

THE APOCRYPHA

by

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The word apocrypha is from the Greek *ta apocrypha*, "The hidden things," although there is no strict sense in which these books are hidden. Some thirteen books comprise the Apocrypha: I and II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus which is also entitled The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The Additions to Daniel, The Prayer of Manasses, and I and II Maccabees. Both the status of these books and the use of the term apocrypha have been in confusion since the early days of the church. In the restricted sense the word denotes the above-named books in contradistinction to the pseudepigrapha, or false writings; but in the broader sense the word refers to any extra-canonical scripture. Sometimes the term takes on a disparaging meaning, especially when used of the "apocryphal" gospels; this is to say they are spurious or heterodoxical. A further difficulty attending the restricted use of *apocrypha* is that some of the Apocrypha are pseudonymous, whereas some of the Pseudepigrapha are not pseudonymous. R. H. Charles broke the accepted order by including III Maccabees in the Apocrypha and transferring II Esdras to the Pseudepigrapha. The ancient rabbinic practice was to regard all such writings as "outside books," and this designation was continued by Cyril of Jerusalem, who used *Apocrypha* in the same sense, i.e., scriptures outside the canon. In modern times C. C. Torrey has revived this signification so that all such books, including the Pseudepigrapha, are called Apocrypha. Therefore to use the term Pseudepigrapha is a concession to an unhappy usage.

How did the Apocrypha secure a place in some of our English Bibles? The Jews uniformly denied canonical status to these books, and so they were not found in the Hebrew Bible, but the manuscripts of the LXX include them as an addendum to the canonical OT. In the second century A.D. the first Latin Bibles were translated from the Greek Bible, and so included the Apocrypha. Jerome's Vulgate distinguished between the *libri ecclesiastici* and the *libri canonici* with the result that the Apocrypha were accorded a secondary status. However, at the Council of Carthage (397), which Augustine attended, it was decided to accept the Apocrypha as suitable for reading despite Jerome's resistance to their inclusion in the Vulgate. In 1548 the Council of Trent recognized the Apocrypha, excepting I and II Esdras and The Prayer of Manasses, as having unqualified canonical status. Moreover, anyone who disputed this ecclesiastical decision was anathematized. The Reformers repudiated the Apocrypha as unworthy and contradictory to the doctrines of the uncontroverted canon; however, Luther did admit that they were "profitable and good to read." The Coverdale and Geneva Bibles included the Apocrypha but set them apart from the canonical books of the OT. After much debate, the British and Foreign Bible Society decided in 1827 to exclude the Apocrypha from its Bibles; soon afterwards the American branch concurred, and this action generally set the pattern for English Bibles thereafter. Among Protestant communions only the Anglican church makes much

use of the Apocrypha today.

Many literary genres appear in the Apocrypha: popular narrative, religious history and philosophy, morality stories, poetic and didactic lyrics, wisdom literature, and apocalyptic. Most of these books were written in Palestine between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100, and the language of composition was either Hebrew or Aramaic, and occasionally Greek. They generally reflect the Jewish religious viewpoint of late OT times with certain additions which were emphasized. Almsgiving became an expression of good works meritorious to salvation; see Tobit 12:9. The Apocrypha, and to a greater extent the Pseudepigrapha, evince an amplified doctrine of the Messiah (*q.v.*) beyond what the OT reveals. Two types of messianic expectation predominate: the heavenly Son of Man, taken from Daniel and embellished by Enoch, and the earthly Davidic king described in the Psalms of Solomon. The doctrine of resurrection of the body, so seldom mentioned in the OT, is ubiquitous in the Apocrypha and shows an advance over the OT idea of Sheol. The hope for immortality was greatly influenced by Greek thought. Throughout the Apocrypha is a highly developed angelology which is a natural consequence of the impact of dualism upon Jewish religious thought after the Exile. The NT cites none of the books of the Apocrypha, although there are frequent parallels of thought and language as in the case of Eph. 6:13-17 and The Wisdom of Solomon 5:17-20, and Heb. 11 and Eccles. 44. But to admit these parallels is not necessarily to admit dependence by NT authors upon the Apocrypha, and even if a clear case of dependence can be made, it does not follow that the NT author regarded these books as authoritative.

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