

Errors and Contradictions in the Apocrypha

The Apocrypha (ἀπόκρυφα means “hidden”) is a set of books written between approximately 400 B.C. and the time of Christ that is rejected by Protestants and officially accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1546 as being inspired. These books are Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch.

But if the Apocrypha is a [Scripture](#), then it should not have any errors. But since it does have errors, as will be demonstrated below, this puts into question whether or not the Roman Catholic Church has properly used its self-proclaimed position as the teaching authority of the Christian Church. If it can error in such an important manner as what is Scripture, can it be trusted to properly teach the Christian Church? The following references can be verified at <http://www.newadvent.org/bible>.

Condone the use of magic

Tobit 6:5-7, “Then the angel said to him: Take out the entrails of this fish, and lay up his heart, and his gall, and his liver for thee: for these are necessary for useful medicines. 6 And when he had done so, he roasted the flesh thereof, and they took it with them in the way: the rest they salted as much as might serve them, till they came to Rages the city of the Medes. 7 Then Tobias asked the angel, and said to him: I beseech thee, brother Azarias, tell me what remedies are these things good for, which thou hast bid me keep of the fish? 8 And the angel, answering, said to him: If thou put a little piece of its heart upon coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kind of devils, either from man or from woman, so that they come no more to them.”

Is it true that the smoke from a fish’s heart, when burned, drives away evil spirits? Of course not. Such a superstitious teaching has no place in the word of God.

Teaches that forgiveness of sins is by human effort.

Salvation by works:

- Tobit 4:11, “For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.”
- Tobit 12:9, “For alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting.”

We know from Scripture that alms (money or food given to the poor or needy as charity) does not purge our sins. The blood of Christ is what cleanses us – not money or food given to poor people. “But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin,” (1 John 1:7).

Money as an offering for the sins of the dead:

2 Maccabees 12:43, “And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection.”

Can anyone truly accept that money isn't offering for the sins of dead people? Such a superstitious and unbiblical concept has no place in Scripture.

Historical Errors

Wrong historical facts:

- Judith 1:5, "Now in the twelfth year of his reign, Nabuchodonosor, king of the Assyrians, who reigned in Ninive the great city, fought against Arphaxad and overcame him."
 - The book of Judith incorrectly says that Nebuchadnezzar II was the king of the Assyrians when he was the king of the Babylonians.¹ Nebuchadnezzar II did not rule in the city of Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar II was the longest-reigning king of the Neo-Babylonian (625-539 b.c.). Arphaxad was not a real person
 - Judith 4:6 mentions a town called "Bethulia"
Judith 2 mentions a General called "Holofernes" not known to history.
 - Baruch 6:2, "And when you are come into Babylon, you shall be there many years, and for a long time, even to seven generations: and after that I will bring you away from thence with peace."
 - Baruch 6:2 says the Jews would serve in Babylon for seven generations where Jer. 25:11 says it was for 70 years. "And this whole land shall be a desolation and a horror, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years."
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Don Stewart :: Why Were the Books of the Old Testament Apocrypha Rejected as Holy Scripture by the Protestants?

The Old Testament Apocrypha consists of eleven or twelve books, depending upon how they are divided, that the Roman Catholic Church adds to the Old Testament. The Protestants reject these books as Holy Scripture for the following reasons.

1. The Apocrypha Has Different Doctrine And Practices Than Holy Scripture

There are doctrines and practices contained in the Apocrypha that are contrary to what the Scripture teaches. They include the following.

They Teach A Person Is Saved By Works

In the Apocrypha proof texts can be found to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by human works and not faith alone. The Apocrypha contains the following verses.

For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life (Tobit 12:9).

In another place in Tobit it says.

So now, my children see what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does it brings death! (Tobit 14:11).

In the Book of First Maccabees it says.

Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (First Maccabees 2:52).

The Bible, on the other hand, says that a person is saved by grace through faith. It is not based upon our good works.

For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast ([Ephesians 2:8,9](#)).

