

THE FASCINATION OF TABOO: A FEW BIBLICAL EPISODES FROM THE BOOKS OF THE ANAGIGNOSKOMENA AND OF THE APOCRYPHA ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH

Abstract

The extension of the biblical canon in Orthodoxy represents a thorny, still unsolved, and probably unsolvable issue. Its history begins with the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek (the Septuagint) when, during the Second Temple period, after Ezra generally established the books received by Judaism, several books, mostly in Greek, which we call Anagignoskomena, meaning “acknowledged” or “worthy of reading”, were added to the Greek manuscripts. Moreover, in the deuterocanonical period, Judaism produced a series of other writings which largely circulated within the people, but in secret, unofficially, and which were not inventoried or later included on the lists of acknowledged books or in the official manuscripts containing the canonical books or the books of the Anagignoskomena. Nonetheless, the fascination they held and the authority some of them had were stronger than those of canonical writings. Some lacunal canonical biblical texts were being enriched or explained by them, sometimes offering many helping elements “from tradition”. The present study is intended to be an incursion into the world of these writings, which first influenced certain canonical writings, namely those acknowledged initially by the synagogue and then by the tradition of the Church. We will be surprised to find out that, although they are officially denied, the Christian writers from the past and, later, Christian and contemporary tradition have absorbed elements from them. Throughout the history of the biblical canon, there has been a certain attraction towards the forbidden or the taboo. Therefore, up to the life of the modern Christian, we will find notions and teachings which come from tradition, but which initially originate in these writings, to which official theology avoids granting too much importance.



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Introduction

When speaking about the Canon of the Old Testament, the old textbook on the study of the Old Testament, which is used in theological institutes and which was the only one until two years ago, initially has a resolute approach about the quoting of (sic!) uncanonical writings (this is how the Anagignoskomena are called) and of the Apocrypha in the New Testament, claiming that “this is an assertion which cannot be proved” (Prelipceanu et al 1985, 36). Then, we are offered a few examples supported by the opposing party. Mt 4:4 would quote Wisd. of Sol. 16:26; 6:14 would quote Ecc 28:3; 6:17 would quote Ecc 7:14 (sic!) etc. Supposed quotations from Tobit, the Apocrypha the Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch are also mentioned. The authors support their position by reasoning that none of these quotations is introduced by the formula “as written”, “the Scripture says” or “the Holy Spirit says”. Later, things seem less categorical: “it is true that many (biblical, emphasis added) writers often use all or some of the uncanonical books as “Scripture” (Prelipceanu et al 1985, 37). Unfortunately, in this case, we are not offered an example. The starting point of the explanation is the evolution of the canon, namely the fact that neither the Holy Apostles nor the Saviour Himself mentioned the precise number of canonical books and that the Septuagint, with its extended canon, made the sanctified authors of the New Testament have an improper orientation concerning the extension of the canon. In other words, they were wrong using these books, which were only later removed from the canon, or maybe they were a priori fascinated by the taboo they contained. Therefore, our predecessors at the Department of Old Testament Studies cannot present a solid explanation regarding the use of these writings both by the authors of the New Testament and by the Fathers of the Church, being confused especially by the fact that the *textus receptus* of the Orthodox Church is the Septuagint version, which also includes the books of the Anagignoskomena.

This short study aims first to follow the historical evolution of the writings of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha on the lists of canonical books of the primary Christian tradition and then to provide a few concrete examples to demonstrate how, over time, the tradition of the Church has incorporated some of the episodes they present. The novelty of the study resides in the fact that it underscores the idea that,

although at a quasi-official level, the Church seems to reject these writings, especially in dogmatic formulations, and regards them as its step (Anagignoskomena) or illegitimate (Apocrypha) daughters, the writers of the Church and the Saints of the past and even the faithful of our times have used and continue to use them.

The study is structured in several subchapters: the position of the books of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha on the canonical lists of the first centuries, a few biblical episodes acknowledged by tradition, which are present only in the books of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha, a few canonical episodes dealt with in-depth in the books of the Apocrypha and acknowledged by tradition and some brief conclusions on the canonicity of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha.

The Position of the Books of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha on the Canonical Lists of the First Centuries

As we have mentioned, the debate regarding the canon originates in the translation of the Septuagint (the Alexandrian “canon”), which has some additional books, besides those which were in Hebrew (the Hebrew “canon”). Some were written directly in Greek, whereas others were translated from a lost Hebrew original, in the period following Ezra (4th-3rd BC) How did they get to us, nowadays? First, they were mentioned on the lists of books of various Christian authors. And if they are present on their lists, that means those communities used them in their local cult and readings.

