

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

metaphor, this theory seems to fit too many wards of a highly complex lock to be other than the true key. Certainly it has opened up the allusive meaning of various expressions in the Muratorian Canon to the present writer's mind, as he proceeded to apply it, in a way that causes him to hope that it may commend itself to others also in like fashion. To locate more accurately an early Christian witness of such obvious significance, but of enigmatic origin, is to enhance its potential value to a degree that can only be realized by actual experience. But even though this paper may not lead to the ultimate supersession of the accidental label "Canon of Muratori" by the historically significant title "Canon of Melito"; it will be something gained, if the Hippolytean origin be henceforth considered an exploded hypothesis, and the true path be indicated by the setting up of some fresh finger-posts to the final truth.

VERNON BARTLET.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

ABOUT 190 years before the Christian era, one Jesus Ben-Sira produced a book of sage counsel and godly exhortation, which found acceptance, first in Jewry and afterwards in Christendom, as a work profitable to be read "for example of life and instruction of manners." This book, however, was not admitted into the Jewish Canon of "Holy Writ." Some twenty-five years later (so we are called upon to believe) appeared an anonymous work, purporting to be the record of certain acts, prophecies, and visions of one Daniel, who had been carried away as a captive, in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and had lived in Babylon until the days of Cyrus and Darius. This "Book of Daniel" found admission into the Jewish

Canon. Its existence and contents were perfectly well known to Christ, who quoted it as prophecy.

If the Book of Daniel was in truth composed and produced not earlier than the year 165 B.C., it is not easy to understand, or even conjecture, how it came to pass that the Jews gave it a place in their Canon of Holy Scripture, while they excluded the work of Jesus Ben-Sira. The question, whether Daniel should be recognized as "Mikra" or not must have been decided by the time when Christ warned his disciples (and through them all and sundry) to flee from Jerusalem and Judæa when they should see "the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place." Those to whom Christ was then speaking were Jews. To what purpose would he have quoted, as prophetic, a book which they knew to be excluded from the Canon? It might be answered that the disciples would have accepted, as canonical, anything that their Master might choose to quote as law or prophecy. But we do not find any evidence to show that the Law and the Prophets which he recognized differed from the Law and the Prophets recognized by the Jewish Church.

The canonicity, then, of Daniel may be regarded as having attained the authority of a "chose jugée" by the time of our Lord's public ministry. On what grounds, then, was canonical dignity accorded to Daniel, while it was withheld from Ben-Sira? The work of Ben-Sira strongly resembles the Proverbs of Solomon, but this circumstance, so far from being an obstacle, might very possibly have been accounted a positive recommendation for inclusion within the Canon. There is some resemblance between the visions in the latter part of Daniel and those in the Book of Ezekiel, but it is very far from being so close as the resemblance between the maxims of Ben-Sira and those con-

tained in the canonical Book of Proverbs. Daniel, indeed, is hardly like anything else in the Old Testament. In the course of some 250 or 300 years after the supposed date of Daniel (165 B.C.) a number of books, more or less similar, and classified as "apocalyptic" came into existence. None, however, found admission into the Jewish Canon, and only one (the Apocalypse of St. John) found admission into the Canon of the Christian Church. The very novelty of Daniel would, for all one can tell, have been likely to impede, rather than facilitate, the canonization of the book.

There is, then, this serious objection to the date assigned by most modern authorities to the Book of Daniel, viz., that it refuses to fit in with the indubitable fact that Daniel found acceptance as "Holy Writ," sacred and authoritative.

It is true that, in Jewish Bibles, Daniel is placed, not among the Prophets (Nebiim), but among the Hagiographa (Kethubim). But the question may be asked, whether a very great degree of importance was assigned, before the Christian era, to the division into Law, Prophets, and "Writings." St. Luke distributes the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ among the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke xxiv. 44), but Christ Himself quoted the Old Testament as "the Scriptures," or the Law (John x. 34, xv. 25—both citations from the Psalms), or, as the Law and the Prophets (e.g. Matt. xxii. 40). St. John records how, on one occasion, "the multitude answered, We have heard *out of the Law* that the Christ abideth for ever." The Old Testament passages which they had in mind must have been such as Psalm lxxxix. 4 or Isaiah ix. 7. No text in point can be adduced from the Pentateuch. Furthermore, as we have already noticed, Christ once at least explicitly quoted Daniel as "the prophet."

