

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

MICHAŁ WOJCIECHOWSKI

University of Warmia and Mazury
address: 15 Hozjusza str., 11-041 Olsztyn; e-mail: m.wojciechowski@uwm.edu.pl

SUMMARY: Judaism has never recognized Tobit as a canonical book, perhaps because of its roots in the northern Israel. Its reflections in the New Testament are scarce. Ancient Christian witnesses are usually favorable to the canonicity of the book of Tobit. It is present in many ancient biblical manuscripts (Ⲙ, B, A, more then 30 minuscules). It was quoted by at least 79 authors, by many as Scripture. Some canon lists include it, other ones does not – when they are influenced by the Jewish canon. Some authors who failed to list Tobit in the canon have quoted it as Scripture. Accordingly, arguments for the canonicity prevail. Later ages accepted Tobit as canonical book. Protestants, despite some initial positive interest, have eliminated it. Tobit is canonical in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It contains valuable teachings, especially on family and marriage – it is the only biblical book concentrated on these subjects.

KEYWORDS: Tobit, Tobias, canon, authority, deuterocanonical books, Apocrypha, history of the biblical canon, canon lists

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Tobit, Tobiasz, kanon, autorytet, księgi deuterokanoniczne, historia kanonu, listy kanonu

The Book of Tobit is preserved in Greek¹, although it was probably written in Aramaic². Therefore, in the Roman Catholic canon of the Bible

- 1 The Greek text of Tobit see: *Tobit* (ed. R. Hanhart) (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum VIII, 5, Göttingen 1983). Cf. The commentaries (listed below), esp. Moore and Fitzmyer; T. Nicklas, C. Wagner, *Thesen zur textlichen Vielfalt im Tobitbuch*, *JSJ* 34 (2003) 141-159. Old Latin: *Old Testament in Greek*, vol. III/1: *Esther, Judith, Tobit* (eds. A.E. Brooke – N. McLean – H.S.J. Thackeray) (Cambridge 1940) 123-144. A more recent tool: *Polyglotte Tobit-Synopse. Griechisch – Lateinisch – Syrisch – Hebräisch – Aramäisch*. Mit einem Index zu den Tobit-Fragmenten vom Toten Meer (ed. Ch. Wagner) (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Dritte Folge 258 = Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen 28; Göttingen 2003).
- 2 Its Aramaic and Hebrew fragments have been found in Qumran. On the problem of original language I follow J.A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin 2003) 18-28; he continued the research of J.T. Milik. Arguments: in Qumran Aramaic texts prevail; Origen denied the existence of

the Book of Tobit is placed among the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, and in the Protestant Bibles it belongs to Apocrypha. It is canonical for the Orthodox Church. It is classified among the “external” books by the Jews. In the ancient Christianity it was most often considered canonical, even if not always.

However, the problem is more complex than this textbook presentation suggests. It seems also that modern commentaries and introductions tend to simplify this problem, even if they contain many details³. Copious materials were collected in the dissertation on the history of interpretation of Tobit till 1600 published by Johann Gamberoni⁴. This rich book does not concentrate on the canonicity and authority, analyzing the use of particular motifs from Tobit, but often touches our subject; his book must be mentioned as the basic position in the secondary literature related to the problem. In this article I follow my earlier article published in Polish, but considerably expanded, with many improvements in details and in conclusions⁵.

I. Judaism

Five partial manuscripts of Tobit were found in Qumran, four in Aramaic and one in Hebrew (4Q196-4Q200). It is many⁶, but it does not prove that Tobit was considered canonical. According to my knowledge, it was not quoted in other Qumran writings. The preserved fragments show that the copyists

Tobit in Hebrew (*Letter to Julius Africanus* 19); Jerome translated it from Aramaic (PL 29.23-26); the Hebrew of Qumran fragments represent a late form of this language and the Aramaic of Qumran fragments is typical for the centuries before Christ, with Hebraisms, but without traces of dependence of a supposed Hebrew original. Cf. also A. Tronina, “Qumrańskie rękopisy Księgi Tobiasza (4Q196-4Q200)”, *RT* 47/1 (2000) 81-93. Some scholars postulated the Hebrew original: P. Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit. Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (OBO 43; Fribourg 1982); H. Gross, *Tobit, Judit* (NEB 19; Würzburg 1987); K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer. Ergänzungsband* (Göttingen 1994) 134-147. An Aramaic starting point, next perhaps Hebrew, next Greek: F. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit* (New York 1958); C.A. Moore, *Tobit* (AB 40A; New York 1996) 59-60.

