The Chronological Reading of the Old Testament During 1933
(With Chronological Chart and Suggestive Reading Schedule)

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AN EARNEST invitation is extended to all workers of the Advent Movement to join in the united, chronological reading of the Bible within the next two years, the Old Testament in 1933, and the New Testament in 1934. This recommendation, approved by action of the General Conference Committee, is here placed before our workers as one of the designated objectives of the Ministerial Reading Course.

In these remnant days of time, when apostasies from the faith and departures from the Word constitute an ever-increasing danger to the church, such a call to renewed study of the Scriptures is both timely and appropriate,—for the Bible is the most loved, most feared, most hated, most strangely distorted, most widely circulated, and most shamefully neglected Book in the world.

The advantage of acquaintance with the chronological order of the books of the Old Testament may be illustrated thus: The casual reader of the Bible will ordinarily think of Hosea as coming after the prophet Daniel, because so placed in our Bibles; instead, Hosea lived over two centuries before Daniel. This fact is recognized in Ussher's chronology, which dates appear in the margins of most Bibles.

Moreover, it is desirable to have an accurate understanding of the time or placement of each prophet's ministry in relation to paramount movements and crises in Israel, together with those in surrounding nations.

Still another helpful feature meriting attention in such reading, is a knowledge of the contemporary ministry of many of the prophets. It will be observed that a group of writing prophets is clustered in the period of the declension of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, terminating in the fall of Samaria. A second and larger group centers about the decline of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, with the siege of Jerusalem, and the beginning of the captivity. Previous to both of these crises, still another and remarkably large group of oral prophets appeared just after the division of the kingdom.

This relationship of the prophets to the obvious exigencies of the hour is deeply significant. The need of a contemporary group of prophets in both Israel and Judah was of course increased by the division of the nation after Solomon's death, and intensified by the periodic and persistent strife between the two nations. These points are easily grasped and retained by means of the chart which appears within, together with informative notations in parallel columns. Frequent reference to this chart should enhance the interest and value of chronological reading.

The majority of the Old Testament books can be placed in their historical and chronological order in the Canon on the basis of internal evidence, as well as upon the records of the Jews. A few, such as Obadiah and Jonah, are more difficult to locate, and their precise place cannot be determined with finality. In such instances, the conclusions of learned and conservative Christian scholars are recorded.

FORMATION OF THE CANON

That it [the Canon] was fixed at that time [of Ezra] appears from the fact that all subsequent references to the sacred writings presuppose the existence of the complete Canon, as well as from the fact that of no one among the apocryphal books is it so much as hinted, either by the author or by any other Jewish writer, that it was worthy of a place among the sacred books, though of some of them the pretensions are in other respects sufficiently high (e.g. Ecclus. xxxiii, 16-18; 1, 28). Josephus, indeed distinctly affirms (cont. Ap. 1. c.) that, during the long period that had elapsed between the time of the close of the Canon and his day, no one had dared either to add to, or to take from, or to alter anything in the sacred books. This plainly shows that about the time of Artaxerxes, to which Josephus refers, and which was the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, the collection of the sacred books was completed by an authority which thenceforward ceased to exist.—McClintock and Strong, Vol. II, p. 76.

The O.-T. Canon, as established in the time of Ezra, has remained unaltered to the present day. Some indeed, have supposed that, because the Sept. version contains some books not in the Hebrew, there must have been a double Canon, a Palestinian and an Egyptian ... but this notion has been completely disproved. ... All extant evidence is against it. The Son of Sirach, and Philo, both Alexandrian Jews, make no allusion to it; and Josephus, who evidently used the Greek version, expressly declares against it in the passage above referred to (Ap. i. 8). The earlier notices of the Canon simply designate it by the threefold division already considered.—Id., p. 77.
A SUGGESTIVE READING SCHEDULE

As there are 929 chapters in the Old Testament, and 365 days in the year 1933, if the worker will read approximately three chapters daily, the reading of all the sacred writings to which our Saviour had access, will be easily accomplished in 1933.

