

L. STEPHEN COOK

On the Question of the
“Cessation of Prophecy”
in Ancient Judaism

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145

Mohr Siebeck

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“Cessation of Prophecy”
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Preface

This volume represents essentially a reprinting of my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Biblical Studies faculty at The Catholic University of America (2009). To that work I have made a handful of corrections and clarifications, and have added references to a few peripheral sources which have come onto the scene since the dissertation was first submitted. It seems that no major works on my subject have appeared since early 2009.

No undertaking of this sort is possible without the support of many teachers, friends, family members, and colleagues. I offer my thanks once again to the faculty at CUA for their initial oversight of this project, especially my director Christopher T. Begg, along with Alexander Di Lella and Joseph Jensen. I can only hope to imitate the first-rate scholarship and discipline (not to mention patience) exhibited by these gentlemen. To Dr. Henning Ziebritzki at Mohr Siebeck, along with Annette Reed and the editorial staff of *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism*, I extend my gratitude for accepting this work for publication in that series.

The administration and faculty at Johnson University in Knoxville, TN, where I have taught while completing this dissertation/book, also merit special mention. Dr. Carl Bridges deserves thanks for offering comments on a near-final draft of this work. Several students at Johnson also assisted with various aspects of this project, including my teaching assistants David Schneller, Adam Grant, and Andrew Frazier, who assisted with the bibliography and helped compile the indexes. To Eli Mathers, who assisted with the source index, I also offer thanks.

A few other individuals also provided practical assistance with various aspects of this project. Of these, I offer my thanks to David Swidler and Rebecca Garber who translated several articles and passages in Hebrew and German for me; and to Prof. Matthias Henze of Rice University, who sent me a copy of his article on Zechariah and Ben Sira more than a year before it appeared in print. I also offer apologies to Dr. Stephen L. Cook of the Virginia Theological Seminary, a far more accomplished scholar, for any confusion between his name and mine.

Of the countless friends and family members I could mention, I single out my best friend, Pete Isenberg, who sometimes resisted the temptation to pull me away from this project in order to spend time with him. No one deserves more thanks, though, than my mother, Barbara Cook, whose love, encouragement, and mother's pride propelled me forward every step of the way.

Steve Cook
September 3, 2011

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Abbreviations of Modern Publications

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentums
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
<i>Ebib</i>	<i>Études bibliques</i>
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	CBQ, Monograph Series
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJSup	Supplements to the <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	JSNT, Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	JSP, Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	JSOT, Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LEC	Library of Early Christianity
<i>LS</i>	<i>Louvain Studies</i>
<i>NBD</i>	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature, Dissertation Series

<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>SBL Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSS	SBL, Semeia Studies
SBLSymS	SBL Symposium Series
SJ	<i>Studia judaica</i>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TynNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TynOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed a virtual explosion of studies examining various aspects of Second Temple Judaism, and no slowdown appears on the horizon. These studies seek to elucidate, among other things, the religious and historical situation from which Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism emerged. As part of this ongoing effort, the present work seeks to identify and examine attitudes about the status of prophets and prophecy in this complex phase of Jewish history.

A variety of Jewish texts from the Second Temple and rabbinic periods seem to reflect the view that Israelite prophecy ceased during the Persian period, around the beginning of the Second Temple era. Up until the twentieth century, scholars generally regarded these ancient texts as presenting a relatively uniform, consistent picture of the historical process of the cessation of prophecy. Some authors still hold to this assessment; in recent decades, however, others have pointed to numerous ancient texts which refer to prophetic activity occurring well beyond the point of its supposed cessation. These scholars therefore hold that the claim that prophecy ceased was simply *one* view in antiquity, and not necessarily representative of a larger consensus. According to these authors, the evidence of prophetic activity in the Second Temple period either contradicts ancient claims of prophecy's demise, or else exposes these claims as polemical attempts to counter belief in the legitimacy of prophecy during this period. Contemporary scholarship is therefore divided on whether to regard the sources which allege the absence of prophets/prophecy as reliable characterizations of the religious atmosphere of the Second Temple period.