The oldest lists of normative books can be found in the Jewish authors of the end of the 1st c. AD. Flavius Josephus, in about 95 AD, in his paper *Against Apion* (1.37-42), and the Babylonian Talmud (3rd AD), in the *Baba Batra* 14b tractate etc. (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 57-69). It is not surprising to see that the Hebrew lists, which are faithful to Ezra’s “canon”, do not comprise the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha. The first lists are written in Greek, Bryennios’ list (100-150 AD) and Melito of Sardis’ list from *Extracts* (170 AD), include neither the Anagignoskomena nor the Apocrypha (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 70-83). Origen (184-254 AD) has a list of normative books in his *Commentary on Psalm 1*, but it includes neither the Anagignoskomena nor the Apocrypha, except the books of the Maccabees (τὰ Μακκαβαϊκά) (we do not know which and how many), which he names using the Hebrew title: *Sar bet sabanai el* (Σαρβηθσαβαναιελ) and of the Epistle of Jeremiah (καὶ τῇ Ἐπιστολῇ). The books of the Maccabees are “outside” (ἔξω) the list. Thus, one of the books of the Anagignoskomena (the Epistle of Jeremiah) is on the normative list and others (Maccabees) are not. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in *Catecheses*

4.33-36 (~ 350 AD), does not include the Anagignoskomena or the Apocrypha on his list, except the books of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah, both regarded as part of the book of Jeremiah (καὶ Ἱερεμίου μετὰ Βαρούχ ... καὶ Ἐπιστολῆς). Therefore, two books of the Anagignoskomena are on the list of normative books. Moreover, St. Cyril also included in the book of Daniel the two additions from the Anagignoskomena: Susanna and Bel and the Dragon, considering them to be normative. For instance, he quotes from Dn 13:45, the longer version of Theodosius, from Sus. 1:44, using the special formula employed for normative books “it is written” (γέγραπται): “for it is written: The Lord raised the holy spirit of a young boy” (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 115). St. Athanasius the Great, in *Festal Letters* 39.15-21 (~ 367 AD), include neither the Anagignoskomena nor the Apocrypha on the list of normative books, except the books of Baruch and the Epistle to Jeremiah, which he incorporates in the book of Jeremiah (Ἱερεμίας, καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ Βαρούχ ... καὶ ἐπιστολή). Likewise, he mentions and quotes Sus. 1:42, from Theodosius’ version, as being part of Daniel (ἐν δὲ τῷ Δανιήλ). Therefore, three books of the Anagignoskomena are on the list of normative books. The mysterious Council of Laodicea (4th AD) lists the normative books in the 59th (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 131) or 60th (Perşa 2018, 99) canon. The list includes neither the Anagignoskomena nor the Apocrypha, except the books of Baruch and the Epistle to Jeremiah, which it includes in the book of Jeremiah, as being only one (κ’ Ἱερεμίας, Βαρούχ ... καὶ ἐπιστολή).

The 85th apostolic canon (~ 375-380 AD) contains the first most extensive list regarding the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha. The following are mentioned among “holy books” (βιβλία ἁγία): Judith, 1-4 Maccabees, Psalm 151, Wisdom of Solomon and Tobit (in the Syriac version of the canon). “Outside” (ἔξωθεν) these canonical books, the following are enumerated: Sirach and, in the Ethiopian version of the canon: Wisdom of Solomon, Judith (it is no longer considered to be canonical), the three books of *Kufâlê* (*Book of Jubilees*) and Sirach (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 136-139). St. Gregory of Naziansus, in *Carmina Dogmatica* 1.1.12 (~ 381-390 AD), does not include on his list either books of the Anagignoskomena or of the Apocrypha, except the book of Baruch. Amphilochius of Iconium, in *Iambics to Seleucus* 251-320 (~ 350 AD), does not include on his list either books of the Anagignoskomena or of the Apocrypha, except the book of Baruch. St. Epiphanius of Salamis has three lists of canonical books in his papers *Panarion* 8.6 (~ 376 AD) and *On Weights and Measures* 4-5 and 22-23 (~ 392 AD). Neither of the three lists includes books of the Anagignoskomena or the Apocrypha, except the books of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. In *Panarion* 8. 6, he

