

The Apocrypha

There has been found a substantial collection of works published under the names of the Apostles from the 2nd century forward. Almost all were deliberate fabrications without any serious claims to be part of the accepted canon of Scripture. Many tried to pass these writings as if from an apostle, the gospel of Thomas the apocalypse of Peter, the Acts of John. Books such as the gospel of Mary and many others which were written over a period of 100 -500 years later.

Apocrypha means hidden things. The word Apocrypha was then associated with the meaning spurious or untrue. These writings consist of 13 books 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, an addition of Esther, additions to Daniel, Wisdom of Solomon. Ecclesiasticus (also known as the wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach) Baruch, the letter of Jeremiah, the prayer of Manasses and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

Some of these books are traced to the inter-testamental period such as Maccabees. There were 400 years of silence in the inter- testamental period where God did not speak nor have prophets. 1 Maccabees 9:27 and 14:41 tell us the prophets ceased to appear among the people. So the book of Maccabees as well as the Apocrypha could never be considered inspired scripture equal to the Old Testament these books were always held as historical writings with some questionable accuracy not as inspire writ. If God was silent in this inter testament period, no inspiration or prophetic writing, where does this put the Apocrypha?

Some find a similar quote in 2 Esdras 7 of Heb.11 therefore the Apocryphal book is now inspired. We may find the same rare quotes in other religions as well but this does not validate their religion as true. An example would be Paul in Acts 17 who quotes from one of the Greeks own poets book. Yes there may be some truth in the Apocrypha, no one is disputing this, but they were never considered inspired as the Scripture.

The reasons become obvious as we examine the contradictions to the received Scriptures. We read in of suicide being commended in 2 Maccabees 14: 41, 42, and the writer apologizes for defects. It is the only book where prayers for the dead are found, that contradicts the received Scripture (2 Maccabees 12:44). The expiatory sacrifice which eventually became the Mass (2 Maccabees 12:39-46). Alms giving with expiatory value, and having the ability to deliver someone from death (Tobit 12:9, 4:10). The worship of angels (Tobit 12:12). invocation and intercession of the saints (2 Maccabees 15:14; Baruch 3:4). Place of Purgatory; and the redemption of souls after death (2 Maccabees 12:42, 46).

Whether something is written hundreds of years later or hundreds of years before, the test has to be applied whether it agrees with the already revealed word of God. In the Qumran area where the Essene's lived, 600 fragments of writings were found. Six scrolls known by the name of manual of discipline, a Habbakuk commentary, the Book of Jubilees, and the war of the saints of light with the sons of darkness. Zadokite fragments as well as a collection of hymns, containing the Essene creed and a sketch of future Christianity. None of these were ever added as inspired. There were other writings that were non canonical that were accepted as valid such as the Didache but this too was historical or considered a manual of practices in the church never inspired.

The Apocrypha they were never accepted by the Jewish community which kept the canon to 39 in number, nor did the Church at large accept them as being inspired. The Jewish scholars of Jamnia 90 AD did not recognize it as inspired. Only later in history did the Catholic church officially have them became part of the canon in as a polemic to counter the reformation which was challenging the church's practice on indulgences and helped support the church's doctrine of purgatory. Even then Trent did not

include Esdras and the prayer of Manasses. This addition was never part of those Scriptures 'Accepted either by Jews or by the larger believing Church for almost 1500 years. The reason may be the conflict with purgatory in which Esdras 7:80 states there is no place where their souls can go for rest. They must wander around forever in torment and grief and sorrow their torment will progress in 7 stages. This certainly dampens the teaching of masses and payments to free one from their suffering.

Keep in mind that the books of the Apocrypha were already in existence at the time of Jesus. Yet they were not quoted as Scripture by Him or the apostles, nor included in New Testament. With over 250 quotations from passages in the Old Testament in the New Testament; there is not one quotation from the Apocryphal writings.

When the New Testament talks about Scripture, it only deals with the same three-fold division as found in the Hebrew Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Rabbis never quote from the Apocrypha as divine authority but is used as history having value for historical purposes as backgrounds to the events found in Scripture. The fact is neither Jesus nor any of the Apostles ever quote the Apocrypha as divine authority. What was considered "scripture" clearly excluded the Apocrypha from both the Jewish community and the Hebrew Christians of the New Testament. The Jewish scribes denied canonical status to these books, so they were never officially included in the Hebrew Bible. The early Jewish believers saw the writings of the Apostles as "Scripture," and the Old Testament as "Scripture," the Apocrypha was never accepted as such.

The Apocrypha does not claim to be the word of God or of the prophets and makes a lot of contradictory statements. It does not hold up to the historical, archeological analysis as the other books of the Bible. Catholics accuse the Protestants as leaving something out not having the full revelation. Actually It is only that the Catholic Church included it, and rather late in the game at that.

The Apocrypha was used alongside the writings of the Church fathers. Manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint had them as an addendum to the canonical Old Testament. Philo a Jewish philosopher in A.D. 40 quotes from the Old Testament and recognizes the standard threefold division but never quotes the Apocrypha as inspired. In the 2nd Century The Jewish historian Josephus deliberately excludes it. He wrote: "The Jews had only twenty-two books that deserved belief, but those which were written after the time of Artaxerxes (the Apocrypha) were not of equal credit with the rest, in which period they had no prophets at all" (Lib. 1, Con. Apion.).

What makes this interesting is modern findings of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls in the Qumran caves date back to as early as 250 B.C. most are from 100-150 B.C.. Within the 800 scrolls, all the Old Testament books were found minus Esther, neither were there any of the Apocryphal writings. The more one is aware of Hebrew and their culture the less likely they accepted these books. Both Jerome and Origen knew Hebrew; the first Latin Bibles were translated from the Septuagint and included the Apocrypha. Jerome's Vulgate had distinguished the Apocrypha as canonical and was assigned a secondary status. He at first refused to translate these books into Latin but later made a quick translation it was after his death they were brought into the vulgate from the Latin version.

The early church fathers were not supportive of its acceptance Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement mention the New Testament only as inspired. Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius as well as Origen and Jerome later rejected this. Athanasius is clear on what was accepted as scripture this was not the apocryphal writings. The Scriptures were spread out throughout the world and almost all that we have today is the same that was accepted in the 2nd century by the majority of the Church.

No Roman Catholic was required to believe that the Apocrypha was Scripture, until 1,500 years later at

the council of Trent. Most believe it was Rome's reaction to the new movement of getting back to the Scriptures that were God breathed.