



THE CANON IN THE VULGATE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE

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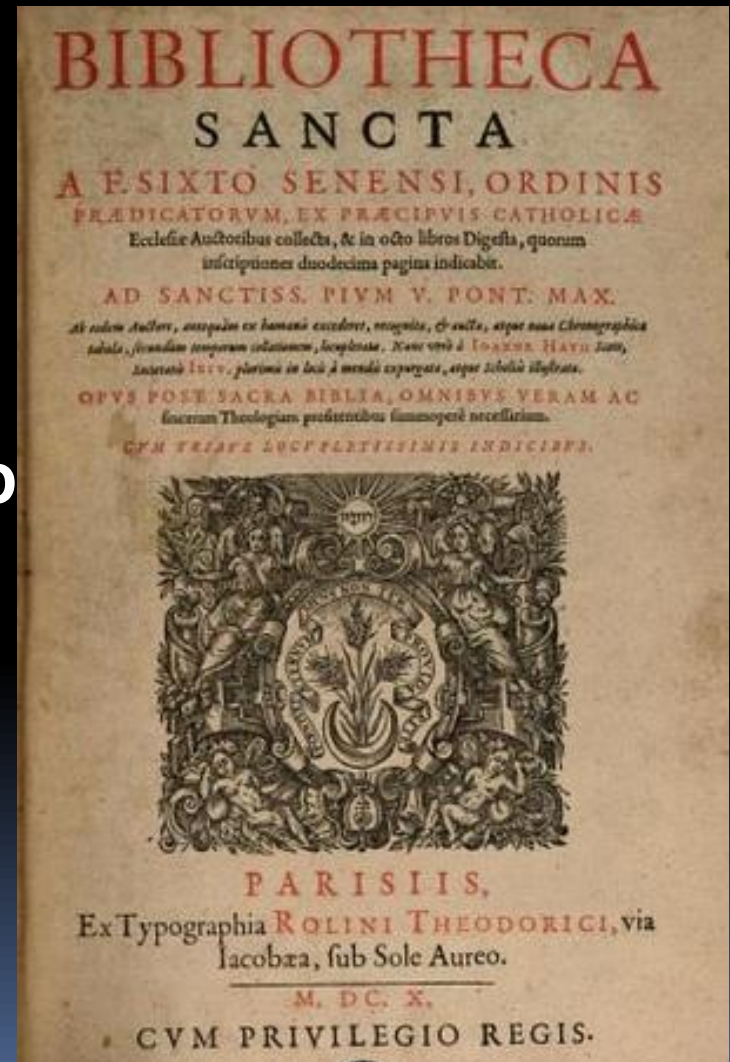
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- The debate on the different groups of books that finally formed our bibles. (terminology)
 - The development of the Vulgate and its correlative discussion about the canon. (history, theology)

Introduction

Different names for different groups of books:

- **Eusebius of Caesarea** (ca. 265- 340)
 - Homologoumenoi (unanimously accepted)
 - Antilegomenoi (disputed)
 - Amphiballomenoi (uncertain)
- **Jerome** (ca. 340-420)
 - Canonical scriptures
 - Ecclesiastical
 - Apocrypha

- **Sixtus of Siena** (1520-1569) coined the terminology (1566):
 - **Protocanonical**
 - **Deuterocanonical**
- This terminology has b
Catholic tradition.



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- Although many lists containing the Hebrew and Greek canons were given since the 4th Century, for the Catholic Church, the canon debate reached its final point in the 4th Session of the Council of Trent (1546) with two decrees:
 - ▣ On the canon (dogmatic truth for Catholics)
 - ▣ On the “authenticity” of the Vulgate translation.