also speaks about two controversial books: “Wisdom of Sirach and Solomon” (εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλαι δύο βιβλοὶ παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐν ἀμφιλέκτῳ, ἡ Σοφία τοῦ Σιράχ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Σολομῶντος) and “other Apocryphal books” (χωρὶς ἄλλων τινῶν βιβλίων ἐναποκρύφων), without however mentioning one. Sixteen years after he had written *Panarion*, St. Epiphanius seemed to change his mind, as he then called the two controversial books “useful and beneficial” (χρήσιμοι καὶ ὠφέλιμοι), saying that “they had not been kept in the Ark of the Covenant” (ἐν τῷ ἀρῶν ἐνετέθησαν, τουτέστιν ἐν τῇ τῆς διαθήκης κιβωτῷ) (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 141-173), probably like the other canonical books. However, historically speaking, it was not even possible, as, during the Second Temple period, when the Jewish canon was created and when the two books were written, the Ark of the Covenant was no longer present in the Holy of Holies (acc. 2Mac 2:4-8).

The lists written in Latin also mention some of the books of the Anagnoskomena and the Apocrypha. Codex Claromontanus (4th AD) contains the following on the list of canonical books: Wisdom of Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 and 4 Maccabees, Judith and Tobit and St. Hilary of Poitiers, in *Commentary on Psalm 15* (~ 364-367 AD), enumerates Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah as part of the book of Jeremiah and, on Tobit and Judith, he says that “some add them to have 24 books, which is the number of letters of the Greek alphabet” (quibusdam autem uisum est, additis Tobia et Iudith, uiginti quattuor libros secundum numerum graecarum litterarum connumerare) (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 183-197). Blessed Jerome has three lists of canonical books in *Prologus Galeatus* (390 AD), *Letter 53* (395 AD) and *Letter 107* (403 AD). The most extensive one is in the Prologue. Jerome is very emphatic and considers as “Apocryphal” and “outside the canon” the following books: Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, the Shepherd of Hermas and 1-2 Maccabees (... inter Apocrypha seponendum. Igitur Sapientia, quae vulgo Salomonis inscribitur, et Iesu filii Sirach liber et Iudith et Tobias et Pastor non sunt in canone. Maccabeorum primum librum hebraicum repperi, secundus graecus est, quod et ex ipsa φρασιν probari potest) (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 197-216). Rufinus, in *Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed* (404 AD), calls for the first time “the uncanonical books” (non canonici) “ecclesiastic books” (sed ecclesiastici). Here, he includes: Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, Maccabees (we do not know which). Finally, Blessed Augustine, in *On Christian Doctrine* 2. 8. 12. 24-13. 29 (397 AD), mentions Tobit, Judith and 1-2 Maccabees among the historical canonical books (haec est historia ... Tobias ... Iudith et Machabeorum) and the Wisdom of Solomon and that of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) among the prophetic books

(deinde prophetae ... nam illi duo libri, unus qui Sapientia et alius qui Ecclesiasticus) (Gallagher, Meade 2017, 216-230).

After going through these lists, we conclude that each local Church decided upon the books used and had its canon, mostly identical with that of the other Christian communities. Between the minimalist canon of Blessed Jerome, influenced by the Hebrew canon (39 books) and the maximalist one of the 85th apostolic canon, influenced by the Septuagint (as found in Codex Alexandrinus – Swete 1914, 202), we find all the other lists of canons presented. To summarise, Tobit is canonical in the 85th apostolic canon, in Codex Claromontanus and for Blessed Augustine. For Blessed Jerome, it is Apocryphal, it is mentioned by St. Hilary and for Rufinus it is ecclesiastic. Judith is canonical in the 85th apostolic canon (but also uncanonical – the Ethiopian version), in Codex Claromontanus and for Blessed Augustine, it is Apocryphal for Blessed Jerome, ecclesiastic for Rufinus and it is mentioned by St. Hilary. Baruch is mentioned on most lists and it is canonical every time, namely for St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Athanasius, the Council of Laodicea, St. Gregory, Amphilochius of Iconium, St. Epiphanius and St. Hilary. Likewise, the Epistle of Jeremiah is canonical on all the lists on which it is mentioned: Origen, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Athanasius, the Council of Laodicea, St. Epiphanius and St. Hilary. The Wisdom of Solomon is canonical in the 85th apostolic canon (but also uncanonical – the Ethiopian version), in Codex Claromontanus and for Blessed Augustine, it is ecclesiastic for Rufinus, controversial for St. Epiphanius and Apocryphal for Blessed Jerome. Sirach is canonical in Codex Claromontanus and for Blessed Augustine, ecclesiastic for Rufinus, controversial for St. Epiphanius, uncanonical in the 85th apostolic canon and Apocryphal for Blessed Jerome. Susanna is canonical for St. Cyril and St. Athanasius. Bel and the Dragon are canonical for St. Cyril. The books of Maccabees are canonical for Origen, in the 85th apostolic canon, in Codex Claromontanus and for Blessed Augustine. Rufinus calls them ecclesiastic and Blessed Jerome Apocryphal. The 85th apostolic canon lists Psalm 151 as canonical and the book of Jubilees as uncanonical. St. Epiphanius also mentions the Apocryphal books, without naming any.