- 3 Moore, *Tobit*, 48-53, mostly on the history of Tobit in the Judaism; briefly B. Ego, *Buch Tobit* (JSHRZ II/6; Gütersloh 1999) 900; H. Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (HTKAT; Freiburg/B et al. 2000) 42-44; Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 55-57. Cf. B. Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; London 2002) 65-66. Virtually nothing in M. Rabenau, *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (BZAW 220; Berlin – New York 1994).
- 4 J. Gamberoni, *Die Auslegung des Buches Tobias in der griechisch-lateinischen Kirche der Antike und der Christenheit des Westens bis 1600* (StANT 21; München 1969).
- 5 M. Wojciechowski, „Kanonizacja Księgi Tobiasza”, *Forum Teologiczne* 5 (2004) 67-78; its shortened version in my commentary: M. Wojciechowski, *Księga Tobiasza czyli Tobita* (NKB. ST XII; Częstochowa 2005) 29-37.
- 6 For comparison, only 7 manuscripts of Numbers, 36 of Psalms, 28 of Deuteronomium.

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

treated the text rather freely, whereas the holy texts were copied with more care. The same should be said about the ancient versions. Longer and better Greek text from the Sinaitic Codex (confirmed and completed by the Old Latin) is often in conflict with the secondary, polished shorter version⁷; this duality reflects a pre-Christian tradition. The Aramaic fragments support the longer version, but they are by no means unified.

Some traces of its influence can be found in the ancient Jewish sources (some analogies to the Judeo-Hellenistic writings have been found in the writings from the Second Temple period: Sir 7.32-33 on the alms; *Test. Job* 39.1-10; 40.6-14; 53.5-7 on burying the dead; *Jub. 27* and *Tob 10.4-6*; *Test. Sal.* 5.1-13 on Asmodeus). Rabbis quoted Tobit in relation to the endogamy⁸ (e.g. Tosephta, *Quiddušin* 1.4; *Nazir* 7.1 and Talmudic developments). It has been suggested that the book contributed to the formation of Jewish concepts of marriage, of relation to parents, of burying the dead⁹. The knowledge of Tobit in this period is confirmed in the New Testament. The mention on seven husbands in Mark 12.18-27 parr. can mirror Tob 3.7. Rom 9.18, both in form and content, seems to derive from Tob 4.19.¹⁰ 1 Tim 6.19 alludes to Tob 4.9.

Jewish sources we know never consider this book holy, even if they abstain from rejecting it openly. The later Jewish position was expressed in the list of 39 Hebrew books. However, it is highly probable that because of the different way of reckoning this list corresponds to the lists from the first century A.D., to the 22 books of Josephus (*Against Apion* 1.8; § 39-41) and 24 books in 4 Esdras 14.45, with some doubts about books included later into the Hebrew canon, as Esther, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes¹¹.

However, it is probable that in Greek Tobit was copied by the Jews together with other biblical books, and the same is true for most deuterocanonical books / Apocrypha. I do not mean the contents of the Christian manuscripts here, because they were written later. The place of these books in the Judeo-Hellenistic manuscripts can be inferred from the frequent quoting of these books by the early Greek Fathers who had to find them in the Jewish manuscripts they had access to¹².

⁷ The third form of the Greek text is mixed and secondary, even if it contains valuable readings.

⁸ T. Hieke, "Endogamy in the Book of Tobit, Genesis, and Ezra-Nehemiah", *The Book of Tobit. Text, Tradition, Theology: Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books*, Pápa, Hungary, 20-21 May, 2004 (eds. G.G. Xeravits – J. Zsengellér) (JSJ Supplement Series 98; Leiden 2005) 103-120.

⁹ Cf. e.g. *Literature of the Sages* (ed. Sh. Safrai) (Assen-Maastricht – Philadelphia 1987) I, 126.

¹⁰ A.A. Di Lella, "Tobit 4,19 and Romans 9,18: An Intertextual Study", *Bib* 90 (2009) 260-263.

¹¹ Cf. the reckoning of "22" and "24" books in *Prologus Galeatus* of Jerome.

¹² It was documented by R.J. Brabban, *The Use of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in the Writings of Apostolic Fathers* (diss. Balmor 1984). A confirmation can be easily found in the web *Bibindex* tool (see below).

Why was the book of Tobit omitted in the Palestinian and Rabbinic traditions, if the Qumran findings prove that it was known? Aramaic as the original language and late date of composition were possible reasons. Some scholars quote contradictions between Tobit and Rabbinic rules (e.g. *Shabbat* 14b prescribed that the bridegroom should write the marital contract down, and not his father in law as in Tob 7.13)¹³, but it should not be decisive: not only Rabbinic, but also biblical sources contain many contradictions of this sort. In my opinion, the initial reason of distrust was the birth of the Book of Tobit, at least in its earlier form, in the Israelite diaspora in Assyria¹⁴. It is implied by the subject of the story and explains its peculiarities. Anything Samaritan was suspect, even if the present book contains Judean additions and adaptations.