There is yet another consideration. The division of the

books of the Old Testament into three classes, Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa, may be traced back as far as the oldest Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament will take us. The extant MSS. of the Hebrew text are traceable to a single copy. But that copy may not have been made earlier than the Christian era. The "puncta extraordinaria" are, according to Professor Margoliouth, of Roman origin (EXPOSITOR, Sept. and Oct., 1900).¹ We must be careful, then, lest we build too much on the evidence of existing Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament. They may not be absolutely *certain* evidence for the place of Daniel in a MS. of, say, 100 B.C. In such a MS. Daniel *might* have been found next to Ezekiel.

At the same time, certain considerations set forth by Professor Driver in his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* and his commentary on the Book of Daniel in the Cambridge Bible² make it impossible to regard the extant Hebrew-Aramaic text as a production of the sixth century B.C. His arguments, as he himself allows, are not all of equal strength. But there seems to be no possibility of "getting round" the fact that in the text of Daniel there are Persian and Greek words. Colonel Conder, indeed, transmutes the Greek words into Assyrian,³ but in a philological question of this sort, it is safer to follow an Oxford Professor than a Colonel of the Royal Engineers.⁴ Sir Robert Anderson tries to ridicule the inference drawn from the presence of the Greek words, but he does not deny that they are Greek, and furnishes no satisfactory explanation of their being found where they are.⁵ Let it be granted, on

¹ See also his *Lines of Defence of the Biblical Revelation*, pp. 240-241.

² See the Introduction to this Commentary, pp. xlvi.-lxviii.

³ *The First Bible*, p. 38.

⁴ Colonel Conder has the hardihood to assert that ψαλτήριον has no Greek etymology!

⁵ *The Coming Prince* (5th edition); Preface, pp. xxvii.-xxviii.

the evidence of the languages used in the existing text of Daniel, as found in Hebrew Bibles, that the said text dates in its present form from the second century B.C. This admission, however, does not preclude us from seeking a more remote origin for the prophecies contained in the book.

The following is offered as a possible reconstruction of the history of the prophecies and visions ascribed by tradition to Daniel.

An attempt was made by the deputies and agents of Antiochus Epiphanes to destroy utterly the sacred literature of the Jews. "In the hundred and forty and fifth year" (sc. of the Seleucian era, B.C. 168) "they rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, and set them on fire. And wheresoever was found with any a book of the covenant, and if any consented to the law, the King's sentence delivered him to death. Thus did they in their might unto Israel, to those that were found month by month in the cities" (1 Macc. i. 54, 56-58 R.V.). The destruction of "books of the law" would be certain to include other books beside the Mosaic—it would include anything known to be regarded by the Jews as "sacred writings."

The extant text of Daniel is partly Hebrew, partly Aramaic. On the theory that it is all traceable to one author, who lived not earlier than 300, and most probably as late as 165 B.C., it is difficult to account for the Hebrew being dropped in chapter ii. 4, and then resumed in chapter viii. 1. Why not Hebrew *or* Aramaic all through? It is, however, a possible account of the matter that before B.C. 168 there were two Palestinian texts of Daniel, one Hebrew, the other Aramaic, the latter being a version of the former, "in usum plebis," and that portions of the Hebrew text perished irrecoverably in the Bible-hunt of 168 B.C. and the years following, the lacuna being sub-

sequently filled up from the Aramaic version. The disappearance of the rest of the Aramaic may have been due to the establishment of a rule that a Targum might not be committed to writing.¹

