

What Every Christian Should Know About **The Apocrypha** An Overview and Critique of the Deuterocanon

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In its literal sense, the term “apocrypha” means “the things that are hidden.” As applied to Jewish intertestamental literature and the biblical canon, the term “**Apocrypha**” is a misnomer as it refers to more than a dozen books or supplements to books that postdate the Tanakh – the Old Testament. Although highly regarded by Jewish scholars and religious leaders for their historical and/or moral value, these writings were considered supplemental rather than scriptural. However, due to their inclusion in the Septuagint, many Christian scholars and church leaders in the first four centuries A.D. accepted at least some of these writings as authentic Scripture. During the Reformation era, however, Protestant leaders such as Luther and Calvin rejected the Apocrypha while Roman Catholic authorities approved these writings as “**deuterocanonical**” – i.e., “later additions to the canon” – in contrast to the “protocanonical” books that comprised the ancient Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament).

Among the various Christian denominations that recognize the apocryphal writings as Scripture, there is no standardized list. However, since the time of Jerome and the publication of the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible, the Roman Catholic canon has remained fairly constant. The Bibles of the various Orthodox denominations include all of the texts in the Catholic Apocrypha along with a few other books and additions, as indicated below.

[Note: In terms of literary genres, the Apocrypha is composed of books and supplements that can be divided into 7 categories. Texts marked † are included in the Roman Catholic Bible, while ‡ indicates that a text is accepted as deuterocanonical by one or more of the various sects of the Orthodox Church.]

1. Historical

I Esdras (c. 150-100 B.C.?) †‡

A history of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine after the Babylonian exile, *I Esdras* (the Greek name for Ezra) generally correlates to II Chronicles 35:1 to Nehemiah 8:13. Inexplicably, the book is called *III Esdras* in the Latin Vulgate Bible and placed in an appendix following the New Testament.

[Note: *I Esdras* incorporates some factual errors. The book claims that **Zerubbabel** (Zorobabel) served as a bodyguard for **King Darius I of Persia** (r. 522-486 BC). After writing an eloquent appeal to the king on behalf of the Hebrews living in exile in Babylon, Darius granted Zerubbabel’s wish to return to Jerusalem with the first wave of Jewish emigrants to reconstruct the temple. This is factually incorrect. Zerubbabel led the first wave of Hebrew exiles back to Jerusalem from Babylon to rebuild the city and the temple by permission of **King Cyrus “the Great”** (r. 559-530 BC), a predecessor of Darius I. By the time Darius came to power, Zerubbabel had been serving as governor in Jerusalem for several years.]

I Maccabees (c. 100 B.C.) †‡

Historically, this is the most valuable book in the Apocrypha. *I Maccabees* is regarded as a generally reliable history of the **Maccabean Revolt** (167-160 B.C.). The principle figures are the Jewish patriot **Mattathias** and three of his sons, **Judas**, **Jonathan** and **Simon Maccabeus**. The complex plot deals with the heroic struggle of the Maccabees against the Seleucid (Syrian) tyrant **Antiochus IV “Epiphanes”**

(“the Exalted One,” r. 175-164 BC) and their efforts to establish an independent Jewish state. Antiochus had a pathological hatred of Jews and their religion, and he sought to impose paganism on the Jewish nation. In addition to selling the office of high priest, he desecrated the holy temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar. Any who resisted were brutally persecuted. Fighting a prolonged and bloody guerilla war, the Maccabees and their ardent supporters defeated not only the Seleucids but other enemies including Greeks, Egyptians, and Edomites in military campaigns reminiscent of those of King David. *I Maccabees* was probably written shortly after the death of Simon Maccabeus’ son, the first Jewish Hasmonean king **John Hyrcanus** (r. 134-104 B.C.).

[Note: The most objectionable aspect of the book is its endorsement of a Jewish theocracy. Contrary to the Mosaic Law and Hebrew tradition, the victorious freedom fighters Jonathan and Simon Maccabeus were appointed as both the nation’s governors and high priests. Another point of contention is the book’s effusive praise of Rome and their system of government, which later Jews would come to despise. In addition, I Mac. 1:15 claims that some Jewish males reversed their circumcision, which was impossible at the time.]

2. Historical Fiction

II Maccabees (1st century B.C.) †‡

II Maccabees is not a sequel to *I Maccabees* but a parallel account of the Maccabean Revolt, reputedly written as a summary of a five-volume history by Jason of Cyrene. However, it is not generally regarded as reliable history in that it incorporates a lot of legendary features. The book is perhaps most known for its graphic accounts of violent atrocities allegedly perpetrated against the Jews by the monstrous Seleucid (Syrian) king, **Antiochus IV “Epiphanes”**.

[Note: According to II Mac. 12:45, Judas Maccabeus “perceived that there was great favor laid up for those that died godly... Whereupon he made a reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin.” This passage was later cited by Roman Catholic theologians as the basis for the doctrine of **purgatory**.

II Maccabees also contradicts *I Maccabees* in several respects. In I Mac. 13:31 the Greek general Tryphon killed Antiochus Epiphanes so as to reign as king in his place, but in II Mac. 1:13-16 Antiochus was killed by priests at the temple in Nanaea – only to be contradicted later in II Mac. 9 when Antiochus dies in the mountains of Ecbatane from an incurable disease of the bowels.]

III Maccabees (1st century B.C.) †

A misnomer, the book has nothing to do with the Maccabees or their revolt against the Seleucid Empire as described in *I-II Maccabees*. Rather, it relates three stories of the persecution of the Jews under the Egyptian Pharaoh **Ptolemy IV “Philopator”** (r. 222-205 B.C.) several decades prior to the Maccabean uprising. The book includes the dramatic account of Jews being herded into the hippodrome near Alexandria to be trampled to death by intoxicated elephants. Although parts of the story are fictitious, some elements are possibly based on actual incidents.