2. Ancient Christianity

There are three groups of sources for the research on the status of the Greek deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament in the late antiquity: biblical manuscripts; quotations and references contained in the works of the Fathers of the Church; canon lists. I shall make the following initial observation. The third group, canon lists, are deliberately mentioned here as the last group, because it reflects a later stage of reflection on the canon and its content. There is also a conflict between these groups of sources: the first two groups clearly prove that Tobit was widely considered canonical, and the third group is strongly ambiguous in this respect. The situation is very similar in the case of other later books of the Septuagint.

2.1.

The Book of Tobit is contained in the three basic majuscule manuscripts: Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus and further in more than 30 minuscules and in all earlier ancient versions (Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac translations, Ethiopic, Armenian)¹⁵. There is no slightest doubt that Christians found his book in his Bible. Such was the prevailing use. It is the basic fact for further study.

¹³ After Moore: H.L. Orlinsky, "The Canonization of the Hebrew Bible and the Exclusion of the Apocrypha", *Essays in Biblical Culture and Bible Translation* (New York 1974) 277-284, cf. 131.

¹⁴ My study: M. Wojciechowski, "Assyrian Diaspora as Background of the Book of Tobit", *ColT* 77 (2007) fasciculus specialis, 5-19.

¹⁵ See the list of Hanhart, 32.

2.2.

The use of Tobit is well confirmed by its wide quoting by the Fathers of the Church. The *Bibindex*¹⁶ offers 235 results for this book (79 authors). It is much; for comparison, Nehemiah, Hebrew book of the same size, with similar contents (a story with some teachings and prayers), is found 256 times. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of results stem from Latin works, but it is due in part to their bigger length. Further, Hanhart's edition of Tobit refers in the apparatus to 80 ancient works of more than 50 authors (with the same proportions)¹⁷.

These figures have their weight, even if some quotations give no clear indication about the opinions of the author on the status of Tobit. The book belonged to less popular biblical books. No ancient commentary was preserved¹⁸. It can be explained by the absence of major theological themes. Nevertheless it was quoted quite often as a moral authority.

2.3.

Among Greek writings, the first such case is in *Didache* 1.2 (it alludes to "silver rule" from Tob 4.15). Policarpus writing to Philippians (10.2) quoted the New Testament and Tob 4.10 (= 12.9) side by side. 2 *Clement* 16.4 makes use of Tob 12.8-9. Therefore, Tobit is the source of the early Christian idea that sins are purged by almsgiving which (is necessary for salvation¹⁹: it is often found without a direct reference to Tobit (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Quis dives salvetur* 38; Cyprian, *De lapsis* 35; *On work and alms* 2; John Chrysostom *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 23); in this case it is difficult to discern the influence of Tobit and of Dn 4:27. Hippolytus in his commentary to Daniel (1.28.6) refers to the prayer of Tobias and Sarah (Tob 8) in the context of Susannah story, treating Tobit as a recognized book.

Clement of Alexandria in *Stromata* summarizes Tobit among the biblical books (1.123.5), apparently considering it canonical and historical. The same opinion was expressed by Julius Africanus in his letter to Origen. In

¹⁶ In October 2013; the tool includes *Biblia Patristica* project volumes and unpublished materials as well as references from Sources Chrétiennes. It implies serious lacunas, e.g. no Augustine.

¹⁷ Listed on pp. 54-56. Hanhart's list is not complete.

¹⁸ Cassiodor, *Institutiones* 1.6, had five in Vivarium, but the exact character of these manuscripts is unclear.

¹⁹ On this idea: C.M. Hays, "By Almsgiving and Faith Sins Are Purged? Theological Underpinnings of Early Christian Care for the Poor", *Engaging Economics. New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception* (eds. B.W. Longenecker – K.D. Liebengood) (Grand Rapids – Cambridge 2009) 260-280. However, he has not appreciated sufficiently the relation to Tobit.

Stromata, Clement quoted Tobit as Scripture (2.139.2 from Tob 4.15; 6.102.2 from Tob 12.8). However, the popularity of some selected sentences suggests the use of a collection of *testimonia* in this period rather than the knowledge of the full text.

Origen mentioned Tobit as a biblical book understandable to beginners, together with Esther, Judith and Wisdom (*Homilies to the Book of Numbers* 27.1). In his letter to Julius Africanus (19), he discusses the absence of Tobit and Judith in the Jewish canon, stating that the churches do use them. Christians, against Jews, do include this book to the Testament (Greek *endiathetos*: *On prayer* 14.4). Tobit is quoted as Scripture (Tob 12.6-7 in *Against Celsus* 5.19 cf. 29). The mentions about Raphael prove that Tobit was among the sources of his angelology (*Homilies to the Book of Numbers* 14.2 etc.; *On prayer* 14.4; 11.1; 31.5 contains quotations from Tb 2.12; 3.16,17; 12.8,15).

