

THE CHRISTIAN CASE FOR DROPPING THE BOOKS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ADDED TO THE BIBLE

There are several reasons why the Apocrypha is to be rejected as part of the Bible.

General Principles

1. There is abundant evidence that none of these books was ever received into the canon (that which conforms to “rule”) of the Hebrew Old Testament. Though they appear in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament - known as LXX), that is not necessarily a reliable criterion. Professor G.T. Manley notes: “[These books] do not appear to have been included at first in the LXX [3rd/2nd centuries B.C.], but they found their way gradually into later copies, being inserted in places that seemed appropriate...” (The New Bible Handbook, Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962, p. 39).

2. The apocryphal books are not in those most ancient works which allude to the Old Testament Scriptures. For example:

(a) Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria (20 B.C. - A.D. 50), wrote prolifically and frequently quoted the Old Testament, yet he never cited the Apocrypha, nor did he even mention these documents.

(b) Josephus (A.D. 37-95) rejected them. He wrote: “We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine...” (Against Apion 1.8). By combining several Old Testament narratives into a “book,” the thirty-nine of our current editions become the twenty-two alluded to by Josephus.

(c) The most ancient list of Old Testament books is that which was made by Melito of Sardis (cf. A.D. 170); none of the apocryphal books is included (cf. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 4.26.14).

(d) In the early 3rd century A.D., neither Origin nor his contemporary, Tertullian, recognized the books of the Apocrypha as being canonical.

(e) Though some of the apocryphal books were being used in the church services by the 5th century A.D., they were read only by those who held inferior offices in the church (see: T.H. Horne, Critical Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, Philadelphia: Whetham & Son, 1841, Vol. I, p. 436).

3. The apocryphal books were produced in an era when no inspired documents were being given by God. Malachi concludes his narrative in the Old Testament by urging Israel: “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in

Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances.” He then projects four centuries into the future and prophesied: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come...” (Mal. 4:4-5). This text pictured the coming of John the Baptist (cf. Mt. 11:14; Lk. 1:17). The implication of Malachi’s prophecy is that no prophet would arise from God until the coming of John. This excludes the apocryphal writings.

Josephus confirms this when he declares: “It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.”

He further says that no one “has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them . . .” (Against Apion 1.8).

F.F. Bruce contended that there “is no evidence that these books were ever regarded as canonical by any Jews, whether inside or outside Palestine, whether they read the Bible in Hebrew or in Greek” (The Books and the Parchments, London: Pickering & Inglis, 1950, p. 157).

4. Jesus Christ and His inspired New Testament penmen quoted from, or alluded to, the writings and events of the Old Testament profusely. In fact, some 1,000 quotations or allusions from thirty-five of the thirty-nine Old Testament books are found in the New Testament record. And yet, significantly, not once is any of these apocryphal books quoted or even explicitly referred to by the Lord, or by any New Testament writer. Noted scholar Emile Schurer argued that this is really remarkable since most of the New Testament habitually quoted from the LXX (Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1894, Vol. I, 99).

“Despite the fact that New Testament writers quote largely from the Septuagint rather than from the Hebrew Old Testament, there is not a single clear-cut case of a citation from any of the fourteen apocryphal books The most that can be said is that the New Testament writers show acquaintance with these fourteen books and perhaps allude to

them indirectly, but in no case do they quote them as inspired Scripture or cite them as authority” (Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1951, p. 101).

5. Finally, it must be observed that the apocryphal books, unlike the canonical books of the Old Testament, make no direct claims of being inspired of God. Not once is there a, “thus says the Lord,” or language like, “the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.” In fact, some of the documents actually confess non-inspiration! In the Prologue of Ecclesiasticus, the writer states: “Ye are intreated therefore to read with favour and attention, and to pardon us, if in any parts of what we have laboured to interpret, we may seem to fail in some of the phrases” (*The Apocrypha*, New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1894).