Tobit (c. 200 B.C.) †‡

Although purportedly historical, *Tobit* is a simply tale of religious fiction and a romantic novel. Tobit, a pious Jew, dispatches his son Tobias to travel from Nineveh to another city to retrieve money for his father. Along the way Tobias meets and marries a distant cousin, Sarah, who has lost seven husbands – each on the night of their wedding before the marriage was consummated.(1) The book is Pharisaical in tone, extolling the virtues of piety and faithfulness to YHWH

[Note: *Tobit* incorporates three popular folktales, including the legend of the Grateful Dead, and implies that alms-giving atones for one’s sins. According to Tobit 12:9, “For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin.” This is of course contrary to the teaching of Scripture that salvation comes by God’s grace alone (*sola gratia*) by faith alone (*sola fide* – ref. Gal. 2:16 and Eph. 2:8-9).

Throughout his journey, Tobias is guided by an archangel named Raphael who dispenses secret esoteric knowledge regarding demons and other matters in keeping with Persian mysticism.]

Judith (late-2nd century B.C.?) ††

A fictitious Pharisaic novel in which a beautiful heroine, Judith, saves the nation of Israel from utter destruction by deceiving an Assyrian general, Holofernes, whose army is marching on Jerusalem. Having seduced the general, Judith manages to decapitate him. As with *Tobit*, the book of *Judith* promotes Pharisaical themes such as strict observance of the Mosaic Law including its ceremonial and dietary traditions.

[Note: *Judith* is riddled with obvious historical inaccuracies. According to the narrative, Holofernes serves under the command of **Nebuchadnezzar II**, the king of the Assyrians whose palace is in Nineveh. In reality, Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605-562) was the Babylonian monarch who besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple and deported thousands of Jews back to his capital of Babylon in the "Babylonian Captivity." In addition, the text states that Nebuchadnezzar subdued the Medes by taking the city of Ecbatane. In fact, it was the Medes and Persians who eventually conquered the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar's grandson.]

Additions to Daniel (c. 170 - 100 B.C.?) ††

"**The Prayer of Azariah**" and "**The Song of the Three Jews**" (c. 100 B.C.?) is an extended passage and antiphonal hymn that follows Daniel 3:23 in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles. The passage purports to record the miracle that preserved Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Azariah) while in the fiery furnace (ref. Daniel 1:6-7). Along with the prayer of Azariah, the passage includes a brief account of the angel who preserved them while in the furnace (whom Christian scholars later interpreted as a theophany of the Son of God) and the hymn of praise they sang once delivered from the flames. This account does not appear in the Hebrew/Aramaic text of Daniel.

"**Susanna**" (1st century B.C.?) is a legendary story added to the book of Daniel as a 13th chapter. The heroine, Susanna, is a virtuous Jewish woman who is falsely accused of infidelity by two Jewish elders after she rejects their sexual advances. As she is being led away to be executed, Daniel (presumably the Daniel of the Bible) requests that the two elders be

questioned separately. Their conflicting testimony confirms Susanna's innocence and she is spared.

"**Bel and the Dragon**" (c. 100 B.C.?) is also a legendary account set during Daniel's lifetime and added as a 14th chapter. The story is essentially a warning against idolatry, in particular the worship of Bel-Marduk, the chief god in the Babylonian pantheon, and a "dragon" (actually, a serpent). The story depicts a contest between Daniel and King Cyrus as to whether Bel actually eats the food offered to him as a sacrifice. Daniel reveals that in fact the food is consumed by the priests of Bel, who in turn retaliate by throwing the prophet into the lions' den. While in the den, Daniel is miraculously protected and ministered to by the prophet Habakkuk: "Then the angel of the Lord took [Habakkuk] by the crown of his head and carried him by his hair; with the speed of the wind he set him down in Babylon, right over the den (Bel 36). Then after serving the food to Daniel, "the angel of the God immediately returned Habakkuk to his own place [in Judah]." It is no mystery why religious Jews rejected this spurious tale as part of canonical Scripture.

3. Legendary***Jubilees*** (Date unknown)

The book of *Jubilees* claims to present an authoritative "history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed by angels to Moses while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights. The chronology given in *Jubilees* is based on multiples of seven: the "Jubilees" are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks," into which the entire history of creation and of Israel is divided. *Jubilees* covers many of the same themes as Genesis, but often with additional detail. For example, the book narrates the appearance of angels on the first day of creation and the story of how a group of fallen angels mated with mortal females, giving rise to the race of giants identified as the Nephilim (ref. Gen. 6:1-4). Approximately 15 copies of *Jubilees* were found in various caves at Qumran, which indicates that it was highly revered by the Essene sect and perhaps regarded as sacred Scripture.

4. Wisdom literature

Wisdom of Solomon (c. 50-40 B.C.?) †‡

One of most respected of all the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books, *Wisdom of Solomon* is a stern warning to Jews against religious apostasy, idolatry and materialism. Although written in the tradition of Solomonian wisdom literature, few ancient scholars ever attributed the book to the historical Solomon as it is generally conceded to have been written in the first century B.C.

The *Wisdom of Solomon* is a beautiful tribute to God's divine character and omniscience, the primacy of wisdom and virtue, the security of the righteous, and the destruction of the wicked. The author is unsparing in his condemnation of pagan idolatry and moral perversion. The book concludes with a reminder of God's love and provision for the people of Israel even during times of unfaithfulness and apostasy.

[Note: The *Wisdom of Solomon* is not without its problems. Wis. 11:17 states that God's "all-powerful hand" "created the world out of formless matter" – a concept derived from Greek philosophy. By contrast, Genesis 1:1-2 and Hebrews 11:3 declare that God created the universe *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing").

Even more unsettling is Wis. 3:16-19 that states categorically that the "children of adulterers" (i.e., illegitimate children) will not come to maturity.... Even if they live long they will be held of no account, and finally their old age will be without honor. If they die young, they will have no hope and no consolation on the day of judgment. For the end of an unrighteous generation is grievous." This claim that illegitimate children have no hope of salvation is contrary to the spirit and the word of true Scripture.]

Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus,

c. 180 B.C.?) †‡

The longest book of the Apocrypha, *Ecclesiasticus* conveys moral and ethical themes similar to those in the canonical book of Proverbs. *Ecclesiasticus* is attributed to the Jewish scribe Shimon ben Yeshua ben Eliezer ben Sira of Jerusalem. Originally written in Hebrew circa 180 B.C., it was later translated into Greek about 50 years later in the city of Alexandria.