A Few Biblical Episodes Acknowledged by Tradition, which are Present Only in the Books of the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha

I shall mention here only two examples, one from the books of the Anagignoskomena and the other from the Apocrypha.

The Prophecy of Baruch (3:38)

As we have seen, the book of Baruch has always been canonical, as an *addendum* to the book of Jeremiah. Probably this was due mostly to the prophecy in 3:38: “afterwards he was seen upon earth and conversed with men” (μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὤφθη, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συνανέστράφη). The author praises the wisdom given through law to the Israelis, which they abandoned (3:9,12,13 et seq.). In the last verses of the chapter, it is said that the personified Wisdom descends from heaven, more precisely “from the clouds” (v. 29) and that no man, besides Him (v. 32), can know her mission and her paths (v. 31). She, Wisdom, or He, God (in Greek, the subject is not specified), was seen upon earth and conversed with men (v. 38). According to patristic teaching, Christ is prefigured in the sapiential literature under the form of divine Wisdom (Prv 8-9), which indwells the people. Although they do not provide us with solid reasons, modern Bible exegetes regard the addition in v. 38 as a late Christian interpolation (Moore 2008, 301). The fact is that v. 38 is quoted by many Fathers and it was used in the Arianistic debate, as it is the only one to speak explicitly about the Embodiment. In the Syriac version, the subject is masculine (“God showed Himself and was seen”) (Charles 2004, 591). The text of the prophecy is remarkably like Jn 1:14: “and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”. Given that it was quoted many times by the Fathers of the Church, it could not be left outside the canon, at least not on the lists of the first four centuries! Therefore, the fascination for this book of the Anagnoskomena is not related only to its instructive, moral value, but also to its prophetic character or to its dogmatic teaching (it was used in the Arianistic debate). Moreover, the fragment 3:36 – 4:4 is also used in the Orthodox cult, being read twice, first during the Third Hour on Christmas Eve, between the Prokeimenon and the Apostle, and during the Vespers held on December 25th, between the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1-10 and Daniel 2:31-36, therefore between two paroemia from canonical books. There are many such examples from the Anagnoskomena, which are acknowledged by tradition.

The Names of Angels

The second example is from the Apocrypha. Here, things are clearer from the point of view of their mentioning on the lists. Only Ps. 151 is canonical and the book of Jubilees uncanonical (the 85th apostolic canon). Nonetheless, tradition has acknowledged certain episodes they present. I shall refer here only to the names of angels. According to the Scripture (Rv 1:20) and the Orthodox tradition (Alexandra

