

**The Importance of the Deuterocanon for Deepening the Relationship
Between Christianity & Judaism**

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The Canonical & Extra-Canonical Writings and their Reception"**

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It is with an enormous sense of gratitude that I stand here today, the grandson of ancestors who emigrated to the United States from Halychyna before the First World War. This is my sixth visit to Lviv and second to UCU. The first was just days after 9/11, when members of a seminar posed incisive theological questions to me.

I want to acknowledge publicly that my participation at this event fifteen years later was made possible in large part by the extraordinary efforts of our colleague and Moderator, Professor Halyna Teslyuk. May I also express my admiration for the financial supporters of this Conference, the Temerty Family Endowment, who had the vision several years ago to establish not one but three endowed chairs of Jewish Studies at this University.

Such a major commitment is entirely fitting historically for at least two reasons. First, there is the long association between Jews and Ukrainians on the same territory. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, twenty-five percent of the world's ten million Jews shared the same space with Ukrainians. Second, during the chaotic eighteen months or so between the end of WW1 and the Communist takeover, The Ukrainian National Republic created the first ever Ministry of Jewish Affairs. Even during this period of profound instability, official documents were printed in Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and Yiddish. All four languages appeared on paper currency. Can you imagine? Of course, such enlightened sentiments were not shared by all elements of Ukrainian society, especially at the lower military orders and among large sections of the peasantry.¹

My aim this morning is to add to this legacy by arguing that the presence of the fuller canon of Scripture, preserved in both Western and Eastern traditions (including the Slavonic Bible) provides *textual, artifactual* testimony to the importance of defending Christianity's original and continuing rootedness in Judaism, especially as witnessed to by the Greek Old Testament.² Consequently, I am not citing the pronouncements of ancient Fathers of the Church, worthy and authoritative as they may be. Nor do I invoke

¹ For an account—with photographs—of the second point, see Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government. Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times: 1917–20* (Harvard: University Press, 1999).

² It must be remembered that there was never a time when the Old Testament (OT) in Hebrew appeared with the New Testament (NT) in Greek between two “covers” of a biblical codex. For a recent consideration of the language question, see Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek. The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford: University Press, 2013). The Scriptural bases for all of the Church's foundational doctrines were derived from the fuller Greek and Latin Bibles.

the decisions of regional councils of the Church when it was one. Rather, my appeal is to ancient Scriptural texts—the earliest full-scale Bibles that we have from the mid-4th and mid-5th centuries³: Codex Sinaiticus⁴, Codex Vaticanus⁵, and Codex Alexandrinus⁶—plus all of the translations that were subsequently based upon this manuscript tradition.⁷

I make this point as one who, during all of my upbringing and much of my professional experience, has been immersed in Protestant attitudes towards the so-called “Apocrypha”, at best known in my circles as “Intertestamental Literature”. Only later did I know, and take to heart as an academic, that these are confessional or sectarian categories. And it pains me to see how often scholars, who should know better, perpetuate this pejorative nomenclature. Even the term “deuterocanon”, though more neutral, carries with it the sense of “secondary” – and therefore less authoritative.

My teachers were fond of citing St. Jerome’s position on this literature, but not giving any weight to St. Augustine’s. We preferred to adopt the position of the fourth century Hebrew and Aramaic-speaking synagogue but totally ignored the stance of Greek-speaking synagogues of the Jewish Diaspora and historic Church. In opting for the shorter canon of rabbinic Judaism (and feeling superior about it) instead of the longer canon of Hellenistic Judaism, we – ironically – became less Jewish in our understanding of Christianity.

And there was a double irony: we were not even faithful to our classic Protestant Reformation tradition. This came to me full force many years ago when, flipping through a large photographic reproduction of the original King James (or Authorized) Version, I discovered 1 and 2 Maccabees printed just before the Gospel of Matthew. Although the Reformers had disintegrated the “extra” writings from their genre-embedded locations, they did at least print them in their Bibles between the “true” OT (now sometimes called “Protocanonicals”) and the NT, a practice that continued with diminishing popularity into the early 19th century. The Anglican tradition still includes optional OT readings from the so-called “Apocrypha”. But the Book of Common Prayer (article VI) – citing St. Jerome – states, “the Church doth read [them] for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth not apply them to establish any doctrine”⁸ – a shocking dichotomy and compartmentalization of theology and ethics. On what else should example and manner of life be based but established doctrine?

But I am preaching to the already-convinced. Let me get on with the heart of my talk. So far as the NT is concerned, St. Luke (very likely [but not certainly] a Gentile Christian) is nevertheless credited in both of his magisterial works with rooting the more recent and shorter Christian story in the larger and more ancient recital about God’s calling of Israel and commissioning it to be the light for all nations. The Third Evangelist

³ Of course, earlier papyrus fragments and collections of smaller units (gospels, letters, etc.) are available from the second century onwards.

