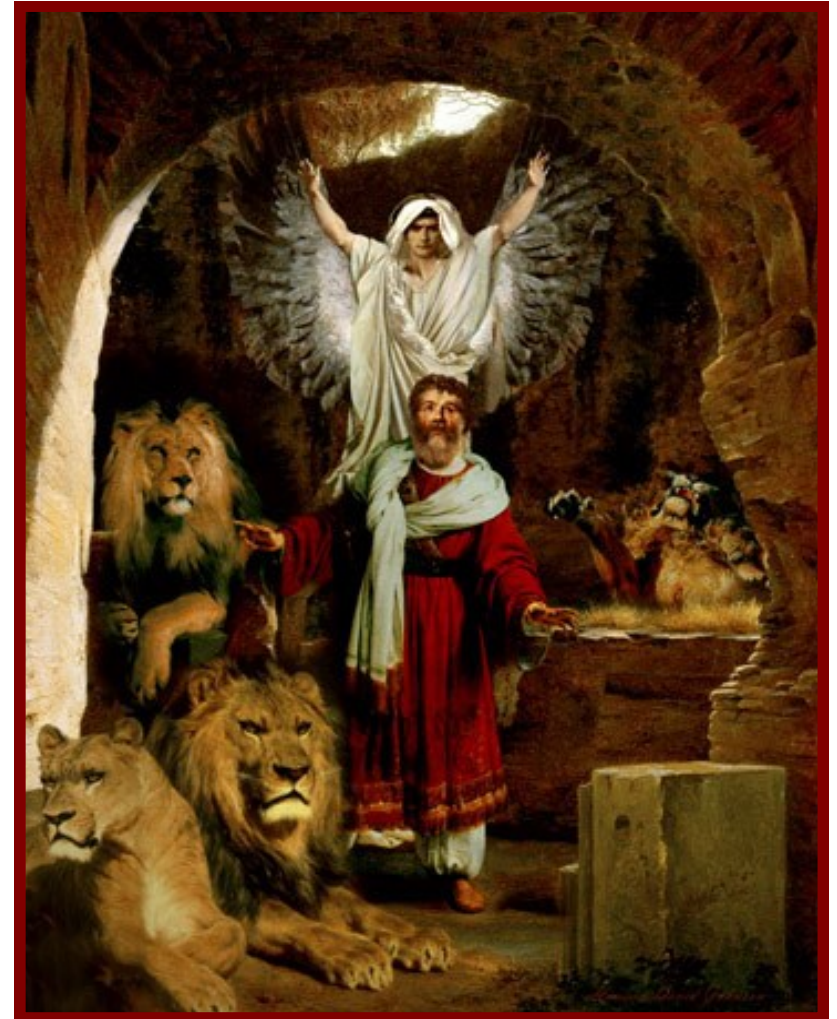


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The Book of Daniel

Prologue



The Book of Daniel, as it now stands in the ordinary Hebrew Bibles, is generally divided into two main parts. The first includes a series of narratives which are told in the third person and the second, a series of visions which are described in the first person. From its content it readily appears that the Book of Daniel does not have as its objective a summary historical account of the period of the Babylonian Exile, or of the life of Daniel himself. The contents of the Prophecy of Daniel are of a peculiar kind which has no exact parallel in the Bible, except in the Apocalypse of St. John.

Commentary of the Book of Daniel is by Saint Jerome. St. Jerome, who was born Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius, and is the most learned of the Fathers of the Western Church. The Church regards him as the greatest of all the doctors in clarifying the Divine Word. While at Rome he made a revision of the current Latin New Testament, and of the Psalms. Then he undertook to translate most of the books of the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew. The only parts of the Latin Bible, now known as the Vulgate, which were not either translated or worked over by him are the Books of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two Books of the Maccabees. In the sixteenth century the great Council of Trent pronounced Jerome's Vulgate the authentic and authoritative Latin text of the Catholic Church, without, however, thereby implying a preference for it above the original text or above versions in other languages. In 1907 Pope Pius X entrusted to the Benedictine Order the office of restoring as far as possible the correct text of St. Jerome's Vulgate, which during fifteen centuries of use had naturally become altered in many places. The Bible now ordinarily used by English-speaking Catholics is a translation of the Vulgate, made at Rheims and Douay towards the end of the sixteenth century, and revised by Bishop Challoner in the eighteenth century. The Confraternity Edition of the New Testament appearing in 1950 represents a complete revision.

Prologue

Porphyry wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, (A) denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judaea at the time of the Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that "Daniel" did not foretell the future so much as he related the past, and lastly that whatever he spoke of up till the time of Antiochus contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjectured beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he would not have foreknown the future. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, made a most able reply to these allegations in three volumes, that is, the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth. Appollinarius did likewise, in a single large book, namely his twenty-sixth. (B) Prior to these authors Methodius made a partial reply.