According to the prologue, "All wisdom comes from the Lord and remains with him forever." The author identifies himself as **Yeshua ben Sirach**

(Jesus, the son of Sirach), and he attributes his insights to many years studying and reflecting upon the Mosaic Law, the writings of the prophets, the great wisdom literature of the Tanakh, and the wise counsel of his father. The last section of the book contains a review of all the great men in Jewish history, ending with the high priest Simon who died in 199 B.C.

Like other great wisdom literature, ben Sirach emphasizes that the "fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline, fidelity and humility are his delight" (Sir. 1:27), "without knowledge there is no wisdom" (Sir. 3:25), "Happy is the person who meditates on wisdom and reasons intelligently" (Sir. 14:20), and "Fight to the death for truth, and the Lord God will fight for you" (Sir. 4:28). Life is brief, and God will judge the deceased: "Humble yourself to the utmost, for the punishment of the ungodly is fire and worms" (Sir. 7:17). Therefore, one should live an upright life and endeavor to cultivate a spirit of humility and charity: "Do not avert your eye from the needy.... Do not neglect to give alms" (Sir. 4:5; 7:10). Those who live godly lives will control their speech, their sexual impulses, and avoid excessive consumption of wine. "Wicked" women and contentious wives are condemned, but so are adulterous husbands.

Interestingly, admirable occupations are praised – everything from physicians to farmers, artisans and craftsmen who "support the fabric of the world" and whose "prayer is in the practice of their trade." *Ecclesiasticus* even provides mundane advice such as basic health habits and proper dining etiquette.

[Note: Sir. 25:24 declares, "From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die" – implying that Eve alone was the origin of humanity's sin problem. Contrarily, Rom. 5:12 states that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all mankind, for all have sinned."]

IV Maccabees ‡

A recount of the persecution of Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (r. 175-164 B.C.) as drawn from *II Maccabees*, and Stoic-influenced philosophical reflections on these incidents. The author portrays martyrdom as bringing atonement for the past sins of the Jews.

5. Devotional

“Prayer of Manasseh” (2nd century B.C.) †‡

Purportedly, the prayer of the wicked king Manasseh of Judah while a captive of the Assyrians (ref. II Chron. 33:1-19). Traditionally, the prayer has been placed at the end of II Chronicles.

Additions to Esther (c.100 B.C.) †‡

Scattered throughout the Greek (Septuagint) translation of the book of Esther are supplemental passages apparently intended to compensate for the lack of references to YHWH in the original Hebrew text. These additions include a dream by Mordecai regarding the events recorded in the original text; the purported contents of King Artaxerxes’ edict authorizing the massacre of the Jews; the content of Esther’s prayer prior to approaching the king unsummoned; the contents of a letter that permitted the Jews to defend themselves; and an epilogue in which Mordecai demonstrated how his dream had been fulfilled.

[Note: Inserted centuries after the fact, these “Additions to Esther” were intended to enhance the original narrative and legitimize the book of Esther as a divinely-inspired sacred text. No serious scholars, including Jewish religious leaders in the first and second centuries A.D., believed these later additions had any historical credibility.

The “Additions to Esther” also contain numerous historical errors. Verses 2:5-6 of this version of Esther state that Mordecai had been taken captive from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar along with King Jehoiachin. Historically, this happened in 591 B.C., but the events recorded in the canonical book of Esther took place more than a century later when “Ahasuerus” (a.k.a. Xerxes I, r. 486-465 B.C.) was king of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Psalm 151 (Date unknown) ‡

Excluded from virtually all Hebrew manuscripts of the Psalter, *Psalm 151* contains 7 verses in which David celebrates his providential selection by the prophet Samuel as the “leader of [God’s] people and ruler over the people of his covenant.”

6. Prophecy

Baruch (late 2nd or 1st century B.C.) †‡

Although purportedly written by **Baruch ben Neriah**, Jeremiah’s scribe (ref. Jer. 32:12-16; 43:1-6; 45:1-2), some scholars propose that it was probably written during or after the period of the Maccabees. *Baruch* 1:1,14 declares: “And these are the words... which Baruch... wrote in Babylonia.... And when [the Jewish exiles] heard it they wept, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord.”

The theme of *Baruch* is the need for national repentance, exhortations to faith, and a plea for God’s mercy. In the Latin Vulgate and many other versions, the “**Letter of Jeremiah**” †‡ is appended to the end of *Baruch* as a sixth chapter. Although attributed to Israel’s great “weeping prophet,” it was likely composed only in the 1st century B.C. The letter, addressed to the captives in Babylon, is a stern warning against idolatry and worshiping foreign gods.

[Note: The book of *Baruch* was supposedly written at the same time that Baruch delivered a donation of money to the temple in 582 B.C., but this cannot be true as the temple had been destroyed four years earlier by the Babylonians. Bar. 1:8-9 also claims that Baruch took the vessels that were taken from the temple by the Babylonians and returned them to Judah during the reign Nebuchadnezzar, but the canonical book of Ezra states that the vessels were not returned until the reign of Cyrus “the Great” some 70 years later.

Regarding the “Letter of Jeremiah,” the text reads: “Because of the sins you have committed before God, you will be taken to Babylon as exiles by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians. Therefore when you have come to Babylon you will remain there for many years, for a long time, up to seven generations; after that I will bring you away from there in peace” (Bar. 6:2-3). This, of course, contradicts Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 25:8-12) that the Jews would be captives in Babylon for 70 years.]

7. Apocalyptic

II Esdras (c. 70-220 A.D.?) ‡

In the tradition of Daniel's prophecies and the book of Revelation, *II Esdras* purports to be a collection of seven apocalyptic visions regarding future events. As with other apocalypses, the book incorporates symbolic language and numbers, strange creatures, and angelic visitations. However – and unlike other prophetic works – the central theme deals with the problem of suffering: How can a good God allow his people to suffer, why do the wicked seem to be more prosperous, and why would God use nations even more wicked than Israel (such as Rome) to punish his “Chosen People”? The conclusion, as in the Book of Job, is that there are many things in this life that we cannot know.