⁴ For full, on-line access to the manuscript, see <http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=36&lid=en&side=r&zoomSlider=0>.

⁵ <https://archive.org/details/OldTestamentGreeklxxTextCodexVaticanus>

⁶ http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_1_d_viii

⁷ St. Jerome translated the OT of his Latin Vulgate from the Hebrew and Aramaic “protocanon”. But he used the existing Greek texts when including the Deuterocanon. See the modern edition, which provides parallel Latin translations of the Psalms from both the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint (LXX): *Biblia Sacra. Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (ed. Robert Weber; 5th edn; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007).

⁸ http://www.churchsociety.org/issues_new/doctrine/39a/iss_doctrine_39A_Arts06-08.asp

takes great pains to tell the story of John the Baptizer's Law-observant priestly parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–23). Subsequently, Jesus is circumcised in obedience to the Law of Moses (2:21–24). As a boy, he is found disputing with elders in the Temple – his Father's house (2:45–49). In the Acts of the Apostles, the earliest followers of Jesus continue worshipping in that Sacred Place (2:46–3:10, etc.). When St. John makes the astonishing claim that “the Word became flesh and dwelled among us” in that universal sense (1:14), we must recall that the Word became *Jewish* flesh⁹ in the particular sense. St. Paul, in expanding the Gospel mission to the larger Gentile world, makes it a practice to proclaim Jesus as Messiah first in the synagogues of the Eastern Mediterranean. And, to cite one more example, the Author of the Homily to the *Hebrews* (!) includes in his list of faithful heroes allusions to the Maccabean martyrs (11:35–38).

It is as if these leaders are saying that authentic Christianity must never be cast adrift by loosing its moorings to the Jews and their Holy Scriptures. “Time does not permit me” (as this anonymous writer to the Hebrews would say) to develop the implications of the NT's direct citation of 1 Enoch 18:15, a work regularly labeled as “Pseudepigrapha” by scholars. But by what authority do they say it is falsely attributed? Not by permission of the Ethiopian/Coptic Church!¹⁰ Certainly not by St. Jude, who regards it as a prophecy uttered by the eighth descendent of Adam (v. 14)!

Now allow me offer some illustrations from the Bible of NT authors, largely the Septuagint (LXX). Let us keep in mind that, unlike the Hebrew Bible, the Greek translation placed documents according to genre, that is, according to the kind of literature that they were. So, Judith; Tobit; and the Maccabean books were included with the Historical Books, arranged in approximate chronological sequence. The Wisdom of Solomon and the Psalms of Solomon were grouped with the Poetical Books or Books of Wisdom. These followed the Historical Books and Preceded the Prophetic Literature.¹¹

In the Prayer of Manasseh¹² and in Greek Daniel (chapter 4), we find in Judaism supreme examples of a wideness in God's mercy, of a grace greater than all of our sins. Fully accepted is the repentance uttered by Manasseh, the worst of Judah's homegrown kings (2 Kings [=4 Kingdoms] 21:1–18) and by Nabouchodonosor [=Nebuchadnezzar], the most oppressive foreign emperor in Israel's experience (at least until the time of Antiochus IV). In the expanded narrative of Daniel 4, the king's hubris is magnified; and he is consequently punished more severely. Thereafter, Nabouchodonosor's restoration is more elaborate in keeping with his more profound repentance. For the latter two, see esp. vv. 37a–c.

In Tobit; Greek Daniel; and Greek Esther, the literature of Exile is expanded – illustrations of how to live as God's faithful people in a strange, new land – whether that be Assyria, Babylon, Persia, or in any Diaspora. And we need not be troubled if historians or literary critics conclude that some of this material is fiction. We spend billions of dollars on books written about events that never happened and about people

⁹ I owe this stunning expression to Professor Markus Bockmuehl. “The Trouble with the Inclusive Jesus”, *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 33 (2011) 22. Such duality illustrates the so-called “scandal of particularity” that oscillates with the emphasis upon the universality of the Christian message.

¹⁰ The Coptic Orthodox and Ethiopian Churches also recognize the Book of Jubilees as canonical. <http://www.ethiopianorthodox.org/english/canonical/books.html>

¹¹ It is the grouping and sequencing of the LXX that has been bequeathed to all subsequent Christian Bibles.

¹² In Greek and Slavonic Bibles, after 2 Chronicles in St. Jerome's Vulgate—subsequently in its Appendix.

who never lived. Why? Because they are true to life, authentic about human relationships, and faithful to the experience of individuals and communities.

An enlarged Book of Esther, the appearance of Susanna in Greek before or after the main body of Daniel, and the presence of Judith testify to the expanded literature of heroic Jewish women. They join the gallery of females portrayed as leaders. I have in mind the likes of Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4–5), and Huldah (2 Kings [=4 Kingdoms] 22:14–20)—all prophets (literally “spokespersons on [God’s] behalf”, Deborah exclusively also holding the position of Judge. It makes me wonder if such a cloud of witnesses inspired St. Luke to recount traditions and memories of women significant in the life of Jesus and the early Church. Among the numerous females mentioned in both of his works, I cite the prophet Anna (Luke 2:36–38) and the four daughters of Philip the Evangelist, each of whom was a prophet (Acts 21:8–9).