6. Too, there is the matter of literary style. Dr. Raymond Surburg has written: “When a comparison is instituted of the style of the Apocrypha with the style of the Biblical Hebrew Old Testament writings, there is a considerable inferiority, shown by the stiffness, lack of originality and artificiality of expression characterizing the apocryphal books” (*The Christian News*, November 24, 1980, p. 7).

Evidence negating inspiration

The Apocrypha contains a great variety of historical, geographical, chronological, and moral errors. Professor William Green of Princeton wrote: “The books of Tobit and Judith abound in geographical, chronological, and historical mistakes...” (*General Introduction to the Old Testament*, New York: Scribner’s & Sons, 1899, p. 195). A critical study of the Apocrypha’s contents clearly reveals that it could not be the product of the Spirit of God. The following examples are ample evidence of this:

1. Rather than the creation being spoken into existence from nothing by the word of Almighty God, as affirmed in the Scriptures (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6-9; Heb. 11:3), the Apocrypha has God creating the world out of “formless matter” (*Wisdom of Solomon* 11:17).

2. According to the prophet Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem on the tenth day, fifth month, or the nineteenth year of his reign (Jer. 52:12-13). Subsequent to this, both the prophet and his scribe, Baruch, were taken into Egypt (Jer. 43:6-7).

According to the Apocrypha, however, at this very time Baruch was in Babylon (Baruch 1:1-2).

3. There are two contradictory accounts of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, that dreaded enemy of the Jews. One narrative records that Antiochus and his company were “cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea by the treachery of Nanaea’s priests” (II Maccabees 1:13-16), while another version in the same book states that Antiochus was “taken with a noisome sickness” and so “ended his life among the mountains by a most piteous fate in a strange land” (II Maccabees 9:19-29).

4. Tobit is said to have lived 158 years (14:11), yet, supposedly, he was alive back when Jeroboam revolted against Jerusalem (931 B.C.), and then still around when the Assyrians invaded Israel (722/21 B.C.)—a span of some 210 years (Tobit 1:3-5)!

5. The Apocrypha teaches the erroneous doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, suggesting that the kind of body one now has is determined by the character of his soul in a previous life. “Now I was a goodly child, and a good soul fell to my lot; Nay rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled” (Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20). The foregoing was a common belief among heathen peoples, but certainly it is contrary to the biblical view that the soul of man is formed with him at conception (Psa. 139:13-16; Zech. 12:1).

6. The Apocrypha teaches that prayer may be made for the dead. “Wherefore he made the propitiation for them that had died, that they might be released from their sins” (II Maccabees 12:45). Roman Catholics cite this passage to find support for their dogma of praying for the dead to be released from purgatory (obviously there’s no New Testament passage to buttress the notion), but the effort is vain.

7. The Apocrypha suggests that one may atone for his sins by the giving of alms. “It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin” (Tobit 3:9).

8. The moral tone of the Apocrypha is far below that of the Bible. Note some examples:

(a) It applauds suicide as a noble and manful act. II Maccabees tells of one Razis who, being surrounded by the enemy, fell upon his sword, choosing “rather to die nobly” than to fall into the hands of his enemy. He was not mortally wounded, however, and so threw himself down from a wall and “manfully”

died among the crowds (14:41-43).

(b) It describes magical potions which are alleged to drive demons away (Tobit 6:1-17).

(c) The murder of the men of Shechem (Gen. 34), an act of violence which is condemned in the Scriptures (cf. Gen. 49:6-7), is commended and is described as an act of God (Judith 9:2-9).

These, along with various other considerations, lead only to the conclusion that the Apocrypha cannot be included in the volume of sacred Scripture.

Reasons For Rejecting The Apocrypha From The Canon

(Copied, with minor variations, from the fact sheet distributed by Clyde Woods in a session of Critical Introduction to the Old Testament in the fall of 1986).

- The books were never included in the Hebrew canon.

- Josephus expressly excludes them.