[Note: According to chapter 7 of *II Esdras*, when Christ returns from heaven with his bride, the church: “*After these years shall my son Christ die, and all men that have life. And the world shall be turned into the old silence seven days, like as in the former judgments: so that no man shall remain. And after seven days the world, that yet awaketh not, shall be raised up, and that shall die that is corrupt.*”

This is even more heretical than it is bizarre. Scripture is clear that the risen Christ lives eternally and will never again die. In addition, since the dead in Christ shall rise and be caught up with him in the air along with those who are still alive at his Second Coming, all true believers will reign with him for a thousand years. The Earth will still be populated during this period, and there will never be a time when “no man shall remain.”

In chapter 9 we read: “*And every one that shall be saved, and shall be able to escape by his works, and by faith, whereby ye have believed, shall be preserved from the said perils, and shall see my salvation....*” This passage can be interpreted to imply that salvation comes by faith *and* works, but of course the same allegation has been lodged against canonical passages such as Matt. 7:21; 25:31-46; Rev. 2:19-23; and especially Jas. 3:14-26.

For his part, Martin Luther found the book of *II Esdras* to be so exasperating that he flung it into the Elbe River.]

I Enoch (c. 300 BC-100 B.C.)

An intriguing collection of apocalyptic visions and revelations, *I Enoch* was attributed by tradition to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah (Gen. 4:17-18; 5:18-24; Heb. 11:5; Jude 14). The book itself asserts that the author was the historical Enoch. In reality, *I Enoch* was probably written by several authors over more than a century during the intertestamental period. Most scholars believe the five sections of the book were originally independent works that they were later redacted into a single book.

The first section of the book describes the creation and fall of the “Watchers”, the angels who fathered the angel-human hybrid giants called *Nephilim* [Gen. 6:1-4]. The remainder of the book describes Enoch's visits to heaven in the form of travels, visions and dreams, and the “revelations” he received including the nature of Gehenna and Paradise, why the Genesis flood was morally necessary, the pre-existent Messiah, and the millennial reign of the Messiah.

Interestingly, the writer of the New Testament epistle of Jude references *I Enoch* and even implies that it is prophetic (Jude 14). The earliest complete copy of the book is preserved in an Ethiopic translation that refers to the Messiah as the Son of Man. (Most scholars believe these references are redactions.) *I Enoch* was regarded as Scripture by some notable early Christian scholars such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and the author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and parts of the book were preserved on twelve manuscripts that were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[Note: *I Enoch* was excluded from both the formal canon of the Tanakh and of the Septuagint. Likewise, it is excluded from both the Roman Catholic Bible as well as the various Orthodox sects other than the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

I Enoch was regarded as “scripture” in the *Epistle of Barnabas* (16:4) and by some Church Fathers such as Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus and Tertullian, who wrote c. 200 that the *Book of Enoch* had been rejected by the Jews because it contained prophecies pertaining to Christ. However, later scholars and church leaders denied the canonicity of the book, and some even questioned the canonical status of the Epistle of Jude due to its apparent endorsement of *I Enoch*.

The Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the Canonization Process

Historically, the only “Bible” that the early church had until the apostolic Christian writings began to be circulated and collected by various churches was the **Septuagint**. The post-apostolic Christian community accepted these writings as historically accurate and doctrinally and morally authoritative. They also regarded them as holy Scripture which, when properly interpreted, had the power to transform lives.

An example of how an encounter with Scripture could radically change one’s life comes from the testimony of the 2nd century Christian scholar **Tatian** in his *Address to the Greeks* (c. 170). After reading Greek philosophy and investigating the various mystery cults, Tatian noted the profound difference between these writings and what he encountered in the ancient Hebrew Scriptures:

[R]etiring by myself, I sought how I might be able to discover the truth. And while I was giving my most earnest attention to the matter, I happened to encounter certain ‘barbaric’ [i.e., non-Greek] writings, too old to be compared with the opinions of the Greeks and too divine to be compared with their error. I found myself convinced by these writings because of the unpretentious cast of the language, the authentic character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, the excellent quality of the precepts, and the declaration of the government and of the universe as centered in one Being. And my soul being taught by God, I understood that the pagan writings led to condemnation, whereas these put an end to the slavery that is in the world, and rescue us from many rulers and tyrants. These writings do not indeed give us something which we had not received before but rather something which we had indeed received but were prevented by error from making our own. [Tatian, *Address to the Greeks* XXIX.]

As the New Covenant people of God, the church considered itself to be the true heir of the ancient Tanakh. Therefore, Christians venerated the Hebrew Scriptures just as Jesus and pious Jews had always revered these books. However, there were questions

regarding the exact parameters of the Old Testament as some scholars, both Jewish and Christian, were less than convinced that books such as Esther and Ecclesiastes should be accepted as holy Scripture. Likewise, the status of the Apocrypha was somewhat controversial, and it took more than three centuries before the church reached a general consensus on a set canon of the Old Testament.

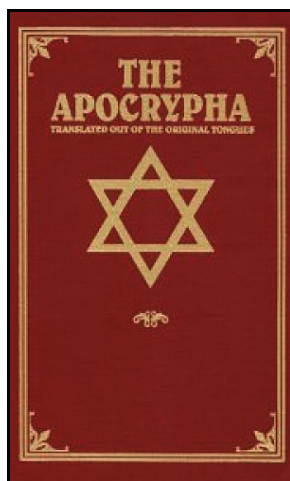
As mentioned previously, most apocryphal books were part of the Septuagint. In fact, fragments of five of these texts have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls: *Wisdom of Sirach*, *Tobit*, *I Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and the “Letter of Jeremiah.” There is no indication that Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, nor any of the major Jewish rabbinical schools of the 1st century A.D. regarded these books as Scripture *per se*, and they were always on the periphery and never at the core of

the Jewish corpus of sacred literature. Nonetheless, due to their inclusion in the Septuagint, most Christian scholars apparently accepted at least some of these writings as legitimate Scripture. In fact, there are far more references in the writings of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers (scholars and influential clerics who lived and wrote prior to the Nicene Council of 325 A.D.) to books such as the *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Wisdom of Sirach*, *Judith*, *Tobit*, *II Esdras*, *II Maccabees*, and even *I Enoch* than to Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Lamentations, Obadiah,

Micah, or Haggai. [Ref. Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, (Hendrickson, 2007), p. 221.]