According to Eusebius, Dionysius of Alexandria quoted Tob 12.6-7 (*History of the Church* 7.11.2). Chrysostomus quoted our book as Scripture (*Homilies to Hebrews* 9 [Tob 4.11]; 13 [Tob 4.7]; *Ad populum Antiochenum* 13 [Tob 4.16]; *Homilia 6 de precatione* [Tob 12.8-9]). It was used by him in moral contexts; cf. also Nilus of Ancyra, *Letter* 3.149; Ephrem, *De admonitione: Hymni et Sermones* 1.299; Athanasius (see below).

2.4.

There are even more similar quotations and comments in Latin writings. Tertullian possibly referred to the angel from Tobit (*On prayer* 17.6,17; 18.1-2); it is evident in Hilarius of Poitiers (*Commentary on Psalms* 129.7). Cyprian quoted 9 texts in 14 places, clearly as Scripture. He wanted to prove that prayer without works is not sufficient to obtain divine favor (*Testimonia* 3.1; *On work and alms* 5; 20; *On the Lord's Prayer* 32-33). Tob 4.10 confirms that penitence after apostasy is possible (*Letter* 44.22). Tob 4.13 warns against marriages with pagans (*Testimonia* 3.62). Tobit is an example of patient endurance (*On mortality* 10; *On the use of patience* 18). The book is repeatedly used to teach Christian life.

Tobit is mentioned in the title *De Tobia* of Ambrosius. This short writing is not a commentary, but a treaty against usury. The Book of Tobit is referred to at the beginning and at the end (1-8: cf. Tob 2.10-11.19-22; 89-93: cf. Tob 1.14; 4.20; 4.14 further 12.1-5; 5.4; 12.15; 4.13-16,19). At the beginning (1) it is called "prophetic" what implies its inspiration and canonicity. Ambrosius used to quote Tob 4.10 = 12.9 and other places in relation to alms, prayer, patience and fasting.

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

Many quotations are found in Augustine. He favors Tob 4 with the “silver rule” from v. 15 (e.g. *On the true faith* 46; *Sermo in Vetus Testamentum 9 de decem chordis* 14-15, where the commandments are summarized in: *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alii ne feceris*). Tobit is quoted as an encouragement to good works (e.g. *De civitate dei* 1.13). Prayer from Tob 8.6-7 is included in the teaching on marriage (*De doctrina christiana* 3.62). Etc.

Ambrosiaster also contains many quotations from Tobit (e.g. *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti* 119. Others: Priscillianus (?), *Tractatus* 3.71 appeals to the authority of Tob 4.13; Luciferius, *De non parcendo in Deum delinquentibus* 8; *De sancto Athanasio* 1.38; Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis* 3.20; Cesarius of Arles, *Sermo* 158.5; anonyms. The moral use prevailed and allegories appear late (Optatus of Mileve *De schismate donatistarum* 3,2: Jesus as fish; Quodvultdeus, *Liber promissionum* 2.39). All these Latin authors apparently presuppose the authority and canonicity of the book. Its early reception is also confirmed by the Christian art²⁰. The scene with great fish, very popular in antiquity, is found already in the third century catacombs (Domitilla and Vigno Massimo)²¹.

2.5.

The position of Jerome was ambiguous²². In the background we have the general opinion of Jerome on the Greek books of the Old Testament. Because of the *hebraica veritas* he considered them a lower category, called *apocrypha*, but respected their use by the Church.

His translation of Tobit came to being slightly after 400 AD, when he had already finished his main translation work. In the prologue to this translation he gave the circumstances of his decision (*Praefatio in librum Tobiae*, PL 29.23-26). He was prompted by bishops Heliodorus and Chromatius who asked him to translate also a book in Chaldean (Aramaic), namely the book of Tobias, excluded by the Hebrews from the list of holy books and added to *hagiographa*. This last term is surprising: either *apocrypha* are meant (*hagiographa* would be a copyist mistake), or *ketubim*, the third group of Hebrew canon. Jerome approved this demand, saying that it is better to follow the opinion of bishops rather than of “the Pharisees”, as he wrote, apparently meaning the Rabbinic tradition.

²⁰ Cf. Schüngel-Strautmann, *Tobit*, 47-48.

²¹ J. Doignon, “Tobie et le poisson dans la littérature et iconographie occidentales (III^e-V^e siècle). Du symbolisme funéraire à une exégèse christique”, *RHR* 190 (1976) 113-126.

²² Cf. N. Adkin, “Tobit and Jerome”, *Helmantica* 46 (1994) 289-299.

However, his translation suggests a limited interest and care for this book. The work was based on the Aramaic text (perhaps a secondary one) and included paraphrases. It was done in a hurry and in addition orally: a helper translated from Aramaic to Hebrew and Jerome dictated the Latin version. The result depended on the Old Latin.

