For an Old Testament book, Daniel exhibits some strange features. Given these features, it would clearly be an understatement to label the book, “mysterious.” Some enclaves of higher critical study have endeavored to organize these puzzling features in an attempt to solve them. But between allegations of pseudonimity, vaticinium ex eventu, bi-lingual constructions, late Greek additions, and a host of other supposed difficulties, we can understand Brevard Childs’s amazement that these critical endeavors have produced little theological fruit.\(^1\) However, one issue in the book of Daniel has the potential to bear such fruit. The canonical variance or “dual-placement” of Daniel in certain Old Testament arrangements (the Prophets in Greek/Latin orders and the Writings in the MT/Rabbinic orders) is a phenomenon that requires attention.

I submit that the book of Daniel naturally fits in the Writings and that the book’s canonical shaping stands as a warrant for such placement. My initial approach to Daniel’s placement in the Hebrew canon requires two things. First, an assessment of the book in light of Old Testament canonical formation is essential, looking at proposed models and extra-biblical sources which accord Daniel the mantle of prophet. Next, we must assess the book’s canonical shaping: this includes a close look at a “hermeneutic of wisdom.” Based on these two assessments, we can better construe how Daniel might settle in the Writings, on both historical and theological grounds.

**I. THE BOOK OF DANIEL IN CANONICAL FORMATION**

1. *Proposed Models*
Herbert E. Ryle’s proposal still holds sway in defining canonical formation and though many insightful and conclusive studies have arisen in distinction with this nineteenth-century majority view, the impact of this scholar’s work can still be felt. In its most basic form, Ryle argues that the tri-partite canonization of the Hebrew Bible began with the Torah (closed in the time of Ezra, c.400 B.C.), followed by the Prophets (closed in the Maccabean era, c.200 B.C., before Ben Sira in 180 B.C.) and concluded with the Writings (closed at the rabbinic council of Jamnia, A.D. 90). Each corpus of books allegedly underwent “discrete acts of canonization,” eventually being supplied, filled and “closed” in a sequential manner. Following this model, it is no surprise that critical studies have treated Daniel and the Writings as ad hoc historical fixtures of canonical development.

The model of canonical formation employed in this study regards the Law and the Prophets as the fundamental “grammar” of the Old Testament, with the Writings providing a lens by which to interpret and reflect upon that grammar. Relating Daniel to this model will be detailed anon in an effort to demonstrate how the book is able to migrate within this grammar. The anomaly of a book moving within the canon is a vital hermeneutical factor in the book’s theological shaping. Furthermore, Daniel’s theological shaping permits the book to speak of wisdom and prophecy. Examining Daniel by means of a canonical approach will reveal a formative process within the text, expanding and amplifying God’s word of wisdom and prophetic design.

2. Daniel the Prophet
The book of Daniel, with all issues of dating set aside, is indeed considered a “prophet” by a number of reliable sources, ranging from Josephus to Augustine. These sources recognize Daniel’s prophetic character within a specific ilk, having a modus operandi suitable for a genre influenced by wisdom texts. Historical sources that spoke of Daniel’s biblical placement were well aware of this supra-prophetic context.

Unfortunately, a careful distinction has been lost in the discussion of Daniel’s biblical station. An unconscious rift between the theological identity of a “prophet” and the canonical placement in a corpus entitled “Prophets” confuses the issue. To rephrase, using the words of Louis Ginzberg, “the writing of a prophet is not necessarily a prophetic book, as may be seen from the Book of Psalms, which belongs to the Hagiographa, though David was a prophet.”6 This captures the problem well. Securing the mantle of “prophet” does not require the record or writing of that prophet to be restricted to a particular corpus. Furthermore, such an attitude welcomes the negative result of filtering out the interwoven themes of “Torah” or “wisdom” found in the nearby collections. In clarifying the issue, we must look at the historical-canonical evidence provided by each major source.