- Philo, the Jewish philosopher in Alexandria (ca. 20 BC – AD 40) quoted the O.T.

Scriptures very frequently, yet never quoted the Apocrypha nor even mentioned these books.

- Targums (Aramaic paraphrases) were provided for the canonical books but were not provided for the Apocrypha.

- These books are never quoted in the New Testament

- Most of the Apocrypha material existed and was likely incorporated in Septuagint editions in the New Testament period, yet it is never cited by Jesus or the apostles. The oldest copies of the Septuagint now in existence date from the fourth century AD, plenty of time for them to have been incorporated in later editions.

- NT references rather allude to the commonly accepted Hebrew canon.

- Christian tradition offers no real support for accepting the Apocrypha as canonical.

- These books are not included in the canonical lists of the early centuries.

- Jerome expressly supported the strict Hebrew canon and emphatically rejected the Apocrypha as secondary.

- Books of the Apocrypha were considered suitable for reading and instruction but they were not considered authoritative in the early centuries.

- The Apocrypha bears no internal marks of inspiration.

- No Apocrypha writer actually claims inspiration; indeed, some disclaim it.

- These books contain historical, geographical, and chronological errors.
- Doctrinally, the books at times contradict the canonical Scriptures.
- Stylistically, the books are inferior to the canonical Scriptures.
- Stories in the Apocrypha contain some legendary and fantastic materials.
- The moral and spiritual level is beneath that of the canonical Scriptures.
- Proper dating of the Apocrypha shows its non-canonical character.
- These books were written later than those of the Old Testament.
- Portions of these books even date from the Christian era.

The Apocrypha was first declared canonical by the reactionary Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1546). This conciliar decision was transparently dogmatic. This action was passed by a narrow majority.

The Apocrypha is rejected from the canon of Scripture for numerous reasons.

Besides the fact that Jesus and the apostles never once quoted from it; and aside from its obvious lack of inspiration (it "just doesn't sound like" scripture; "My sheep hear My voice," John 10; etc.) – there are many solid reasons for rejecting its contents from being included with the canonical scriptures. [Much of the following material comes from Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 125.]

A. The Apocrypha contains chronological errors and statements contrary to history.

- Baruch 1:2 (comp. Jeremiah 43:6-7)
- Bel and the Dragon 22 (Xerxes did it); Bel and the Dragon 33
- Tobit 1:4 (Tobit is said to live in Nineveh in 722 BC, and yet he also saw the division of the united kingdom in 931 BC. [1 Kings 12:19-20])
- Esther 11:2-4 (the dates of Mordecai's captivity [597 BC] and dream [485/484 BC] would make him 112 years old)
- 1 Esdras 5:56 has the second year of Cyrus rather than the second year of Darius; in 5:73 Cyrus (c. 530 BC) died more than two years before the reign of Darius (c. 522/521-486 BC.)
- Tobit 1:15 "But when Shalmaneser died, and his son Sennacherib reigned in his place," Shalmaneser died before the fall of Samaria, and Sennacherib was Sargon's son.
- Tobit 14:15 " Before he died he heard of the destruction of Nineveh, and he saw its prisoners being led into Media, those whom King Cyaxares of Media had taken captive." Nineveh's conquerors were Nabopolassar and Cyaxares (612 B.C.).
- Judith 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC) ruled over Babylon after Nineveh was

destroyed in 612 BC.

- Judith 2:1 Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Babylonians, and Holofernes [v.4] may be from a much later time.

- Judith 4:3-4 and 5:19 Nebuchadnezzar sent the Jews into exile, and they returned under Cyrus (538 BC).

- Bel and the Dragon 33 Habakkuk wrote before 612 BC [Hab. 1:6], making unlikely a visit to Daniel almost 75 years later (539 BC).

B. It contains geographical errors.

- Tobit 1:4; 6:1; 9:2 (This was an 11 day journey from Ecbatana to Rages but made to Evangelism Handbook: False Teachings 191 seem shorter.) The Tigris River is west of Nineveh; Persia is east.