The Non-biblical Doctrine Of Purgatory Is Taught In The Apocrypha

The doctrine of purgatory - a place of purging between heaven and hell - is taught in the Apocrypha. It says.

So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to supplication, praying that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened as the result of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin (Second Maccabees 12:41-45).

The Bible teaches that, upon death, one either goes to be with the Lord or is sent away from Him - there is no middle place. The writer to the Hebrews stated.

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).

According To The Apocrypha God Hears The Prayers Of The Dead

We find the Book of Baruch teaching that God hears the prayers of those who have died.

O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the dead of Israel, the children of those who sinned before you, who did not heed the voice of the Lord their God, so that calamities have clung to us (Baruch 3:4).

The dead do not pray for the living. Only the living upon the earth pray for the other living ones on the earth.

The Apocrypha Teaches The Pre-existence Of Souls

The doctrine of the pre-existence of souls is found in the Apocrypha.

As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body (Wisdom 8:19,20).

Scripture does not teach that souls have any existence before they are united into a body.

It Teaches Creation Out Of Pre-Existent Matter

The doctrine of creation out of pre-existent matter is taught in the Apocrypha.

For your all-powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter, did not lack the means to send upon them a multitude of bears, or bold lions (Wisdom 11:17).

The Bible says that God's creation was out of nothing.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible ([Hebrews 11:3](#)).

The Apocrypha Say The Body Weighs Down The Soul

The idea of the body as a weight upon the soul is found in the Apocrypha.

For a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind (Wisdom 9:15).

The idea that the body weighs down the soul is not biblical - the body is not evil.

All of these doctrines are contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture.

2. The Apocrypha Is Never Cited In The New Testament As Scripture

Though the New Testament cites directly, or alludes to, almost every book of the Old Testament as Scripture, it never cites the Apocrypha as being God's Word. The Apocrypha was not the Bible of Jesus or His apostles. While Jesus and His apostles often quoted from the Septuagint, they never quoted from the Apocrypha.

Allusions Are Not The Same As Scripture

While there may be some allusions to the apocryphal books by New Testament writers there is no direct quote from them. An allusion is not the same as a direct quote.

No Statement Introduced By "It Is Written"

In addition, no New Testament writer ever refers to any of these books as authoritative. Quotes from the accepted books are usually introduced by the phrase, "It is written," or the passage is quoted to prove a point. But never do the New Testament writers quote the Apocrypha in this way.

Furthermore no book of the Apocrypha is mentioned by name in the New Testament.

There Are Others Books Directly Quoted Apart From Apocrypha

Add to this, there are certain books that both Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church reject as Scripture that are actually cited in the New Testament. Jude cites the apocryphal book of Enoch.

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, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him" ([Jude 14,15](#)).

Paul cites the name of the magicians of Pharaoh who opposed Moses. These names are not mentioned in the Old Testament.

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth - men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected ([2 Timothy 3:8](#)).

If the writers of the New Testament considered the Apocrypha to be Scripture, we would certainly expect them to refer to it in some way. However we find no direct quotations. This is in contrast to over 250 quotations from the authoritative Old Testament Scriptures.

The fact that the present canon was repeatedly quoted as being divinely authoritative as well as the absence of any direct quote is another indication of the extent of the canon - it did not include the Apocrypha.

3. The Apocrypha Has Always Been Rejected By The Jews As Scripture

The Jews have never considered these works to be divinely inspired. On the contrary, they denied their authority. At the time of Christ we have the testimony of the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus that they were only twenty-two books divinely inspired by God. These books are the same as our thirty-nine in the Old Testament. The books of the Apocrypha were not among these. The same testimony is found in Second Esdras - the Ezra legend. This work was written in A.D. 100. Therefore these books were never part of the Hebrew canon of Scripture.

4. The Books Of The Apocrypha Were Written During The Silent Years

The books of the Apocrypha were written during the four hundred silent years between the Book of Malachi and the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist. Jewish and New Testament sources both agree that no divinely inspired prophetic utterance occurred during this time.

