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THE EXTENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON¹

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The question of the assessment of the deuterocanonical writings/apocrypha has recently, not for the first time, become a burning issue in the Bible Societies. One reason for this is the varying acceptance of the Guidelines for Interconfessional Co-operation in Translating the Bible, agreed between the United Bible Societies and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.² Another reason is that the first Greek interconfessional translation is in progress, and it is necessary to reach agreement on the inclusion and arrangement of the deuterocanonicals.

Co-operation with the Orthodox churches will become still closer in future. In order to reach a general solution of the related problem of the deuterocanonicals, one must first take an overall view of the differing positions on this question in the various church traditions.

I

For the Roman Catholic Church, the question of the canon was finally decided at the Council of Trent, which in Session IV, on 8 April 1546, fixed the extent of the Vulgate.³ According to this decision, the Vulgate contains the following holy scriptures of the Old Testament: the five books of Moses (i.e. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two books of Chronicles, 1 and 2 Ezra (the latter called Nehemiah), Tobit, Judith, Esther, Job, David's Psalter containing 150 Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Wisdom, Isaiah, Jeremiah (including Baruch), Ezekiel, Daniel, the twelve minor prophets (i.e. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi), and 1-2 Maccabees. To these is added an Appendix, expressly described in the Sixtine-Clementine edition of 1592 as "*extra seriem canonicorum librorum*", and containing the Prayer of

¹ This article is an expansion of a paper read in September 1985 to the UBS Europe Regional Translation Committee.

² These Guidelines, first drawn up in 1968, were revised in 1987.

³ Cf. H. Denzinger and K. Rahner, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 28th ed. 1952, 279f., no. 784.

Manasseh, 3-4 Ezra, and Psalm 151. The Roman Catholic view is thus that Tobit, Judith, parts of Esther, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, parts of Daniel and 1-2 Maccabees are "deuterocanonical", while the Prayer of Manasseh, 3-4 Ezra and Psalm 151 are "apocryphal".

The extent of the canon is also clear in those Protestant churches which include the apocrypha in their Bibles. In the last edition of Luther's Bible (Wittenberg 1545), the "Apocrypha: that is, books not of equal value with Holy Scripture, yet useful and good to read", include in the following order: I Judith, II Wisdom, III Tobit, IV Sirach, V Baruch (together with the Letter of Jeremiah), VI [1 and 2] Maccabees, VII parts of Esther, VIII parts of Daniel. The list concludes with "the Prayer of Manasseh, King of Judah, when he was imprisoned in Babylon", but this is not given a number of its own. There follows the note: "End of the books of the Old Testament".

According to Article 6 of the *Confessio Belgica* of 1561, the following books have the status of apocrypha: 3 and 4 Ezra, the books of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Sirach, Baruch with the Letter of Jeremiah, the additions to Esther, the Song of the Three Men in the Fiery Furnace, the Story of Susannah, that of Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh and the 2 Books of Maccabees. Despite this, the Zurich Bible (newly translated in the years 1907 to 1931 by order of the Church Synod), includes only 1 and 2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Sirach and Wisdom.

The apocrypha of the King James Version are identical with those described in the 39 Articles of Religion (1562) as "other Books" which "the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine": The Third Book of Esdras, The Fourth Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobias, The Book of Judith, The rest of the Book of Esther, The Book of Wisdom, Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch the Prophet, The Song of the Three Children, The Story of Susanna, Of Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, The First Book of Maccabees, and The Second Book of Maccabees.

Comparison of the apocrypha of the Luther Bible with that of the King James Version shows, first, that the Prayer of Manasseh, which in the Luther Bible can at best be described as a pseudepigraphon, has in the King James Version the status of an apocryphon in the full sense of the word; and secondly, that the King James Version includes 3 and 4 Ezra, which do not appear in the Luther Bible. In contrast, these three writings are regarded by Roman Catholics as apocryphal, not as deuterocanonical.

This already shows that the expressions "deuterocanonical writings" and "apocrypha" are not at all synonymous. Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians understand them rather differently; indeed, their respective traditions oblige them to do so. Even the introduction of the expression "Late writings of the Old Testament" in the common

language German Bible (*Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch*) cannot obscure this fact.

II

As for the extent of the *Septuagint*, the best source is not the edition of Alfred Rahlfs, but rather that of P.I. Bratsiotis.⁴ This includes the following books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-4 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, 1-2 Ezra (Ezra and Nehemiah), Tobit, Judith, Esther (including additions), 1-3 Maccabees, Psalms (including Psalm 151 *exōthen tou arithmou*), Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach, the minor prophets (in the order Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Lamentations, the Letter of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel (including additions), and 4 Maccabees as *parartēma*.

