nations.' They are mostly denunciations of the Gentile nations, but sometimes encouragements. You will find them to be 'a message against' or 'the burden of' or something like that, and various nations are mentioned: Babylonians, Moabites, and so forth. All three of those major Prophets have a group of such chapters.

In Isaiah they start at chapter 13, so comparatively early on in his prophecy, and there are several chapters of them. In Ezekiel they come in the middle of the book.

In Jeremiah, in the Masoretic Text, these denunciations come at the end of the prophecy. But then fragments of the Hebrew of Jeremiah were discovered at Qumran in Cave 4 and, though they were only tiny fragments, there was enough on them to show that the scroll from which they came had these oracles against the nations, not at the end like the Masoretic Text, but in the middle, like they are in the prophecy of Ezekiel. They also had these oracles in a different order from what the Masoretic Text has. That was very interesting because the manuscripts of the Septuagint translation also have these oracles against the nations in the middle of Jeremiah and not at the end. So, in this respect, the manuscripts of the Septuagint agree with the minority of Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran.

That raises all kinds of interesting questions, so let me point to a feature of the prophecy of Jeremiah. You will have noticed that Jeremiah dates his prophecies, so they often begin in the such-and-such year of such-and-such a king, and so forth. But if you compare all these dates in your English Bibles you will have found that they are not in chronological order, and you will have asked yourself why this should be. Well, presumably Jeremiah or his editor decided that when the book was being published, they would adopt a thematic approach rather than a chronological approach. That is, they would order the prophecies according to their themes rather than putting them in strict chronological order.

Now let me go to the New Testament for a moment. You will have observed that the first three writers, even when they have the same stories, do not necessarily put them in the same chronological order. Matthew will have a different order from Luke, and Luke will have a different order in places from Mark. What does that imply for the inspiration and authority of their Gospels? Well, in the Gospels we have to think of the question of inspiration at two different levels. Tell me, when our Lord first spoke his parables, before they were written down, were they already inspired? I think you would readily agree that of course the words of the Lord Jesus, as originally spoken, were inspired.

Then the question arises at the secondary level. When the writers of the Gospels came to record them, did they do this just upon their own authority—merely by their own sense of literary propriety and what is suitable—or were they guided by the Holy Spirit when they wrote their Gospels? It is my view that they were guided in that fashion and, to support that view, I appeal to our Lord's words in the Gospel by John, 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak' (John 16:13). In the Gospels, the fact that the authors, the evangelists, put the story sometimes in a different order helps to bring out the significance of what our Lord said.

Leaving that then for a moment, let's come back to Jeremiah. When he pronounced his prophecies and he dates the occasions on which he announced them, were they already inspired? Was he acting as a prophet of the Lord and speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit? I think you would agree with me that, yes, of course they were already inspired. Then why was the order changed from chronological to thematic in his prophecy? I suspect for the same reason that the evangelists had when they recorded our Lord's words and deeds in a different order from what they were originally given.

Moreover, we have insight into the process of the production of Jeremiah within the book of Jeremiah itself, for he tells us that on one occasion he was ordered by the king to come and read one of his prophecies before him. And when the king heard it, he didn't like it and got out his knife and cut a lot of the stuff out of it and put it in the fire. So there was an original writing of Jeremiah and then we are told that Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, wrote it all again and added much to it (ch. 36). I'm just quoting here the words of Jeremiah as they now stand, because when Jeremiah came to write his prophecies down, and doubtless Baruch helped him, it is now apparent that he may well have added at that stage to what he originally said. We hold therefore that inspiration of such a prophet acted at various levels, as originally spoken, and then in the course of writing them down.

The Septuagint (LXX)

We must go on now to consider the so-called Septuagint translation because we are dealing with the text of the Hebrew and its authenticity. Its importance, in the first place, is the early date at which the translation began to be made. This translation of the Old Testament into Greek began around 280 to 270 BC, in Alexandria in Egypt.

The first account we have of the translation being made comes from a Jewish writer who gives himself the name Aristeas. I think that was his pen name perhaps: he's generally called pseudo-Aristeas. In a letter that he purported to write to his brother, Philocrates, he claimed that it was only the Pentateuch that was then translated, the first five books. If nothing else, his story serves to explain how the translation came to bear the name it now has. But first, we need to set the historical context.

When Alexander the Great died, his great empire was split among his four generals and a general by the name of Ptolemy got Egypt as his share, and originally Palestine was included. So at that stage he was the ruler in Egypt and in Palestine. Alexander, of course, had taken thousands of Greeks to Egypt, so they were a thriving community as distinct from the local people who spoke their own native language. In addition, Alexander had taken some thousands of Jews with him when he swept down through Palestine into Egypt, and settled them there in Alexandria. By the time 280 or 270 BC, therefore, the Jews were a thriving community, already with a synagogue, and mostly spoke Greek. Some of them still may well have understood Hebrew, but their first language was now Greek. This is like Jews in London today who speak English, though as boys from age one to twelve they were taught a bit of Hebrew. To pass their confirmation ceremony, the Bar Mitzvah, at the age of twelve, they have to be able to read a certain amount of Hebrew. Most of them, thereafter, immediately forget it! Their majority language is English. Likewise, the majority language of the Jews in Egypt was Greek.

Now the story of this Aristeas goes as follows. The son of Ptolemy, Ptolemy II, was a great scholar, interested in Greek culture and Greek literature. He himself was a Greek, of course. He founded a museum and a great library. He had his scholars and agents combing the whole of Greece for manuscripts of the Greek classical authors, and in those days many more manuscripts would have survived than do now, of course. Having collected them, he got his

scholars working on them in an early form of textual criticism, deciding what were, as far as they could judge, the original text of the author, mistakes that had entered in through the copying, alterations made by well-meaning people and politicians and all sorts, and now producing what they regarded as first-rate texts of the Greek classical authors. It was a tremendous loss to civilisation that when the Turks took Egypt they destroyed that library. Many a scholar would give his right arm to have the manuscripts from that library; now of course it's under the sea anyway, for the sea has encroached.

But to go back to Aristeas, his story is that Ptolemy II decided that he must have a good copy of the Jewish Old Testament. He was advised by his librarian that this would be a difficult thing because, first of all, the Jewish manuscripts were written in what they then called Phoenician characters, the old Hebrew script; and secondly, they had not been copied out very well. (That shows incidentally that the Jews were aware that not all their manuscripts had been carefully copied out.) Ptolemy therefore sent to the high priest at Jerusalem and asked—and this is significant—for translators to be sent who could translate this language which was in Phoenician lettering. According to Aristeas, the high priest duly obliged and sent six translators from each of the twelve tribes. Now, sheer arithmetic tells us that that would have meant seventy-two translators—in Latin, *duo et septuaginta* (two-and-seventy). But early on, the Greek translation they produced came to be called 'the Seventy'—the Septuagint—and the name has stuck.

Is that a likely story? Well, it could be. It could be that the Ptolemy was broad minded enough to know that this Jewish community was a significant community and therefore wanted to get its literature. That is conceivable. It is to be noticed that in this story by Aristeas, the high priest sent not only seventy-two translators, but a specially prepared manuscript. That is a very significant thing. It shows by the time this Aristeas was writing, which probably was about 130 BC, the Jews were aware of the importance of a first-class manuscript produced by the religious authority in the temple at Jerusalem. Just to complete the story, when the seventy-two translators got to Egypt, Ptolemy received them and wined and dined them for days on end and put to them questions testing their wisdom. Lo and behold, they all answered with magnificently wise answers, according to the story and, eventually, they produced a translation which was absolutely 100 per cent exact. They did it by consulting one another and coming to a unanimous opinion.

I mention that because of what will come up later. It is not claimed that the translators were inspired. They were very good translators, they consulted together and thus they arrived at what was claimed to be an exact translation. The alternative accounts that we have elsewhere from the ancient world were that there were simply five translators. A later story is that the seventy-two translators were put by twos in the caves around Alexandria. They worked in pairs, but separate from the others and without consultation and, lo and behold, when the results were compared they were found all to agree, word for word—from which it was concluded they must be inspired! That story comes from centuries after the translations were made and that's another matter we shall come back to. I suspect most people think these days (it's still debated) that the translation owed a lot to the energies of the Jewish rabbis in Alexandria, because the congregations could no longer understand Hebrew if it were read out to them; they needed a translation into Greek.

Now you should remember that in Jewish synagogues, ever since there were synagogues, they began to meet together on a Sabbath for the reading of Scripture, the reading of the Law. This dates back to perhaps the captivity in Babylon, when Jews no longer had a temple and many of them were in distant countries. So from the beginning of the synagogue movement, the Scriptures were read first in Hebrew. As in all synagogues throughout the world, in the synagogue in Belfast, the cantor, as he is called, will stand on the dais each Sabbath and will read several chapters of the Law in Hebrew. Whether the congregation understands it or not, some of them every now and again will vent the phrase *baruch hashem*, 'blessed be the name,' to indicate that they were probably listening, or maybe not. They read it from a scroll—all these centuries later, still a scroll—which is kept in a very dignified cupboard called the Ark. At the beginning of the service the elders of the synagogue with their prayer shawls and their phylacteries go to the Ark and the scroll is taken out. It is taken in procession around the synagogue and the men in the congregation touch the Torah Scroll with their prayer shawl and put the shawl to their lips. Why? Because the psalm says, 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' (Ps 119:103).

In the ancient world, in Palestine and other countries, as well as the man who stood to read the Hebrew, there was an interpreter, as we would call him—in Aramaic, a *meturgeman*. The reader would read a portion of Hebrew and the interpreter would then give an interpretation. But along with the strict interpretation there would be a lot of exposition and comment. They were not supposed to write it down and read it, which shows you the importance the Jews paid to the actual text of the Bible. They wanted it clear in the minds of the congregation that it was the Bible that was the original Hebrew; the translation would be the best the man could do, but it wasn't to be treated as exactly the Bible.