But inasmuch as it is not our purpose to make answer to the false accusations of an adversary, a task requiring lengthy discussion, but rather to treat of the actual content of the prophet's message for the benefit of us who are Christians, I wish to stress in my preface this fact, that none of the prophets has so clearly spoken concerning Christ as has this prophet Daniel. For not only did he assert that He would come, a prediction common to the other prophets as well, but also he set forth the very time at which He would come. Moreover he went through the various kings in order, stated the actual number of years involved, and announced beforehand the clearest signs of events to come. And because Porphyry saw that all these things had been fulfilled and could not deny that they had taken place, he overcame this evidence of historical accuracy by taking refuge in this evasion, contending that whatever is foretold concerning the Antichrist at the end of the world was actually fulfilled in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, because of certain similarities to things which took place in his time. But this very attack testifies to Daniel's accuracy. For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers as a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past. And so wherever occasion arises in the course of explaining this volume, I shall attempt briefly to answer his malicious charge, and to controvert by simple explanation the philosophical skill, or rather the worldly malice, by which he strives to subvert the truth and by specious legerdemain to remove that which is so apparent to our eyes.

I would therefore beseech you, Pammachius, *as a foremost lover of learning*, and Marcella, as an outstanding exemplar of Roman virtue, men who are bound together by faith and blood, to lend aid to my efforts by your prayers, in order that our Lord and Savior might in His own cause and by His mind make answer through my mouth. For it is He who says to the prophet, "Open thy mouth and I will fill it" (Psalm 80:11). For if He admonishes us, when we have been hailed before judges and tribunals, not to ponder what answer we are to give to them (Luke 12), how much more is He able to carry on His own war against blaspheming adversaries and through His servants to vanquish them? For this reason a great number of the Psalms also contain that Hebrew expression, *lamanasse*, rendered by the Septuagint as "To the end," but which rather is to be understood as "For victory!" For Aquila construed it as *to nikopoio*, that is, "To Him who grants the victory." Symmachus renders it as *epinikion* which properly signifies "Triumph and the palm of victory."

But among other things we should recognize that Porphyry makes this objection to us concerning the Book of Daniel, that it is clearly a forgery not to be considered as belonging to the Hebrew Scriptures but an invention composed in Greek. This he deduces from the fact that in the story of Susanna, where Daniel is speaking to the elders, we find the expressions, "*To split from the mastic tree*" (*apo tou skhinou skhisai*) and to saw from the evergreen oak (*kai apo tou prinou prisai*), (D) a word-play appropriate to Greek rather than to Hebrew. But both Eusebius and Apollinarius have answered him after the same tenor, that the stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Dragon are not contained in the Hebrew, but rather they constitute a part of the prophecy of Habakkuk, the son of Jesus of the tribe of Levi. Just as we find in the title of that same story of Bel, according to the Septuagint, "There was a certain priest named Daniel, the son of Abda, an intimate of the King of Babylon." And yet Holy Scripture testifies that Daniel and the three Hebrew children were of the tribe of Judah. For this same reason when I was translating Daniel many years ago, I noted these visions with a critical symbol, showing that they were not included in the Hebrew. And in this connection I am surprised to be told that certain *fault-finders* complain that I have on my own initiative truncated the book. After all, both Origen, Eusebius and Apollinarius, and other outstanding churchmen and teachers of Greece acknowledge that, as I have said, these visions are not found amongst the Hebrews, and that therefore they are not obliged to answer to Porphyry for these portions which exhibit no authority as Holy Scripture.

I also wish to emphasize to the reader the fact that it was not according to the Septuagint version but according to the version of Theodotion himself that the churches publicly read Daniel. (A) And Theodotion, at any rate, was an unbeliever subsequent to the advent of Christ, although some assert that he was an Ebionite which is another variety of Jew. But even Origen in his Vulgate edition (of the Greek Old Testament) placed asterisks around the work of Theodotion, indicating that the material added was missing (in the Septuagint), whereas on the other hand he prefixed *obeli* (i.e., diacritical marks) to some of the verses, distinguishing thereby whatever was additional material (not contained in the Hebrew). And since all the churches of Christ, whether belonging to the Greek-speaking territory or the Latin, the Syrian or the Egyptian, publicly read this edition with its asterisks and obeli, let the hostile-minded not begrudge my labor, because I wanted our (Latin-speaking) people to have what the Greek-speaking peoples habitually read publicly in the regions of Aquila and Symmachus. And if the Greeks do not for all their wealth of learning despise the scholarly work of Jews, why should poverty-stricken Latin's look down upon a man who is a Christian? And if my product seems unsatisfactory, at least my good intentions should be recognized.

But now it is time for us to unfold the words of the prophet himself, not following our usual custom of setting everything forth in detail with an accompanying detailed discussion (the procedure followed in our commentary on the Twelve Minor Prophets), but rather employing a certain brevity and inserting at intervals an explanation of only those things which are obscure. In this way we hope to avoid tiring the reader with an innumerable abundance of books. And yet to understand the final portions of Daniel a detailed investigation of Greek history is necessary, that is to say, such authorities as (B) Sutorius, Callinicus, Diodorus, Hieronymus, Polybius, Posidonius, Claudius, Theon, and Andronycus surnamed Alipius, historians whom Porphyry claims to have followed, Josephus also and those whom he cites, and especially our own historian, Livy, and Pompeius Trogus, and Justinus. All these men narrate the history involved in Daniel's final vision, carrying it beyond the time of Alexander to the days of Caesar Augustus in their description of the Syrian and Egyptian wars, i.e., those of Seleucus, Antiochus, and the Ptolemies. And if we are compelled from time to time to make mention of profane literature and speak of matters therein contained which we have formerly failed to mention, it is not by personal preference but by stark necessity, so to speak, in order to prove that those things which were foretold by the holy prophets many centuries before are actually contained in the written records of both the Greeks and Romans and of other peoples as well.

End of Prologue