Jerome would therefore conform, at least externally, to the general judgement of the Western Church. However, when he expressed his own opinion, he questioned the canonical value of Tobit more than once. It happened in his earlier writings: in *Prologus Galeatus* (first of the series)²³; in the prologue to Proverbs (and others): Tobit is read by the Church, but without a doctrinal authority²⁴; in the commentary to Jonah. On the other hand, he did quote sayings from Tobit as Scripture later (Tob 12.7 in *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 8.2-4; Tb 2.14 in *Commentary on Sophonias* 3.19-20). We are uncertain what was his final judgment.

2.6.

Let us now consider the c a n o n l i s t s. The great codices obviously included Tobit. Vaticanus placed Tobit after the historical and didactic books (his order is Esther, Judith, Tobit and prophets). Sinaiticus – after the historical ones (Esther, Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, prophets, didactic books). Alexandrinus – after history and prophets (Esther, Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Esdras, 1, 2, 3, 4 Maccabees). This positions resulted from the genre of the book. In each case Tobit is placed between a canonical book and a deuterocanonical one from the modern list.

It is different with the Eastern lists. The synod of Laodicea (about 360) in its 60th canon did not included the deuterocanonical books (except of Baruch, appended to Jeremiah). In the same fourth century, the *Apostolic Constitutions* (2.57; 6.16) do not mention Tobit. The last, 85th canon of the so-called *Apostolic Canons* (present form from the sixth century, first

- 23 “This preface to the Scriptures may serve as a ‘helmeted’ introduction to all the books which we turn from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may be assured that what is not found in our list must be placed amongst the Apocryphal writings. Wisdom, therefore, which generally bears the name of Solomon, and the book of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, and Judith, and Tobias, and the Shepherd are not in the canon. The first book of Maccabees I have found to be Hebrew, the second is Greek, as can be proved from the very style”.
- 24 After mentioning Wisdom and Sirach, Jerome goes on: “As, then, the Church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures, so let it read these two volumes for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the Church”.

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

citation by John Scholastic about 560), also omits Tobit, although includes some deuterocanonical books (Sir, three Maccabees)²⁵. Tobit is lacking also on some late lists: the list of 60 books and the list of Hebrew books from *Hierosolymitanus* 54. This Greek tradition was clearly unfavorable to Tobit.

On the other hand, Latin synods and anonymous lists did include it unanimously. Because of the content it was often placed next to Job. Roman synod from 382 mentioned Tobit among the historical books. Synod of Hippone (393) in its 36th canon listed, after the prophets, also Tobit, Judith, Esther, 1 and 2 Esdras; the same was done by the Carthaginian synods in 397 and 419. Perhaps this proximity to prophets explains the name of a prophetic book given to Tobit by Ambrosius (*De Tobia* 1). The letter of the pope Innocent I to bishop Exsuperius (405) placed first the five “Salomonic books” and later Psalms, Job, Tobit, Esther, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees. Anonymous *Canon Mommsenianus* (before 367) contains Tobit after the historical books and Job, and before Esther, Judith and Psalms. *Canon Claromontanus* (about 400) places Tobit at the very end of the Old Testament, after Esther and Job. Pseudo-Gelasian decree (fifth or sixth century) lists the prophets and later Job, Tobit, Esdras (two?), Esther, Judith, Maccabees (two). Tobit is usually found among the books of the Hebrew canon.

The lists given by individual writers have more often than not omitted Tobit. Meliton, according to Eusebius (*Church History* 4.26.13-14), had listed the Old Testament books after the Palestinian traditions, without the deuterocanonical books. Origen in his commentary to Psalms, written in his youth and also known through Eusebius (6.25.1-2), presented Hebrew names of the biblical books. Did he omit the deuterocanonical ones because he did not recognize them, or because he did not have them in Hebrew? On the other hand, he quoted Tobit as Scripture; the examples were already given. Later we shall try to explain this phenomenon, repeatedly found.

The famous *Festal Letter* of Athanasius from 367²⁶ discerns between “canonical” Old Testament books, identical with the Jewish canon, New Testament books and the books which are to be read: Wisdom, Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, *Didache*, *Shepherd*. “Canonical” books (*kanonizomena*) and “read” books (*anaginokomena*) are different from the apocryphal ones.

25 All the authors and the Eastern tradition understands it as 1, 2 and 3 Macc. Nevertheless 3 Macc was virtually unknown to the Fathers, whereas 4 Macc was popular; therefore 4 Macc was probably meant. I proposed this solution in my book: M. Wojciechowski, *Apokryfy z Biblii greckiej*. 3 i 4 Księga Machabejska, 3 Księga Ezdrasza oraz Psalm 151 i Modlitwa Manasses (RSB 8; Warszawa 2001) 33-34.

26 More exactly, its preserved Greek excerpt. More has survived in Coptic: cf. D. Brakke, “A New Fragment of Athanasius’s Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter: Heresy, Apocrypha and the Canon”, *HTR* 103 (2010) 47-66.