From this list it can be seen that although Psalm 151 and 4 Maccabees are described as “outside the number” or “appendix”, and are thus in a sense defined as apocrypha or pseudepigrapha, 3 Maccabees is fully included in the Septuagint, while by contrast the Prayer of Manasseh, included in the appendix to the Vulgate and among the apocrypha of the Luther Bible and the King James Version, is omitted from the Septuagint.

More problematical is the fact that a clear decision on the extent of the Septuagint has never been taken. On the contrary, the Second Trullan Synod of 692 recognizes no less than six different canonical lists, Canon 59 (60) of the Council of Laodicea (c. 360), Canon 85 of the Apostolic Canons (end 4th century), Canon 47 of the Council of Carthage (397), Athanasius’ 39th Festal Epistle (367), and the metrical lists of Gregory of Nazianzus (between 374 and 379) and Amphilochius of Iconium (c. 396), which in places vary considerably among themselves.⁵

For example, the metrical list of Gregory of Nazianzus reads:

Historical books are twelve,
altogether of the most ancient Hebrew wisdom:
first Genesis, then Exodus and Leviticus,
next Numbers, then Deuteronomy.
Then come Joshua and Judges, with Ruth the eighth;
the ninth and tenth books are the Acts of the Kings,
the Chronicles, and last you have Ezra.
The poetical books are five, of which the first is Job,
then David, then three books of Solomon:
Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and Proverbs.
These are also full of prophetic spirit:

⁴ Athens, 9th ed. 1983.

⁵ T. Zahn, *Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, vol. II/1, Erlangen/Leipzig 1890, 216f.

In one book are found the twelve:
Hosea and Amos, and Micah the third,
next Joel, then Jonah, Obadiah
and Nahum and Habbakuk and Zephaniah,
Haggai, then Zechariah, Malachi;
they make one book, and Isaiah the second,
next Jeremiah, called from his childhood,
next Ezekiel and the grace of Daniel.
I have presented twenty-two old books,
corresponding to the twenty-two Hebrew letters⁶.

This contrasts with the scriptural canon of the Council of Carthage:⁷

“These are the canonical scriptures: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two books of Chronicles, Job, David’s Psalter, five books of Solomon [= Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach], the books of the twelve prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Tobit, Judith, Esther, two books of Esdras, two books of Maccabees.”

Thus, whereas Gregory of Nazianzus’s canon list essentially corresponds to the extent of the Hebrew Bible (Lamentations being subsumed under Jeremiah, and Esther being omitted as in other early canon lists from Melito of Sardis onwards), the biblical canon of the Council of Carthage is identical with that of the Council of Trent.

Because of these differences, in the Greek Orthodox Church the canonicity of the deuterocanonicals/apocrypha is still contested. This is why an urgent desire has been expressed “that a much desired future ecumenical Council should include this among other matters to be discussed, and confirm by an infallible judgement the generally prevailing opinion in the Greek Orthodox Church”⁸.

III

The biblical canon of the Coptic Orthodox Church includes the following writings:⁹ the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, Job, 151 or 150 Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, the Minor and the Major Prophets, Wisdom, Judith, Tobit, Esther, three books of Maccabees and Sirach.

The exact number of Psalms cannot be determined with certainty, since different manuscripts of recension A have “the book of Psalms, which amount to 151” or “to 150”, while recension B reads simply “the

⁶ P.P. Joannou, quoted from J.D. Kaestli and O. Wermelinger, *Le canon de l’Ancien Testament. Sa formation et son histoire*, Geneva 1984, 147f.

⁷ Cf. E. Preuschen, *Analecta*, Tübingen 1910, 72.

⁸ N.P. Bratsiotis, as “Alte Testament in der griechisch-orthodoxen Kirche”, in *Kyrios*, vol. 1 (1960/61), 59-82, quotation from 71.

⁹ Cf. I. Guidi, “Il canone biblico della chiesa copta”, in *Revue Biblique*, 10 (1901), 161-174, quotation from 172f.

Psalms of [prophet] David, 1 book".¹⁰ If the reading "151" is correct, then the Bible of the Coptic Orthodox Church includes in its Old Testament two texts, Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees, which are not present either among the deuterocanonical writings of the Vulgate, nor among the apocrypha of the Luther Bible or the King James Version, but which form an integral part of the Septuagint.