2012, 31), there are seven saint archangels: Michael (“Who is like God?” – Hebr. מיכאל), Gabriel (“God is my strength” – Hebr. גבריאל), Raphael (“God has healed” – Hebr. רפאל), Uriel/Ouriel (“God is my light” – Hebr. אוריאל), Selaphiel/Salathiel/Sealtiel/Selatiel (“I have asked God” – Hebr. שאלתיאל), Jegudiel/Jhudiel/Jehudiel (“Laudation of God” – Hebr. יהודיאל) and Barachiel (“the Lightning of God” – Hebr. ברקאל or ברקיאל) (Bulgakov 2009, 108). Probably the list of names of the seven archangels appears for the first time with the Gnostics (Davidson 1971, 338), but, according to Düsterdieck: “in 1460, their names (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Sealtiel, Jehudiel and Barachiel) were revealed to a certain Amadeus, who was chosen for his holiness, miracles and prophecies” (Düsterdieck 1887, 101). Michael, “the prince of Israel”, and Gabriel, “the Archangel”, are mentioned in Dn 10:13,21 and Dn 8:16; 9:21, which is a canonical book. Raphael is mentioned for the first time in Tob. 3:17, which belongs to the Anagignoskomena, and in 1 Enoch 10:4 and 20, which is Apocryphal. Uriel is only mentioned in the Apocrypha: 4 Ezra 4:1; 5:20; 10:28 (the Apocalypse of Ezra) and 1 Enoch 72:1 etc., but, in the Apocryphal 2 Enoch 22:11, he is called Pravuil/Vrevoil and in Qumran, Suriyel/Suriel/Sariel (1) (שוריאל Q33 9:15-16). Salathiel is mentioned in the Apocryphal 4 Ezra 3:1 and in the Apocryphal Book of Adam and Eve 31:6, being one of the seven archangels responsible for the movement of heavenly bodies. In the Book of Adam, Salathiel and another angel, Suriyel (סוריאל) (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 51a), brought Adam and Eve, who had been tempted by the devil, from the top of a mountain to the cave of treasures (Davidson 1971, 254). Jegudiel/Jhudiel/Jehudiel only appears in tradition. No Apocryphal book mentions him. His name and icon are present in St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv and he is holding a crown in his hand (Bulgakov 2009, 108). Finally, Barachiel, under the form of Baraqel, is mentioned in the Apocryphal 1 Enoch 6:7 etc. and, under the form Baraqiel, in the Apocryphal 3 Enoch 14:4 and 17:3. Nowadays, there is general information regarding the names of the seven angels available on the Internet and there is even an “Apocryphal” akathist in this respect, meaning that it is not acknowledged by the Church. Thus, of the names of the seven archangels, two are known to us from canonical writings (Michael, Gabriel), one from the Anagignoskomena (Raphael), three from the Apocrypha (Uriel, Salathiel, Barachiel) and one from the tradition of the Church (Jegudiel). The influence of the Apocrypha and the Anagignoskomena on the tradition of the Church is also visible in this case.

A Few Canonical Episodes Dealt with in Depth in the Books of the Apocrypha and Acknowledged by Tradition

“The Fall of the Angels” (Gn 6:1-4)

The Apocrypha also left their imprint on the early Christian exegesis, for instance, on the mysterious passage of “the fall of the angels” (Gn 6:1-4). Often, Apocryphal books take pieces of information from the canonical books and try to explain and to analyse them in-depth, bringing elements from tradition and thus becoming a sort of official biblical commentaries (midrashim). Subsequently, these additional commentaries can become part of the official tradition or not. The history of the interpretation of this passage is eloquent in terms of the fascination caused by the information provided by these taboo writings. In the beginning, all opinions were convergent, then slightly divergent, only to become discordant. The oldest interpretation we have is in the Apocryphal 1 Enoch (2nd BC). “The Sons of God” who interbred with the daughters of men are called here “angels”, “sons of heaven” (6:1-8) or “watchers” (1:5 etc.). Likewise, in Jubilees 4:15 (~ 150 BC), the Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran (1 Qap Gen^{ar} 2:1) (1st BC), 2 Enoch 18:4 (1st BC – 2nd AD), the Testament of Rubens 5:6 (2nd AD) and 2 Bar. 56:12-16 (2nd AD), which are all Apocryphal. Philo, in *De gigantibus* 2.6, and Flavius Josephus, in *Ant.* 1.3.1, embrace the same idea of interbreeding between angels and men. The New Testament seems to evoke the episode in 2 Pt 2:4 and Jude 6, without however giving details. The Fathers of the first two centuries also support this idea: St. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose (Walton 2003, 794). The Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 67b etc.) continues along the same path. Also, the only great uncial codex of the Septuagint to keep the beginning of Genesis (the beginning of Genesis is missing from Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus), Codex Alexandrinus (5th AD), was deliberately altered by a reviser to read “the angels of God” (οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θῦ – sic!) instead of “the sons of God” (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θῦ – sic!). So great was the influence of Enoch’s book, that his interpretation also penetrated the official reading of the codex and thus the reading of the Church, at least that of Alexandria! However, from the 2nd AD, things started to gradually change, with the translation of Targums. For Onkelos and Neofiti, “the sons” were no longer “angels”, but “the strong ones” (Gn 6:2). St. Cyril of Alexandria would give us the official interpretation of the Church, namely the Seth Theory, according to which “the sons of God” would be the very descendants of Seth and Enos, who were seen as pure or, in the view of those from the past, “divine beings” (Paton 1910, 19-20). Could we say that, for hundreds of years, the Synagogue and the Church have been fascinated by this taboo interpretation?

