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## Theological Observer

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE FOLLOWING PIECE OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM DR. ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN TO Dr. John Reumann of the faculty of Mount Airy Seminary in Philadelphia will interest our readers. It was prepared to provide information concerning the propriety of Lutherans using the new Roman Catholic Lectionary, since it includes some readings from apocryphal books. ED.

I have not had a great deal of time to give to the questions that you put, but let me suggest the outlines of a reply.

1. The Lutheran Symbolical Books nowhere define "prophetic and apostolic scriptures." The term is apparently a way of denoting the Old and the New Testament. In itself it says nothing about the inclusion of the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament among the "prophetic scriptures" or their exclusion from the "prophetic scriptures."

2. The Jewish canon was not definitely fixed until late in the first century of our era. One cannot conclude therefore from the New Testament the scope of the Old Testament canon. Although the New Testament depends extensively on the Septuagint and although there are many parallels and apparent allusions in the New Testament to the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, the absence from the New Testament of a clear citation of a deuterocanonical book as "scripture" leaves the question of the place of these books in Lutheran thought open.

3. As far as I know, "canonical scriptures" occurs only once in the Lutheran Symbolical Books (Augsburg Confession 28,28, Latin), but this is a quotation from St. Augustine, whose canon included the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament.

4. Unlike the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Reformed communities, all of which produced lists of "canonical" books, the Lutheran Symbolical Books nowhere list the books of the Biblical canon.

5. The Lutheran Symbolical Books twice treat passages from the deuterocanonical books: Tobit 4:6, 11, 20 in Apology 4, 156—158, and 2 Maccabees 15:14 in Apology 21,9. The Apology is responding in both cases to references cited by the *Constitutio Pontificia*, but it treats these passages with the same seriousness with which it treats passages cited from protocanonical books. Justus Jonas' German paraphrase of the Apology calls Tobit "scripture" ("mit andern Sprüchen der Schrift"), (*Bekennnisschriften*, p.215, line 47). Both Melancthon and Jonas call 2 Maccabees "scripture" ("testimonium nullum de mortuis orantibus extat in scripturis, praeter illud somnium ex libro Machabaeorum posteriore"/"Doch hat solchs kein Zeugnis in der Schrift, denn allein den Traum, der genommen ist aus dem andern Buch Maccabaeorum").

6. The literature on the use of the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament in Lutheran worship is very scanty. Indeed, the only discussion that I know of is a very brief page-and-three-quarters note by Paul Graff, "Die Stellung der Lutheri-

schen Kirche zum Gebrauch der Apokryphen in Predigt, Liturgie und Kirchenmusik," *Musik und Kirche*, 18 (1949), 44—45. This note was precipitated by the citation of Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6, as an alternate Epistle on St. John the Evangelist's Day (December 27) in a calendar published by the Lutherische Liturgische Kirchenkonferenz Deutschlands and in Karl Bernhard Ritter, *Gebete für das Jahr der Kirche: Agende für alle Sonntage und Feiertage des Kirchenjahres*, 2d edition (Kasel: Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1948), p. 67. I do not know if something might be found in the polemic exchanges of the 19th century that began in 1825 (Moulinié, Reuss) and again in 1851 (Keerl, Hengstenberg, Stier).

7. You have alluded to the use of material from the Old Testament deuterocanonical books in the introits of various Lutheran rites (including European rites, the Common Service, the *Service Book and Hymnal*, and *The Lutheran Liturgy*). You probably intended this to include *Benedicite omnia opera* as one of the Lutheran canticles. (Ecclesiasticus 50:22-24, as the source of the very popular Lutheran hymn "Now Thank We All Our God," might also be noted in this connection, along with Ecclesiasticus 14:18 in Johann Sebastian Bach's Cantata No. 106.)

8. While ordinarily what Luther said depends for its persuasiveness upon its own merits and may merely be of historic interest, his attitude toward the Old Testament deuterocanonical books at least informally shaped the attitude of Lutherans toward them in varying degrees ever since the 16th century. He identifies "Apocrypha, das sind Bücher, so der heiligen Schrift nicht gleich gehalten und doch

nützlich und gut zu lesen sind" (*Biblia, das ist, Die gantze heilige Schrift Deutsch, auff's new zugericht* [Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1545], folio clvi recto). His comments on certain of these books are interesting. On Judith: "Darumb ist ein fein, gut, heilig, nützlich Buch, uns Christen wol zu lesen. Denn die Wort, so die Personen hie reden, sol man verstehen, als rede sie ein geistlicher, heiliger Poet oder Prophet, aus dem heiligen Geist, der solche Personen furstellet in seinem Spiel und durch sie uns prediget" (ibid., verso). On 1 Maccabees: "[Das erste Buch Macca-baeorum] fast eine gleiche weise helt, mit reden und worten, wie andere der heiligen Schrift Bücher, und nicht unwirdig gewest were, hineyn zu rechen" (ibid., folio ccvi verso).