5. The Septuagint Translation Proves Nothing

The fact that the Apocrypha is found in the Septuagint translation does not prove anything. It merely testifies that the Alexandrian Jews translated other religious material into Greek apart from the Old Testament Scripture. A Greek translation is not the same thing as a book being part of the Hebrew canon.

6. There Is No Evidence The Apocrypha Was In Septuagint At The Time Of Christ

There is no evidence that the books of the Apocrypha were in the Septuagint as early as the time of Christ. The earliest manuscripts that contain them date back to the fourth century A.D. This does not demonstrate that the books of the Apocrypha were part of the Septuagint in pre-Christian times. Even if they were in the Septuagint at this early date, it is noteworthy that neither Christ nor the apostles ever

quoted from them as they did with most of the Old Testament books. In addition, books were merely translated in Alexandria, Egypt - they were not canonized there.

There is no clear answer as to what the first century Septuagint contained. The fourth or fifth century Greek manuscripts, in which the Apocrypha appears, have no consistency with the number of books or their order.

7. There Is No Evidence Of A Greater Alexandrian Canon

It has been argued that the canon of the Alexandrian Jews was larger than the present Hebrew Old Testament. However, there is no evidence that the Jews in Alexandria, Egypt had a wider canon than the Jews living in Israel. Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the first century A.D., wrote on a number of subjects. He acknowledged the Jews believed in the divine authority of the Hebrew canon. However, he gave no indication that there was a wider canon used by the Jews living in Egypt. From Philo we find that the canon in Alexandria, Egypt was the same as in Palestine. He knows the threefold division of the Old Testament as ascribes divine inspiration to many of the books. In addition, he says nothing about the Apocrypha. Consequently there is no evidence anywhere that the Alexandrian Jews accepted the Apocrypha as Holy Scripture.

It must be remembered that it was not the Jews in Egypt but rather some of the Greek-speaking Christians who gave some measure of authoritative status to certain of these books translated with the Septuagint plus. To the Jews, these books were never considered divinely inspired Scripture.

8. They Are Not On The Early Canonical Lists

In the early years of the church it drew up various lists of the books it considered to be Old Testament Scripture. The books of the Apocrypha do not appear on any list until late in the fourth century. This demonstrates the acceptance of these writings was not immediate.

The Apocrypha Is Missing From The Earliest List

The earliest existing list of the Old Testament canon comes from a man named Melito, a bishop of Sardis. In approximately A.D. 170 he wrote the following.

When I came to the east and reached the place where these things were preached and done, and learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, I set down the facts and sent them to you. These are their names: the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of the Kingdom, two books of Chronicles, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon and his wisdom, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, The Twelve in a single book, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra.

This list of Melito is highly instructive. He includes all the books of the present canon except Esther. The reference to the four books of the kingdom would be 1,2 Samuel and 1,2 Kings. Ezra was the common way to refer to Ezra-Nehemiah. Wisdom was merely a fuller description of the Book of Proverbs - not the Apocryphal book by that name. Among ancient writers Proverbs was often called Wisdom.

While including all of the books of the present Old Testament canon (except Esther) Melito nowhere mentions any of the books of the Apocrypha.

9. They Were Rejected By Most Church Leaders

While a few of the early leaders of the church accepted some of the books of Apocrypha as Scripture, most of the great church leaders did not-Athanasius, Origen, and Jerome, to name a few. Many great church leaders spoke out against the Apocrypha. Those who do cite the Apocrypha as Scripture were few in number.

It is also worth noting that *none* of the church fathers that quoted the Apocrypha as Scripture knew any Hebrew.

The Clear Testimony Of Athanasius Toward The Apocrypha

In A.D. 367, the great defender of orthodox belief, Athanasius bishop of Alexandria, wrote a letter. In this letter he affirmed all the books of the present Old Testament canon (except Esther) as well as all the books of the present New Testament canon. He also mentioned some of the books of the Apocrypha. Of those he said.

[They are] not included in the canon, but appointed by the Fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish instruction in the world of godliness.

This is another ancient and powerful testimony that the books of the Apocrypha were not considered to be Holy Scripture.