Nevertheless Athanasius consistently quoted the deuterocanonical books as Scripture, especially Wisdom, but sometimes Tobit, too (*Apology against Arians* 11 [Tob 12.7]; *Apology to Constantius* 17 [Tob 4.19]).

Earlier, Cyril of Jerusalem in his *Catecheses* (4.35, probably from 348) mentioned only the Old Testament books translated from Hebrew into Greek, and indeed in his work he virtually never refers to the deuterocanonical books. Theodore of Mopsuestia rejected the deuterocanonical books; his opinions are known through the work of Paulus of Nisibis, adapted in Latin by Junilius Africanus (*Instituta regularia* 1, 3-7). He mentions books of *perfectae auctoritatis* and of *mediae auctoritatis*, by many added to the *divina historia*. Tobit is not named here, but Junilius mentions it with Daniel in relation to the angelology (1.4).

Epiphanius of Salamis in his *Panarion* 8.6.1-4 (about 375) and in *De mensuris et ponderibus* 4 (about 392) quotes the Jewish list, mentioning Wisdom and Sirach as questioned by the Jews, what leaves us in some doubt about his own opinion. Also Gregory of Nasiansus in his theological poem (*Carmen* 1.12; about 374-379?) presents the list of the recognized books stemming from the old Hebrew wisdom. Amphilochius of Iconium repeats the Hebrew list (iambic poem to Seleucus, vv. 251-319; about 396). John of Damascus repeated the list of Epiphanius (*Expositio* 4.17).

Tobit is lacking also on some late lists: the list of sixty books and the list of Hebrew books from *Hierosolymitanus* 54 but some late sources mention Tobit: cf. stichometry attributed to Nicephorus (Tobit at the end, among the “ecclesial” books). Anonymous *Synopsis Athanasii* presents diverging opinions on the deuterocanonical books. There are more interrelated synopses of this kind, discussing this problem (e.g. Cod. Barber. 3.36.239r-240v). It seems that in the early Byzantine period the matter was not yet settled.

Among the Latin authors, Jerome was already presented. Hilarius of Poitiers in his treaty on the Psalms (*Instructio Psalmorum* 13-16) quoted the list of 22 Old Testament books, but stated that Tobit and Judith can be added to obtain the number of 24. Rufinus (*Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed* 37-38; about 400) repeated the distinctions of Athanasius, calling the two groups *canonici* and *ecclesiastici* (with Tobit)²⁷. Augustine not only quoted Tobit as Scripture, but also placed it in the canon, as other Greek books of the Old Testament, listing Job, Tobit, Ether, Judith, Maccabees (two) and Esdras (two) among the historical books (*De doctrina christiana* 2.8.13). Cassiodorus lacked

27 It is far from clear, whether his comment: “All of which they would have read in the Churches, but not appealed to for the confirmation of doctrine”, refers to *Didache* and *Shepherd* mentioned directly before, or also to these ecclesial books listed in the preceding sentence (as it is too easily assumed).

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

consistency, either following Jerome (*Institutiones* 1.12), and omitting his “apocrypha”, or Augustine (1.13) and the contents of Old Latin and Septuagint version (1.14); the catalogue of books held in Vivarium placed Tobit between Job and Esther (1.6). Isidore of Seville followed Augustine, noting that the Jews did not recognize this book as canonical, whereas the Church did accept it (*In libros Veteris ac Novi Testamenti Proemia* 5-7; *Etymologiae* 6.1.1-9).

3. Later ages

Here we have to be brief. Rich material is once more furnished by Gamberoni. Since the commentary of Beda²⁸, the canonicity of Tobit was widely presupposed. An allegorical interpretation is a new factor; this method was applied to Tobit as to other biblical books (it is interesting that the antiquity abstained from allegorizing Tobit and kept it on the moral shelf). A later popular commentary, *Glossa Ordinaria*, followed Beda in this respect. A literal and historical approach can be found in the *Postillae* of Nicolaus of Lyra (died in 1349). Late medieval commentaries accent the moral appeal of the book. Tobit and Tobias found their way into hagiography (respectively as patron saints of blind people, of sextons and of traveling journeymen). However, the Jewish opinion was remembered (Rupert of Deutz). The critical words of Jerome were explained in favor of the canonicity (Stephen Langton). Inside the Scripture (*Sacra Scriptura*) two categories of canonical and ecclesiastical books were sometimes discerned. Erasmus understood Jerome accordingly. It proves a lasting tendency to look for a “canon inside the canon”.

This tendency was followed and reinforced by the reformers. It was Karlstadt (Andreas Bodenstein) who as the first rejected in 1520, the “apocrypha” of Jerome. He thought them to be un-biblical books, from outside the canon, despite of their acceptance in the Church. However, he accorded to them some value. This opinion with some nuances was maintained by Protestants; among the Catholics it was rare (Thomas of Vio called Cajetan about 1530). As a result, the canonicity of Tobit was widely discussed.