Josephus makes for an effective example of how prophecy and the prophets were perceived from a theological and canonical standpoint. Those who locate Daniel exclusively in the prophetic corpus appeal to Josephus’s numerical list in Against Apion 1.7-8 and Antiquities 10. However, Josephus seems to have an expanded definition of “prophecy” and “prophet.” Included in the “thirteen books” of prophets subsequent to Moses, we find Esther, Job and Ruth (joined to Judges), quite apart from the “four
books...for the conduct of human life” (*Ap. I, 1.8.40-41*). One could argue that Josephus is reporting a chronological order, but this does not account for the inclusion of books of which current scholarship would deem non-prophetic.

Though Daniel is absent in his Prologue, Ben Sira also casts the prophet in a distinct light. Beckwith quotes the Wisdom of Ben Sira 49:9 – “He made mention of Job among the prophets,” referring to Ezek.14:14, 20 who cites the “righteousness” of Noah, Daniel and Job.7 Beckwith’s intention in citing this passage was to show that Ben Sira may have known about Daniel despite the book’s omission in the biblical canon list of the Greek prologue. By this, Beckwith has drawn our attention to how Ben Sira defines “prophets.” They, like the figures of the Pentateuch, are categorized as “good or evil,” “men of wisdom or folly” and, indeed, righteous or unrighteous (cf. Wisdom 10).8 The definition of a “prophet,”9 according to Ben Sira, is certainly a different sense than the definition to which we are accustom.

Jerome also refers to Daniel as a “prophet” in *Against the Pelagians* 30:344-45, while, at the same time, firmly situating the book in the Writings. Based on these accounts, we may agree with Leiman in his short summary on canonical divisions: “The fluidity of the Prophets-Hagiographa (books being freely assigned to either division) as evidenced by a comparison of the canons of Josephus, LXX, and the Talmud indicates that in most Jewish circles the Prophets and Hagiographa were treated alike.”10

Koch also provides evidence for this complex relationship between the Prophets and the Writings: “The ancient pre-exilic difference between wise men and prophets (and
priests) as separate institutions (Jer. 18:18) had disappeared long ago and with it the corresponding gap in the genres of language.”

Lastly, Beckwith echoes these observations in his treatment of the tri-partite Hebrew canon:

Yet even then (referring to the ‘later rabbinic period’), as in earlier times, the basic importance of the Pentateuchal Law (a fact never far from the surface of the Jewish consciousness) caused forms of language to be used on occasion which classed the Prophets and Hagiographa together, as being simply ‘the remainder of the canonical literature’, so to speak.

If the historical witnesses to the canon associate Daniel with unlikely prophetic figures (specifically, unlikely wisdom figures) this has implications for the understanding of what a “prophet” is in our compendium of canon sources and has ramifications for our own theological categorization of prophecy. Accounts of Daniel’s biblical relevance testify to his uniqueness and inimitability among other prophetic messages. In the end, we can ascertain that the designation, “Daniel, the prophet” is “a new usage.”

3. Reasons for Placement in the Writings

Just as there are historically and theologically compelling arguments for the placement of Daniel in the Prophets, so are there arguments to support its position in the Writings. Considered to be the earliest extra-biblical source on record, Babu Bathra 14b in the Babylonian Talmud (A.D. 5th-8th cent.) places Daniel after Lamentations and before Esther.

Of course, if we want to enforce the rule that “earliest-is-best,” one might look to Jerome in the fourth century. Jerome is an intriguing witness since he did not follow the
orders of Melito, Origen or Epiphanius. One difference in the order was Daniel’s position after Song of Songs. As shown in his *Preface to Samuel and Kings* (347-419), Jerome demonstrates a keen awareness of the “Hebrew tradition.” Not only does he preserve an actual tri-partite division, unlike Melito, Origen or Epiphanius, he also records two different canonical orders—22 books *and* 24 books—subscribed to in the Jewish tradition, noting the rejection of apocryphal books and other additions. After Jerome, the two earliest manuscripts recording the place of Daniel in the Writings are *Codex Leningradensis* and the *Allepo Codex* from the 9th and 10th centuries.