In the Church of England the Bible is read publicly from a bookstand. The reader tells the congregation, 'Here begins,' and proceeds to read the passage, and then at the end, 'Here ends the passage.' It goes back to the days when the people didn't have a Bible and they needed to know the difference between Bible and sermon. For the sermon, the parson got up into the pulpit, he didn't stand at the desk from which he had read the Bible. Thus a distinction was formally made in the minds of people between the Bible, which was God's word and authoritative, and the sermon. Nowadays, in many places, the preacher reads the Bible and stands at the same desk and gives the sermon. That's okay so long as people have Bibles in their hand and can check the difference between what the Bible actually says and what the preacher says.

Might it be important still to distinguish between what the Bible says, what the preachers say and what the commentaries say? How often our interpretation of Scripture depends on interpretations that have been handed down and are now regarded as orthodox doctrine that must not be questioned.

From my lesson drawn from Old Testament synagogue practice, I must briefly return to the matter of this Greek translation. We have many, many manuscripts of this Greek translation, thousands of them. And we have translations of them because, when the early Christian missionaries went to countries that didn't speak Greek, they translated the Old Testament into the language of their missionary country. The early Christian missionaries used the Septuagint—many of them didn't know Hebrew anyway—and translated the Old

Testament from the Septuagint into the local language. And so we have translations into Syriac, Bohairic, Sahidic,¹ Ethiopic, Old Latin, and so forth, and thus we have many manuscripts. Indeed, until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, the manuscripts we had of the Old Testament in Greek were much earlier than the earliest Hebrew manuscripts we had. The thing that interests us of course is whether the Greek translation agrees with the Hebrew. There is also the problem of knowing how well the Septuagint manuscripts have been copied out: how well they represent the original translation.

The original translation of the Pentateuch was made, as I have said, in Alexandria around 280 to 270 BC. After that, the rest of the canonical books of the Old Testament were translated, but from the style it looks as if they were translated very often by different people at different times, in different styles and maybe in different countries. The Septuagint is not homogenous. It's not of the same quality throughout. It's not all translated by the same translators, nor at the same time and so on. Secondly, you should notice that the translation in the course of the centuries was revised many times.

So, let me sum up now in general what the situation is and come to particulars later. In general, you may say that the Pentateuch translation is a reasonable translation into Greek of the Hebrew that stood before the translators. It is moderately literal, but not literalistic, and to a great extent it agrees with the Hebrew—the Masoretic Text, that is. It does have some differences and we want to know why. There was some translation of the rest of the books. There was certainly one translation by the year 130 BC. There was more than one translation of some books. For some, bits and pieces of three translations have survived. They're not all of equal quality. Some of them are very literalistic to the point of not making any sense.

If you read in one manuscript that David asked the messenger who came from Joab, from the army, about 'the peace of the war,' you'll have to scratch your head to think what on earth that could possibly mean. What is 'the peace of the war'? Well, it's a literalistic translation of the Hebrew. *Shalom* in Hebrew means 'peace,' so if you meet your neighbour and say, 'Hello, how are you?' 'How are you?' is, 'Mah shalomkha?' 'What is your peace?' He's not implying, 'Have you had an argument with your wife recently?' or, 'Have you fallen out with the boss?' He's just asking, 'How are you?' 'Mah shalomkha?' 'What is your peace?' And so *Mah shalom* comes to mean, 'What is the state of?' What David asked the messenger who came from Joab was, 'What is the state of the war?' So in Hebrew, he said, 'Mah shalomkha?' 'What is its peace? What is its state? How's it getting on?' To translate that literally into Greek, 'What is the peace of the war?' is absolute nonsense. Not all were equally good translators. In some places there are interpretative elements, and if you ever get reading the book of Proverbs in Greek, you'll wonder whether it is a translation at all in some places, so different is it. So the Septuagint has to be handled with some care.

On the other hand, it is an important evidence for the text of the Old Testament and therefore you will find modern Bibles quoting in their footnotes sometimes, 'the Septuagint,' and sometimes in the text itself, following the Septuagint manuscripts rather than the Hebrew. Why they do that is because many times in the New Testament, when the inspired writers want to quote the Old Testament, they quote it in this Septuagint translation. And

¹ Bohairic is the northern dialect of Coptic (an ancient Egyptian language), and Sahidic the southern dialect.

even when they quote the words of the Lord Jesus that he would have spoken—more often than not in Aramaic—sometimes the writers will themselves translate his words into Greek, but sometimes they will just put the Greek translation of the Old Testament. So when our Lord quotes the Old Testament, he quotes it in Aramaic, maybe sometimes in the original Hebrew, for you notice that when he went to the synagogue at Nazareth, they handed him the scroll and he read from the scroll. That would have been Hebrew, not Aramaic. He preached to the people, probably in Aramaic. But when the apostles quote his words and quote the passage that he read from the Old Testament in Hebrew, they of course quote it in Greek and generally from that Greek translation, or one of the Greek translations. We regard it, therefore, with a great respect. We do not follow it blindly. Even the Holy Spirit in Hebrews seems to quote at one place the Greek translation and not the Hebrew that we now have.

In the Hebrew, when Jacob dies, the Authorised Version following the Hebrew says, 'he bowed himself upon the bed's head' (Gen 47:31). Read the Greek translation and it says 'he bowed himself on his staff.' The difference lies in the vowels. One is *matteh* and the other is *mittāh*. When the Holy Spirit has it quoted in Hebrews 11, he follows the Greek, or agrees with the Greek anyway, and says that Jacob worshipped, leaning on his staff (v. 21).

And finally we should note that when I talked about the Hebrew texts of Jeremiah, I said that the Masoretic Texts have the 'oracles against the nations' at the end of the book. Some non-Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts have the oracles against the nations in the middle of the book. The Greek translation of Jeremiah has those oracles in the middle of the book just as those non-Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts have, but even so, they don't agree 100 percent and they don't have the same order of the nations within the group.

It's getting complicated, isn't it? But why on earth shouldn't it be? When computers and all that are vastly complicated, why would you not expect it to be complicated? If as a result of these talks I could come across one evangelical in a million who believes God's Word is inspired, and believes it enough to begin to have a care for the matter of Old Testament manuscripts and the text of Old Testament, then I would have counted these lectures worthwhile. It has been an unhappy thing that so very few of the people that have cared to look after the text of the Old Testament, and all these complications, have been evangelicals and conservative scholars. There begins to be a few more now. When I began work myself, I didn't know of anybody in England that was an expert on the Greek translation of Old Testament. Ponder it, if you will, but I warn you that we have not completely exhausted this matter of the text of the Old Testament!

The Scripture as God's Word

I wish to diverge a little from the question of the text of the Old Testament and the contributions that the Septuagint makes to the establishment of the original text. I want to turn from that for the moment to the terms that we do well to think about when it comes now to regarding Scripture as God's word. The terms are *revelation*, *inspiration*, *authority* and *infallibility*.

Revelation

We put *revelation* first, because *revelation* refers to the means by which God made himself and his mind known to his holy apostles and prophets. Revelation is fundamentally important because, unless God had been pleased to reveal himself, to take the initiative from his side to reveal himself to mankind, we should know virtually nothing about him. And if you should say, 'But we can learn a lot about God from creation apart from the Bible,' you would be right; but the existence of the universe is part of God's self-revelation, is it not? Creation was made through the Word. All things were made through him who is the Word (John 1:1–3).

Creation is the word of God, revealing God, what may be known of him through the created universe. Even more so with Scripture, revelation is God making himself known, taking the initiative. It answers the criticism of those who say the Bible is merely man's ideas about God. Some of them add that if the elephants were so inclined, they would write books about God and of course, in their book, God would be very much like an elephant. So the Bible is man's idea of God and it portrays God as man has invented him, rather much like man. The more critical add that if you look at the analogies in Scripture about God, about heaven and so forth, (e.g., God as Father, us as children of God), the metaphors are all based on our human experience. We've had human fathers, therefore we imagine God as being a super-duper father, if you see what I mean. Likewise, we have known human cities, therefore we imagine the eternal state to be a city, New Jerusalem; and the critics point out that these analogies are all based on this world. They then say that we invented them and there is a crucial weakness and inadequacy to using analogies, comparing one thing with another. They claim that analogies are inadequate to cross the vast chasm between this world and any other world there might be. Well, that notion presupposes that the Bible is man's attempt to find out what God might be like and man's attempt to write it down.

The Bible's claim is that it is God who has revealed himself and taken the initiative. Of course when he talks to us about himself, he condescends to use analogies that we can

understand, as a mother talking to her children would use analogies to help them begin to perceive what adult life might be like. It is difficult for a mother to tell a child what courtship and marriage are like! Mum can only talk in analogies that the child can understand, but Mum's analogies can very well be valid. She knows both sides. Revelation then is similar, and you will see our Lord speaking about it: 'All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Matt 11:27). That basic sense of revelation then is God taking the initiative to make himself known. That doesn't mean that when the writers of Scripture cited events, either current or in past history, that they didn't use records. Luke, for instance, at the beginning of his Gospel tells us that he consulted records and authorities and eyewitnesses of the Word. The books of Chronicles will tell you of various kings and so forth and point out to you that, if you want to know more, the histories are also written in the books of other writers who never were in the Bible, but they cite you those other writers.