9. German Bibles down to the present century list Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-12 as an alternate Epistle on the Feast of SS. Philip and James Minor (May 1), Ecclesiasticus 24:22-31 as the Epistle on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (September 8), and Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6 as the alternate Epistle for St. John the Evangelist's Day. Luther's *Kichenpostille* of 1522 (W. A., 10/1, 289 to 304.731) contains a sermon that he preached on St. John the Evangelist's Day on Ecclesiasticus 15:1-6. Earlier sermons of Luther on texts from the Old Testament deuterocanonical books are at W. A. 1,37-43 (Ecclesiasticus 15:1; St. John the Evangelist's Day); 1,115-117 (Ecclesiasticus 15:1-2; the same feast); 4,645-650 (Ecclesiasticus 24:11; August 15, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary); and 4,659-666 (Ecclesiasticus 15:1; Saint John the Evangelist's Day). Tobit 7:15 survived as a blessing at the end of the

marriage rite in various Lutheran orders of the 16th and subsequent centuries. In Konrad Ameln, editor, *Handbuch der deutschen evangelischen Kirchenmusik*, 2 ("Das gesungene Bibelwort") (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1935), there are a number of texts taken from deuterocanonical Old Testament books, including the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus.

10. The deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament were the subjects of commentaries by a number of Lutheran exegetes of the 16th and 17th centuries. A case in point is Lucas Osiander, *Sacrorum bibliorum pars II secundum veterem seu vulgatam translationem ad fontes Hebraici textus emendata et brevi ac perspicua explicatione illustrata* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Ioannes Saurius [Ioannes Bernerus], 1609). In his introduction to the Old Testament deuterocanonical books Osiander notes: "Non tamen sensit pia vetustas, nullum prorsus esse scriptorum Apocryphorum usum in Ecclesia, sed prudenter discernere voluit inter eos libros Biblicos, qui certam & indubitam autoritatem in Ecclesia obtinent: ideoq[ue] ad probatione[m] dogmarum fidei allegantur & ea, quae lectu quidem utilia sunt, non tamen ad diiudicatione[m] controversiarum religionis, satis firma creduntur. Interim tamen Apocrypha, in exhortationibus ad pietatem aliasq[ue] virtutes, homine Christiano dignas, recte in concionibus adferuntur. . . . Apocryphorum allegationes rariores esse debent: ne rudiores ea cum Canonicis scriptis eiusdem valoris esse putent" (ibid., p. 502). This is an area that could be further investigated.

11. The use of the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament by Lutheran

theologians in the systematic theological enterprise during the 16th and 17th centuries is also revealing. John Andrew Quenstedt is a case in point. I shall here refer to his *Theologia didactico-polemica* (Wittenberg: Johannes Ludolphus Quenstedt et Elerdi Schumacheri Haeredes [Matthaeus Henckelius], 1685). On occasion Quenstedt brushes off a point on the ground that the deuterocanonical Old Testament books from which citations come are "apocrypha" (so 1,484-485, observations 3 and 7, on a single guardian angel for each human being and on the septenary number of angelic princes or archangels). Before explaining Ecclesiasticus 16:15, in the commonplace on good works, he notes that the book is apocryphal (4, 347). Before explaining 2 Maccabees 12:43 in his discussion of prayer, he observes that by the author's own admission in asking forgiveness of the reader in 2,24, the book is not canonical nor of "canonical authority" (4,379, objection 1). At the end of his discussion of Tobit 4:18, in the same context, he notes that the book is "an apocryphal one that does not avail for the confirmation of the truth of dogmas" (4,580, objection 2). He again makes the point that both books are not canonical in the discussion of death and the state of souls after death (4,562 to 4,563, objections 11-12), but he devotes over three columns (some 1,400 words) to an analysis of these passages. Indeed, he normally treats citations from these books quite seriously.