But if someone were to evaluate the “Daniel as Prophet only” argument in detail, they would find a classic two-stage rebuttal without any expressed goal. What does this mean? The first stage cites the appropriate historical lists, from earliest to latest. The second stage seems to trump the first stage, in any case, and ultimately maps out Daniel’s location according to the alleged theological commitments of the readership (e.g. Second Temple Judaism, the early church and so on). This forms a simple question: Should we assign Daniel a place in the HB according to the earliest historical testimony or according to theological reconstruction, and, if it is both, how do we combine the results? If evangelical scholarship is compelled to make sense of Daniel through its canonical relationship with other books, then should the historical precedence of these records (Ben Sira, various codices and the like) be considered a decisive element?

We might even add a third stage to the confusion. The basic approach prizes the most antiquated sources (1st stage), then makes theological sense of the proposed arrangement (2nd stage) and then makes historical and theological conjectures as to why
the book was moved (3rd stage). For example, some scholars presume that Daniel was extracted from the Prophets during the mutual separation of Jewish and Christian communities. Paul Kissling, in a paper on the arrangement of the Writings, suggests Daniel’s shift to be a result of Jewish reactions to the overtly “messianic” use of the book by its Christian recipients. This, however, raises some questions. First, why should Daniel be repositioned when Isaiah, for example, a book with major “messianic” clout, remains in the Prophets? Furthermore, why move a controversial book when the protocol of early canonical growth was to preserve it in genuzim or remove it entirely (as with Baruch)? Drawing these historical sketches of Jewish/Christian canonical relations may seem harmless, but one implication stands to damage canonical interpretive sensitivity. Assuming Judaism relocated Daniel to keep it from Christian meddling implies that shifting a book from a prophetic context to a sapiential context not only makes a definitive theological break between the Prophets and Writings, but also that its new context presumably lessens the Scriptural value of the book. Kissling affirms this, describing the relocated Daniel as “merely a wisdom figure.” In my opinion, such a view reflects our unfamiliarity with wisdom texts and their ability to contextualize other collections (“the Law and the Prophets”).

We had mentioned earlier that the modus operandi of Daniel fits a wisdom context. Actually, the full function of the book’s re-orientation permits Daniel to be read as prophetic material. This is the modus vivendi of the canonical arrangement of Daniel. As long as Daniel is understood in the Writings initially, prophecy and wisdom can effectively co-exist in the book. Donn Morgan describes the duality of Daniel’s
witness: “On the one hand, Daniel, through his name and actions, stands with Joseph and the prophets. On the other hand, Daniel as a sage represents the authoritative post-exilic scribal tradition through which the meaning of Torah and the Prophets is given.”

II. A HERMENEUTICAL CONSTRUCT OF WISDOM IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel, a wise man, received visions. Simultaneously, he acquired the abilities to ascertain and interpret the significance of the visions. Doing so portrayed how one should interpret God’s Word according to a wise stature, befitting Yahweh’s coming/established kingdom. The editor of Daniel’s final form follows suit, emulating the office of a wise interpreter. We, constituting the community of faith, are responsible for reading the book of Daniel with this hermeneutic of wisdom in mind, thereby contextualizing its ever-pertinent prophetic witness. Such is the theological lineage of the “wise interpreter.” Morgan reiterates this process: “Thus the visionary Book of Daniel points backward to the basic scriptures, Torah and Prophets, and forward to the ongoing process of interpretation to which these scriptures if they are to provide direction for the present.” This process summarizes the canonical intention of Daniel within a wisdom context. Nevertheless, the case for a wisdom context is only as persuasive as the biblical evidence presented.