The question, 'What is God like?' is a question of revelation; but there is a case in the prophecy in Daniel 2 where Daniel, by revelation, not only interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, but was shown what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamt the previous night. Nebuchadnezzar, you may remember, had a dream which upset him very much because it showed that his kingdom was going to be succeeded by another kingdom. This was a bit scary and he wanted an interpretation. He knew that if he called in his wise men and he told them the dream, they would make whatever they liked of it, and how would he know whether what they said was true? So he decided on a technique. He assembled the wise men and said, 'I've dreamed a dream. I want you to tell me the interpretation of it.'

They said, 'Very good, your Majesty, but first of all if you please, tell us the dream.'

'No,' he said, 'you tell me what I dreamt.'

'Well, no, you tell us your dream and then we will show you the interpretation.'

'I'm telling you now, you will tell me what I dreamt and if you don't, I shall execute the whole lot of you!'

Whereupon they said that there was no king or anybody ever in the whole of history that had asked such a thing. In other words, they said he was an absolute fool and so he threatened to execute them. The dream was made known to Daniel because, by that stage, he and his three friends were regarded as being among the wise men. He pleaded mercy to the God of heaven to reveal to him, not merely the future, but also the past—which is within the possibilities of divine revelation.

Inspiration

Having thought of *revelation*, we think of *inspiration*. This is how the message was conveyed and committed to word. God revealed himself to the prophets, they spoke to the people, and eventually they wrote it down. Two of the verses in Scripture that talk of inspiration are in the first place concerned with the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul wrote:

And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by

God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim 3:15–17)

‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’ (v. 16 KJV)—he’s talking about the holy Scriptures, the sacred writings of the Old Testament. Inspired of God, able to lead people to salvation, and make the man of God thoroughly equipped.

Let’s look at John 20 so that we help ourselves to understand what is meant by the term ‘inspiration’ or ‘inspired.’ Some people have felt, by the implications of the Latinised English word *inspiration*, ‘to breathe in,’ that this phrase ‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’ means that God breathed into Scripture. Some people have even used the analogy of the creation of Adam: God moulded Adam from the dust, and when he’d finished there he was, laying on the ground. A human male form, but lifeless until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul, an animate human being. Therefore people have said that that’s what Scripture is—Moses wrote some things and then God breathed into it. No, that won’t do. God breathed, meaning God breathed it out.

Let’s look at that reference again, ‘And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld”’ (John 20:22–23). He breathed out, he breathed on them and gave them the authority to pronounce what his gospel was, which the apostles were then guided by the Holy Spirit to write down—the terms for the forgiveness of sins being one of the basic messages of the gospel.

So Scriptures are ‘God breathed.’ Or take the second description of the process as Peter puts it. Peter is concerned that believers should be utterly convinced that there is an eternal world. Therefore, because that world is real and because the way we live here will affect our status there, Peter wants us to be absolutely sure about it. He says,

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his Majesty. For when he had received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’, we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (2 Pet 1:16–18)

‘The voice from God, we heard it,’ says Peter. The voice God breathed; breathed out from God. Let me just emphasise again, Peter is talking about the historicity of the transfiguration. It actually happened and the voice which they heard was not some fable that he’d made up. This is God revealing himself. He says then in verse 19, ‘And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.’ If you’re reading some other English versions, they may have phrases such as ‘We have the word of prophecy made more sure’ or ‘made more certain.’

It doesn’t sound too good, does it? You’ve just had a voice from heaven but for Peter to say now that ‘the prophecy is more sure’ is actually an over-literalistic translation of the Greek comparative. Do you know what I mean by ‘comparative’? ‘Good’ is the positive, ‘better’ is the comparative, and ‘best’ is the superlative. Greek does have those orders, though it differs from English. In many cases it just has the positive and the comparative, and the comparative doesn’t always mean better than something else. It just intensifies ‘we have the

word of prophecy,' not 'made more sure.' 'We have the word of prophecy,' which is very certain, very sure. It's not a question of it being *made* more sure. In other words, it *is* very sure. Now verse 20, 'Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.' Once more, there are difficulties with some English translations. The one before me says, 'no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation' (RV). Another translation would be, 'no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation' (NIV).

You'll notice that this phrase is telling you not how Scripture should be interpreted, but how it *came* originally. People have often imagined that Peter is talking about being faced with a particular verse of Scripture, and it isn't of any private interpretation. You've got a private interpretation, you think it means this and he thinks it means something else. Ah, but we don't decide it by our own, private interpretation; we have to take the general consensus of the Christian church.

But Peter is not talking about how we should interpret it. He's talking about how it *came* in the first place. Verse 20 explicitly says, 'no prophecy *comes*.' What it means, therefore, is that when a prophet preached or sat down to write, it wasn't because he had an acute political mind and had analysed the situation as best he could and, in his speech or writing he's now giving you his own particular view on the matter, like you get with political commentators on the news. No, it didn't come that way. How did it come then? It didn't come 'by the will of man, but' —and it's interesting to follow the order of the Greek words to get the process into our minds vividly—'but by the Holy Spirit, being carried along there spoke from God human beings.' Interesting the order, isn't it? 'But by the Holy Spirit, being carried along there spoke from God men.' Or, 'men spoke from God' —we've got to say in English. Greek isn't tied down to our English word order. It can use more or less what order it likes and uses it to get across the vividness of the process. It didn't come from the will of man, then. How did it come? 'By the Holy Spirit, being carried along men spoke from God.' That's how it happened.

You will get an illustration of this in 2 Samuel 7. Here was King David, sitting in his palace:

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.' And Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.' But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, 'Go and tell my servant David, "Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?"' (2 Sam 7:1-5).

'Thank you very much, you did well to think of it, but no.' Now you see the Prophet acting twice, don't you? David sitting in his palace, observing the nice cedar work and how beautiful it was and he suddenly remembers how far he's come, how he is now established as king and living in a beautiful palace. Then he comes to think of how the ark of the Lord is only living under curtains. So it was a nice idea, wasn't it?

Nathan thought it seemed reasonable, indeed admirable, of David to think of building God a permanent house. 'Excellent devotion, David, go and do all that's in your heart.' He

was speaking by his own intelligence or analysis of the situation. That night God said to Nathan, 'Please, you won't tell David anything of the sort, but go and tell him quite the opposite.' In the first instance Nathan was merely acting of his own volition, prophet though he was. In the second instance he was speaking from God, being moved along by the Holy Spirit.

So we have the two Scriptures in the New Testament, both of which are strictly referring to the Old Testament's sacred Scriptures, 'All Scripture given by inspiration of God.' The cynic within me says, 'Yes, of course, all evangelicals would go to the stake for it, wouldn't they? All Scripture is inspired of God. Yes, I would die for it at the stake if I had to. But what about the next phrase, 'and profitable for teaching'? Do you believe it? When did you last hear a set of messages on Chronicles? 'Keep it simple, brother,' they say. Well, yes, the Epistle to the Hebrews does say that—there are times when the sustenance can only be milk. But here the writer chides his readers that by now they ought themselves to be teachers, but aren't, because atrophy—dullness of hearing—has set in. It is a spiritual disease. If a child is always brought up on milk and never brought on to solid food you'll injure his stomach and digestive system. People who have never been made to think of the deeper things of God, their ability to grasp it will atrophy. Let's see to it in our day and generation, if we can and where suitable, that we believe what Scripture says. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration'—it's talking about the Old Testament—and is 'profitable for teaching' and for encouragement and so forth, that the man of God might be fully equipped. 'For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope' (Rom 15:4). Hope for the future, from the past of the Old Testament.

Authority

So we have discussed *inspiration*, and next is *authority*. What authority has Scripture? Well, the authority is based on the fact that it is God's self-revelation and that revelation is brought to us, as God would have it, by the process of inspiration. When we use the term 'the Scripture is inspired,' we need to be careful that we don't treat the word in its modern sense. We talk about a poem being inspired because it moves us, perhaps, and stirs our emotions. And if a thing isn't inspired, like a legal document, we think it's just dull. But that's not what Scripture means by 'inspiration.' The details of the insides of animals described in Leviticus are likewise inspired; that is, they're given of God by his breathing out, and recorded by his prophets and servants. The authority, therefore, of Scripture depends on its source of revelation and its transmission by inspiration.

We can observe the authority of Scripture by the way our Lord regarded it as shown to us in the three temptations by the devil. Of course, in the home, parents were under an obligation to teach their children Scripture. When they come in, when they go out, when they rise up and when they sit down, they were to teach the Scriptures (see Deut 6:7). It was not left to the synagogue to teach it, though very often the synagogues did develop schools and education in the ancient world. When our Lord came to the temptation, every time he answered, 'It stands written,' using a perfect tense, or at least Matthew uses the perfect tense

in Greek. Not, 'It was written a long time ago,' but 'It has been written.' In other words, 'It stands written'—the enduring authority of Scripture. And our Lord repeated it each time, 'It stands written.' I say it not irreverently, he knew his Deuteronomy, didn't he? If our being able to withstand the devil depended on our knowing Deuteronomy, I wonder how well we would fare.

To observe the authority of Scripture further let's go to the other end of our Lord's ministry. In the garden Peter drew his sword, valiantly and courageously, to protect the Lord, and the Lord stopped him and told him to put his sword back into its place. He added, 'Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?' (Matt 26:53). We mustn't deny the truth of what our Lord said. If he had called, the Father would have given him twelve legions of angels, each with its sword. Why didn't he call? He wasn't giving in because he couldn't help it. He could have called. He didn't call. Why not? 'But how then,' says he, 'should the Scriptures be fulfilled?' (v. 54). What magnificence of self-control. He could have called and would have been given the swords. Why didn't he? It would have prejudiced the authority of Scripture.