Since Luther (1523) Protestant Bibles have separated the Apocrypha/deuterocanonical books and have placed them on the end of the book as an appendix; the same applied to the Protestant editions of the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The full Luther Bible from 1543 labeled them as Apocrypha, books not equal with Scripture, but useful and good for reading, although

²⁸ Beda, *In librum beati patris Tobiae* (Corpus Christianorum, Latin series 119B; Turnhout 1983) 1-19; Beda, *On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Dublin – Portland 1997) 39-63.

he was critical towards some of them²⁹. The Luther introduction to Tobit stressed the good example for married couples. Sometimes, as in the Anglican Church, Apocrypha are read in the liturgy (Tobit including). Most commentaries to Tobit were written by Protestant scholars (Pelican, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, Lucas Osiander, Theodore Beza among others), not by the Catholics (Nicolaus Serarius).

A more negative approach was initiated by F. Junius (Du Jon) the Elder, Reformed scholar who described Tobit as a non-canonical work, a Jewish fairy-tale. His judgment on the literary genre of the book was more or less correct, but his conclusion was false – but he became influential. Later, Protestants ceased to add Apocrypha to their Bibles (Germany in the eighteenth century, England in the nineteenth century). Sometimes Apocrypha were assimilated to pseudepigrapha, as in the Jewish tradition. However, during the last century ecumenical and scholarly considerations have increased an interest for them.

The position of the Catholic Church is clear. The Council of Trent fixed the biblical canon in 1546, with seven Greek books of the Old Testament listed among the Hebrew books. The Book of Tobit belongs here to the historical books. The dogmatic decision says that all these books are equally holy and canonical. The table of contents of the popular Vulgate was a reference point.

So Tobit was included definitively into the Catholic canon. We may only observe, that the Vulgate contains a shorter, secondary and paraphrased version of this book, although the modern scholars of different denominations prefer the longer, Greek text as the original. This problem, however, was not considered by the council, so it was not solved; we are free to make a decision. I would add, in favor of the shorter text of Tobit, that if the Bible is the Word of God written in human language, the biblical books can exist in more than one edition, because it characterizes the books written by human hand (similarly with Jeremiah and Acts, further Job, Sirach, Mark and John). Perhaps in such cases we should consider two texts of the canonical and inspired book³⁰.

Orthodox Churches in their Bibles adopt always the longer canon of the Old Testament, following the Septuagint³¹. It is not a matter of dogma, but of the Church discipline. Synod of Jerusalem condemned Protestant opinions of

²⁹ Cf. C.M. Croghan, “Grist for the Mill: Luther on the Apocrypha”, *Word & World* 29 (2009) 389-396.

³⁰ The problem of multiple versions of the inspired works has been discussed, on the example of Tobit, by W. Linke, “Natchnienie Księgi Tobiasza. Studium nietypowego przypadku”, *ZN SBP* 3 (2006) 235-255.

³¹ With 3 Macc, with Prayer of Manasseh appended to Chronicles, with the Greek ending of Job; 4 Macc and Psalm 151 are appendices; Old Slavonic and Russian Bibles includes 4 Esdras (called 3 Esdras, sic). Baruch with the Epistle of Jeremiah can be included into Jeremiah.

Cyril Lukaris and gave the official list of the canonical books, including Tobit. Under the Lutheran influence some Russian theologians raised doubts about the deuterocanonical books³², but the official editions have always included them. Oriental Churches recognize the deuterocanonical books / Apocrypha as a part of the biblical canon.

4. Conclusions and interpretation

These data lead to some classical and to some less classical conclusions. Testimonies and comments on the canonicity and authority of Tobit are numerous and diversified – even more diversified that it is possible to show in an article of this length. The division between Christians about the composition of the canon is grounded in the Christian and Jewish antiquity. The outcome of the ancient tradition is ambiguous. The longer canon list of the Old Testament is supported by the Western tradition, except Jerome, but the Eastern tradition is not uniform in this respect, leaving us with a doubt about the deuterocanonical books, including Tobit. There was sometimes a tendency towards a two-degree canon.

The Jewish influence on the formulating the Christian canon of the Old Testament is obvious. It could be evaluated in different ways: as a fidelity towards the *hebraica veritas*, as a weakness (abandoning the specific Christian position in favor of the later Rabbinic developments in Judaism), and in relation to the missions among the Jews. In particular, it seems probable that the Judeo-Christian Palestinian tradition ignored the canonicity of Tobit (Cyril, further Theodore), although it was known and finally accepted in other Christian centers (Rome, Antiochia, Alexandria, Constantinople).