Daniel begins with a superscription, not unlike those of the Major and Minor Prophets (Hos. 1:1; Amos 1:1). However, the standard form of address transitions into a statement about “reign” (1:1), not prophetic self-identification. Speaking structurally, the canonical process has framed the issue of theocracy around the entire work, initialized
in 1:1-2 and concluded in 12:13.\(^{27}\) The close proximity of God’s theocracy to Daniel’s governmental duties is not an accident; they work in tandem, as the God of Israel is revealing and Daniel is representing.

Daniel interpreted dreams while operating as a “bureaucrat,” not unlike Joseph (Genesis 39).\(^{28}\) To be sure, Daniel’s “visions” and “interpretation of dreams” differ from standard prophetic discourse, yet the difference is in presentation and not in nature. Both wisdom and prophecy are indeed revelation, but use different means of communication. As Dempster defines it, prophecy proceeds as “transcendent revelation” or “words from above” whereas wisdom is “immanent revelation” or “a human word from below.”\(^{29}\) Emphasizing such an on-the-ground revelation lends added credibility to C.A. Auberlen’s description of Israel: “The subject of revelation is no longer Israel in its relation to the powers of the world, but the powers of the world in their relation to Israel.”\(^{30}\) God’s people are in dark and confusing times. In response to this, a new shape of wisdom is forged by Daniel’s words and exilic situation.

Clearly, the prophetic content is subordinated to the function of wisdom from chapters 1-6. For example, narrative discourse precedes Daniel’s interpretation in chapter 2, making up more than half of the section, not including the final statements about Daniel’s royal promotion. It is noteworthy that the narrative discourse is about the prophetic visions of Daniel and not the actual interpretation, something not unveiled to the reader until v. 31. In chapters 7-12, Daniel’s earthly wisdom for “discerning” (יָדַע) the times meets face to face with the divine Wisdom who was present at creation and is continually active throughout the unfolding of history. This explains the condition
Daniel was in when presented with the magnitude of these visions (7:15, 28; 8:17-18, 27); they moved almost completely beyond his comprehension.

Based on these studies and the accompaniment of Sheppard’s findings, Daniel appears to be a “wise interpreter” of prophetic texts, resetting the predictive voices of the exile within a post-exilic framework. It seems the hope of the author is to engender an aptitude for wisdom since God’s nation had been confronted with (ostensibly) failed promises. Contemporary scholarship must also take care not to read Daniel as purely wisdom literature in a formal sense. That could disable conversation between it and the prophetic milieu. To do so may also subject the revelatory material in these latter chapters (7-12) to neglect.

III. CONCLUSION: WISDOM IN ITS TIME AND PLACE

This study considers the book of Daniel to be a wisdom book, examining its prophetic and sapiential content under a hermeneutical lens of discernment. In this case, prophecy and wisdom are both expanded into something unique. Predictions and figurative language are not simply placed at the foot of the reader, but instead become motifs within a hermeneutical construct of wisdom. This construct was intentionally woven throughout the canonical activity in Daniel, illuminating the word of God for the historical Israelite community as well as the confessing Church.

With wisdom as a factor in reading Daniel, I suggest that many eschatological observations excessively charged with “end-times” speculation might welcome reassessment and fresh contexts. Attention to the sapiential details of the text would add, not subtract, from the book’s theological statement. The canonical context of Daniel is
the staging of that theological statement. Negotiating and assessing the canonical context of Daniel becomes an act of discernment itself.

Finally, if we can agree that prophecy in Daniel shifts somewhat from its traditional moorings and that wisdom in the book has a distinctive form when compared to other forms of biblical wisdom, then we can consider the canon to be performing an intended function, namely, to shape the text it contextualizes and make something more of it. Daniel also proves, by its ability to move within the canon, that the collected arrangement of biblical books in the Old Testament is more than the sum of its parts.


7 Beckwith, *OT of the NT Church*, 73.

Beckwith, *OT of the NT Church*, 125-27, notes a “wider sense” of the term “prophet”, broadening the sense to “spokesmen of God.”