The New Testament specifically cites two apocryphal books. In Hebrews 11:35 the author refers to an incident recorded in *II Maccabees*, and Jude 14 quotes from *I Enoch* 1:9:

- **Hebrews 11:35-38** – In the past, many righteous men and women “were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.” These were people of whom “the world was not worthy.”
- **II Macc. 6:18-7:4** relates the stories of righteous Jews who suffered excruciating torture rather than forsake their faith.



- **Jude 14** – “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way....’”
- **1 Enoch 1:9** – “And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgement upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly: And to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

In addition to these two examples, there are numerous other parallels and allusions to apocryphal writings throughout the New Testament such as in the following examples:

- **Rom. 1:18-32** – “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

“Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator....

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations

with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these things but also approve of those who practice them.”

- **Wisdom of Solomon 13:5-10; 14:22-30** – “For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator. Yet these people are little to be blamed, for perhaps they go astray while seeking God and desiring to find him. For while they live among his works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful. Yet again, not even they are to be excused; for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things? But miserable, with their hopes set on dead things, are those who give the name ‘gods’ to the works of human hands....

“Then it was not enough for [pagan idolaters] to err about the knowledge of God, but though living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace. For whether they kill children in their initiations, or celebrate secret mysteries, or hold frenzied revels with strange customs, they no longer keep either their lives or their marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill one another, or grieve one another by adultery, and all is a raging riot of blood and murder, theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury, confusion over what is good,

forgetfulness of favors, defiling souls, sexual perversion, disorder in marriages, adultery, and debauchery. For the worship of idols not to be named is the beginning and cause and end of every evil. For their worshipers either rave in exultation, or prophesy lies, or live unrighteously, or readily commit perjury; for because they trust in lifeless idols they swear wicked oaths and expect to suffer no harm. But just penalties will overtake them on two counts: because they thought wrongly about God in devoting themselves to idols, and because in deceit they swore unrighteously through contempt for holiness. For it is not the power of the things by which people swear, but the just penalty for those who sin, that always pursues the transgression of the unrighteous.”

- **II Cor. 5:1,4** – “Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal home in heaven not built by human hands.... For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened....”
- **Wisdom of Solomon 9:13-15** – “For who can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail; for the perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the thoughtful mind.”
- **James 1:19 and 13** – “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger...
“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”
- **Wisdom of Sirach 5:11 and 15:11-12** – “Be quick to hear, but deliberate in answering...
“Do not say, ‘It was the Lord’s doing that I fell away;’ for he does not do what he hates. Do not say, ‘It was he who led me astray;’ for he has no need of the sinful. The Lord hates all abominations; such things are not loved by those who fear him.”
- **I Cor. 2:9** – “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared

for those who love him” – appears to cite either the *Ascension of Isaiah 11:34* or the lost *Apocalypse of Elijah* derived from Isaiah 64:3.

- **II Peter 2:4 and 3:6** indicate an awareness of *I Enoch*.

There are several quotations in the New Testament taken from earlier writings that are unknown to us, but which are cited as if they were holy Scripture:

- **Matt. 2:23** – “So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’”
- **John 7:38** – “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”
- **I Cor. 2:9** – “However, it is written, ‘No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him....’” Some Church Fathers thought this quote came from the *Secrets of Elijah* or the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, but there is no way to substantiate this.)
- **Eph. 5:14** – “This is why it is said, ‘Awake, o sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’”
- **II Timothy 3:8** – “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses....” These names, in various forms, appear in several Jewish writings, but most postdate the time of Paul. The earliest known reference is to “Yahaneh and his brother” in the *Book of the Covenant of Damascus*, circa 100 B.C.
- **James 4:5** – “Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?”

Because they revered the ancient Hebrew Scriptures as divinely inspired, Christian scholars and church leaders considered it vital to distinguish between three classifications of books:

- (1) Books that were worthy of canonical status;
- (2) Books that were efficacious but supplemental to the sacred texts; and
- (3) Books that were purely legendary and mythical in nature.

In reality, this proved to be a particularly messy and complicated process as it related to the Apocrypha.

Versions of the Old Latin translations of the Bible that predated the Latin Vulgate included the books in the later Roman Catholic Apocrypha, along with others such as *I* and *II Esdras*. Likewise, many of the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers quoted from these books and implied that they were authoritative Scripture, including Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, and the authors of the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache*. [Ref. Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. iii ff. Also ref. Lee Martin McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, pp. 196-98.] In the 4th century many church leaders in the Greek-speaking East (including Eusebius, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Gregory of Nazianzus) distinguished between the books in the traditional Hebrew canon and the Apocrypha, while in the Latin West most clerics and scholars tended to integrate these writings into the Old Testament corpus.

The status and authority of the Apocrypha had always been controversial. The 1st century A.D. Alexandrian Jewish scholar **Philo** quoted and commented extensively from the Tanakh but never from the Apocrypha. Likewise, **Josephus** excluded the Apocrypha from his list of sacred books. [Josephus, *Against Apion*. I:8.] Furthermore, there is no indication that the Pharisaic Jewish scholars at Jamnia ever accepted these texts as divinely-inspired. Among other factors, it was often noted that none of these intertestamental writings includes the common authoritative declaration of the ancient prophets, “Thus saith the Lord.”

The first-known church leader to establish a set list of sacred Hebrew texts was **Melito** (d. 180), the bishop of Sardis. (He might also have been the first to refer to this collection of books as the “Old Covenant” or “Old Testament.”) Melito may have been motivated by the fact that Jewish scholars were debating the limits of the Scriptures in the 2nd century. Apparently, their lack of consensus on the issue prompted him to travel “to the east” (probably Judea) some time around the year 175 to research the matter. As the church historian Eusebius later recounted Melito’s testimony:

Accordingly, when I went East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, I learned accurately the books of the Old Covenant, and send them to you as written below. Their names are as follows:

Of Moses, five books: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Jesus Nave [Joshua]; Judges, Ruth; of Kings, four books [I and II Samuel and I and II Kings]; of Chronicles, two; the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, *Wisdom*; also, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job; of Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah; of the twelve [minor] prophets, one book; Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras [Ezra/Nehemiah]. From which also I have made the extracts, dividing them into six books. [Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV.26. 13-14.]