There are, however, other important points. The support for the authority of Tobit in the antiquity is unevenly distributed. It is very strong on the level of biblical manuscripts. Tobit was copied by Christians together with the books stemming from the Hebrew canon. Further, it was quoted and used by the Fathers as Scripture: as often, or sometimes more often, than some Hebrew books. This usage probably resulted from the presence of Tobit in biblical manuscripts, both Judeo-Hellenistic and Christian, and expressed the prevailing opinion on its canonicity, *vox populi*. On these levels Tobit appears as a book widely accepted in the early Christianity. The direct declarations

³² Por. M. Jugie, *Histoire du Canon de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Eglise Grecque et l'Eglise Russe* (Etudes de Théologie Orientale; Paris 1909); reprint: Subsidia Byzantina 14; Leipzig 1974.

on its canonicity we know from the first hand are either positive (Origen, Hilarius, Ambrosius, Isidore) or ambiguous (Jerome, Junilius).

It is a different matter with the Eastern canon lists. Why? I would suggest that manuscripts and quotations expressed a universal, easy and practical approach, whereas many synods and theologians tended to take a more theoretical and perfectionist position. They could have considered difficulties, not always known to the faithful and to the ordinary churchmen: composition of the Jewish canon, absence of the Hebrew originals, perhaps the late origin, questionable points of the doctrine, and the value of the short canon for the mission among the Jews. Synods and theologians wished to exclude any doubt from the dogmatic and official documents – so they found it more prudent to omit the Greek books of the Old Testament from their lists.

There is also another interpretation of this difference: the longer list is scholarly, academic, and the shorter is related to the episcopal centre of authority³³. Athanasius would quote Wisdom of Solomon as scholar and omitted it as bishop in his letter etc. It seems possible, but less convincing, because the *Festal Letter* does not directly prove it.³⁴ An academic canon is a guess, a wider canon reflected in many works is a fact.

We should explain next another important phenomenon: why some important authors presented the shorter canon and nevertheless they did quote Tobit and similar books as Scripture? Were they not coherent, did they lack memory and logic? Origen, Athanasius, Jerome? The answer is that they discerned mentally an everyday canon, opposed to a canon cleansed from any doubt, as well as a wider ecclesial and liturgical canon as opposed to a narrower official or academic canon. Such an approach explains further an apparent contradiction between the decisions of the Greek copyists, who included Tobit into canon, and the synodal lists.

Moreover, it explains the two-degree canons as attempts of a scholarly solution of this difficulty. The understanding of the resulting categories inside the canon is however uncertain. The intermediate category could be understood in many fashions, not only as in early Jerome (and perhaps Rufinus) and later during the Reformation. “Ecclesiastical books” do not have to mean only some good books, fit to be read in the church but without a dogmatic value.

I would suggest that the ancient notion of canonicity was more restricted than later and perhaps corresponded to the modern Catholic category of the

³³ Cf. recently Brakke, *A New Fragment*, 51-56.

³⁴ E. Junod, “D’Eusèbe de Césarée à Athanase d’Alexandrie en passant par Cyrille de Jérusalem. De la construction savante du Nouveau Testament à la clôture ecclésiastique du canon”, *Le canon du Nouveau Testament* (ed. G. Aragione et al.) (Genève 2005) 169-195.

Authority and Canonicity of the Book of Tobit

protocanonical books. The canon in this sense consisted only from the books which are free of any doubt. Other books, called “read” or “ecclesial” could raise opposition or doubt, but they were accepted as authority, worth to be quoted as Scripture. The names given to them confirm that they were highly valued. Perhaps these names denoted the additions to the canon made by the Christian Church³⁵. It corresponds, of course, to the widespread practice of quoting them as Scripture. The Fathers were more consistent in their use than we have suspected.

It explains also why there are no voices in the tradition (except of Jerome, who changed his mind later) which would openly deny canonicity of the Greek books of the Old Testament and particularly Tobit, although they are frequently omitted from the Eastern canon lists. First, the ancient Christian writers were conscious that they are accepted by most Christians. Next, they did not really oppose them, but only reflected on the degree of their authority.

The canonicity could have also implied a directly dogmatic use of the books. They should have been useful for establishing the doctrine of God and Jesus Christ. The books dealing rather with the morals, as Tobit, could be authoritative on their field, but added nothing to the systematic theology.

I presented the canonicity and authority of Tobit from the historical point of view and interpreted it theologically. Some additional light can be thrown by the teaching contained of the Book of Tobit. It is the only biblical book concentrated on family and marriage and dealing with the life of ordinary people. In this respect, it cannot be replaced with something else. Without Tobit, the Bible would be to some extent incomplete. And further, nobody can prove that Tobit contains anything opposed to the truth established through the other biblical books. The book of Tobit knows about its own authority, being the authority of a father teaching his son.

Concluding: even if Tobit has not always been listed among the canonical books, the Christian tradition approves it as an authoritative book, and it appears necessary for the biblical canon.

³⁵ They could be perceived so if the position of the Hellenistic Judaism was not remembered.