It is also to be noted that, at least according to recension B¹¹ of the Coptic canonical list, the Coptic New Testament also has an item not included in the Greek or Latin Bibles: after Revelation are listed "the 2 letters of Clement in one book . . . and all that was commanded, whether patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and archpriests by means of Clement (a disciple of Peter the Apostle), which are the 8 books of the canons." Besides 1 and 2 Clement, the eight books of the Apostolic Constitutions are thus also given canonical status.

IV

The most extensive biblical canon is that of the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, which itself distinguishes between a wider and a narrower canon. The wider canon,¹² it is true, has only theoretical significance, since it has never formed the basis of a printed Bible. By contrast the 1927 diglot Geez-Amharic edition, and the Amharic edition of 1953, are both based on the so-called narrower canon, which includes the following books¹³: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Enoch, Ezra, Nehemiah, 3-4 Ezra, Tobit, Judith, Esther (including the additions to Esther), 1-3 Maccabees, Job Psalms (including Psalm 151), Proverbs (= Prov 1-24), Tägsas (= Prov 25-31), Wisdom, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Sirach, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch (together with the Letter of Jeremiah), Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel (together with the additions to Daniel), Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. In addition there is the Prayer of Manasseh, which follows 2 Chronicles 33.12. The Ethiopic Bible thus has the entire Septuagint, including 3 Ezra, 3 Maccabees and Psalm 151, but also two texts from the appendix to the Vulgate, namely the Prayer of Manasseh and 4 Ezra, and finally includes two books, Jubilees and Enoch, which do not appear anywhere in the Vulgate or Septuagint traditions.

V

The Bible of the Syrian Orthodox Church will be discussed here only in its East Syriac form. It includes the following Old Testament writings:¹⁴

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 162, 169.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 170.

¹² Cf. R.W. Cowley, "The Biblical Canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today", in *Ostkirchliche Studien*, vol. 23 (1974), 318-323, quotation from 319f.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 320, n. 8.

¹⁴ Cf. the researches of E. Eising, *Zur Geschichte des Kanons der Heiligen Schrift in der ostsyrischen Kirche im ersten Jahrtausend*, thesis Würzburg, Vol. II, 525ff.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, Proverbs, Sirach, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Song of Songs, Job, Isaiah, twelve Minor Prophets, Jeremiah (including Lamentations and the Prayer of Jeremiah), Ezekiel, Daniel (including additions to Daniel with the exception of Susannah), Psalms, 1-3 Maccabees, Chronicles, Ezra, Wisdom, Judith, Esther, Susanna, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Letter of Baruc [= Syriac Baruch 78.1-86.3] and Baruch.

In this case, "Ezra" should be understood as including Ezra and Nehemiah. The omission of Tobit is noteworthy, as is the inclusion of 3 Maccabees, in agreement with the Septuagint but against the Vulgate.

The East Syrians, like the Copts, have a New Testament which diverges from what is usual; but unlike the Copts, it is an omission rather than an addition which is remarkable. The Peshitta (not only in its East Syriac form) omits 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude and Revelation. In *The New Testament in Syriac* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1920ff.), the "minor" Catholic Epistles (2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Jude), together with Revelation, are supplied from the Phyloxeniana, the new translation from the Greek made in 507/8 by Chorepiscopus Polycarp on the instructions of the Monophysite Bishop Philoxenus of Mabbug.

In practice, however, the special features of the East Syriac biblical canon are of only relatively small significance, since "the editions of the East Syriac Bible printed today have nothing to do with the history of the East Syriac canon, but reproduce either the Roman Catholic or the Protestant canon".¹⁵ Thus the Syriac Old Testament published in London in 1913 by the Trinitarian Bible Society, and frequently reprinted, goes back to an edition produced in 1852 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Urmia, while the three-volume *Biblia Sacra juxta versionem simplicem quae dicitur Pschitta*, Mosul 1891 (reprinted Beirut 1951), which includes both Old and New Testaments, is the work of the Missio Dominicana Mausiliensis.

VI

The extent of the Old Testament was decided in the Armenian Apostolic Church by the canonical list of Gregory of Tat'ew (1346-1410), which includes the following writings:¹⁶ Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-4 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, 1, 3 and 4 Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (including additions to Esther), Judith, Tobit, 1-3 Maccabees, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach, Job, Isaiah, the twelve prophets, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jeremiah, Baruch (together with the Letter of Jeremiah), Lamentations, Daniel (together with the additions to Daniel), and Ezekiel. Of these, 3 Maccabees and 3-4 Ezra are considered "extra-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. III, 395, n. 48.