Thus he cites Wisdom 13:4 to support his interpretation of Psalm 19:4-5, in discussing the natural knowledge of God (1,258). He lists Wisdom 13:1 along with passages from New Testament books

and from the Psalter to support his position in the same context (1,257, observation 5; p. 258, distinction 3). He adduces Ecclesiasticus 18:1 to illustrate a distinction between universality and simultaneity in the divine creation (1,432, distinction 4). He carefully interprets Wisdom 11:21 Vulgate, in order to resolve an objection based on this passage (1,435, objection 5). In his treatment of divine providence he says: "In Scriptura Canonica Providentia Deo tributa vocatur . . . *dioikêsis* Sap. XII, 18; *diakybernêsis*, Sapient. XIV, vers. 3" (1,527, thesis 3); the other passages that he cites at this point in support of other designations of providence are Genesis 22:8; 1 Samuel 16:1; Ezekiel 20:6; Psalm 119:91; 36:7; Acts 17:26. He quotes Wisdom 6:8; 12:13; 14:3 to demonstrate that "there is a certain divine providence or concern for created things" (1,528, thesis 5). He uses Wisdom 8:1; 12:13, 15 to show that all creatures are the general object of divine providence, and Wisdom 6:8 to show that human beings and angels are the special object (1,529, thesis 7). He quotes Wisdom 2:23, 24 to prove a point in his discussion of the image of God in the first human being (2,36, *ekdikêsis*).

A concluding observation in this chapter cites Wisdom 2:23 as a "dictum Scripturae" along with passages from Genesis, Psalms, 1 Corinthians, and James (2,48, observation 6). In his discussion of justification he carefully explains Ecclesiasticus 1:27, and 5:5, in order to reject objections based on these passages (3,557, distinction 5; 3,575, observation 6). In his discussion of good works he does the same with Wisdom 3:5 (citing v. 9) and Ecclesiasticus 16:15 (4,347-348, objec-

tions 10 and 12), and in his discussion of the resurrection of the dead he proceeds in the same fashion with Wisdom 16:14 (4,590, objection 5). This is also an area that could be further investigated. The index to John Gerhard's *Loci theologici*, for instance, lists about 200 references to the Old Testament deuterocanonical books. A careful examination of John-George Dorsch, *Biblia numerata*, edited by John Grambs (Frankfurt-am-Main: Haeredes Johannis Beyerli [Thomas Mattias Götzius, Christianus Gerlachius, et Simon Beckenstein], 1674), of which the Seminary has a copy interleaved with additions through Abraham Calovius, would probably turn up quite a bit of additional material in the way of sermons, theological citations, and commentaries.

12. It could also be argued, I think, that some of the conventional reasons of the past for depreciating the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament are not as valid as they once may have been—for instance, that they were produced when the spirit of prophecy had ceased among the Jews, and that they are not found in Hebrew. It could also be argued that Lutheran church bodies that have long retained the *comma Johanneum* in the Epistle for Quasi Modo Geniti Sunday, or St. Mark 16:14-20, as the Gospel for the Ascension of Our Lord, or a lesson from a New Testament deuterocanonical book like 2 Peter as the Epistle for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, are being a bit pedantic when they exclude the deuterocanonical Old Testament books as sources of lessons on principle.

My own feeling would be that we Lutherans could well go along with the Roman Catholic lectionary, assuming that the

lessons from the deuterocanonical Old Testament books are well chosen, if only to assert our Christian liberty against the Biblicists who say that we cannot do so.

At the same time, we do have to take account of consciences, no matter how imperfectly instructed, and of honest differences of opinion as to the prudence of the suggested step. I should hope therefore that your committee would propose alternative lessons for the lessons from the Old Testament deuterocanonical books.

I confess that I share the view of those that feel that world Lutheran ties are more important than American solidarity. Quite apart from this, however, I have basic misgivings about the use of a three-year cycle

of pericopes. With the irregular attendance of many of our people at divine worship and with the general lack of preparation for the service on the part of many of the worshipers that do come, I feel that a three-year cycle or even a two-year cycle would mean that many of our people would in the end be less well acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures than they are now. At the same time I believe that there is virtue in a three-year cycle of sermon texts. I hope, therefore, that the commission will give the church a permanent option between the revised historic one-year cycle and a three-year cycle of pericopes, but make the three-year cycle available for sermon texts.