- Judith 1:6 Hydaspes, a river in India, is erroneously placed in Mesopotamia.

- Judith 2:21 The 300 miles separating Nineveh and Bectileth makes a 3-day march impossible.

- Judith 2:24 The normal route is south from Cilicia to Damascus, not following the Euphrates River.

- 1 Maccabees 9:2 says "Gilgal" when it should have said "Galilee" (cf. Josephus, Ant. 12:11.1, sections 420-421)

C. Mistakes

- Baruch 6:1-3 (Epistle of Jeremiah) 70 years called seven generations

- 2 Esdras 6:42 says that God in creation gathered the waters to a seventh part of the earth, whereas in fact water covers 70% of the earth's surface.

- 2 Esdras 3:1 has Ezra in Babylon 30 years after the fall of Jerusalem, whereas Ezra lived a century later.

- 2 Maccabees 1:19 Persia should be Babylon (2 Kings 24:14)

D. Many false teachings are represented, and evil practices that the inspired Word of God condemns are condoned.

1. Prayers for the dead. 2 Maccabees 12:40-45. A post-death visit by Jeremiah in 15:14.

2. Salvation by good works (almsgiving, etc.). Sirach 3:3, 14-15 (kindness to parents atones for sin)

Sirach 3:30 (almsgiving atones for sins)

30:11-12 2; Esdras 7:7; 8:33, 36; Tobit 12:9, 8a; 14:11

3. The use of magic.

a. In demon exorcism. Tobit 6-8

b. In healing. Tobit 11

c. "Good luck" (fortune). Sirach 8:19

4. The intercession of angels. Tobit 12:15 (Raphael)

5. Suicide. 2 Maccabees 14:41-46

6. Mourning for the dead. Sirach 38:16-23 (especially verses 20-21)

7. Sinless lives of Old Testament personalities. Prayer of Manasseh 8

8. 2 Esdras 6:55 The Bible never says the world

was created for Israel

9. 2 Esdras 8:4-5 possibly suggests the preexistence of souls

E. Contradictions

1. 1 Maccabees 4:26-35 contradicts 2 Macc. 10:37-11:12, which puts Lysia's defeat after the death of Timothy.

2. 1 Maccabees 4:30-35 contradicts 2 Macc. 11:6-15, which says it was a negotiated peace.

3. 1 Maccabees 6:8-9 contradicts 2 Macc. 9:5-12, which says that the king was struck with a repulsive physical disease.

4. 2 Maccabees 8:9 contradicts 1 Macc. 3:38-4:25, which says that Gorgias, not Nicanor, was leader.

5. 2 Maccabees 8:13 contradicts 1 Macc. 3:56, which cites other reasons for the troop reduction.

6. 2 Maccabees 10:3 contradicts 1:19-2:1 on how altar fire was restarted and contradicts 1:54 and 4:52, which say 3 years instead of 2.

7. 2 Maccabees 10:37 contradicts 12:2, 18-25, where Timothy reappears (cf. 1 Macc. 5:11-40).

8. 2 Maccabees 11:13-15 contradicts 1 Macc. 4:35, which says that no peace was made.

9. 2 Maccabees 13:16 contradicts 1 Macc. 6:47, which says the Jews fled.

F. Some of the miracles and events described are simply fabulous and silly.

Tobit 6:2-7, 16-17, etc. (placing incense smoke on the organs of a man eating fish to ward off evil spirits; the demon was in love with the woman and had killed her last seven husbands on their wedding night)

G. Only three divisions of the Old Testament are described in Luke 24:44. Matthew 23:35 and Luke 11:51 also witness the arrangement and compass of the Old Testament – not allowing for any books outside the time from Genesis to 2 Chronicles. The books of the Apocrypha form no part of the canon, but rather serve as witnesses to life and thought in the inter-testamental period.

FROM Evangelism Handbook: False Teachings