THE CONTENTS AND ORDER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON

INFORMATION as to the whys and wherefores of the Protestant Old Testament canon, and how and when it came to differ from the Roman Catholic, will be useful to our workers. The Old Testament is, of course, utilized alike by Jews, Catholics, and Protestants. These different groups have a slightly varying order for the component books that have been accepted by all as canonical. This is quite apart from the apocryphal writings injected first into the Septuagint text, and later into the Roman Catholic canon. It is desirable to discern clearly that the Protestant Bible has eliminated the apocryphal books, and so is identical in content with the original list of the Palestinian Jews whose canon, as the illuminating footnotes indicate, remained virtually unchanged for centuries both before and after Christ. Data is here presented, showing at a glance the unwarranted enlargement approved by Roman Catholic authority, together with the Protestant repudiation of the apocrypha and a return to the original canon under Reformation influences. The occasional confusion, therefore, arising from continued publication by Protestants of the apocrypha along with the canon, as an appendix, was fully removed shortly before the rise of the Advent Movement. The four lists follow in parallel columns to facilitate comparative study, with the apocryphal books (or parts thereof) as they occur set off in brackets, and footnotes for reference conveniently appended. It should likewise be noted that, while the Septuagint lists more apocryphal books by name than the Roman Catholic, the latter has incorporated with other books most of those not separately named, so that in reality the two lists are virtually alike in relation to apocryphal writings.

While there are unquestioned allusions to historic events in some of the apocryphal books, yet the internal evidence of these writings—their strange phantasies, fables, and errors—automatically separates them from the inspired Scriptures. They were never quoted by Jesus, and it cannot be proven that the apostles ever directly alluded to them. Hence they stand unrecognized in the Protestant Church, and rejected as uncanonical.

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<th>Jewish</th>
<th>Septuagint</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
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<tr>
<td>(New 1917 Trans.)</td>
<td>(After Swete, 3 Vols.)</td>
<td>(Vulgate)</td>
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In making the transition from the Jewish to the Christian church, we find the same canon cherished by all. Christians of all ages have always been disposed to accept without question the canon of the Jews. For centuries all branches of the Christian church were practically agreed on the limits set by the Jews, but eventually the western church became divided, some alleging that Christ sanctioned the "larger" canon of Alexandria, including the Apocrypha, while others adhered, as the Jews have always done, to the canon of the Jews in Alexandria in view of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Pal. The actual difference between the Catholic and Protestant OTs is of a matter of 7 complete books and portions of two others: viz., Tob. Jth. Wisd. Eccles., Ecclus. Bar., 1 and 2 Macc., together with certain portions of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Pal.—International Standard Bible Ency., Vol. I, p. 561.

During the first four centuries this Hebrew Canon is the only one which is distinctly recognized, and it is supported by the combined authority of those fathers whose critical judgment is entitled to the greatest weight. The real divergence as to the contents of the Old-Testament Canon is to be traced to Augustine, who enumerates the books contained in "the whole Canon of Scripture." In proportion as the fathers were more or less absolutely dependent on the Old-Testament Canon among the early Christian writers. In proportion as the fathers were more or less absolutely dependent on the Old-Testament Canon among the early Christian writers. The actual difference between the Catholic and Protestant OTs is of a matter of 7 complete books and portions of two others: viz., Tob. Jth. Wisd. Eccles. Bar. I and II Macc, together with certain portions of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Pal.—International Standard Bible Ency., Vol. I, p. 561.

The general use of the Septuagint (enlarged by apocryphal additions) produced effects which are plainly visible in the history of the 0-T. Among the early Christian writers, in proportion as the fathers were more or less absolutely dependent on that version for their knowledge of the Old-Testament Scriptures, they gradually lost in common practice the sense of the difference between the books of the Hebrew Canon and the Apocrypha. The custom of individuals grew into the custom of the Church; and the public use of the apocryphal books obliterated in popular regard the characteristic marks of their origin and value, which could only be discovered by the scholar. The custom of the Church was not fixed in an absolute judgment.—McClintock and Strong, Ency. of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Lit., Vol. II, p. 78.

**Septuagint**—The order of the books in our English OT is of course derived from LXX [Septuagint] through the Vulgate of St. Jerome. The books in the LXX are arranged as follows: ... On the basis of the LXX, Catholics advocate what is known as the "larger" canon of the Jews in Alexandria: Protestants, on the other hand, deny the existence of an independent canon in Alexandria in view of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Pal. The actual difference between the Catholic and Protestant OTs is of a matter of 7 complete books and portions of two others: viz., Tob. Jth. Wisd. Eccles. Bar. I and II Macc, together with certain portions of the "smaller" canon of the Jews in Pal.—International Standard Bible Ency., Vol. I, p. 556.