¹⁶ Cf. M.E. Stone, "Armenian Canon Lists IV — The list of Gregory of Tat'ew (14th Century)", in *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 72, 237-244, quotation from 239-241.

canonical".¹⁷ Apart from these writings, the extent of the Armenian Bible corresponds exactly to that of the Vulgate.

VII

To summarize, the first thing to say is that all the Bibles mentioned in this article go back directly or indirectly to the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, and that (with the exception of the Peshitta, which omits 2 Peter, 2-3 John, Jude and Revelation) they reproduce them completely.

In addition, all the Bibles mentioned include the following texts, which have either canonical, deuterocanonical or apocryphal status: Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, and 1-2 Maccabees. Tobit is included in the Vulgate, the Luther Bible, the King James Version, the Septuagint, and the Coptic, Ethiopic and Armenian Bibles, but is lacking in the Peshitta.

Some writings appear only in certain Bibles: Maccabees in the Septuagint, the Peshitta, the Coptic and the Ethiopic, and also in the Armenian, but with the restriction of being identified as "extra-canonical"; **4 Maccabees** appears as *parartēma* in the Septuagint; the **Prayer of Manasseh** in the appendix to the Vulgate, in the apocrypha of the Luther Bible and the King James Version, and in the Ethiopic Bible; **3 Ezra** in the appendix to the Vulgate, in the apocrypha of the King James Version, in the Septuagint, in the Ethiopic, and also, with the restriction "extra-canonical", in the Armenian Bible; **4 Ezra** in the appendix to the Vulgate, in the apocrypha of the King James Version, in the Ethiopic, and with the restriction "extra-canonical" in the Armenian Bible; Psalm 151 in the appendix to the Vulgate, in the Septuagint, in the Ethiopic Bible, and perhaps also in the Coptic Bible; Jubilees and Enoch only in the Ethiopic Bible, and the Letter of Baruch only in the Peshitta.

This situation makes it probable that the United Bible Societies will not be able to make a single agreement with the Orthodox Churches, but will need to make special agreements with the various Orthodox churches. In this process, the common basis of the contents of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament should be given prominence. For the additional biblical writings, it might be possible to take as a model the extent of the Vulgate (without its appendix) or the Septuagint (without the *parartēma*. As for the order and arrangement of the biblical books, it would be desirable for the United Bible Societies to reach a uniform agreement with the Orthodox churches, similar to that reached in 1968 between the UBS and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (published as "Guidelines for Interconfessional Co-operation in Translating the Bible..", and revised and confirmed in 1987). Such agreements need not remain pious hopes:

¹⁷ I am indebted for this information to a letter from Manuel M. Jinbachian dated 26 February 1987.

they are completely attainable, as is shown by the fact that the UBS European Production Fund published in 1979 and 1987 two complete Syriac Bibles with a letter of recommendation from His Holiness Ignatius Zakka, Patriarch of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. In the first of these editions, the "Apocrypha" follow the following order: Wisdom, Sirach, the Letter of Baruch, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, 1-2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, and the additions to Esther; in the second, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, Wisdom, Sirach, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Letter of Baruch, Baruch, additions to Daniel, and 1-2 Macabees. But in both editions, these writings appear "in a separate section before the New Testament", exactly as provided for in the "Guidelines for Interconfessional Co-operation in Translating the Bible".

The same picture is shown in the Amharic Bible, produced in 1988 by the United Bible Societies' European Production Fund. The "special section before the New Testament" includes the following writings: 3 and 4 Ezra, Tobit, Judith, additions to Esther, 1-3 Maccabees, Sirach, the Prayer of Manasseh, the Letter of Jeremiah, Susanna, Baruch, Wisdom, the Song of the Three Men, Daniel (= Bel and the Dragon), Jubilees, and Enoch. In addition, Psalm 151, in accordance with the Septuagint tradition, is placed at the end of the Psalter.

ION BRIA

THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE AND THE COMMUNICATION OF FAITH TODAY

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It is realistic to say that the communication and sharing of faith is one of the most challenging issues and the most sensitive area of church life and mission today. Often one speaks of our failure to communicate the gospel to the world.¹ All churches, including the Orthodox, are facing the difficult task of passing on the universal message of the word of God—the tradition—to succeeding generations. The good news of Jesus Christ is a reality to be proclaimed, celebrated and shared with all in every age and in every place. This is the mission and the vocation of the

¹ Jean-Claude Margot, "Traduction et communication de l'Évangile", in *Perspectives missionnaires*, 1 (1981), 40.