Leiman, *The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, 33. Sources from Qumran are also used to reinforce Daniel’s place in the Prophets. One text, in particular, refers to “Daniel, the prophet.” The title is undisputed, but again, some level of distinction is apparent: 1) he is a prophet and 2) the book of Daniel *within* the Prophets. The text is 4Q158-4Q186 or, as Allegro labeled it, “Florilegium.” In 4Q174, we read “…as it is written in the Book of Daniel, the prophet” from J.M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave* 4.1 (4Q158-4Q186). In considering this evidence, we must also note the close textual relationship shared by the Qumran Scrolls and the MT of Daniel, not only in the words themselves but even the shift to Aramaic.

Koch, “Is Daniel Among the Prophets?” 126. As a historical example of this disappearance of distinction, Koch cites the ministry of Christ who was both prophet and wise man.

Beckwith, *OT of the NT Church*, 127.

Currently, we are engaged in a similar case of genre alteration. Christopher Seitz, in multiple works, notes the unwise, yet telling, development of retagging the “Former Prophets” (Joshua-Kings) with the title, “Historical Books.” Our complacency in such a move demonstrates the modern interpreter’s innate ability to harmfully reconcile the prophetic and historical nature of this collection. Problems arise when the community of faith does not account for the prophetic “hermeneutic,” we might call it, within Joshua-Kings, set forth by canonical parameters. Changing the collective context
of the Former Prophets impairs the reader’s ability to detect a prophetic current running through this group of books. This serves as an example of how the transposition of Daniel may disconnect the interpreter from key theological signals.

14 Beckwith, *OT of the NT Church*, 126; for another view on Daniel’s unique contribution to the prophetic genre, see Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible*. According to Freedman, Daniel no longer represents “classical prophecy at all” but is “disguised” to do so (55). Daniel seems to remain, for Freedman, an unfortunate addition to the canon since it disrupts his ‘word-count’ hypothesis and allegedly resembles much of the Apocryphal and Deutero-canonical literature due to its late date (he even separates the analysis, reserving space for it at the end of his book; 78-9). Disrupting an “otherwise symmetrical arrangement” of texts, Daniel, in Freedman’s historical account, indicates that the Hagiographa was not yet closed (82). The Book of Daniel is an addition to the “new crisis” plaguing God’s people. Freedman explains the addition: “For such a crisis, a new Gattung, or a new form of literature, was required, one based on the earlier prophetic visions of the end time when the old world would collapse in destructive violence and be replaced by a new earth—even a new heavens in which there would be a final climactic struggle between the forces of good and evil.”

15 Beckwith, *OT of the NT Church*, 122, brackets out *Baba Bathra* 14b as a recollection of a baraita, with dating similar to the ancient traditions in the Mishnah. In all probability, this passage cites a canonical list predating the Babylonian Talmud itself (5th – 6th cen.); see also H.G.L. Peels, “The Blood ‘from Abel to Zechariah’ and the Canon of the Old Testament” in *Zeitschrift fur die alttestament-liche Wissenschaft* 113
[2001] 583-601, for a detailed discussion on the Talmudic canon and its reception (he
dates BB 14b-15a to the 2nd century). Additionally, Jerome attests to this particular
“numeration” and division. He states “I call attention to this, that, among the Hebrews,
Daniel is not reckoned with the Prophets, but with those who wrote the ‘Hagiographa.’
For all Scripture is by them divided into three portions, the Law, the Prophets, and the
‘Hagiographa,’ that is into five, and eight, and eleven books” (Preface to Daniel). Still,
he followed an order of 22 books (combining Ruth-Judges and Jeremiah-Lamentations to
make 22 books from 24 books).

16 Leiman, The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures, 48, postulates that Melito,
Origen, the Bryennios list and Epiphanius reflect various attempts of “harmonizing” or
correlating the Greek Bible with Hebrew tradition.