The Aramaic version might have been a thing of no great antiquity in 168 B.C. One notices that it is in the Aramaic part of the existing text that the Greek words occur (chap. iii. 5, 7, 10, 15). Naturalized Greek words might easily have been used by a translator in the period 200–170 B.C.² To what epoch, though, is the Hebrew text to be assigned? Professor Driver is assured that the Hebrew of Daniel is Hebrew of the age subsequent to Nehemiah.³ We may contend for the spirit of prophecy enabling a man in the sixth century B.C. to foretell things which were to come to pass in the fourth and the second centuries, but we have no ground, no authority, for contending that the spirit would enable him to speak of those things in the dialect of generations yet unborn. The tests by means of which earlier and later “hands” are said to be discoverable in the composition of the Pentateuch may be fallacious. At any rate, Hebraists of no mean standing have disallowed them, and if such tests are not to be regarded as yielding certain results when applied to the Pentateuch, they may also be doubtful when applied to the Prophets. Still, when such men as Professor Driver and the late Dr. Delitzsch

¹ “Mas’udi in the tenth century describes the Targum not as a book, but as a *language* into which the Jews translate their sacred books” (Margoliouth, *Lines of Defence*, p. 228). Nothing but the Old Testament was written in the period A.D. 70–750; *op. cit.*, p. 232. The determination that the Targum should be left unwritten may have been arrived at several generations earlier.

² The occasion prompting the production of an Aramaic version “in usum plebis” may have been the conquest of Coele-Syria and Palestine by Antiochus the Great, 198–197 B.C. In the wresting of Palestine from the suzerainty of the Lagidæ, the author of the version might well have seen a change that boded ill for his people.

³ *Daniel*, in the Cambridge Bible, *Intro.* pp. lx.–lxiii.

declare unreservedly that the Hebrew of Daniel is Hebrew of an age later than that of Nehemiah, i.e. later than 430 B.C., their statements must be taken into serious consideration. Accepting, therefore, on their authority, the post-exilian, and rather late post-exilian, date assigned for the Hebrew sections of Daniel, we proceed to ask whether this shuts us up to the fourth century B.C. as the very earliest epoch within which the prophecies of the book can be believed to have originated. Not of necessity. The state of the matter seems to be this. In the fourth century B.C. a record of such visions, prophecies, and acts of Daniel as were known to tradition was made, in the Hebrew of the time. This document contained a great deal of matter which did not really rest upon the authority of the sixth-century prophet himself. The scribe who produced it had no access to good sources of Babylonian and Persian history, and therefore fell into those inaccuracies (e.g. making Darius come before Cyrus in the Persian succession) which are considered signs of the comparatively late origin of the book of Daniel.¹ The historical narrative (chaps. i.-vi.) may be regarded as the work of this scribe, its actual basis being a perhaps rather scant tradition concerning oracles delivered by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and attempts made to induce him and other Jews to abandon the worship of Jehovah for paganism. In the apocalyptic section (chaps. vii.-xii.) it is at the least allowable to suppose that the compiler found much less scope for amplification.

But by what manner of tradition were acts, prophecies, and visions of Daniel in the sixth century B.C. preserved in remembrance for, it may have been, full two hundred years ?

Is it a thing incredible that the tradition was an oral one ? The Oriental memory is equal to much greater feats than

¹ *Daniel*, in the Cambridge Bible, Introd. pp. xlviiii.-liv.

this, of preserving virtually (at any rate) intact for two hundred years the words in which a man had prophesied before kings or had described visions in which the course of history, in ages yet to come, the rise and fall of great empires, had been disclosed to him.

For some 700 years the Jews allowed themselves to write nothing but the canonical Scriptures. So we are told by the Talmud, and on this point Professor Margoliouth, a competent witness, declares that the Talmud cannot be mistaken.¹ During those 700 years oral tradition carried a vast and ever-increasing burden—not only the manner of pronouncing and intoning the holy writings, but the meaning of the language in which they were written, and a mass of comments and interpretations—all the heterogeneous contents of the Mishna. In view of this, the preservation of what must have amounted to little more than half of what now constitutes the Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel seems a very small exploit.