10. There Are Other Books Apart From The Apocrypha That Are Cited As Scripture By Some Church Fathers

The Church Fathers do not restrict themselves to the books that now make up the Apocrypha. Authors such as Justin, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria occasionally use books outside the present Apocrypha - especially the Book of Enoch and First Esdras (Third Esdras).

Clement of Alexandria accepted Second Esdras (Fourth Esdras). Origen believed that the books of First and Second Maccabees, as well as the Letter to Jeremiah, were part of Holy Scripture. Irenaeus cited the Book of Wisdom as being divinely inspired. **Therefore appeal to the church fathers cannot settle the matter, seeing that they give conflicting evidence.**

11. The Early Greek Manuscripts Are Not Decisive

The fact that some of the books from the Apocrypha are found in early Greek manuscripts of the Bible is not decisive. These manuscripts also contain other written works that are neither part of the Scripture nor part of the Apocrypha - everyone rejects them as having any divine authority. For example, 3 and 4 Maccabees and the Psalms of Solomon are found in these early Greek manuscripts along with the Greek Old Testament and the Apocrypha. If someone points to the inclusion of the Apocrypha among these early manuscripts as proof of their divine authority, then what do they do with these other works? Should they also be added to the Old Testament?

The Books Have A Different Order And Content

In the three most important Greek manuscripts the order and the contents of the books are different.

In Vaticanus we find: Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, and the Letter to Jeremiah.

In Sinaaiticus the list includes: Tobit, Judith, First Maccabees, Fourth Maccabees, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus.

In Alexandrinus the order is: Tobit, Judith, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, Third Maccabees, Fourth Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and the Psalms of Solomon.

Therefore the early Greek manuscripts give no consistent testimony.

12. The Apocrypha Is Not A Well-Defined Unit

One of the main problems with accepting the Apocrypha as Scripture is that it is not a well-defined unit. Three of the books in the Septuagint plus were excluded as Holy Scripture - First and Second Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. If the books in the Septuagint plus should be made part of the Old Testament then why are these three books omitted?

The Latin Vulgate contains First and Second Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh in the Apocrypha. First and Second Esdras are found in most Latin manuscripts of Scripture. In addition, they are placed with the Apocrypha when the full *King James* Version is printed.

However the Roman Catholic Church does not call these three books Scripture. Sometimes these three books are printed as an appendix to Roman Catholic Bibles after the New Testament. Sometimes they are omitted entirely.

In addition, not every church Father, which accepted the Apocrypha as canonical, had exactly the same list of books in mind. This adds to the problem as to the exact content of the Apocrypha.

13. The Councils At Hippo And Carthage Are Not Definitive

The fact that the councils of Hippo and Carthage accepted the canonical status of the Apocrypha is not decisive. First, they were not larger more representative councils. In addition, these councils had no qualified Hebrew scholar in attendance. Basically the Apocrypha was canonized at these councils because of the influence of one person - Saint Augustine.

14. The Ambiguous Testimony Of Saint Augustine

It is often argued that the great scholar, St. Augustine, accepted the books of the Apocrypha as authoritative. However, Augustine seemed to have changed his mind about the authority of the Apocrypha. At one point he implied that the Apocrypha did not have the same status as Holy Scripture (*City of God* 18.36). At best his testimony is ambiguous. Moreover Augustine's testimony, while important, is certainly not the last word on the matter.

Augustine mistakenly accepted the miraculous account of the origin of the Septuagint. While this was a popular thing to do at his time, no one today takes the story seriously.

15. The Clear Rejection By A Real Authority - Jerome

There was one great Hebrew scholar among the Christian Church living in the era of Saint Augustine - Jerome the translator of the Latin Vulgate. Jerome rejected the Apocrypha as Holy Scripture in the strongest of terms. He refused to place it in his translation of the Old Testament. It was only after the death of Jerome that the Apocrypha was placed in the Vulgate - the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church. His expert testimony was rejected.