17 Codex Cairensis (A.D. 895) does not include the book in either the former or
latter prophets, but Daniel was added as a “prophet” by B. Aser in the list, “Haggai,
Malachi and Daniel”; see Koch, “Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?”, 123, and also
Paul Kahle, Der hebraische Bibeltext seit Franz Delitzsch (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer,
1961), 72-73. Another source distinguishing Daniel from standard prophets is bMeg 3a,
referring to him apart from Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

18 Other forms of the Christian appropriation of Isaiah are posited by Joachim
Schaper, “Messianism in the Septuagint of Isaiah and Messianic Intertextuality in the
Greek Bible” in BETL 195: The Septuagint and Messianism (ed. M.A. Knibb, Leuven:
Leuven University Press, 2006), 371, stating in his introduction: “Since the Book of
Isaiah has been such an important focus for the hopes and fears of the people of Israel,
one should expect it to have been a prime candidate for what one may call a ‘messianization’ of its text in the Hellenistic period.”

19 Koch, “Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?”, 126-27. Koch concedes there is “no explanation available in the extant Rabbinic text” and though he submits a text from Josephus’ *J.W. VI*, he admits this is “pure conjecture.”

20 In addition, the speculative nature of Daniel’s historical relocation causes certain theories to be at odds. For example, Kissling, “ Canonical Approaches to Old Testament Theology in Light of Ancient Variations in the Order of the Kethubim” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, Rhode Isl., November 19, 2008) believes rabbinic opinion forced Daniel to move to the Writings due to messianic re-interpretation, but Jiri Moskala, “The Place of the Book of Daniel in the Hebrew Canon” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, Rhode Isl., 2008), another proponent of Daniel’s establishment in the Prophets, believes the Jewish community wanted to retain the book for their own eschatological calculations and messianic calendar. Thirdly, to intensify the controversy, John Sailhamer, “Daniel” in *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [1994] 396-413), 396, believes it is precisely Daniel’s placement before Ezra-Nehemiah in the Writings that amplifies the “messianic schematic” of Daniel 9, not a privileged position among the Prophets.

21 Kissling, “Canonical Approaches”; also Koch, “Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?” 127, makes a similar statement: “Removing Daniel from the prophetic corpus and placing it among the narratives of late exilic and early postexilic times like Esther
and Ezra shifted the accent from eschatology to pedagogics.” Later in the discussion, Koch assumes Daniel’s movement to have “degraded” the book.


23 Morgan, Between Text and Community, 49.

24 Labeling Daniel as “interpreter” is the coinage of James L. Kugel, How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now (New York: Free Press, 2007), 656; see also von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 308, who also labels apocalyptic work as “interpretation,” but in a sense far removed from inspired revelation or divinely, imparted wisdom.

25 Morgan, Between Text and Community, 49. He also writes “although obedience and faithfulness are to be grounded in a direction provided by Torah and Prophets, the ‘visions’ of Daniel are equally necessary for the community to persevere and understand the present” (48, italics mine). At times, Morgan (as preceded by James
Sanders) describes canonical shaping in terms of “identity” more than I would like. This statement, on the other hand, captures the movement of Daniel well.

26 Koch, “Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?” 124, contends that although Daniel is not called a “prophet” in the introductory material, neither is he strictly considered “a wise man.” Instead, Koch writes “the correct title, however, appears in the address of the angel in 10:11, 19 (9:23): Daniel is ‘the man greatly beloved’ (by God).”


28 I am thankful to Dr. Richard Schultz for this insightful comment; see also Paul A. Porter, Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8 in Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Studies 20 (Uppsala: CWK Gleerup, 1983), 15-16, who reads the visions of chapters 7-8 in light of Daniel’s position as a “wise courtier.” It is plausible that the bestowal of divine visions was an exercise in wise diplomacy and political relations between Daniel and the current ruler.

29 Dempster, “Torah, Torah, Torah,” 93, illustrates wisdom as “immanent revelation” by citing Solomon’s encounter with the two warring mothers of 1 Kgs. 3:16-28.