Many scholars suppose that Melito probably regarded Lamentations as an appendage to Jeremiah, but conspicuously absent from his list was the book of Esther. He also omitted all the writings of the Apocrypha other than “*Wisdom*” – either a reference to *Wisdom of Solomon* or *Wisdom of ben Sirach*.

Despite Melito’s efforts to establish the parameters of the Old Testament, subsequent Christian scholars over the next two centuries expressed various opinions regarding the scope of sacred literature, but none were identical. **Tertullian** (c. 160-225) never articulated a set list of books, but he seems to have accepted the Septuagint (including the “Septuagintal plus”) as authoritative Scripture. He considered the *Wisdom of Solomon* to be of Solomonic authorship, “The Song of the Three Hebrews” and the story of “Bel and the Dragon” to be credible additions to Daniel, and the “Letter of Jeremiah” to be authentically Jeremiah’s. Unlike most scholars, Tertullian even regarded obscure and generally discredited writings such as *I Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Ezra*, and the *Sibylline Oracles* as legitimate. In his comments on *I Enoch* he acknowledged that “the Scripture of *Enoch*... is not received by some [Christian scholars] because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon,” but he speculated that this was because “they did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that world wide calamity [i.e., Noah’s flood].” [Quoted in McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, p. 106.] [Note: Tertullian was a notorious misogynist – even by ancient history standards – and in his treatise

On Women's Dress he cited *I Enoch 8:1* as the source for his contention that Azaz'el, leader of the fallen angels, first introduced women to bracelets, ornamentation, eye-shadow, "the beautifying of eyelids," hair-dying, and jewelry in general.]

F. F. Bruce comments that Tertullian was representative of all the Western (Latin-speaking) church leaders before the time of Jerome in that "the Bible which they used [i.e., the Septuagint] provided them with no means of distinguishing those parts which belonged to the Hebrew canon from those which were found only in the Septuagint." [F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, p. 87.]

A generation after Tertullian, **Origen** (c. 185-254), the greatest Greek biblical scholar of antiquity, compiled a list of Old Testament books. Like Josephus, Origen was intent on preserving the twenty-two book tradition, and he drew a sharp distinction between the Apocrypha and the ancient Hebrew Scriptures. But even at that, he often referred to the Apocrypha and even cited other works outside the Septuagint. Like some other Christian scholars, Origen was prone to fudge a bit in his approach to the canon. In contrast to Melito, he included Esther in his list, but he also incorporated the apocryphal "Letter of Jeremiah" into the text of Jeremiah. After concluding his remarks with the comment, "These are the twenty-two books according to the Hebrews," he added: "Outside of these are the books of Maccabees."

In his dialogues with Jewish scholars Origen adhered to the narrower Jewish canon that excluded the Apocrypha, noting that "In discussions with the Jews, we do not bring forward what is not contained in their copies, but use in common with them the [books] which they recognize." However, in his *Homily on Numbers* he recommended that Christians read, in addition to the books of the Old Testament, apocryphal works such as *Judith*, *Tobit*, and the *Wisdom of Solomon*. (Origen also counseled Christians to avoid Numbers and Leviticus – probably because he considered them insufficiently inspirational.) His opinion of some marginal books changed over the years. For example, early in career, like his predecessor Clement of Alexandria, he accepted *I Enoch* as the work of the antediluvian patriarch, but he later doubted its authenticity. [See McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, pp. 177, 202.]

A half-century after Origen the **Clermont List** (*Codex Claromontanus*) of sacred books was compiled in Alexandria around the year 300. The Old Testament portion of the Clermont List followed the Septuagint order and included not only *I* and *II Maccabees* but also *IV Maccabees*. A few decades later, the scholar/bishop **Hilary of Poitiers** (c. 310-367) essentially followed Origen's list, but he added *Tobit* and *Judith* to make a twenty-four-book canon. He also combined the "Epistle of Jeremiah" and Lamentations with the book of Jeremiah.

In his annual Festal letter of 367, Bishop **Athanasius** of Alexandria (c. 297-373) was the first to use the term *kanon* specifically in reference to a list of books. Athanasius' twenty-two-book canon corresponded closely to that of Origen except that he excluded Esther and included *Baruch* and the "Letter of Jeremiah" in a single book with Jeremiah and Lamentations. Some scholars suspect that he probably also integrated the Greek additions to Daniel and Esther into those books as well. Following his list of Old Testament texts, he commented on the status of the Apocrypha:

But for the sake of greater accuracy I must needs... add this: there are other books outside these, which are not indeed included in the canon, but have been appointed from the time of the fathers to be read to those who are recent converts to our company and wish to be instructed in the word of true religion. These are the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Wisdom of Sirach* [*Ecclesiasticus*], *Esther*, *Judith*, and *Tobit*. [Cited in Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, p. 79.]

Curiously, Athanasius did not mention two of the most popular apocryphal books, *I* and *II Maccabees*, and he concluded his comments on the Old and New Testament canons with the stern warning, "Let no one add to these nor take anything from them."

About this same time **Cyril** (c. 313-86), the bishop of Jerusalem, also drafted a canonical list of twenty-two books that corresponded to that of Origen in which he integrated Lamentations, the "Letter of Jeremiah" and *Baruch* into the book of Jeremiah. Also like Origen, Cyril omitted the book of Esther from his canon, as did **Gregory of Nazianus** (c. 330-90) a few years later.

Epiphanius (c. 315-403), the bishop of Salamis, catalogued a twenty-two book canon identical to that

of the current Protestant Old Testament canon. However, he also held a high opinion of *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Wisdom of Sirach*, which he called “helpful and useful but are not included in the number of the recognized [Scriptures].”

In *An Exposition on the [Apostles] Creed*, **Rufinus of Aquileia** (345-410) delineated the “canonical” books of the Hebrew Bible from what he called the “ecclesiastical” books of the Apocrypha:

But it should be known that there are also other books which our fathers call not Canonical but Ecclesiastical: that is to say, *Wisdom*, called the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and another *Wisdom*, called the *Wisdom of the Son of Sirach*, which last-mentioned the Latins called by the general title *Ecclesiasticus*, designating not the author of the book, but the character of the writing. To the same class belong the Book of *Tobit*, and the Book of *Judith*, and the Books of the Maccabees.” [Cited in Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, p. 224.]