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**Roman Catholic**—Up to the date of the Council of Trent (q. v.), the Romanists allow that the question of the Canon was open, but one of the first labors of that assembly was to circumscribe a freedom which the growth of literature seemed to render perilous. The decree of the Council "on the Canonical Scriptures," which was made at the 4th session (April 8th, 1546), at which about 53 representatives were united, pronounced the apocryphal books to be deserving in all parts of "equal veneration" (pari pietatis affecto), and added a list of books "to prevent the possibility of doubt" (nec dubitatio suboriri posset).—McClintock and Strong, Ency. of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Lit., Vol. II, p. 79.

The Council of the Trent (1546) accepted as canonical all the books contained in the Latin version known as Vulgate, that is to say, in addition to the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Scriptures also Tobit and Judith (between Nehemiah and Esther), the additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus (Ben Sira; after the Song of Songs), Baruch including the Epistle of Jeremiah (after Lamentations appended to Jeremiah), Susanna and Bel and the Dragon (as an appendix to Daniel; in chapter 3: the Song of the Three Holy Children—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—is inserted), I and II Maccabees (at the close of the Prophets).—The Hebrew Scriptures in the Making, Margolis, p. 92. (See also Note a).
THE THREE MAJOR DIVISIONS

The Jews early divided the OT writings into three classes: (1) the Torah, or Law; (2) the Neviim, or Prophets; and (3) the Ketubim, or Writings called in Gr. the Hagiographa. The Torah included the five books of the Pentateuch (Dt), which were called "the five-fifths of the Law." The Neviim embraced (a) the four so-called Former Prophets, which were comprised in the Greek LXX and afterwards the Latin Vulgate, and became the Bible of the Mediaeval Fathers, notably Origen, Athanasius, and Jerome; whereas the Apocrypha had been clearly distinguished by the fathers, notably Origen, Athanasius, and Jerome, and placed upon a lower level. The Reformers were also influenced undoubtedly by the fact that quotations from the writings of the so-called Minor Prophets were frequently used by Roman Catholic writers in support of the peculiar doctrines of their Church, such as the immortality of the soul, and the meritorious value of good works (To 4:10, Sir 3:29-12).

It is an altogether erroneous supposition that all of the writings comprised within the third division must have been published before the second or prophetic collection had been closed. The books of the third division rather form a group of matter from the two which precede it in the editions. "The Hebrew Scriptures in the Making," Margolis, p.

MAJOR PROPHETS.—The study of the Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel—carried us through a major and a half of the history of Judah, and through the entire period of the Babylonian Exile. That is, from when Isaiah began his prophetic labors to the end of the reign of Heczekiah, and from the thirteenth year of his reign until the fall of Judah in 596 B.C. Ezekiel was carried to Babylon in 597 B.C., and in 592 was exiled by the edict of Cyrus. The Holy Bible, New Analytical Ed., Dickson, p. 1011.

It is proper to add that while the contents of the several divisions of the canon were fixed, the order of the division varied from time to time; and even in the second division the Talmud knew Isaiah as standing between the Major and Minor Prophets. This order of the four prophetic books (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Minor Prophets), was by size, the largest being placed first. A Dictionary of the Bible, John D. Davis, p. 117.

MINOR PROPHETS.—At an early time these twelve prophets must have been brought together in one volume. In the Septuagint there is a slight difference in the order. The word "Minor" does not denote less importance than the others, but are smaller in bulk than Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The Holy Bible, Newson, p. 1011.

The Minor Prophets take us back to a time earlier than that of Isaiah, since at least two of them preceded him. The Minor Prophets are not prophesying when Jeremiah received his call, and between the time of Zephaniah and the fall of Judah. Nahum and Obadiah utter their messages. Following the Exile, the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are placed in the Old Testament Canon. It was in Israel that the first of the sixteen prophets appeared, Jonah, doubtless, from the fall of Israel in 722 B.C. Thus we see how the minor prophets range over the whole of the long period of the Kingdom of Judah. —Ibid.