To describe with exactness and in detail the original form of Daniel's oracles and visions is now no longer within our power. But that in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus and Darius, there lived, at the courts of Babylon and Susa, a Jew who served these monarchs in positions of trust, who testified to them of the Divine will, who had visions of a future from himself very remote, need not, and indeed ought not, to be doubted. One needs something more substantial than the hero of a Midrash for the source of prophecies to which Christ appealed for testimony concerning Himself.

But it may be asked, "How do you account for Ezekiel quoting Daniel as an example of righteousness, on a par with Noah and Job, if Daniel was a younger contemporary of Ezekiel?" The Bible, it may be answered, contains

¹ *Lines of Defence*, p. 232.

more than one instance of the younger being preferred before the elder. No doubt, Ezekiel must have had a very strong reason for mentioning Daniel on an equality with Job and Noah. So indeed he had. "*The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, when a land sinneth against me, and I stretch out mine hand upon it . . . though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness*" (Ezek. xiv. 13-14; cf. 16, 18 and 20). It was not so much Ezekiel as the Lord from whom the word came to the prophet, who testified to the righteousness of Daniel.

Then how are we to account for the absence of Daniel's name from Ben-Sira's catalogue of famous men? It is, indeed, a question whether Daniel's name was absent from that catalogue in its original form. Ezra's name, it may be pointed out, is like Daniel's, conspicuous by absence. Furthermore, the reading of the Vatican Codex in the second half of Ecclus. xlix. 10 suggests that a name in the singular number has disappeared, and the reading of the same MS. in xlix. 15 does *not* favour the rendering "Neither was there a man born like Joseph." Though indeed, even if the Vatican Codex supported that rendering, it would be no great matter. Ben-Sira has already made an over-statement with regard to Enoch (v. 14) whose translation was not a greater miracle than the ascension of Elijah, and he might easily have made another one with regard to Joseph. Yet again, Ben-Sira mentions Ezekiel, and Ezekiel mentions Daniel. The Greek text in xlix. 9 is of doubtful accuracy. Professor Margoliouth thinks that the real meaning of the original Hebrew was "he made mention of Job in an allusion and blessed those who direct their ways aright."¹ The mention of Job as referred to by Ezekiel would mean at the very least that Ben-Sira was not ignorant of Daniel's

¹ *Lines of Defence*, pp. 177-182.

name and fame as a righteous man. At the same time it is possible that Daniel's name never figured in Ben-Sira's catalogue, and was intentionally left out, in deference to the opinion of those who, in his day, were yet doubtful whether Daniel should be accounted "holy writ" or not.

If there was a controversy in Israel, about B.C. 200, over the question of Daniel's claim to a place among the canonical Scriptures, it was set at rest, once for all, by the events of 168 B.C. and the years following. But if the hypothesis offered above is true, viz., that the *text* of Daniel is not of sixth-century origin, but fourth-century at the earliest, the knowledge of this may have led to placing this book with the Psalter and the Megilloth rather than with the Prophets.

H. T. F. DUCKWORTH.

THE ALPHABETIC STRUCTURE OF PSALMS IX. AND X.

SOME few years since ¹ I attempted to prove afresh (for at the time it was not generally admitted by English scholars) the existence in the first chapter of Nahum of part of an alphabetic poem; in recoil from certain over-elaborate and inconclusive attempts to prove that an *entire* alphabetic poem lay concealed there, several writers had expressed scepticism of the existence of even a part of such a poem, for which nevertheless the evidence, rightly considered, was really, and is now more generally admitted to be, irresistible.

I here propose to re-discuss the question of the alphabetic structure of Psalms ix. and x. In this case it is agreed that we have to do with parts of an alphabetic poem (or of two) but opinion remains divided as to the extent of these parts. In the interests alike of the criticism of the Psalter, the

¹ THE EXPOSITOR, 1898 (Sept.), pp. 207-220.