16. Early Christian Art Is Not A Test Of Divine Truth

The fact that stories from the Apocrypha were depicted in early Christian art only shows that they were considered valuable in some sense by believers. However the divine authority of any work is not determined by whether it is included or missing in art collections by Christians.

17. They Were Rejected By Many Catholic Scholars Through The Protestant Reformation

Many Roman Catholic scholars, through the Protestant Reformation, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture. Even the Roman Catholic Church made a distinction between the Apocrypha and the other books of the Bible prior to the Protestant Reformation. An example of this is Cardinal Cajetan. He is the man who opposed Martin Luther at Augsburg. In 1518, he published *A Commentary on all the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament*. His commentary, however, did not include the Apocrypha.

Cardinal Ximenes made a distinction between the Apocrypha and the Old Testament in his work called the *Complutensian Polyglot* (1514-1517).

Thus there was no unanimity of opinion among Roman Catholic scholars that these books should be considered Scripture. Consequently, before the Protestant Reformation these books were not considered canonical by all of the church authorities.

18. They Were Not Officially Accepted By The Roman Catholic Church Until The 16th Century

While councils at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) listed the Apocrypha as canonical, this was not the stated view of the entire church. As we have seen there were Roman Catholic works at the time of the Protestant Reformation that did not include the Apocrypha with the Old Testament.

It is only since the Council of Trent that the Apocrypha has had an authoritative status. The first official council of the Roman Catholic Church to ratify these books was at the Council of Trent in 1546-1563. There is no official record of the acceptance of the writings as authoritative Scripture before this time.

Why Were Certain Books Of The Septuagint Plus Rejected?

In addition, the decision at Trent has many problems. Rather than accepting the entire fourteen or fifteen books of the Septuagint plus as Holy Scripture they rejected First and Second Esdras (which they call Third and Fourth Esdras) and the Prayer of Manasseh. It is interesting to note that Second Esdras, or Fourth Esdras in Roman Catholic reckoning, contains a strong objection against prayers for the dead - one of the important doctrines practiced by the Roman Catholic Church at that time.

Second Esdras also limits the Old Testament canon to twenty-four books. This of course, would exclude the Apocrypha.

It must also be noted that at the Council of Trent there seems to have been no Hebrew scholars and only a few good Greek scholars.

19. There Are Other Books, Apart From Scripture, Found Among The Dead Sea Scrolls

Most scholars believe that the people who lived at the place near the Dead Sea, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, were the Essenes. Although they were rivals of mainstream Judaism they accepted the same books as Holy Scripture. While it is true that the books of the Apocrypha were found among the scrolls left by this group, they not the only non-canonical books that were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The materials found at Qumran were part of a library - they were not merely books of

Scripture. While commentaries of the biblical books have been found at Qumran no commentary has thus far been found on the Apocryphal books. Consequently there is no evidence whatsoever that the Dead Sea Community held the books of the Apocrypha to be divinely inspired.

Even if evidence were someday found that showed the Essenes believed the Apocrypha to be divine, this would prove nothing. This group was a sect that was not in the mainstream of Jewish thinking.

20. The Protestants Have Always Rejected The Divine Authority Of The Apocrypha

While some Protestants may find some use of the Apocrypha, such as printing it between the testaments and using it in some measure in public worship, it has never been accepted as Holy Scripture. The use by Protestants of the Apocrypha has never been to establish doctrine or settle doctrinal issues. The use of the Apocrypha is limited. The Church of England in their Bible readings say the Apocrypha is to be used for example of life, but not to establish any doctrine.

The Westminster Confession goes even further. It states.

The books commonly called the Apocrypha . . . [are not] to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings (Westminster Confession 1:3).

This is the Protestant position.

21. There Are Demonstrable Historical Errors In The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha also contains demonstrable historical errors. We can cite a number of examples.

The Age Of Tobit When He Died Is A Contradiction

For example, Tobit was supposedly alive when Jeroboam staged his revolt in 931 B.C.

I, Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. I performed many acts of charity for my kindred and my people who had gone with me in exile to Nineveh in the land of the Assyrians. When I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem. This city had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes of Israel should offer sacrifice and where the temple, the dwelling of God, had been consecrated and established for all generations forever. All my kindred and our ancestral house of Naphtali sacrificed to the calf that King Jeroboam of Israel had erected in Dan and on all the mountains of Galilee (Tobit 1:3-5).

Yet the text says that Tobit was still alive when the Assyrians captured the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. This means that he lived over two hundred years!

However, the Book of Tobit says he lived only 112 years.

So ended Tobit's words of praise. Tobit died in peace when he was one hundred twelve years old, and was buried with great honor in Nineveh (Tobit 14:1,2).

This is an obvious contradiction. Those who believe in an inerrant Scripture cannot accept the Apocrypha as God's Word.

Errors In The Book Of Judith

Another example can be found in the opening verse of the Book of Judith.

It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh. In those days Arphaxad ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana (Judith 1:1).

There are two historical errors in this verse. Nebuchadnezzar was the ruler of the Babylonians, not the Assyrians, and he ruled from Babylon, not Nineveh.

It Is Not Possible To Defend The Historical Accuracy Of The Apocrypha

While it is possible for Bible scholars, using the most up-to-date archaeological knowledge, to defend the historical accuracy of the books of the Bible, it is not possible to argue for the historical accuracy of the books of the Apocrypha. Many of them have demonstrable errors that cannot be reconciled.

22. There Is Sub-Biblical Content In The Books Of The Apocrypha

The content of the books of the Apocrypha is below that of canonical Scripture. Several of the books including Judith, Tobit, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon read like legends. When one reads these books alongside canonical Scripture the differences become obvious.

23. There Is No Objective Evidence Of Divine Authority In The Apocrypha

The books of the Apocrypha do not contain anything like predictive prophecy, or the firsthand testimony of miracles, that would give evidence of their divine authority. If God divinely inspired these books, then we should expect to see some internal evidence confirming it. But there is none.

24. None Of The Books Of The Apocrypha Claim Divine Authority

From the documents themselves we find no claim of authority. This is in contrast to the books of the Old Testament that claim to record the words that God spoke and the deeds that He performed among the people. Therefore it is not logical to attribute God's authority to the books of the Apocrypha when they themselves make no claim to divine authority.

25. There Was No Hebrew Original For All Of The Books Of the Apocrypha

While the books of the present Old Testament canon were written in Hebrew, with small parts in Aramaic, some of the books of the Apocrypha have no Hebrew original behind them. They were composed in Greek. These include Susanna, the Letter of Jeremiah, and the additions to Esther.

While the Hebrew language is not a determining factor as to what books should be part of the Old Testament canon all of the undisputed books of the Old Testament were composed in Hebrew - none of them were composed in Greek. Greek did not become the international language till about 330 B.C. This was about seventy years after the close of the Old Testament. The fact that a number of the books of the Apocrypha were originally written in Greek shows their late date and their lack of claim to be part of the Old Testament.

26. There Is Nothing New Added To God's Truth

The teaching of the Apocrypha adds nothing new to the faith that God has revealed to humanity. There is nothing in these books that adds to our knowledge of God's character or His plan. At best, they simply

repeat what is already revealed in the Old Testament. Consequently they do not contain any further revelation.

27. Jesus' Testimony Is Definitive

It is clear that in the first century the Old Testament was complete. Jesus put His stamp of approval on the books of the Hebrew Old Testament but said nothing concerning the Apocrypha. However, He did say that the Scriptures were the authoritative Word of God and they could not be broken. Any adding to that which God has revealed is denounced in the strongest of terms. Jesus asked the religious leaders a penetrating question.

Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ([Matthew 15:3](#)).

Jesus' And The Extent Of The Old Testament

A statement by Jesus seemingly gives His belief in the extent of the Old Testament.

Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation ([Matthew 23:34-36](#)).