Having said that about *revelation*, *inspiration* and then *authority*, we must observe what authority implies. It does not mean that every word in the Bible is true. Before you excommunicate me forthwith, let me explain what I mean. The Bible includes, for instance, the very big lie uttered by Satan himself. 'You will not surely die,' he said to Eve (Gen 3:4). 'Did God actually say that?' Satan had asked her (v. 1). So Eve said, 'But God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die"' (v. 3). The devil replied, 'You will not surely die.' That was a lie, but the Bible's record is true—Satan did say that. Likewise a lot of what Job's friends said to Job and about Job is in Scripture: the record is true. God himself however said to Job and to those three friends, 'A lot of what you said has not been true. You've not spoken of me as you ought to have spoken' (Job 42:7). We therefore have to distinguish between the truthfulness of what has been written—it's a true record—and the statements of God and his apostles that are true, and statements of men, or Satan or whoever, that might not be true at all. When Peter the apostle said to Christ, 'Oh, no, Lord, certainly you shouldn't go up to Jerusalem. You're not going to be rejected and crucified,'—the record is true; Peter actually said it (Matt 16:22). What he said was very bad, of course, so we have to learn to discriminate.

The record is true, inspired for our learning, but not all sayings recorded in the Scripture are in themselves true. Some of them are lies. When Moses took the rod the second time and struck the rock and said, 'Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?' (Num 20:10), God rebuked him for behaving like that. And because he had misrepresented God, he was not allowed to go into the promised land.

So yes, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.' The record is true and inspired and authoritative. It has to be read carefully and we must distinguish between a true record of what people said and did—the record being true—but what they said and did being wrong. In case anybody should think I said that not all the Bible is true, I say again, I believe 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable' and agree with the psalmist when he says, 'The sum of your word is truth' (Ps 119:160).

Infallibility

As to the *infallibility* of Scripture, this generally raises the question of whether the Scripture is historically accurate. For the Old Testament, there is a very helpful book on these matters by K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*.² It's worth getting hold of it. He is an expert, now retired. He held the chair of Egyptology in Liverpool and he has produced this very large book on the historical reliability of the Old Testament.

There is another question. If the Old Testament is inspired of God, comes by revelation from God, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and is therefore authoritative, is all the Old Testament binding on us? You can think at once of practical questions. In the Old Testament people had to keep the Sabbath day. Is that binding on us? In the Old Testament people were not allowed to eat pork. Is that binding on us? And so forth and so on.

The old covenant, is that binding on us? This question arises straight out of the question of authority. Here we should notice, first of all, our Lord's own statements in this regard. In the first part of Mark 7 the Pharisees criticised Christ's disciples because they ate their bread with defiled, that is, unwashed hands. The ground of complaint was not hygiene or the risk of infection, but rather the ritual ceremonial cleansing prescribed by the Old Testament and elaborated by the Jews. In replying to their criticism our Lord drew a very big distinction between tradition and the Old Testament because the Pharisees said, 'Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' (v. 5). And our Lord proceeded to criticise and then denounce some of their traditions—traditions that were the doctrines and precepts of men as distinct from Scripture (v. 7). Not only did some of them add traditions to Scripture, which were their own inventions, but, in order to keep the commandment of men, they'd leave the commandment of God. 'You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men' (v. 8); and then he added,

You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban"' (that is, given to God)—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do. (vv. 9–13)

So our Lord first makes the distinction between the word of God and the traditions of the elders. We have to watch the same thing in our Christian age, to distinguish between Scripture and tradition. There are of course good traditions. 'For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you' (1 Cor 11:23). The words are those of tradition: the Lord handing it to Paul, Paul handing it to other Christians. He exhorts us to keep the traditions, meaning the true traditions handed down from the apostles. Beyond that, we have to distinguish between traditions of interpretation and always judge traditions by God's word.

Some traditions are good, some traditions are not, but then our Lord observed something about the Old Testament itself. Look at this passage in Mark:

² K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

And he called the people to him again and said to them, 'Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.' (7:14–15)

Once again, our Lord is not talking about hygiene or medicine. He's talking about moral and spiritual defilement.

And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, 'Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?' (vv. 17–19)

Now notice the next words, '(Thus he declared all foods clean.)' It's a Hebrew usage, translated into Greek. To make something unclean is to declare it unclean. If a rabbi said that a certain food was unclean, they made it unclean. That is, they declared it unclean, and here our Lord is declaring all food clean. The Lord, who had the authority to do it, was now cancelling some of the food laws.

A similar thing happened to Peter. In Acts 10, when God let down a sheet from heaven, full of creepy-crawly things and unclean animals, and the divine voice said to Peter, 'Rise, kill and eat,' Peter said, 'Not so, Lord. I've never eaten anything unclean in all my life.' The Lord had to do it three times. This taught Peter that what God has cleansed, he must not call common or unclean (vv. 9–16). The food laws now at an end—whatever their purpose was in the Old Testament, and we haven't time to discuss that—set Peter and everybody else free from certain inhibitions that otherwise they would have had. If it hadn't been for that, Peter would not have gone and eaten with the Gentile Cornelius in his house for fear the food wasn't kosher, or clean. It's remarkably difficult to take the gospel to a man if you're not prepared to drink coffee with him in his house.

So God himself taught Peter the lesson, and Paul says, when he discusses such things in Romans, 'I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean' (Rom 14:14). In these practical matters, therefore, we notice our Lord himself now cancelling the food laws of the Old Testament. You say, 'What right had he to do that?' He is the author of the Old Testament and thus has supreme authority. What are we to do with people who are still bound by tradition? Paul discusses it in Romans 15 and, from a practical view, it's important to read it so that we take the right attitude and do not unnecessarily stumble people who have a conscience about what they needn't have, if they had the proper knowledge.

And then of course there are the other major things. The Aaronic priesthood was established by God. You know what happened to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram when they challenged it and rebelled against Aaron and Moses—God opened the earth and swallowed them up (Num 16:32). The Aaronic priesthood was established by God in the Old Testament, so how can the writer to the Hebrews say that it's all finished and that there is another priesthood, this time according to Melchizedek? You notice how the writer has to be very careful how he argues the case. He invites them to notice where in the Old Testament God instituted the priesthood: that's in Exodus and Leviticus. 'Ah but,' he says, 'centuries later

God inspired the psalms and in the psalms, mainly Psalm 110, God indicated that one day there would arise another priesthood, not of Aaron's order, but of the order of Melchizedek (v. 4). The Old Testament points to him.'

Similarly, God instituted the sacrifices. How could the Christians say that they don't need those sacrifices any more? To justify this, the writer to Hebrews quotes the psalm, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me' (Heb 10:5; cf. Ps 40:6).

The old covenant too has gone and now there's a new covenant. How on earth would you prove that, if you accept the authority of the Old Testament? Well, the writer says that the old covenant was given at Mount Sinai, as recorded in the book of Exodus. But in Jeremiah, which is in the Old Testament too, God speaks of a coming day in which the old covenant would be set aside and a new covenant brought into being (Jer 31:31-33). Those changes have been made by the authority of the Old Testament itself, let alone the authority of the New Testament.

So let's leave it there then. We have talked about the text of the Old Testament and our evidence for it—Masoretic Text, non-Masoretic Hebrew texts, Septuagint texts, and so forth. We have talked now about *revelation*, *inspiration*, *authority* and *infallibility* of the Old Testament. Next we shall have to talk about the canon of the Old Testament and who decided which books were to be included or excluded.

The Canon of the Old Testament

So far we have considered the Old Testament, the languages in which it was originally written, Hebrew and Aramaic, and its early translation into Greek in the third century BC. Now we come to the question of the canon of the Old Testament. How many books are there? How many books should there be in the Old Testament? This is a matter over which the Orthodox Jews themselves have never been in any doubt. The doubt and discussions have arisen in the Christian era, not amongst Orthodox Jews. So let's put down the books and make a list of them here, the books in the Hebrew canon.

The Hebrew Bible

We will notice that in the Hebrew Bible there are three divisions in the Old Testament canon (see [Appendix 1](#)). The first five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—the Pentateuch, are referred to in Hebrew by the word *Torah*, though the word is translated in English as *the Law*. In the New Testament Scriptures, the word *law* can refer to the law given at Sinai; or to the Law in the sense of the Pentateuch; or to the whole of the Old Testament. But in the Jewish canon the first five books are referred to as the Law, *Torah*. The word *Pentateuch* is Greek, meaning 'five volumes'.

In the second division there come the Prophets. It is to be noticed that some of the historical books are included in this group: Joshua, Judges (but not Ruth), Samuel, Kings (but not Chronicles), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi; but not Daniel, and not the historical books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Those books come in the third division of the Hebrew Bible called the Writings, *Ketuvim*, or they tend in English nowadays to be called by their Greek name, the Hagiographa, which means the 'holy writings'. The order raises interesting questions. Why was Daniel not put among the Prophets? The Lord Jesus himself refers to Daniel the prophet. Why was Chronicles put in the third division and not in the second division along with the historical books such as Judges, Samuel and Kings? We will come to that in a moment.

To this present day, if you're offering an Old Testament to an Orthodox Jew, you wouldn't refer to it as the *Old Testament*. He doesn't like the term 'old.' You would refer to it in the Jewish way, and nowadays they take the initial letter of the term for the Law, *Tōrah* (T), and the initial letters of the Prophets, *Nevi'im* (N), and the initials of the Writings, *Ketuvim* (K), and they put them together to make one word and they call it the *Tanakh*.