What, then, is the best way to describe ancient Jewish thought on the status of prophets and prophecy in the Second Temple period? Some difficulties confront those who seek to address this question. The first is merely a practical one, in that research on this topic is not always easy. Discussions of the subject often occur in bits and pieces rather than in comprehensive treatments, though fortunately some articles and book chapters have appeared recently which are devoted largely to this topic. In another regard, work on the present topic also involves contending with semantic and terminological difficulties, not the least of which is the problem of defining the terms "prophet" and "prophecy." One must take care to discern not only how these terms are used in modern

discussions, but also how their Greek and Hebrew counterparts are used in ancient discussions.¹

The three parts of this dissertation will seek to address these and other problems relating to the question of whether prophecy ceased in ancient Judaism. As an aid to future researchers, Part One will first present the key texts from antiquity, and then systematically summarize the seminal discussions of the question from the last 150+ years. Larger aims of this section will be to clarify the status of modern scholarship on this issue, particularly in regard to the two general views delineated above, and to introduce the body of material with which I will interact throughout the rest of the dissertation. Part Two will then attempt a thorough analysis of the ancient texts in question, in order to present my own view of how each of these texts should be understood. This section will examine a range of relevant texts from antiquity, including passages from the Old and New Testaments, Qumran, rabbinic literature, and numerous other Jewish sources from the Second Temple period. A mostly chronological analysis will seek to identify streams of thought within ancient Judaism which help address the question of whether prophecy was thought to have ceased. Part Three, finally, will offer an assessment of modern scholarship on the subject, with a view toward clarifying where the various schools of thought diverge. I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches, and also offer my own suggestions on how the discussion should proceed from here. While I have attempted to keep repetition of material to a minimum, the reader may notice occasional overlap between material introduced in Part One, and the interaction with this material in Parts Two and Three.

Citations from the Bible (including apocryphal/deuterocanonical works) are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*. Regarding citations of other ancient sources, see the bibliography for a complete list of translations and critical editions used.

¹ The usage of the adjective “prophetic” needs some clarification here also, for the term can sometimes be used to refer to actual prophecy, but other times to that which is not prophecy *per se* but instead only *relates to* or *resembles* it. It will be apparent in this work that I use the term in both senses, but often in the latter sense to distinguish, for example, “prophecy” from other “prophetic” phenomena. Cf. Part Three, p. 183 n. 8 below.

Part One

Literature Review

By nearly all accounts, the notion that prophets/prophecy ended in Judaism in the early Second Temple period has occupied the minds of reflective Jews and Christians since the late centuries B.C.E. Comments on the subject have appeared in a steady stream since antiquity, although it is fair to say that the issue never spawned a large body of material until very recent times. Not until the mid-twentieth century, in fact, have articles and book chapters appeared which are devoted entirely to the subject.

The discussion has historically generated widespread agreement as well, with the vast majority of authors taking prophecy's cessation as historical fact. It can still be said in our times, "Nearly all Jewish writers on the subject suppose that prophecy ceased with the closing of the Bible canon at the time of Ezra and the rabbis said that prophecy ended with Malachi."¹ As I will show, however, this view has been sharply challenged in recent decades from several angles, not the least of which is the contention that prophetic activity of various sorts continued for several centuries following prophecy's supposed cessation. Additionally, not only do some dispute that prophecy ceased, but others even question to what extent prophecy was viewed in ancient times to have ceased. The present literature review will summarize the arguments used in support of these contentions, and will also demonstrate that lines of argument raised in discussions from the 1800s laid the foundation for disputes that arose in the twentieth century. Much of the evidence advanced by the various authors will be mentioned only summarily in this section, but will be examined more closely in later sections.

The review will begin with a straightforward listing of the major ancient texts from which scholars traditionally have concluded that ancient Jews believed prophecy to have ceased at some point during the Persian or early post-Persian period. The modern espousal of the view that prophecy ceased at this time, or at least the modern view that *the ancients believed* prophecy ceased at this time, will be designated for brevity's sake as "the traditional view," though in due course it will become essential to distinguish more carefully between ancient and modern perspectives.

¹ Geoffrey Wigoder, ed., "Prophets and Prophecy," *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism* (Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 2002) 624.

The literature from subsequent periods will be covered mostly in chronological order, though ease of presentation will sometimes necessitate slight deviation from this pattern. For modern sources that have been translated into English, I have indicated their original language and publication date. The literature reviewed here represents the most influential treatments of the subject, plus a sample of the many dozens of shorter discussions that show up in commentaries, articles, Bible dictionaries, and books on prophecy in general. An exhaustive review is not possible.

Finally, treatments of the question of *why* prophecy ceased will mostly be left out in this section. The primary exception which will be mentioned is the view that prophecy ceased because of the ascendancy of the Torah. This view pervades much of the discussion on the subject, especially the material from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Other views on why prophecy ceased will be listed in more detail in the appendix.

