Résumé
Le canon de l'A.T. présenté dans le De sectis (VIe-VIIe s.) comprend 22 livres protocanoniques, regroupés par genres littéraires. Esther n'y figure pas. Ce canon ne correspond pas exactement à celui d'Athanase : la réversion de l'ordre du Lévitique et des Nombres ne se retrouve que chez Métilon et dans la Cheltenham list. Celle-ci, d'origine africaine, n'a rien d'autre en commun avec le canon du De sectis. Par contre, le canon de Métilon, en provenance de Palestine, est identique à celui du De sectis.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON IN THE TREATISE DE SECTIS

Actio II of de sectis, a treatise dating from the sixth or seventh century, sums up the books of the Bible as follows:

τὰς μὲν οὖν Παλαιὰς (διαθήκης) εἰσὶ βιβλία εἰκοσι δύο, ὑπὸ τὰ μὲν εἰσο ἱστορικά, τὰ δὲ προφητικά, τὰ δὲ παρανετικά, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὸ ψάλλειν μόνον γενόμενα. εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκαστὸν ἐν ἐκάστῳ εὑρίσκεται, ἀλλὰ οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ πλεονάζοντος ἐκαστὸν κέκληται.

Then twelve historical books are enumerated: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, i.e. the so-called books of Moses or Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings counted as two books, Paralipomena (Chronicles) and Esdras. The contents of these books is mostly summarized in a few lines. Next come the 5 prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the δωδεκάπροφητών, without their contents. The four "hortatory" books are Job, that may be written by Joseph, the Proverbs of Salomo, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, ἐπειδὴ ἂ τούτων θεωρία ὑψηλότερα ἐστίν. The Psalms only are poetical (πρὸς τὸ ψάλλειν) ².

The limitation of the number of the books to 22 is not peculiar to de sectis. This reckoning appears for the first time in Flavius Josephus ³, and also in Melito ⁴, Origen ⁵, Athanasius ⁶, Cyril of Jerusalem ⁷, Gregory Nazianzen ⁸, Canon 60 of the Council of Laodicea ⁹.

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¹ This paper has been presented at the Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies (Oxford, 3-7 April 1978).
² PG. 86, col. 1200-1204. There is no fundamental difference between the edition of Leunclavius and ours (in preparation) in this part of the text.
³ Contra Apionem. I. 8: δύο δὲ μόνα πρὸς τοὺς εἰκοσι βιβλία τοῦ παντός ἐχοντα χρόνου τὴν ἀναγραφήν, τὰ δικαίως πεπιστημένα.
⁴ ap. EUSEBIUS, Historia Ecclesiastica. IV, 26.
⁷ Catech., IV, 33.
⁸ Carm., 33.
Leontius 10, Synopsis of Ps. Athanasius 11, John of Damascus 12, Nicephorus 13, Epiphanius 14; in other words, all over the East. Sanday says: "We can have little doubt that it represents a tradition of the Palestinian (and probably also Alexandrian) Jews, and that it was ultimately derived from them" 15.

The list of de sectis contains the protocanonical books, with the exception of Esther. This book is also omitted in Melito of Sardes, where the word Esther might be dropped in the manuscript if we may believe Keil, Strack and Bigot 16 – for Melito does not give the exact number of the books. Another possibility is that the consultors of Melito, probably judeo-christians, rejected the book Esther because of the additions which were not accepted by the palestinian Jews 17. We should rather concur with Sundberg who supposes that "the absence of Esther may reflect a continued reservation on the part of Melito’s informant concerning the canonicity of Esther, such as was observed at Jamnia" 18. For Athanasius Esther is one of the biblia ou xanouzōmea 19. Bigot says: "Il faut en chercher le motif dans une interprétation exagérée de la notation d’Origène, qui marqua d’un obèle les additions de la recension grecque, malgré qu’ils citât lui-même comme Écriture, appréciation qui put conduire les docteurs alexandrins à suspecter le livre tout entier" 20. We might point out to the far from christianlike spirit of the book Esther 21 or to the substantial acceptance