The Christian Bible

In the Christian Bible, as I've called it here, meaning the order of Old Testament books found in most Christian Bibles (see [Appendix 1](#)), you have the Pentateuch, the exact same as the Hebrew, but now in the Christian Bible, Ruth and Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, all precede the three Major Prophets, or the four Major Prophets, if you like—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. The other prophets, generally referred to as the Minor Prophets, come at the end. Now, curiously, we owe that ordering in great part to the Septuagint, and not to the Hebrew. Likewise, the names of the books, in part, we owe to the Septuagint. For instance, take the book of Numbers. The name comes into English from the title of the book in the Septuagint. In the Septuagint, it is labelled *Arithmoi*, meaning 'numbers,' whereas in Hebrew, the book is called by the first word in the book, *Bemidbar*, which means 'in the desert'.

The name of the book of Deuteronomy in Hebrew is *Ēlleh ha-devārim*. These are the first words in Hebrew of the fifth book of the Torah: These are the words which Moses proclaimed. The name Deuteronomy actually means a 'second law': *deutero*, 'second', *nomy* is from the Greek word *nomos*; and is the name of the book in English, following the Greek. The title is a misunderstanding. What the phrase is in the Old Testament is a repetition of the law, not a second law. It was mistranslated into the Greek as a second law, hence the title Deuteronomy which, strictly speaking, if people knew the meaning of the name, is not right. But that is how it is as far as the labels of these books are concerned.

The Old Testament canon

The question is, when was the canon complete? The liberal view is, by and large, that the Hebrew canon was compiled virtually as the books were written, so to speak, though the third division was not finally compiled until, say, about the second century AD, or perhaps at the Council of Jamnia around AD 90. The conservative view, put in a book by Roger Beckwith³ is that the law section was settled and finalised early on, recognised by the Jews as authoritative with the general authority of Moses, but that the second and third divisions were finally settled around the time of the Maccabees, largely on account of their contents. Psalms, being a very large book but rather different from what has gone before, is put first in the third division of the Hebrew Bible because in many senses it was regarded as the most important book in the third division. Chronicles comes last, even after Ezra and Nehemiah, because it's not only a long book, but it was written after the exile, after the Jews came back from Babylon. Unlike the books of Samuel and Kings, Chronicles is a survey of world history, or at least of the Jewish history from the time of Adam, the very beginning. First Chronicles 1:1 starts with Adam, traces the rise of some of the Gentile nations, then the rise of Israel out of the nations, and ends up after the exile. It's written in the years after the exile, when Israel had returned, and hence because it is, so to speak, a summary, it is placed last. Some have

³ Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: And Its Background in Early Judaism*, [1985] repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

suggested that Daniel is there in the third division because, while he was a prophet, and our Lord said he was a prophet, a great deal of Daniel is not prophecy but history.

As to the threefold division, the Lord himself referred to the three divisions, 'Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled"' (Luke 24:44). You notice that in the Prophets you have a number of historical books—Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel and 1–2 Kings. They are called generally the Former Prophets, as distinct from the Latter Prophets, that is, the later Prophets. As I've said, Daniel is not placed among the Major Prophets presumably because a lot of his material is straightforward history. Chapter 1 is; chapter 2 is what happened to him and his three young friends in the university in Babylon; the story of the young men put into the furnace is in chapter 3 and chapter 4 contains the story about Nebuchadnezzar and the tree being cut down. Then comes the story of Daniel thrown into the den of lions in chapter 6. So a lot of it is history, along with the other chapters, which are plain prophecy.

There are a lot more things that we could mention about the canon as it stands, but we must move on now to the disputed matter, the books of the Apocrypha. As I said, the Jews are clear to this day—particularly Orthodox Jews—and have no dispute about the Old Testament canon. The dispute arose mainly in Christian times.

The Apocrypha

The fifteen books that now comprise the Old Testament Apocrypha are listed in [Appendix 2](#). They are a mixed bag. Among them are serious, or meant to be serious, historical works. Some deserve particular comment.

The Maccabees

First Maccabees and 2 Maccabees are important historical works. First Maccabees sets out to be a plain, factual account of the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes in the years 167 to 164 BC particularly, and the way the Maccabees rose up in defiance and rebellion and, by dint of guerrilla warfare, gained freedom for Israel. One of the successors of the Maccabees eventually restored the territory to Israel, almost as completely as it had been under David. They were great heroes.

Antiochus Epiphanes persecuted the Jews, desecrated the temple with an idol of Baal, sacrificed a pig on the altar, forbade possession of the Old Testament Scriptures, forbade the practice of circumcision, and so forth. It is a fact that the high priests compromised with him. They were all for turning Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city, which brought them benefits of Greek education and commerce. They compromised and they were happy to say that it didn't matter what you call God. Hebrews call him Yahweh, while others call him Ba'al, or On or Osiris. The priests felt that it didn't matter what you called him.

The Maccabees rose up against Antiochus Epiphanes and against the high priests and stood for the uniqueness of the Old Testament, God's Old Testament revelation to Israel, and for monotheism; that God was the only true God. The weapons by which they fought were, as Paul would describe them, carnal weapons and literal warfare. Alas, throughout

Christendom, many claiming to be Christians have followed their example and attempted to use literal force of literal armies to stand for the faith, with what disaster we now know. These men were not Christian in our modern sense but were ancient Jews.

So 1 Maccabees sets out to be historical. It is in fact one of the few sources of history that we have in the ancient world for that period of the Jewish nation. It is therefore an important book. That is not to say it is everywhere reliable, but it is an important book. It is also an interesting book, because it's the first book in which 'the abomination of desolation' is mentioned. As far as we know, that phrase first occurs in Greek in the book of Maccabees. It comes originally from Daniel, but it is mentioned in Greek in the book of Maccabees, describing that same situation that Daniel prophesied about. Our Lord himself also referred to the abomination spoken of by Daniel the prophet. In other words, Maccabees gives you some historical description of what that persecution and the abomination of desolation involved.

Second Maccabees is a summary of the larger work. It goes over the same period. It is full of so-called miraculous and incredible things, but nowadays some historians regard elements in it as even more reliable history than 1 Maccabees. It is worth reading if you want to fill in that period of history, to know what happened when Antiochus Epiphanes set up the abomination of desolation.

'Fictional' Books

Then there are books that show what was a common habit in the ancient world. Take for instance the Song of the Three Young Men. Daniel, the canonical book, tells us that these three young men refused to abandon the faith; they refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image and were thrown in the fire. When they were delivered, they praised the Lord. People wrote what they imagined was the song of praise they sang and made a book of it. It is, of course, imaginary. It is not canonical. It is not historically based. It is somebody imagining what the young men might have said.

Likewise, take the Additions to the book of Esther. The book of Esther as we have it in the Hebrew canon doesn't even mention the name of God anywhere. In the Septuagint, the book has been enlarged. Several sections have been interleaved in it. Of course in those, God is mentioned, and the effect of the additions throughout different parts of the book turns it into a historical novel. So they are the Additions to the book of Esther. They are apocryphal.

Then there are stories like Judith, for instance. When Israel was being besieged by a wicked king, Judith, in the end, saw a way of delivering Israel. She dressed up as a woman of no great virtue and went across to the tent of the wicked king and, with feminine guile and charm, she got herself into the tent, and so behaved that the king thought he had a great opportunity. She lulled him to sleep, feeding him a bit too much alcohol, I suspect. As he slept, she drew out a sword and cut his head off without compromising her virtue with the wicked king at all, and brought his head back in triumph to the Israelites. Perhaps some people felt that was an improvement on the story of Esther, because if you listen to the story of Esther, she joined the king's harem and was his favourite wife. What would Orthodox Judaism make of that, I wonder? So Judith was a considerable improvement, according to some people, on the behaviour of Esther.

The book of the Wisdom of Solomon is moralistic. Ecclesiasticus is a book of proverbial statements very much like the book of Proverbs. So much so that if I stood up in a congregation and, without telling them, read Ecclesiasticus, I could guarantee that a good many of the dear believers would think it was Proverbs I was reading from! There's no harm in it, except it wasn't inspired in any way.

As for First Esdras and 2 Esdras, one is the Greek translation of the book of Ezra with bits of Nehemiah in it; and the other one is partly that and partly a lot of legend as well. I despair of ever getting to remember which is which in these books of Esdras, so-called in Greek. They are to be distinguished from the canonical book of Ezra and the canonical book of Nehemiah.

The Apocrypha in the manuscripts

It remains to be said that some of the very big Greek manuscripts of the Christian period like Alexandrinus A and Vaticanus B, which contain both the Old and the New Testaments, have many of these apocryphal books. They also have additional books that are not in the strictly so-called Apocrypha. They have a 3 Maccabees and a 4 Maccabees and then they have some books that are straightforward philosophy. Some of these books existed first in Hebrew and then were translated into Greek. Some never did exist in Hebrew, but were originally written in Greek. As I say, the Orthodox Jews have never accepted any of those books as belonging to the Hebrew canon of Scripture. The inclusion of them as canon dates from the Christian period and came about, doubtless, for a simple reason. Imagine a very ancient scroll of Leviticus, or at least the fragments of it that have remained, and you see the nature of a scroll. That is to be distinguished from manuscripts which we have that are in codex form. A codex is in book form as distinct from being written on a scroll. All the Jewish holy books were written on scrolls and the Torah, as read in the synagogues to this day, is written on a scroll, though of course Jews studied it in book form; but in the synagogue services it's still a scroll that they read from.

The early Christians, however, began to use the codex form, both for the New Testament and then for the Old Testament. It was cheaper and you could get much more in a codex than you could in a scroll, so it was easier to carry around. But when people were taking these scrolls and putting them into a codex form, they would have had many other books. Like, I suppose, if I came to your library I might find on your shelf a copy of the Authorised Version, and I might then find a copy of the NIV, and *The Message*,⁴ and then Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and a Gospel Hymn Book. What would that imply—that you regarded them all as inspired, authoritative Scripture, simply because they stood together? Well, I think not. The ancients would have had scrolls in what they called a *scrinium*, which was like a big tin box. They had all sorts of scrolls in it. When they came to put them into codices, or codex form, then naturally all sorts of books got added into that form.