Chapter One

Ancient Texts upon Which the Traditional View Is Based

1. Hebrew Bible²

A few texts in the Hebrew Bible allude to the concept of a lack of prophecy/prophets:

The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. (Amos 8:11)

Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without revelation. The sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them; the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. (Mic 3:6–7)

Then they remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit ... (Isa 63:11)

We do not see our emblems; there is no longer any prophet, and there is no one among us who knows how long. (Ps 74:9)

Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; guidance is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD. (Lam 2:9)

Also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. And if any prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, “You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD”; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy. (Zech 13:2–3)

2. Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Texts

So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. (1 Macc 4:45b–46)

So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them. (1 Macc 9:27)

² I use the term “Hebrew Bible” in this work to refer to the 24 books commonly accepted by the Jews as canonical, i.e., the Tanak.

The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise. (1 Macc 14:41)

In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you and to find mercy. (Pr Azar 15)

3. *Dead Sea Scrolls*

[The sons of Aaron -LSC]³ should not depart from any counsel of the law in order to walk in complete stubbornness of their heart, but instead shall be ruled by the first directives which the men of the Community began to be taught until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel. (1QS 9.9–11)

The interpretation of the word [concerns the trai]tors in the last days. They are violator[s of the coven]ant who will not believe when they hear all that is going [to happen t]o the final generation, from the mouth of the Priest whom God has placed wi[thin the Commun]ity, to foretell the fulfilment of all the words of his servants, the prophets, [by] means of whom God has declared all that is going to happen to his people Is[rael]. (1QpHab 2.6–10)

[The interpretation of Hab 2:2 -LSC] concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God has made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets. (1QpHab 7.4–5)

4. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*

Consider too, that in days gone by and in the generations of old our fathers had [available] to help them righteous men and holy prophets. Moreover, we were in our own land; and they helped us when we sinned, and, relying on their merits, interceded for us with our creator, and the Mighty One heard their prayer and forgave us. But now the righteous have been gathered *to their fathers*, and the prophets have fallen asleep, and we also have been exiled from *our* land: Zion has been taken from us, and nothing is left us now save the Mighty One and his law. But if we direct and dispose our hearts *aright*, we shall retrieve everything that we have lost, and *gain* many more and much better things than we have lost.⁴ (2 Apoc. Bar. 85:1–3)

5. *New Testament*

Several NT texts can be understood as placing the OT prophets in a distinct (and extinct) class:

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came. (Matt 11:13)

And others said, “It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.” (Mark 6:15)

³ My initials here indicate that I have added this phrase to supply the context for the quotation (i.e., the phrase is not restored text).

⁴ Italics (signifying words not explicitly in the original text) are the translator’s.

Abraham died, and so did the prophets. (John 8:52)

We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:2)

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son. (Heb 1:1–2)

In addition, many NT texts allude to the belief that Jesus and John the Baptist were themselves prophets, and that these figures represent the fulfillment of a popular expectation that prophecy would revive. These texts include Matt 11:9–14; 14:5; 16:13–14; 21:11, 26, 46; John 1:19–26; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40–52. Additionally, numerous passages outside of the Gospels attest to the existence of prophets/prophecy in the early church, including Acts 11:27–28; 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12–14; Eph 4:11; Rev 1:3; 18:20.

6. *Patristic Literature*

Several of the church fathers hold to the view that prophecy ceased within Judaism, although for these authors Christ represents the endpoint. These authors maintain that since the Jews rejected Christ, prophecy was taken from them and given to Christians. The pertinent texts include:

Justin Martyr (mid-second century): And since you also had a continuous succession of prophets down to John (even when your people were led captive into Babylon, your lands ravaged by war, and your sacred vessels carried away), there never ceased to be a prophet in your midst who was lord and leader and ruler of your people. Indeed, even your kings were appointed and anointed by the spirit in these prophets. But, since the coming and death of our Jesus Christ in your midst, you have not had a prophet, nor do you possess one now. (*Dial.* 53.3–4)

You should realize from the fact that among us Christians the charisms of prophecy exist down to the present day that the gifts that previously resided among your people have now been transferred to us. (*Dial.* 82.1)

Origen (early third century): Neither have any of those alien to the faith done anything like the prophets, nor are there any of modern times, who have lived since the advent of Jesus, who are related to have prophesied among the Jews. For the Holy Spirit, as people are well aware, has forsaken them because they acted impiously against God and against the one prophesied by the prophets among them. But signs of the Holy Spirit were manifested at the beginning when Jesus was teaching, and after his ascension there were many more, though later they became less numerous. (*Cels.* 7.8)