He mentions Abel and Zechariah as the first and last messengers of God that were murdered. Abel's murder is mentioned in Genesis while Zechariah's was in 2 Chronicles - the last Old Testament book in the Hebrew canonical order. The fact that these two are specifically mentioned is particularly significant. There are other murders of God's messengers recorded in the Apocrypha. Jesus does not mention them. This strongly suggests He did not consider the books of the Apocrypha as part of Old Testament Scripture as with the books from Genesis to 2 Chronicles.

There Was More Testimony From Jesus

Jesus gave further testimony of the extent of the Old Testament canon in the day of His resurrection. He said.

How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! . . . And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself ([Luke 24:25,27](#)).

Note Jesus' emphasis on "all that the prophets had spoken." Later He explained the extent of "all that the prophets had said."

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" ([Luke 24:44](#)).

This is a reference to the threefold division of the Hebrew Scripture. They constitute "all that the prophets said." There is no reference to the Apocrypha. It would not have been part of the threefold division of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament Apocrypha Is Not Scripture

As the evidence is examined it becomes clear that the books of the Apocrypha should not be accepted with the same divine authority as the books found in the Hebrew Old Testament. There is no evidence whatsoever that they belong in Holy Scripture. To the contrary, all the evidence speaks to their exclusion. Because they are not Scripture it is wrong to have them bound in a single volume with Holy Scripture. Doing so will only mislead believers.

The Apocrypha Does Have Value

The fact that the Apocrypha is not considered to be Holy Scripture does not mean that it is entirely worthless. The books do have some value. For example, the Book of First Maccabees has some valuable historical references about the period between the testaments. However any value these books do have are as historical works - not divinely inspired Scripture.

It Is An Important Matter

The issue as to which books belong in Holy Scripture is more than a historical issue. The books of the Bible are divinely revealed books - all other books are not. The Scripture gives God's truth in an error-free manner - no other book can claim this. The Scripture is the final authority to solve all doctrinal and behavioral issues. Therefore it is of primary importance that we know the extent of Scripture.

Summary

The books of the Apocrypha should not be considered as Holy Scripture because they do not give any evidence as being authoritative. Protestants deny the canonical status of these books on the basis of both internal and external evidence. This evidence includes the following.

First, the Apocrypha contains doctrines and practices that contradict what has been previously revealed in Scripture. Add to this the Apocrypha is never cited in the New Testament as Holy Scripture. This is in contrast to the canonical books - almost all of them are cited.

The Jews rejected the Apocrypha as being part of God's Word. For one reason, these books were written after God had ceased giving divine revelation. In these years God was not giving any authoritative word to His people.

The fact that the Apocrypha is found in the manuscripts of the Septuagint proves nothing - we do not know the content of the Septuagint in pre-Christian times. Furthermore there is no evidence of a wider Alexandrian canon of Scripture. The Jews, wherever they lived, used the same Hebrew canon that did not include the Apocrypha.

The Apocrypha was not on any early list of Christian books that were considered Scripture. While a few church fathers quoted them as authoritative, most did not. In addition, none of those fathers who cited the Apocrypha as authoritative Scripture knew any Hebrew.

There is also the problem with the exact content of the Apocrypha. The books contained in the Apocrypha are not well defined - not everyone can agree on which books are authoritative.

Augustine, while a great thinker, did not read Hebrew and knew very little Greek. Furthermore he accepted the fanciful account of the origin of the Septuagint. Jerome, a real Hebrew scholar rejected the books outright.

Many Roman Catholic scholars, to the time of the Protestant Reformation, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture.

While some Protestants make some use of the Apocrypha it has always been rejected as Scripture.

Another major problem for the Apocrypha is demonstrable historical errors in it. This is not consistent with God's Word being error-free. Furthermore there is no evidence in these books of divine authority - fulfilled prophecy is lacking. Add to this there is no claim within the books of God's authority.

Finally we have the testimony of Jesus. He said the Scriptures were true and could not be broken. However the Apocrypha was not Scripture to Him. Since neither the Jews, Jesus, or His apostles considered these writings as part of the Old Testament neither should we.

We conclude that the present thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are the complete Scripture that God has given us. There are no other divinely authoritative books of Scripture that belong to the Old Testament.