⁴ The NIV is the New International Version of the Bible. *The Message* is a paraphrased version of Scripture translated by Eugene H. Peterson and published by NavPress Publishing Group.

The Latin Vulgate

We have evidence that, for instance, in the early churches in Egypt they began to put together the Epistles of Paul into one codex. But as time went on, it would have been natural in the second, third, fourth and fifth centuries for people who had Greek translations of the Old Testament (because they couldn't read Hebrew), and a lot of other Greek books of a religious nature, to put them all in codex form. And so, particularly among Greek-speaking Christians, the status of these apocryphal books eventually came to be debated. We have historical accounts of the debate that arose in the fourth century onwards, and notably the debate between St Augustine of North Africa and St Jerome, who then lived in Bethlehem. The Old Testament had come to North Africa, translated into Latin from the Greek, not from the Hebrew, and the books that they then had included a lot of these apocryphal books. They were therefore translated into Latin, many of them, along with the canonical books, and accepted by people like St Augustine as being truly part of the Bible.

The Work of Jerome

Then Jerome was asked by the pope to revise the old Latin translation of these books because the Latin translation by that time was in a tremendous muddle and confusion. Many people had tried to improve it and revise it, so you didn't know one from the other. Jerome set about doing it, but he was unusual in that he had troubled to learn Hebrew, for by that time very few Christians knew any Hebrew. Augustine knew no Hebrew. Jerome lived in Palestine and when he came to revise the old Latin translation of the Greek Old Testament he saw at once how much of it in these Apocryphal books, and even within the canonical books, was not in the Hebrew. It wasn't part of the canon in Hebrew and he noticed, in parts in the Greek translation, there were things in the Hebrew that weren't in the Greek. Being a fine scholar, he set about the work and wanted to exclude anything that wasn't in the Hebrew canon, and to put into the revised Latin version all that was in the Hebrew canon, even those bits that the Greek translations had omitted. So Jerome worked from the ancient Hebrew, taught by the rabbis of the time, what was regarded as canonical by the Jews.

Hence began a very big dispute between Jerome and Augustine. I mustn't weary you now with the details of that dispute. If you are interested in it, there is a lecture that I gave, and you may have a copy if you wish, which discusses that argument between Jerome and Augustine, where Augustine reprimanded Jerome and asked him who he thought he was. Just one man, standing up against the seventy who translated the Hebrew into Greek, 'And what's more,' said Augustine, 'those seventy men were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Who are you, Jerome, to dare to reject what the seventy men inspired by the Holy Spirit told us was the Word of God?' Sounds a familiar argument, but Augustine was misled by the legends that had arisen over the translation of the Hebrew into Greek.

The earliest tradition, legend though it might be in many parts, doesn't claim that the men were inspired by the Holy Spirit. It says they came to an agreement on the translation by consulting one with another. It was later people like Epiphanes who claimed that the translators were inspired. They claimed also that, not only were they inspired, but the Greek is an absolutely exact translation of the Hebrew. Anybody that would write such a sentence

shows he doesn't know any Hebrew. The Greek is far from being an exact translation of the Hebrew in many places. So you had the dispute between Augustine and Jerome.

The Latin translation of the Old Testament that Jerome produced came to be called 'the Vulgate' and was regarded for centuries as the official Bible (Old Testament) of the Catholic Church. When the Council of Trent took place in 1545–63, the question came before the council and the arguments raged on both sides. The Augustine view or the Jerome view—which would you accept? Jerome had translated some of those apocryphal books, even though he didn't regard them as authoritative Scripture. So what were they to do? In the end, the Council of Trent compromised. It recognised the Hebrew canon; then it added on the apocryphal books at the end.

Curiously enough, the Vulgate put the Additions to Esther among books of the Apocrypha (see [Appendix 2](#)). Jerome had taken these Additions out of the book of Esther and left the canonical book. So the Vulgate put the canonical book of Esther where it should be in the canon, and put the Additions in the Apocrypha where, you will see, they make no sense, because they were not just added on to the end of the canonical Esther. They were interleaved—with one bit put in to introduce the thing, and other pieces put in here and there to make a running story, but very much a romantically enhanced story. If you take the bits out of their context, they don't make any sense. They still stand like that in the official Vulgate, at the end of the Old Testament, as the Additions to Esther—witness of the great dispute in the Council of Trent. The history of what happened in England is well recounted in F. F. Bruce's *The Books and the Parchments*,⁵ if you care to read it.

Why the canon of the Old Testament matters

In the Orthodox Church, as distinct from the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent is anathema. Actually, they don't regard it at all. They're based on the old councils, the ecumenical councils, when the Church was not divided between east and west. Hence, none of those councils pronounced on what books were apocryphal and what weren't, so the Orthodox Church has no official view on it, but normally goes with the Greek and adds the apocryphal books in. We who work a little bit in Orthodox countries like Russia and Western Ukraine have to observe these things are so with them. Luther tended to include the apocryphal books. So did the Westminster Confession of 1647. The 1611 Authorised Version added the apocryphal books. It was only later that people rose up and said these apocryphal books are not canonical. You'll find the prayer book of the Church of England,⁶ if I am not mistaken, makes the distinction between books that are to be read in church and apocryphal books that are good, edifying spiritual reading, but not to be read authoritatively in the churches, and hence the apocryphal books are sometimes, as I say, printed along with the Authorised Version, though Cranmer's prayer book will make the distinction between them.

Canonical books were to be read authoritatively in church; apocryphal books were to be read as interesting and profitable reading, but not authority in matters of doctrine. By and

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: Some Chapters on the Transmission of the Bible*, [1950] rev. edn, London, Pickering and Inglis, 1971.

⁶ The Book of Common Prayer (1549), generally assumed to be largely the work of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer.

large, evangelicals then insisted that the King James Version in English be read by itself, without including the apocryphal books. In more recent years, and this is why we need to know about it, the Bible societies have gone back on that decision. They're prepared to give you a Bible that contains the Apocrypha if you want it, or, if you don't, they'll give you a Bible that doesn't contain the Apocrypha. The modern Catholic scholars will not call those books 'apocryphal books.' They tend to call them 'deuterocanonical' books. Canonical, but of the second grade, so to speak. I doubt whether the Council of Trent would have agreed with them, but that is the modern view of many Catholic scholars. But to come right up to date, there is a very big move in the scholarly world to now assert that the Septuagint, including these apocryphal books, is the Bible of the Church, not the Hebrew canon.

Of course, Catholics hold that view still and one of their number, the late Dominic Barthélemy, put it this way: God gave the Hebrew canon to the Jews, but then when the Septuagint was translated, it was the Holy Spirit reinterpreting the Old Testament for the church, and while it is an interesting scholarly thing to interest yourself in the Hebrew Old Testament and what is its original text, that's a wild goose chase, he says. And even if you could do it, it would deliver you, bound hand and foot, on the doorstep of the rabbis and we don't want that, do we? In the Septuagint, we have the Old Testament reinterpreted for the Church and this is the church's Bible. As I say, many Protestants now, and some evangelicals, are going over to that view that the church's Old Testament should be the Septuagint.

Why should we bother about it? Well, one big answer is to go back to Christ and ask what he regarded as the Bible. As we have seen he referred to the Old Testament, the canonical books in their three divisions, and cited them as God's word. Our Lord is nowhere on record as having quoted the Apocrypha, nor would the Jews to this day agree to these books being part of the holy Scriptures. Some of the books were written for the first time in Greek and never were in Hebrew. You're not going to get any Orthodox Jew agreeing that they were part of the canon. Should we bother?

Well some of the Apocrypha, as I've said, are worthwhile historical books, but just let me give you a bit from the Maccabees, where at one stage the Jews were defeated. Some of them were killed in battle, and when their fellow Jews came to pick up the corpses they found that these Jews had pagan images under their clothes. They concluded that this was God's judgment on them. They had fallen because they compromised with idolatry and had these pagan symbols under their clothes. So, what next? They offered sacrifices for them, because they did really believe in the resurrection, and if you believe in the resurrection then you have raised the question of where these men have gone. Where will they end up? So they offered sacrifices for them, for they held it was a good and a proper and profitable thing to do, to offer sacrifices for the dead that they might be delivered from their torments. Here, straight, is the doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the dead, that they might be delivered from their torments.

If you accept these books into the canon, what will you say about this practice of offering sacrifices for the dead that they might be delivered from their torments? And what is more, if you accept some of these books into the Old Testament, Susanna and the Elders, for example, you might decide that they border on the pornographic, and they're silly stories anyway, and include silly miracles, a lot of them. In my humble judgment, it is a matter that we ought to

inform ourselves about and to be prepared to stand for the canon that our Lord himself recognised, and not to take the view that these books are part of the Old Testament for the church. These matters may sound to you very obscure, complicated and tiresome. Well they are so, there is no disputing it, but if you were a medical student you'd have to learn a lot of stuff that is very tiresome, but you do need to know the difference between one drug and another, whether it is poisonous or not, because people's lives might depend on it. And the issues at stake, as to whether these apocryphal books are part of the canon or not, is an exceedingly important, practical question because the question of salvation comes in and the question of authority, let alone the question of inspiration and revelation.