Athanasius (early fourth century): It is a fact that at the outset of the Exile Daniel and Jeremiah were there, and Ezekiel and Haggai and Zechariah also prophesied. So the Jews are indulging in fiction, and transferring present time to future. When did prophet and vision cease from Israel? Was it not when Christ came, the Holy One of holies? It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands, neither is prophet raised up nor vision revealed among them. (*Inc.* 39–40)

Augustine (late-fourth, early fifth century): Now during that whole period after the return from Babylonia, after Malachi, Haggai, and Zechariah, who were prophets at that time, and Ezra, they had no prophets until the Saviour's coming, except the other Zechariah, the father of John, and his wife Elizabeth, when Christ's nativity was now at hand, and after his birth the old Simeon and Anna, a widow and already advanced in age, and John himself, the last among them. . . . But the prophecies of these five are known to us from the Gospel, in which the virgin herself, the mother of the Lord, is found to have prophesied before John did. But the rejected Jews do not accept the prophecy of these last, though the countless men among them who have come to believe the gospel have accepted them. For then Israel was truly divided into two parts by that division which was foretold to Saul the king by Samuel the prophet, a division that can never be changed. But Malachi, Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra even the rejected Jews have accepted, and regard as the last admitted to the list of those with divine authority. (*Civ.* 17.24)

The church fathers are thus consistent in identifying the time of Christ as the cessation point of prophecy in Judaism. These sources say little if anything about whether Judaism had experienced an earlier, temporary stoppage in the centuries prior to Christ.

7. *Josephus*

Among the many passages in the writings of Josephus which draw attention in this discussion, the following text is cited most often:

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. (*Ap.* 1.8 §41)

8. *Rabbinic Literature*

Rabbinic literature consistently reflects the view that prophecy ceased in Israel following the deaths of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The view is stated in the following texts:

When the latter prophets died, that is, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, then the Holy Spirit came to an end in Israel. But even so, they made them hear [Heavenly messages] through an echo. (*t. Sot.* 13.3)

When the latter prophets died, that is, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, then the Holy Spirit came to an end in Israel. But even so, they caused them to hear through an echo. (*y. Sot.* 9.13, 24b)

Since the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachai, the Holy Spirit [of prophetic inspiration] departed from Israel; yet they were still able to avail themselves of the Bath-kol. (*b. Sanh.* 11a; see also *b. Sot.* 48b; *b. Yoma* 9b)

It has been taught: With the death of the last prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the holy spirit departed from Israel, but still the Bath Kol was available to them. (*Cant. Rab.* 8.9 #3)

A passage in *Seder Olam Rabbah* reflects a similar idea:

“A valiant king will arise . . . and when he arises, his kingdom will be broken and separated in the four directions of the sky” (*Dan.* 11:3–4). That is Alexander the Macedonian who ruled for 12 years. Until that time there were prophets prophesying by the Holy Spirit; from there on “bend your ear and listen to the words of the wise” (*Prov.* 22:10).⁵ (*S. Olam Rab.* 30)

A few rabbinic texts seem to indicate that prophecy ended around the period of Jeremiah:

The Prophets took over from the Judges . . . Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi took over from the Prophets. (*Abot R. Nat. A 1*)

You find that when Jeremiah saw Jerusalem destroyed, the Temple burnt, Israel driven into exile, and the Holy Spirit departed, he began to say over them VANITY OF VANITIES. (*Qoh. Rab.* 12.7)

Another explanation of why Jeremiah’s portion was set in the land of Benjamin: as Benjamin was the last of all the Tribe Fathers, so Jeremiah was the last of all the Prophets. But did not Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesy after him? On this question R. Eleazar and R. Samuel bar Nahman differ. R. Eleazar said: Yes, but their periods of prophecy were brief. R. Samuel bar Nahman said: [Though they did not utter their prophecies until after Jeremiah’s time], the prophecy they were to utter had already been entrusted [in his days] to the three—entrusted to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. (*Pesiq. Rb. Kah.* 13.14)

⁵ The format of the translation here (from Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* [Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1998] 259–60) has been slightly modified for clarity.

