
The Apocrypha

The word **Apocrypha** means “hidden,” or “secret.” The term “Apocrypha” is usually applied to a collection of books, from eleven to sixteen in number, which appeared during the interim between the Old and New Testaments. These books have come down to us in more or less close connection with the canonical books of the Bible.

These books have a strange history. Ecclesiastical opinion in different periods has differed widely as to the value of this literature, and as to whether any of these books are divinely inspired. The Jews of the Dispersion in Egypt placed a high estimate upon these books and included them in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint; but they were rejected from the Hebrew canon by the Jews of Palestine.

The Roman Catholic Church, in the Council of Trent, 1546 AD, declared eleven of the books to be canonical, and they appear in the modern Catholic editions of the Scriptures.

The View of the Protestant Church

It is commonly agreed that some of these books contain material of literary merit and historical value. But the canonicity of all of the books of the Apocrypha has been rejected, and they have been gradually omitted from the modern editions of the Protestant Bibles, for the following reasons:

1. They are never quoted by Jesus, and it is doubtful if they were ever alluded to by the apostles.
2. Most of the early Church Fathers regarded them as non inspired.
3. The books did not appear in the Ancient Hebrew canon.
4. The inferior quality of most of the writings, as compared with the canonical books, stamps

them as unworthy of a place in the sacred Scriptures.

Character of the Books

Authorities differ as to the classification of these books. The Epistle of Jeremiah is often incorporated in the Book of Baruch, and III and IV Maccabees are often omitted.

Historic – I and II Maccabees; I Esdras

Traditional – Additions to Esther; Susanna; Song of the Three Holy Children; Bel and the Dragon; Judith; Tobit

Prophetic – Baruch; Prayer of Manasses

Apocalyptic – II Esdras; IV Esdras in the Latin Vulgate

Instructive – Ecclesiasticus; The Wisdom of Solomon (in style like the Proverbs)

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