GONICAL RECEPTION OF THE DEUTEROCANONICAL
AND APOCRYPHAL BOOKS IN CHRISTIANITY

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As of today, no satisfactory explanation has been given yet for the inclusion in the Christian canon of the so-called deuterocanonical books, which are absent from the Hebrew Bible. A comparison between these books and the parabiblical and apocryphal writings found at Qumran could, nevertheless, shed some light on this issue. The deuterocanonical books vaunt some pretensions of canonicity. They exhibit, on one hand, a series of features matching those of the apocryphal writings which the Christian tradition picked from the Jewish one, while, at the same time, other works were rejected. Christianity transmitted a series of deuterocanonical and apocryphal Jewish writings, which seems to place it closer to a form of Judaism prior to the Hellenistic crisis and closer to the Aramaic-speaking Diaspora than to Palestinian Judaism of Qumran and New Testament times.

One of the features of this literature incorporated by the Christian tradition is the universalistic perspective. It is represented by figures like Adam, Noah, and the patriarch Abraham, which are preferred to others with a more Israelite or Jewish significance, as Moses, Joshua, or David. It is very meaningful, as I will try to underscore, that the reference to Noah is implicit in the episode on the Apostles’ inebriation, once it is connected with the multitude of languages and peoples assembled in Pentecost, as if in a new Babel. Those figures constitute a sequence of models or periods (patriarchal, tribal, and monarchic) as well as of covenants or testaments: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David..., who, in their multiple versions—Jewish, Christian, and Islamic—have forerunners in models from Mesopotamian historiography, which constitutes one of the sources for Jewish apocalyptic.

Such are the hypotheses or suggestions for research which will be presented in this paper, almost without room left for nuances, developments, and notes. At risk of falling into the deceptions forewarned

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in the saying picked by Goethe in his Wahrverwandtschaft: “latet dolus in generalibus,” let this be my tribute to the scholar of Qumran and Hellenistic Judaism, a friend for many years, and above all, the person who is Florentino García Martínez.

1. Canonical Pretensions of the Deuterocanonical Books

Christianity has transmitted a biblical canon which is larger than the Hebrew one. Is it a Jewish heritage or an autonomous Christian development? On one side, Qumran has taken back in time a couple of centuries the origins of the Hebrew canon, whose basic lines could be already identified at the beginning of the second century B.C.E.; on the other hand, the hypothesis according to which the Christian canon reflected an “Alexandrine” one, a feature of the Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora, has been rejected. These two factors have made it even harder to explain the origins of the expanded Christian canon.

If Christians did not inherit from the Jewish Diaspora a canon larger than the Hebrew Bible, it will be necessary to explain why they did not follow the tendency of proto-Rabbinic circles, which limited the number of books in this canon and why they included in their own canon some books which the rabbis ended up forgetting. One could think that Christianity inherited the Hebrew canon of twenty-two/twenty-four books and that the collection of books visible in the LXX version transmitted by the Christian codices constituted simply a corpus mixtum, which would not have an equivalent in any putative Jewish canon. One could also bring into the scene the idea—present perhaps among the Essenes—that the canon was not a closed repository, but open to new books. Such could have been the case of Jubilees and Enoch, as well as of Ps 151A, 151B, 154, 155 and of the canticle which can be found in Sir 51:15–30 and in 11QPs; all of them could have enjoyed some recognition as authoritative Scriptures among the Qumran group.

It is difficult to conceive of, anyway, an OT Christian canon different from the Hebrew which had no precedent in the Judaism of the Qumran and New Testament era. One of these precedents would be, without any doubt, the quotation in the so-called Florilegium (4Q174 1–3 ii 3) from Qumran, which quotes from “the book of the prophet Daniel” (12:10), as also does the gospel of Matthew (24:15), thus ascribing Daniel to the prophetic corpus, a fact which constitutes a marked feature of the