The Dispute over the Body of Moses (Jude 9)

We end the examples with an episode from the New Testament. According to Deut 34:6, Moses died in the land of Moab and: “he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-Peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day”. There is nothing in the Old Testament related to any dispute over his body or to any supposed assumption to heaven. Yet the New Testament comes with an additional piece of information in the Epistle of Jude (end of the 1st c. – the beginning of the 2nd c. AD) (Bauckham 1998, 13; Bruce 1996, 626; Neyrey 2008, 30). In Jude, the context speaks of ungodly people who spoke blasphemy as not even the devil did when disputing with the archangel Michael over the body of Moses: “but when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgement, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you’”. Exegetes believe this piece of information originates either in the lost Apocryphal paper the Assumption of Moses or the Testament of Moses (the majority) or in an oral tradition. If the majority claims that the Assumption was written in the first part of the 1st c. AD (Silva, Tenney 2009, 332; DeSilva 2000, 1192 etc.), then the canonical episode could have been influenced by this Apocryphal paper. The main problem which burdens research is the fact that, in the only written manuscript discovered so far, the Latin one, the end of the paper has been lost (Priest 1992, 920), which is precisely where the supposed text quoted by Jude was. We know this from the writings of those from the past. Thus, the historian and bishop Gelasius of Caesarea, after quoting from the Testament (1:14) in *Ecclesiastical History* (2.17,17), he also makes reference to the dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses (DeSilva 2000, 1193), the episode being also present in the Testament. The fact that the text of the Apocryphon was complete and that it was used is proved by its being quoted on the lists of Apocryphal books in the first Christian millennium: Anastasius of Sinai (640-700 AD), in *Quaestiones et Responsiones*, and Nicephorus I of Constantinople (806-815 AD), in *Chronography* (Russell 1964, 391-393).

Even if this supposed influence from the Apocryphon had not existed, although most Bible exegetes claim it did, we see that the event present in oral tradition becomes official by entering canonical writing, which contradicts the version of the Deuteronomy. It is the same fascination for a story with no historical foundation or a biblical foundation in the Old Testament. However, if the Epistle of Jude is dependent on the Assumption of Moses, then this fascination gains the value of a taboo.

Conclusions

These few examples provide us with a heterogeneous perspective on the writings which have a biblical character in Christianity. The diversity of lists in the early Church is reflected nowadays in the variety of positions concerning the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha. If for Catholics the Anagignoskomena are deuterocanonical (second canon) and for Protestants they are Apocryphal, for some Orthodox they are worthy of reading, meaning that they can only be used for the moral examples they contain and in no way for their dogmatic, canonical value. This is the official discourse of most Orthodox exegetes of the Old Testament. Yet, by analysing the position of the Fathers of the Church over the centuries, we see that things are not that clear-cut. Many of the Anagignoskomena were canonical and were used as Scripture. As for the Apocrypha, for instance, the book of Enoch is canonical in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (The Ethiopian Orthodox use a small canon – identical with the Hebrew one –, and a wider canon, which also includes Enoch, 4 Ezra and the Jubilees) and many episodes from other Apocrypha influenced the canonical writings.

We would like to conclude by saying that the Orthodox Church have felt much freer concerning the issue of the extension of the canon since, in the cult, they read from this comprehensive corpus (i.e. Baruch, in our case, but also Enoch, in the case of Ethiopians). I believe that, if we were to imagine a staircase of canonicity and inspiration of biblical writings, on the first step we would have the 39 books from the small, Jewish canon, then, in the middle, the books which are worthy of reading and, on the last step, almost falling from the staircase, the Apocrypha. Therefore, could we say that the Anagignoskomena and the Apocrypha contain inspired elements? We have seen that the answer is yes, which, however, as we have said, does not make us place them on the same level as the canonical ones. Yet the Ethiopian Orthodox do! I remain of the opinion that we must analyse the issue of their canonicity and inspiration more in-depth, especially concerning how they are acknowledged by the Church in the cult and daily readings; this research should cause, in an honest way and without a priori preconceived ideas, a rethinking of the canon of the Old Testament. I dare to risk saying that we are dismissing these writings without knowing them almost at all, especially since the Apocrypha, except some of them, are not even translated into Romanian (the best-known ones are the book of Enoch and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs). Irrespective of the contemporary official position of biblical theology, the fascination for them existed in the past, especially among the people, and will continue to exist, regardless of their canonical value.

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