And where did the Church turn when preparing its followers for martyrdom? It cited the examples of the Maccabean martyrs, especially the book of 4 Maccabees.¹³ Furthermore, this literature in its entirety bears witness to the conviction that God was alive and at large¹⁴ in the recent story of God’s people—taking us to within a century (or less) of Christianity’s beginnings.

The expansion of wisdom literature in the Psalms of Solomon and the Wisdom of Solomon (a substantial bulk, quantitatively) provides instruction for Israel as it navigates the rocky shores and shallow waters of a hostile or seductive culture. Such sage advice presupposes commitment for the long haul in God’s world, providing a needed balance for those bedazzled by apocalyptic immediacy and inclined to interpret its unqualified statements and images literally.

That this wisdom is identified as *royal* wisdom should not be lost upon a people whose experience of politics has been disastrous. Apart from three notable examples to the contrary,¹⁵ rulers practiced idolatry—sometimes with human sacrifice. Rarely did the king exemplify Deuteronomy 17’s ideals for the monarch: to sit on his throne all day becoming an expert in the Law of God, which he’d copied from the priest’s original. This would enable the ruler to avoid veering to the right or left and would keep his majesty from exalting himself above the people (vv. 14–20). The messianic hope expressed in the Psalms of Solomon 17:21–46 reflects this wisdom legacy. According to v. 24, he is to slay the nations with the sword of his mouth (a motif applied to Jesus in the Book of Revelation 1:16 and 19:15). It matters greatly where the weapon is. The battle to be waged will be a war of words (or of the Word).

Finally, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) provides the Church with the most extensive, continuous narrative (a meta-narrative) of God’s dealings with the elect from earliest times (that of Enoch!) to the author’s present.¹⁶ There is nothing else in the Jewish Scriptures like it. It is native and internal rather than alien and external. It is concrete rather than abstract, natural rather than being assembled or reconstructed. The Greek text entitles the recital, “Hymn in Honor of Our Ancestors” (NRSV). Introduced in the first 15

¹³ Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski. *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs* (NY: Macmillan-Palgrave, 2009). None of the Maccabean literature appears in Codex Vaticanus (mid-fourth century, CE).

¹⁴ I have adopted and adapted this clause from *Christ Alive and At Large. Unpublished Writings of C. F. D. Moule* (ed. Robert Morgan; Norwich, England: Canterbury Press, 2010).

¹⁵ David, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

¹⁶ A shorter story (Adam to Moses), but a more detailed account, appears in the Wisdom of Solomon 10–19.

verses of chapter 44, and peppered throughout the next six chapters, is the binding motif of wisdom (Sophia). It ends with a description of the High Priest Simon II, Son of Onias (220–195 BCE), emerging from the Holiest Place of the Temple on the Day of Atonement, clad in his bejeweled vestments. One can feel the author’s pleasure: something akin to “It doesn’t get any better than this!” And, although wisdom can certainly be found as a theme in the philosophical literature of Hellenistic culture, it was Greek-speaking Judaism that adapted the category to its most central convictions and bequeathed them to the Church.

And it is a reminder of those central convictions that provides the best response to those who would see this literature as reinforcing what they regard as the legalistic aspects of the OT and Judaism. In recent years, NT scholars (especially those working within a Protestant tradition of one kind or another) have been impressed with the rubric of “covenantal nomism”.¹⁷ This means that expectations for behavior, both individual and collective, are to be viewed as responses to God’s initiative in calling Israel into being unconditionally in the first place, rescuing the people from slavery in Egypt, providing everything necessary for life to flourish, and charging them with the mission to bless the world as they had been blessed.

Of course, we must think and act wisely in developing this category. But I am encouraged by the emphasis here at UCU: that all academic activity and calls to service of various kinds must begin in worship. So, it is entirely fitting that the Ukrainian Catholic University has named its campus Church: “St. Sophia” or fully “The Holy Wisdom of God”. It perpetuates the theology and ecclesiology of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, especially in its Eastern tradition, and links arms with her sister churches: Собор Святої Софії in Kyiv, Ἁγία Σοφία in Constantinople, and San Sofia a Via Boccea in Rome.

I am aware that, even if my thesis is correct, there is yet a more important consideration – so what? What next steps should be taken to build more solid bridges between ancient Judaism and its fuller Bible and historic Christianity with its fuller Bible? Immediately we are faced with the question of education – of Christian education. How might the message be conveyed to students at various levels, seminarians, clergy, and local congregations? Perhaps another conference is needed.

¹⁷ The name and work most associated with this development is Edward P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).