Chapter Two

Review of Modern Literature

1. Pre-1900

Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages adopted the rabbinic view that prophecy ceased in Israel with the deaths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. These authors look for the return of prophecy in the Messianic age. Additionally, the medieval sages often seek both to discern the divine purpose in removing prophets from Israel, while also trying to attain prophetic inspiration through attenuated means.⁶

Christian scholars prior to the 1900s also espoused the view that Malachi was the last prophet of the OT period. Seventeenth-century author Samuel Cradock, in his history of the OT period, refers to Malachi as “the last of all the Prophets” and states that this prophet also predicted the long absence of prophets: “[Malachi] directs them to Moses’s Law to be their guide until Christ should come; till whose coming they should expect no more Prophets, but look to Moses who prophesied of Christ.”⁷

Scholars in the nineteenth century often took the cessation of OT prophecy for granted and gave it only a passing mention. Conselyea writes: “We find that from the days of Adam down to Malachi, there were prophecies of a coming Saviour. After which time there is a silence of 400 years until John the Baptist.”⁸ Orelli, in speaking of John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy of the return of Elijah, comments similarly: “Thus the last prophet of the Old Covenant joins hand with the forerunner of the New.”⁹ Elliot adds that the scribes were the successors of the prophets: “In [Nehemiah’s] day the last of the

⁶ For a bibliography and discussion of numerous sources from this period, see Abraham J. Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration After the Prophets* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996) 1–13; 101–3; 112–19; Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine* (STDJ 68; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 18 n. 45; Ephraim E. Urbach, “When Did Prophecy Cease?” *Tarbiz* 17 (1946) 1 n. 4 (also reprinted; see bibliography for information).

⁷ Samuel Cradock, *The History of the Old Testament Methodiz’d* (London: n.p., 1683) 675–77.

⁸ I. W. Conselyea, *A Synopsis of Old Testament History* (Newark: Advertiser Printing House, 1882) 156.

⁹ Conrad von Orelli, *The Old Testament Prophecy of the Consummation of God’s Kingdom* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885; translated from 1882 German original) 453.

canonical prophets of the Old Testament exercised his ministry. The scribes ... now appear in place of the prophets. They diligently applied themselves to the records of revelation, – especially to the exposition, completion, and fencing of the law.”¹⁰

A few scholars in this period did, however, give the subject more extended treatment. Hävernicks, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, argues that the cessation of prophecy was the most important factor in establishing the boundaries of the scriptural collection. “The weightiest circumstance, however, which rendered a fixing of the Canon necessary, was the foresight of the divine purpose, which, ... took from [the Jews], for a long period, their prophets ... Malachi, the last of the prophets ... was succeeded by no other deserving that name in its proper sense.”¹¹ In Hävernicks’s view, the lack of prophets in Israel was felt as early as the time of Jeremiah, as Lam 2:9 and Ps 74:9 show. Citing texts from Sirach and 1 Maccabees, he observes that the absence of prophets is one of the most noteworthy (and painful) characteristics of the Maccabean period. Further, he asserts that Josephus was unable to find any trace of a prophet during this time. In his assessment: “John Hyrcanus is the only person whom [Josephus] even speaks of as sustaining this honour, for him he calls prince, high priest, and prophet, in one person (de Bell. Jud. i. 3); but it is obvious that the last of these epithets is applied merely on account of Hyrcanus’s great sagacity, ... and through the historian’s evident anxiety to vindicate to his nation, by a vigorous straining, what it had in fact now ceased to possess.”¹²

Smith also sees a connection between the cessation of prophecy and the closing of the OT canon. In a discussion of the value of the Apocrypha, he comments: “[The Apocrypha] belong to a new literature which rose in Judæa after the cessation of prophetic originality, when the law and the tradition were all in all, when there was no man to speak with authority truths that he had received direct from God”¹³ Smith also contends that the Jews of the fifth century B.C.E. could dimly perceive that they were living in a period of transition from an age of revelation to an age of tradition. Citing Zechariah 13 and the ending of Malachi, he contends that even the later books of the OT hint that this

¹⁰ Charles Elliot, *Old Testament Prophecy* (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1889) 183. Other passing references to the cessation of prophecy from this era include *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Bible*, 1868, s.v. “Prophet,” 888.

¹¹ H. A. C. Hävernicks, *A General Historico-Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1852; translation of 1836–1849 German original) 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, 26. For a similar discussion from the mid-nineteenth century, see Moses Stuart, *Critical History and Defence of the Old Testament Canon* (New York: Newman, 1845; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003) 206–26. Stuart (*ibid.*, 216) alternatively explains Josephus’s attribution of the gift of prophecy to Hyrcanus as “a way of *post mortem* eulogy, [rather] than of accurate and earnest historical narration.”

¹³ W. Robertson Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1881) 141.