10 Contra Nest. et Eut., III (PG, 86, col. 1365-1368).
11 PG, 28, col. 283.
12 De fide orth., IV, 17.
13 PG, 100, col. 1056.
14 De mens. et pond., 4. In his Haer., VIII, 6. Epiphanius has included a list of 27 books of the Bible.
17 L. Bigot. ibid.
20 L. Bigot. ibid.
of the Jewish canon 22, but it is not my intention to examine why Esther does not appear in some lists. The point is in which lists. From this we might conclude what is the origin of the canon in de sectis. Esther is also missing in the list of Gregory of Nazianzus 23; there Ruth is the eighth book, just like in de sectis. Amphilochius of Iconium 24 is hesitating to include Esther in his canon, and for Junilius Africanus 25 like for Theodor of Mopsueste 26, the book has not but a mediocre authority. Besides there are a few lists depending on Athanasius, viz. Nicephorus 27 and the Synopsis of Pseudo-Athanasius 28, naturally without Esther. Amphilochius, Theodore of Mopsueste and Junilius have, apart from that, an utterly dissimilar list from the canon in de sectis. The allegation of Bigot 29 that the list of de sectis depends on Theodor of Mopsueste is definitely without any foundation. As a case in point let me mention the fact that Theodore has a very severe appreciation of Job and the Song of Songs 30, while those books are for the author of de sectis perfectly canonical.

Gregory of Nazianzus includes in his list merely the books of the Palestinian canon, but he frequently uses quotations of deuterocanonical books all over his works. The internal order and grouping of the books in his list is also very peculiar 31.

Usually the list of de sectis is said to be dependent on the canon of Athanasius 32. Indeed, in his Epistle XXXIX the patriarch of Alexandria includes a list of 22 protocanonical books, without Esther. Just as in de

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22 A. C. Sundberg, o.c., p. 140.
23 Carm. de gen. libr. inspir. Scripturae (PG, 37, col. 473).
24 Carm. ad Seleucum (PG, 37, col. 1539).
26 Kihn, o.c., §§ 51-73.
28 PG, 28, col. 283.
29 L. Bigot, o.c., col. 857.
31 In his carmen I, xii, 5 sq., he names 12 βιβλία ιστορικά, like most of the lists do, but he reckons 5 βιβλία στηριγμάτων (Job, David and 3 books of Salomo, i.e. Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Proverbs) and 5 βιβλία προφητικά (Dodekapropheton, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel).
sectis the four books of *Kings* are counted as two books. In *de sectis* *Baruch*, *Lamentations* and *Epistulae Jeremiae* are not explicitly reckoned as a part of the book *Jeremiah* : Athanasius does so. But it is quite easy to demonstrate that the author of *de sectis* did it too, at least in the case of *Baruch*. for in *Actio II* a quotation of *Baruch* 33 is prefaced by the words : φησὶ γάρ που λέγων τοῦτο ὁ Ἰερεμίας. The book *Baruch* is not mentioned in *de sectis* and quotations of books not included in the canon are never used. Therefore, it is clear that *Baruch* is reckoned as a part of *Jeremiah*, and *Lamentations* and *Epistulae Jeremiae* are most likely to be in the same position. Consequently we might conclude as Reuss does : «On reconnaît ici l'influence d'Athanase, ou plutôt on constate une fois de plus que l'autorité d'un écrivain justement renommé dans l'Église orthodoxe était l'argument le plus décisif dans ces sortes de questions, et faisait accepter jusqu'aux singularités auxquelles on était devenu au fond tout à fait étranger” 34, or as Loisy does : “Il suit donc fidèlement les Pères grecs du iv* et du v* siècle” 35.

But anyhow, there are a few differences between the list of Athanasius and that of *de sectis* which are really worth of being examined.