Let me read you what F. F. Bruce says on this whole matter of the text of the Old Testament. 'Before the discovery of the Qumran manuscripts Sir Frederic Kenyon⁷ asked what he called a great, indeed, all-important question with regard to the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible. It was this: "Does this Hebrew text, which we call Masoretic, and which we have shown to descend from a text drawn up about AD 100, faithfully represent the Hebrew text as originally written by the authors of the Old Testament books?" The Qumran discoveries have enabled us to answer this question in the affirmative with much greater assurance than was possible before 1947.'⁸

Well let's leave it there for the time being. I hope I've said enough to show you that we must be interested in this question of the canon of the Old Testament. It is more necessary nowadays than in the preceding two hundred years. We shall need to be certain as to what our Old Testament canon is and what the authoritative word of God is, as distinct from some of the doctrines that are put forward in the Old Testament Apocrypha.

⁷ A former director of the British Museum in London

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, London: Pickering and Inglis. 1963, 124.

Typology and the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament

Questions & Answers

(Note: M = member of the audience)

M1: I was asking earlier as to the meaning of the word Apocrypha. We do know that it means 'hidden' but the deeper aspect of the question is, why were those books ever called the Apocrypha?

DWG: As you say, the word means 'hidden away' but it came to be used in a different sense, and I'm not quite sure myself what really the sense is. The immediate meaning of *apocrypha* normally means something 'crypha', 'hidden away', Apo-crypha. Sometimes it is used of the books of hidden wisdom, particularly among mystics, but that is not the meaning claimed for these particular books. So why they continued to use it is a mystery to me. I would have to refer you to the technical works of Bruce Metzger and F. F. Bruce on the Apocrypha and so on.

M1: Even Metzger says he doesn't know why.

DWG: Yes, that's right. It's a bit of a mystery. And you notice that the modern Roman Catholic scholars, particularly, have abandoned the use of this term. They talk about the deuterocanonical books and then, if they use the Apocrypha, they use the many, many other books outside that list of so-called apocryphal books.

M2: As a scholar, how confident are you as to the reliability and the faithfulness of transmission of the Old Testament as we have it today? How confident are you in it, in a scholarly sense?

DWG: I'm 100 percent certain that it is the word of God. And if I add 'as originally given,' I do not thereby mean to say that we have serious doubt as to the contents of the Old Testament. For instance, if you look at the Hebrew number of the Psalms, they are different from our numbering of them. If you look at some of the Septuagint manuscripts, the Septuagint has 151 psalms, and the question is, how do they get the extra one? But talking substantially of the thing as a whole, I do not myself think that there is any doubt of the contents of the Old Testament as a whole.

As to the meaning of some of it and how it should be translated, there are places where the meaning of phrases is in doubt. I was looking at Exodus where it says, 'And he said, the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation' (Exod 17:16). But that first phrase, 'the LORD hath sworn,' in the Authorised Version is, 'Because the

LORD hath sworn.’ In the Revised Version, ‘the LORD hath sworn’ represents Hebrew for ‘a hand on’; or you could possibly translate the preposition ‘on’ as ‘against,’ for ‘a hand on the throne of the LORD’ or ‘a hand against the throne of the LORD.’ The question, ‘What does the Hebrew mean?’ is still debated to this very day. Does it mean ‘A hand upon the throne of the LORD!’? (Exod 17:16 ESV). God’s saying, ‘I have lifted up my hand,’ which is a way of taking an oath; or is it, as the NIV (1984) suggests, ‘For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD’? Namely, Moses sitting upon the rock lifting up his hands, and when he got tired Aaron and Hur came alongside and held up his hands as a gesture of supplication to the throne of the Lord. Is it talking about that, or would you follow the scholar Barthélemy, who says it means a hand has been raised against the throne of the Lord, namely Amalek? Now there are, in that sense, uncertainties of what the Hebrew may mean. There are things of that order.

There are doubts in various places whether the Hebrew should be read with these vowels, or perhaps with some other vowels. There are sometimes doubts about whether a letter has been rightly transcribed. The letter *r* in Hebrew looks like this: ך, just a little curve at the top, with the top line coming round a little bend on to the vertical stroke. The letter *d* is very similar: ך, except the top line protrudes a little bit at the top of the vertical stroke; and in some manuscripts they get confused by the copyist because they are so similar. Therefore, in many places you will find suggestions in the footnotes, if you read the NIV or something else, that the word might be this, the Septuagint has taken it as that, and it’s a question of reading what was there originally. There are multitudes of questions like that, practical questions. But taking the Scripture as a whole, if you ask what my attitude to it is, I say I believe that is the word of God *in toto* as originally given. We were not made any promise that God would supervise all the copying of the manuscripts and guarantee that we shall always have a perfect copy. There is no such guarantee, but from our side we have to recognise that there are some uncertainties of that order. They don’t cast doubt upon the fact that, as originally given, this was the revealed word of God, transmitted by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

I would add that there is another way in which the word of God can convince us, and that is as we read it, not simply as a concatenation, a string of facts unrelated, but we perceive its coherence and that it is devised by God as a coherent account. What that means I cannot now pause to describe to you, but in my mind that is a very important thing. One of the marks of truth is coherence. Truth must be in correspondence with the facts; we rightly look to see the historical element and if it corresponds with the facts as they’re known in history. But truth is also a question of coherence. And in saying that, I mean there are other avenues by which we come to see that the Bible is God’s truth.

M3: I didn’t want to go over what you did last session, but asking another question about the Apocrypha, how do you see its use, or is there any use for it in shedding light on certain things in the Old Testament? For example, you have the added Letter of Jeremiah and Baruch, Jeremiah’s secretary’s book, in the Apocrypha? Do they cast any light on what we have in the canonical book of Jeremiah? Should they be used to maybe give some sort of background, or an insight into the character of Jeremiah? Just because they’re not canonical, they’re still reliable in the same way you study the classics; are they reliable to that extent?

DWG: Well, I would use the word ‘useful.’ The extra books are a mixed bag, as we have seen. Some of them are very useful, as is many a book that’s not in the canon at all and not in the Apocrypha at all. They’re very useful in the sense that they do depict the attitude of the people who wrote them at that time. To know how much of Baruch is reliable as a witness to Jeremiah, you would first have to ask what its own essential authority is. I mean, does it go back to the man who was Jeremiah’s scribe, or to somebody who was purporting to write as though he were Jeremiah’s scribe? Just to illustrate the point, you have a similar problem, for instance, in *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, one of the New Testament Apocryphal Writings. If this were a book written by Nicodemus it would be exceedingly interesting, even though it wasn’t inspired, to know what he himself thought. But it is highly doubtful whether the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was written by the Nicodemus we know from Scripture. It’s more like a historical novel under the name of Nicodemus.

Baruch might be a very different thing. It might seriously be the record of Jeremiah’s scribe and therefore worth reading. The question of its authority, however, would be foundational and would come at all lines of the story. Jeremiah had a second scribe, you may remember; the book of Jeremiah tells you so. There has been a lot made of what is called the intertestamental literature in modern scholarship of the New Testament. It seems to me that very often it goes too far, because presently from using it as an interesting insight into some of the thinkers of the day, the distinction between it and Scripture tends to get obliterated.

But as an interesting comment on your question, in Beckwith’s book⁹ talking about many of the apocryphal books, he points out that you can tell by reading them what source they came from—whether they come from Pharisees, or whether they come from Sadducees, or from Essenes and such like people. For instance, you could tell that a book which talked about angels and the resurrection didn’t come from Sadducees, because they didn’t believe in either. So they are very interesting from that point of view.

M4: Some of us, Dr Gooding, don’t speak Hebrew. We aren’t fluent, and probably not in Greek either, but we find ourselves challenged in Bible study with Greek words and Hebrew words and the best some of us can do, if we get stuck, is go to Strong’s Concordance and Vine’s Expository Dictionary and all these different things. And we know that scholars despair sometimes at the fact that we try to sound authoritative on different little Greek phrases and words, and they get distressed that we do more damage sometimes with limited knowledge of these languages. So how do we minimise the amount of mistakes and messes we make?

DWG: Well I sit alongside you! I’m not an expert in Hebrew myself. I have to know how to use it. I have to know what they’re talking about and that means understanding some of the structure of the language, so that if a writer says that this Hebrew verb should here be, it’s a Niphal or it’s a Hithpael and should therefore have this particular meaning to the verb, then I have to know what they’re talking about, know the structure of the language. Knowing how to help myself, therefore, and in that sense it’s useful to know. If you’re going to talk with some authority on Hebrew words, then I, like you, and you like me, we have to depend upon

⁹ Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: And Its Background in Early Judaism*, [1985] repr., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

the experts. It's good to listen to them so that we know what they're talking about. If you and I were to cite medicine amongst ourselves and I say, 'What's wrong with you?' and you say, 'Well I've got something wrong with my diaphragm,' it would be good if you knew what the medics meant by a diaphragm. Do you see what I mean? There's no reason why we should leave it all to the experts, in any subject. You will have noticed that in a court of law, the people who decide are not the experts. It's the jury who are trusted to deal with the evidence. So there is every reason why we should think about the original languages, only to be careful. We know a great deal more about Greek, and Hebrew for that matter, now than we knew 150 years ago.

We have to be careful to distinguish between language, grammar, syntax and theology. For instance, some people will use *Wigram's Concordance* and say that here the tense is in the perfect, and the perfect means an action done with eternal results. Well the perfect does indicate an action that has been done and has results, but to slip in the word 'eternal' is to add something that the language itself doesn't have. It doesn't necessarily carry eternal results. If a man says to his wife, 'I've done what you said: I have painted the walls pink.' That's a perfect tense but is that result eternal? Well perhaps your wife wouldn't agree that it is. Next year, she'll want it green! We have to be careful in adding on the theology to the language. If you like to say, 'On the evidence of Scripture, this result is eternal. The work is finished.' Now you can go on and say, 'And we know of course, from the context and from elsewhere in Scripture, the result is eternal,' but simply to base the eternal bit on the Greek would be to go beyond what the language implies. It's that kind of thing where we have to be careful. Develop the habit of being modest and saying, 'According to some experts, this is that and that is this.' I have to do that with most of what I say.