Beginning in 382 **Jerome** (340-420) translated the ancient Jewish and Christian writings into a new version of the Bible, the **Latin Vulgate**, which was to become the standard Roman Catholic Bible for the next 1500 years. Until he produced his version of the Old Testament, previous Old Latin texts had been direct renderings of the Septuagint. Jerome originally intended to follow the Hebrew canon and exclude the Apocrypha altogether, as he commented at the time: “Whatever falls outside these must be set apart among the Apocrypha.” [Cited in Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, p. 90.] However, his skepticism regarding the scriptural status of these writings

was not shared by most other Christian scholars, and at the insistence of **Bishop Damasus** of Rome (r. 366-84) and the renowned scholar, Augustine, he consented to translate many of these intertestamental writings. While he added a codicil to the effect that these books were never regarded as part of the canon and should not be used for the formulation of doctrine, Jerome also conceded that books such as *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Wisdom of Sirach*, *Judith* and *Tobit* contained wisdom that rendered them appropriate for reading in the context of Christian worship. Oddly, he

failed to mention the book of *Baruch*, and he noted that Jewish scholars had always dismissed the additions to Daniel as “fables.” As for the book of Esther, he included it in the non-canonical Apocrypha section.

Interestingly, the four great extant majuscule (uncial) codices of the Greek Bible from the 4th and 5th centuries incorporated some apocryphal texts into the Old Testament without any distinction between these books and the rest of the Hebrew canon – all of which suggests that Christian scholars and church leaders were still undecided regarding the precise parameters of the Old Testament even at this late a time:

- **Codex Sinaiticus** (c. 350) includes *Tobit*, *Judith*, *I-IV Maccabees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, and *Wisdom of Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*).
- **Codex Vaticanus** (c. 350) includes *Wisdom of Sirach* (*Ecclesiasticus*), *Judith*, *Tobit*, *Baruch*, and the “Letter of Jeremiah.” (Inexplicably, the books of *Maccabees* are absent.)
- **Codex Alexandrinus** (c. 425) includes *Baruch*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *I-IV Maccabees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Wisdom of Sirach*, *Psalms of Solomon* and the “Letter of Jeremiah.”
- **Codex Ephraemi** (5th century) contains *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Wisdom of Sirach*.



Augustine (354-430), the influential bishop of Hippo in North Africa and the most outstanding scholar of his era, strongly endorsed the Apocrypha. His biblical canon included Esther (including the “Additions”), *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Wisdom of Sirach*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Baruch*, the “Letter of Jeremiah,” *I-II Maccabees*, and the additions to Daniel. Under his influence the **Synod of Hippo** (393) and the **Councils of Carthage** (397 and 419) officially approved these books in their canonical pronouncements. Likewise, **Pope Innocent I** (r. 401-17) endorsed this same list, and for the next 1100 years there was little dispute regarding the status of the Apocrypha. Throughout the medieval era the Roman Catholic Church generally regarded these writings as Scripture. Occasionally, fastidious scholars such as Gregory the Great, Hugh of St. Victor and Hugh of St. Cher questioned their

legitimacy, but on the whole they were given a pass, as F. F. Bruce comments:

So far as the Old Testament was concerned, [the status of the Apocrypha]... was a matter of interest only to a minority. For purposes of devotion or edification, why make any distinction between Esther and *Judith*, or between Proverbs and *Wisdom [of Solomon]*?

It became customary to add to copies of the Latin Bible a few books which Jerome had not even included among those which were to be read ‘for the edification of the people,’ notably *III and IV Esdras* and the *Prayer of Manasseh*....

Throughout the following centuries most users of the Bible made no distinction between the apocryphal books and the others; all alike were handed down as part of the Vulgate. [Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, pp. 98-99.]

Part of this lack of discrimination regarding the status of the Apocrypha stems from the fact that during the medieval period the allegorical method of interpretation was commonly applied to Scripture (see Chapter 4). Those who were concerned primarily with the devotional, inspirational or “spiritual” meaning of the text understandably had relatively little interest in the historicity of these books.

In 1383 **John Wycliffe**, the great “Morning Star of the Reformation,” included the Apocrypha in his English translation of the Bible (other than *II Esdras*), although in his Prologue to the Old Testament he distinguished between these books and those of the traditional Hebrew canon. Regarding the additions to Esther and Daniel, Wycliffe and his associates noted Jerome’s remarks concerning these accretions.

The Reformation Era Debate

During the Reformation era controversy over the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, Protestants considered it imperative to distinguish between books that were doctrinally authoritative and those that were not. In fact, some Catholic scholars such as Cardinal Cajetan questioned the divine inspiration of the Apocrypha. Despite the fact that many early Christian scholars had regarded these books as “profitable reading,” some doubted their legitimacy on the basis of three factors.

- Skepticism on the part of Jewish scholars regarding the divine inspiration and authority of these books. As mentioned previously, none of these books contain predictive prophecy or any “Thus saith the Lord” pronouncements. For example, *I Maccabees 9:27* states, “So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.”
- Doctrinal problems. For example, *II Macc. 12:43-45* implies that prayers and “atonement” should be made for the dead “so that they might be delivered from their sin.”
- Historical and geographical inaccuracies. Some narratives in apocryphal accounts are clearly fictitious and/or mythical. For example, *II Esdras 6:42* implies that most of the earth’s surface is land: “On the third day you commanded the waters to be gathered together in a seventh part of the earth; six you dried up and kept so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service before you.”

In 1520 **Andreas Bodenstein** (a.k.a. Karlstadt), a colleague of Martin Luther at Wittenberg University, published a treatise in which he separated the canonical books of the Hebrew Old Testament from the Apocrypha. Bodenstein then distinguished between certain apocryphal books which he deemed “outside the Hebrew canon” yet “holy writings” – *Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, and I and II Maccabees* – and the more “controverted” and fanciful writings of the Apocrypha.