Background, the *Vetus Latina*

- Collective name for the large and very diverse group of the Latin Bible texts translated from the Greek since the 2nd century in Christian communities
- Jerome: “there were as many forms of the text for Latin readers as there are manuscripts”
Praef. In Josue
- The Old Latin sometimes attests the Old Greek, itself witnessing an Old Hebrew prior to the Masoretic Text

The Vulgate

- For the Latin Fathers it was the Greek Bible and its Latin version
- Since 7th century, it is the version containing Jerome's translation from the Hebrew text (382-ca.407), although he did not translate the full bible.
- In the 5th Cent. the translation was completed and put together by an editor (Rufinus).
- Jerome's relevance (and the mention of pope Damasus?) made this version spread and it was progressively accepted as "the" Vulgate version.

- Twofold reasons for Jerome's translation:
 - **Critical**: to establish a good Latin text according to the *hebraica veritas*. To correct differences according to the Greek NT.
 - **Apologetic**: because of the calumny of the Jews, who continually declared that Christians lacked the genuine Scriptural text and that their theological arguments were not authentic or valid

Jerome's view on the canon

- Jerome defended the "*veritas hebraica*" and so the books written in Hebrew
- He lists 22 books of the Jewish Scriptures (*alephat*) corresponding to 39 in our bibles.
- The majority of the Church did not accept his view.
- Although he defended the "*veritas hebraica*" he also translated some Greek books (Tobias and Judith) "it's better to be judging the opinion of the Pharisees to displease and to be subject to the commands of bishops"

Later history of the Vulgate until the Council of Trent

- Progressive acceptance of the Vulgate: “Nostra Editio” (Bede, 735) “Vulgata Editio” (1294). Different recensions until the Paris Bible (13th c), used for the first printed bible finally recommended by Trent.
- The Vulgate took up all books of Hebrew Bible and the books of the LXX according to previous councils up to 4th Century

Receptio of the Vulgate Bible at the Council of Trent

- Facing the Reformation, the Catholic Church needed a solid foundation to build the refutations. This solid foundation was the faith of the Church based on the Word of God contained in the Bible transmitted by the living tradition of the Church.
- **But which Bible?**

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- The reformers wanted to return to the sources and so they rejected the biblical books belonging to the Greek tradition used by the primitive church (LXX) and went back to the Hebrew canon.
 - A fixed canon was needed, for Scripture was the necessary basis for all further dogmatic aspects that were challenged by the Reformation and the Council was willing to face.

- **The decree**

Makes no distinction regarding authority or origin

- [the Synod] received all books in veneration with an equal affection of piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author or both, [...follows the list of all the books] entire with all their canonicity is defined in relation to be read in the church.

referring to the portions like the additions to the book of Esther

There was an "anathema" added to this decree, so, it was transformed into a formal dogmatic definition.

- the Church has decided and declares that the said old Vulgate edition, which has been approved by the Church itself through long usage for so many centuries in public lectures, disputations, sermons, and expositions, be considered authentic

“in any way diminish the authority and value of the original texts... so its authenticity is not specified primarily as *critical*, but rather as *juridical*.”

Divino afflante Spiritu, 1943

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- The decrees on the Canon
- "Deuterocanonical" books in the Vulgate?

Historical perspective

Difficulty of the sources

Different
interpretations

Is the historical
perspective enough to
deal with the canon?

“Deuterocanonical” books in the Vulgate?

- **No.** “proto- deuterocanonical” (coined 1566) would be an anachronistic use of the term, referred to the Vulgate.
- **Yes** (with doubts), the terminology has been used, maybe acritically, for centuries, referred to the biblical books coming from the Greek tradition.

Sixtus of Siena

- **Protocanonical** (=belonging to the first order) (*qui ad Primum sacri canonis ordinem pertinent*) = The Hebrew (Palestinian) canon?
- **Deuterocanonical** (=belonging to the second order) = the Greek (Alexandrian) canon?
- the works of Sundberg (1966, 1997) seem to demonstrate that there is not a complete Hebrew canon prior to the Greek canon, so, is it accurate to go on talking about “protocanonical” and “deuterocanonical”?