M4: And more work on our part to try and understand the experts as well?

DWG: Yes, our blessed Lord said at one stage, 'Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life' (John 6:27). It is work. 'Work for food that endures.' That is important. Yes, many times we read Scripture and God gives us much encouragement by his Spirit and shows us this, that and the other. But on our side, we are expected to work. Try to use up-to-date dictionaries and word dictionaries. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* is very good but Greek grammar has moved on, since Vine taught, to a deeper understanding. It was very good to start with. Use it by all means.

Typology in the Old and New Testaments

Just let me observe one more thing on the question of the interpretation of the Old Testament, and one particular dimension of the interpretation of the Old Testament.

Typology

It's common knowledge that in the course of the centuries, many Old Testament passages, stories, institutions and such like have been interpreted by preachers as types of New Testament truth. The method is called typology. That has been very common in various times, particularly among conservative scholars, treating Old Testament narratives, institutions and things, as types. Sometimes that method of interpreting Old Testament has been carried to extremes; like one critic said of the ark of the covenant, it was two-and-a-half cubits by one-and-a-half by one-and-a-half or something, and that indicated that the half has not yet been told—which was wickedly cynical!

There has been a reaction against that. In many Bible schools and elsewhere, students have been warned that we must not say that anything in the Old Testament is a type, unless the New Testament explicitly says it's a type. Now people who teach students in that fashion admit, of course, that some Old Testament stories are interpreted in the New Testament as types. Witness Paul in Galatians, about Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac (Gal 4:21–31). But they were apostles and had authority to tell us what is a type and what isn't. We have no such authority and therefore, unless the New Testament explicitly indicates when such and such a story is a type, we mustn't interpret it as though it were a type. That would have implications, for example, for the story of Genesis 22.

You will often have heard that story of Abraham's offering of Isaac spoken of and interpreted as a figure, as a picture, of the father and son going to the altar; as the Father and the Son going to Calvary, God providing the sacrifice, the Lamb of God. In other words, an interpretation that uses it as a type. If it were true that we mustn't, if we would be good expositors and exegetes, say anything is a type if the New Testament doesn't say it is, then it would rule out that interpretation completely. This would have wide-ranging effects of course, because that has sometimes been taught as though it were an authoritative rule on how we should interpret the Old Testament.

I want to protest. Yes, I agree that there has been much fanciful interpretation of the Old Testament under the name of typology, but I want to make the point that typology is only one way in which the New Testament uses the Old. Its use of the Old is exceedingly varied. I want just to list for you some different ways in which the New Testament uses the Old, and I shall not have time to explain what I mean by them, but I just want to cite them to remind you of the New Testament's wide use of the Old Testament.

Quotations

There are, of course, straight quotations of laws, principles, exhortations, promises, characters, events. 'You shall not murder' (Exod 20:13) says the Old Testament. 'You shall not murder' (Matt 19:18) says the New Testament. 'Honour your father and your mother' (Exod 20:12) says the Old. 'Honour your father and mother' (Eph 6:2) says the New, and so forth.

Analogies, Similes and Metaphors

There are formal comparisons, similes, and metaphors. 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up' (John 3:14). That is a simile; a comparison, if you like. It isn't saying that the one thing is a type of another. It is drawing a similarity, an analogy between them.

A metaphor is when you use a phrase and don't formally say it's a comparison, but use a phrase that originates in one area of experience and apply it to another. So Peter says, 'Gird up the loins of your mind' (1 Pet 1:13 KJV). Now minds don't have loins, and anyway, many modern people wouldn't know what a loin is if they should meet one, and they're not in the habit of girding up their loins anyway! So you first of all have to understand what the situation was in real life from which the metaphor is drawn, and then what it means when it is applied. So if in English I say, 'He hit him for six,' what do I mean? For six what? Of course you would know immediately that the literal world from which that is drawn is cricket—you get six if you hit the ball above and beyond the boundary without it touching the ground. So the expression 'hit him for six,' as in 'he knocked his argument for six,' is a metaphor.

Then take, 'Mrs So-and-so always likes the limelight.' In the wickedness of my heart, I used to get some of my students to translate that into Latin. It was wickedness indeed, because the dear students didn't know what limelight was to start with; and of course the metaphor has died out in English. Limelight is a certain very powerful light that was used on the stage to be trained on the leading actor. To say, 'Mrs so-and-so loves the limelight,' simply means she loves all attention put on her. It's a metaphor then. 'Gird up the loins' is a metaphor. What on earth does it mean, and why does Peter use it in that context? It is taken from the Passover in which those who ate the Passover couldn't eat it just any old how. They had to eat it, their loins girded, staff in their hand, shoes on their feet (Exod 12:11 KJV). Why does Peter use that metaphor now to apply it to us, and what does it mean when it's applied to our minds? 'Gird up the loins of your minds.'

Case Law and Precedent

The New Testament uses the Old as case law, as a lawyer would cite case law or common law. 'Abraham was justified' (Rom 4:2). Oh, yes? How and on what ground and on what principle? Well, by faith. Now that's not a type. That isn't a type of anything. Abraham was a man who walked around like we do and he was literally justified before God; he was justified on the principle of faith. It set the precedent, a legal precedent that anybody who's going to be justified can be, and must be, justified as Abraham was. That's case law.

Talking to the Christians at Corinth, Paul quotes the Old Testament law, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain' (1 Cor 9:9). What's that got to do with anything? Well it's what the lawyers in that day would have called a legal paradigm because the lawyers, both Latin and Hebrew, would have said that when the laws were laid down, instead of trying to cover every possible case, they would cite one big case, one situation in which the law applied, which then became an example for all the other similar cases. It is a paradigm, an example.

So the farmer was told he wasn't to muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. The ox, working for his master, producing the threshed corn for the master, must be allowed to profit from the work he did. This was not written to the ox, of course. It was written to the master who benefited from the work of the ox. Writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul is making the point that they who work for the church, spiritually work for them, from whose labours the church profits, must remember this legal paradigm. It is then applied to the church's attitude towards Christian workers.

Predictions and Prototypes

There are straightforward fulfilments of predictions and prototypes. It was prophesied in Micah 5 that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, and he came from Bethlehem—Matt 2:1. Then there are also fulfilments of prototypes. When our Lord was at the Last Supper he said, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22:15–16). What did he mean? The Passover wasn't a prediction. The Passover was a ceremony that bade you remember the past. How could that be fulfilled, therefore? It was what you would call a prototype that was eventually fulfilled at a much higher level: the principle of redemption, namely, freedom through the blood of a sacrifice.

In the case of Israel and Egypt, it brought freedom from the destroying angel through the blood of a sacrifice. The lamb's blood, slain and poured out, was going to be fulfilled at a much higher level when our Lord died to free us from the wrath of God, through the shedding of his blood. So fulfilment not of a prediction, but of a prototype.

Allusions

Just to mention two more, but there are such things as *explicit* allusions. What do you mean? Well, says Jude of certain false teachers, 'For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion' (Jude 1:11). An explicit allusion to three Old Testament rebels: Cain, Balaam and Korah. But you'll see that if you're going to understand the allusion, you'll have to work hard on the Old Testament. If I said of so-and-so, 'he has behaved like a Hitler,' you would know what I'm meaning because you happen to know about Hitler. If I said, 'He behaved like Korah,' what would that mean? You'll not understand what Jude is talking about, about the heretics who were in his day, unless you know what Cain stood for, what Korah stood for, and what Balaam stood for. They were all false men in the context of religion. It was in the context of religion that Cain murdered his brother. It was in the context of religion that Balaam attacked Israel. It was in the context of religion that Korah rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

Then there are *implicit* allusions; let me cite one. 'To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (Rev 2:7). 'Paradise of God?' you say. It's heaven, isn't it, more or less? You may happen to know that the word 'paradise' is the Greek for the garden of Eden. So this is an implicit allusion, is it, to the garden of Eden? Well it could be, couldn't it? For the tree of life originally was in the garden of Eden, and when man sinned he got moved out of the garden. Says our Lord to the church of Ephesus, 'I will

come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent' (Rev 2:5) and adds, 'To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (v. 7). 'Which is in the paradise', not now the garden of Eden, but the paradise of God, as described in the last chapters of the book of the Revelation.

Conclusion

There are then, and I cite some of these examples, many ways in which the New Testament uses the Old. It will include typology, of course, but it does include a lot of other things as well. I would recommend it to you, my good brothers and sisters, that in our study of the Scriptures we should not confine ourselves merely to typology, important though typology is, but we should look for the many other ways in which the New Testament uses the Old.

APPENDIX 1

The Old Testament Canon: Groupings of Books

	Hebrew Bible	Christian Bible
1. THE LAW (Pentateuch)	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
2. THE PROPHETS	Joshua Judges Samuel Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel
3. THE WRITINGS (Hagiographa)	Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra Nehemiah Chronicles	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

APPENDIX 2

The Books of the Apocrypha

1 Esdras

2 Esdras

Tobit

Judith

The Additions to the book of Esther

Wisdom of Solomon

Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach

Baruch

The Letter of Jeremiah

The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men

Susanna

Bel and the Dragon

The Prayer of Manasseh

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

About the Author

DAVID W. GOODING is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. His international teaching ministry is marked by fresh and careful expositions of both testaments. He has published scholarly studies on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John 13–17, Acts, Hebrews and the New Testament's use of the Old Testament.