Let us turn to the grouping of the books of the Bible. Athanasius in his Eastern letter simply gives a list of the books of the Bible without grouping them. On the other hand we can say that the author of *de sectis* attends to the characteristically Alexandrian desire to arrange the books according to their literary character or contents, that we find in many of the Greek patristic lists. Thus Cyril of Jerusalem and Gregory of Nazianzus divide the books of the Old Testament into 12 historical books, 5 poetical and 5 prophetic books. Swete 36 places *de sectis* also

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35 A. LOISy, o.c., p. 137.

in this group, without noting that in this treatise four classes are distinguished: instead of five poetical books the author reckons four “hortatory” books and but one purely poetical book. The designation τα παραινετικά for the “hortatory” books of the Bible is peculiar to de sectis. Pseudo-Chrysostom calls the Salamonic books το συμβουλευτικόν, that we may consider as a synonym of παραινετικά, like Swete does. But Pseudo-Chrysostom’s arrangement is, apart from this, totally different: he counts ten historical books beginning with the Octateuch Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges and Ruth, plus four books of Kings reckoned as two books, and Esdras; next come το συμβουλευτικόν, i.e. Proverbs, Ben Sirah, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs; and finally το προφητικόν, i.e. οι δεκαεξ προφηταί, ‘Ρουθ (?) – this book has been counted yet in the Octateuch – καί Δαυείδ 37. So the Psalter is placed with the Prophets. Swete unjustly notes that the author of de sectis classed the Psalter among τα παραινετικά 38, while we saw it was a strictly poetical book in this treatise. Therefore, it is clear there is no connection between Pseudo-Chrysostom and de sectis.

Since we have no grouping of the books of the Bible by Athanasius himself, but a distribution like this is characteristically Alexandrian, we have not to make heavy the problem. It is very likely there was a certain liberty in the classification of the canonical books among the orthodoxes. The treatise de sectis itself shows an indication towards it: ει δε και εκαστον εν εκαστω ευρίσκεται, άλλων ουτων απο του πλεονάζοντος εκαστον κέκληται. Since every literary style is found in each book, the author of de sectis called the books of the Bible after the preponderating literary character – we might add: at his own discretion.

The order of the books of the Bible is setting more problems. Athanasius implies that there was a more or less settled order when he begins his catalogue by saying: τη δε τάξει και τη ονόματι εστιν εκαστον ουτως 39.

For de sectis the arrangement of the books according to their literary character made a slight alteration in the order necessary. So the Psalter, while considered as a group on its own, is placed at the end of the list for obvious reasons. However, the reversion of the common order of Leviticus and Numbers in the Pentateuch is quite remarkable. We

37 Ps.-Chrysostom, Syn. script. sacr. praef., PG, 56. col. 533 sq.
38 H. B. Swete, o.c., p. 219, n. 1.
39 PG, 26. col. 1436 C.
might believe in an inattention of some copier, if the same inversed order of *Numbers* and *Leviticus* was not found so far away as Melito of Sardes and the *Cheltenham list*. A parallel like this could not be by a mere accident. But the connection between the three catalogues is a question that remains to be seen.

The *Cheltenham list* was found in the *Phillipps Collection* at Cheltenham by Prof. Mommsen in 1885. The manuscript is dating from the tenth century, but a note tells us that the list must be of a date as early as 359 A.D. The origin of the text is African, but it is generally assumed that we are concerned here with the canon of the Roman Church. Besides the peculiar order of the books *Numbers* and *Leviticus*, there is no similarity at all between the *Cheltenham list* and *de sectis*, since the former includes all the proto- and deutero-canonical books and fixes the number at twenty-four. Sanday says: "Most of the more fundamental peculiarities of the Latin Bible can be traced back to Syria. Here is one which must have been always confined to a few copies, but which was perpetuated through them in regions as far apart as Syria and Africa."

Melito of Sardes obtained his list from Palestine. This catalogue which is found in Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* probably represents the contents of the Palestinian Greek Bible. It is identical with that of *de sectis*, missing *Esther* and with the reversed order in the *Pentateuch*. that is certainly not peculiar to the Hebrew canon. Therefore, we have to accept that the reversed order is dating from Melito and has not crept in into the canon by an inattention of Eusebius or some copier of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, since it has a parallel in a Latin canon of 359. Unfortunately we know too little about Melito's life and his connections with the Alexandrian school, to which the author of *de sectis* surely belongs, to arrive at a conclusion.

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44 Melito is sometimes identified with the Ionian teacher of Clement of Alexandria.