The first Bible to segregate the apocryphal books from the others was a Dutch Bible published by **Jacob van Liesveldt** in 1526. Following the Old Testament book of Malachi, the publisher set apart a separate section entitled, “The books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew.” About the same time the Swiss reformer, **Ulrich Zwingli**, in his Zurich Bible (1524-29), excluded the Apocrypha altogether and published these books in a separate volume. In 1530 Zwingli’s colleague, **Johann Oecolampadius**, summed up the view of many Protestants when he wrote, “We do not despise *Judith, Tobit, Baruch,*

Ecclesiasticus, the last two books of *Esdras*, the three books of *Maccabees*, the Additions to Daniel; but we do not allow them divine authority with the others.” [Quoted in Metzger and Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, p. vii.]

In his German translation of the Old Testament (1534), **Martin Luther** relegated the Apocrypha to an appendix entitled: “The Apocrypha: Books which are not to be held equal to holy scripture, but are useful and good to read.”

Meanwhile, the history of Bible translation in England, being directly influenced and often controlled by political factors, was unsettled for decades. The brilliant scholar **William Tyndale** was martyred in 1536 before he finished translating the Old Testament, but in all likelihood he would have followed Luther’s precedent and segregated the Apocrypha from the traditional Hebrew canon. **Miles Coverdale’s** English Bible of 1535 followed the trend by the Continental Protestant reformers and placed the Apocrypha after the Old Testament, separated by a title page reading, “Apocripha.” Likewise, so did the **Matthew’s Bible** of 1537, which was essentially an officially approved version of Tyndale’s translation. Thirty years later, the **Bishop’s Bible** of 1568 added the Apocrypha in a section following the Old Testament with no introductory commentary.

The Church of England adopted a compromise position on the Apocrypha. Readings from the Apocrypha were incorporated into the lectionary attached to the Book of Common Prayer from 1549 onward, and passages from these books were included in the liturgy. However, Article VI of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1562) contained a list of books “necessary to salvation” that excluded the Apocrypha, followed by a separate section of “other Books the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.” (Readings from the Apocrypha are included in most modern lectionaries in the Anglican Communion, based on the Revised Common Lectionary.)

Puritans were more critical of these books than mainstream Anglicans due to their association with Roman Catholicism. The **Geneva Bible** of 1560 included the Apocrypha in a section following the Old Testament along with an explanatory paragraph that

commended them for their historical value and “for the instruction of godly manners,” but cautioned against citing them in doctrinal matters except so far that their teachings were confirmed by canonical books. However, a later edition of the Geneva Bible published in 1599 excluded the Apocrypha altogether, which began a trend among more conservative Protestants.

The **Authorized (King James) Bible** of 1611, being essentially a revision of the Bishops’ Bible, continued the tradition of featuring the Apocrypha in a separate section. In addition to the Catholic deuterocanonical books and additions, the KJV included *I Esdras* (Vulgate *III Esdras*), *II Esdras* (Vulgate *IV Esdras*), and the “Prayer of Manasses.” It was also during this time that the Archbishop of Canterbury outlawed the printing and selling of Bibles without the Apocrypha on penalty of one year’s imprisonment, but the controversy remained far from resolved. In 1644, in the midst of the English Civil War, the Puritan-controlled Long Parliament turned the tables and outlawed the reading of the Apocrypha in church services. Three years later the Westminster Assembly of Divines produced the **Westminster Confession of Faith**. In Chapter 1, Article, 2, the document listed the books that constitute “the Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written,” followed by a paragraph that stated, “The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.” As a result, by the mid-1600s most versions of the King James Bible omitted the disputed books, although with the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 the lectionary readings from the Apocrypha were restored in Anglican church services.

The first Bible published in America was **John Eliot’s “Indian Bible”** (1661-63), in which he translated the Geneva Bible into the Algonquin language. Being a staunch Puritan, Eliot excluded the Apocrypha. In 1782, with the Revolution having cut off the supply of Bibles to America, **Robert Aitken**, a Philadelphia printer, petitioned the U.S. Congress to authorize a new edition of the Bible. The Aitken Bible was reviewed and approved by Congress, after which the *Journals of Congress* recorded:

Resolved. That the United States in Congress assembled highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitkin, as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an influence of the progress of arts in this country and being satisfied from the above report, they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States and hereby authorize him to publish this recommendation.

In keeping with the sensibilities of most American Protestants, Aitken omitted the Apocrypha from his edition of the Bible, as did most all subsequent American Protestant Bibles.

Traditionally, of course, Roman Catholics have viewed these books as “deuterocanonical” and therefore part of the Bible. In 1546, in response to the Protestant criticism of the Apocrypha, the **Council of Trent** (1545-63) officially accorded full canonical status to these books, ignoring Jerome’s distinction between the books of the traditional Hebrew canon and those that were to be read only “for the edification of the people.” In their decree the Catholic prelates pronounced an anathema upon anyone who “does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety... as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition.” Inexplicably, the Council did not accord canonical status to the “Prayer of Manasseh” and *I* and *II Esdras* despite the fact that these books had been included in some manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate.

Like the Catholic Church, the various Eastern Orthodox Churches have also accepted these books as deuterocanonical, but only in the sense that they are secondary in terms of authority to the rest of the Old Testament. The canonical status of these texts had been accepted for more than a millennium by Orthodox Christians, but it wasn’t until 1642 and 1672 that Orthodox synods at Jassy (Iasi) and Jerusalem officially recognized the Deuterocanon as “genuine parts of Scripture.” In addition to the seven books included in the Roman Catholic Bible – *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Wisdom of Solomon*; *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira*, *Baruch*, and *I* and *II Maccabees* – the Eastern Orthodox canon includes *III Maccabees* and *I Esdras*. *Baruch* is divided from the “Letter of Jeremiah,” making a total of 49 Old Testament books in contrast to the Protestant 39-book canon. Other texts included in various Orthodox Bibles include *Psalms 151* and the “Prayer of Manasses” which, as in Catholic Bibles, are integrated into the Old Testament rather than printed in a separate section. In addition, two other books are included as an appendix: *IV Maccabees* and *II Esdras*. However, it should be emphasized that most Orthodox scholars continue to regard these writings as a lower level of authority than the “protocanonical” texts of the traditional Hebrew Bible.

