

~APOCRYPHA (153)

(A-poc'ry-pha)

- Evidence Against Canonicity
- Inclusion In Septuagint
- Additional Ancient Testimony
- Internal Evidence

• The **Greek** word *a-po'kry-phos* is used in its original sense in three Bible texts as referring to things carefully concealed.

• For there is nothing hidden except for the purpose of being exposed, nothing has become **carefully concealed**, but for the purpose of coming into the open. (**Mark 4:22**)

• For there is nothing hidden that will not become manifest, neither anything **carefully concealed** that will never become known and never come into the open. (**Luke 8:17**)

• **Carefully concealed** in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. (**Colossians 2:3**)

• As applied to writings, it originally referred to those not read publicly, hence **concealed** from others. Later, however, the word took on the meaning of **spurious or uncanonical**, and today is used most commonly to refer to the additional writings **declared part of the Bible canon by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546 C.E.**

• These additional writings are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, **not** Ecclesiastes, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, supplements to Esther, and three additions to Daniel: The Song of the Three Holy Children, Susanna and the Elders, and The Destruction of Bel and the Dragon. The exact time of their being written is uncertain, but the evidence points to a time no earlier than the **Second or Third Century B.C.E.**

• Evidence Against Canonicity

• While in some cases they have certain historical value, any claim for canonicity on the part of these writings is without any solid foundation. The evidence points to a closing of the Hebrew canon following the writing of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi in

the **Fifth Century B.C.E.** The **Apocryphal** writings were never included in the Jewish canon of inspired Scriptures and do not form part of it today.

- The **First-Century** Jewish historian Josephus shows the recognition given only to those few books of the Hebrew canon viewed as sacred, stating; **We do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, the equivalent of the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures according to modern division, and contain the record of all time. He thereafter clearly shows an awareness of the existence of **Apocryphal** books and their exclusion from the Hebrew canon by adding: From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. [Against Apion, I, 38,41 (8)]**

• Inclusion In Septuagint

- Arguments in favor of the canonicity of the writings generally revolve around the fact that these **Apocryphal** writings are to be found in many early copies of the **Greek Septuagint** translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, which translation was begun in Egypt about **280 B.C.E.**

- However, since no original copies of the **Septuagint** are extant, it cannot be stated categorically that the Apocryphal books were originally included in that work. Many, perhaps most, of the Apocryphal writings were admittedly written after the commencement of the translation work of the **Septuagint** and so were obviously not on the original list of books selected for translation by the translating body. At best, then, they could rate only as accretions to that work.

- Additionally, while the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria eventually inserted such **Apocryphal** writings into the **Greek Septuagint** and apparently viewed them as part of an enlarged canon of sacred writings, the statement by Josephus quoted earlier shows that they were never brought into the Jerusalem or Palestinian canon and were, at the most, viewed as only secondary writings and **not of divine origin.**

- Thus, the Jewish Council of Jamnia, **about 90 C.E.**, specifically excluded all such writings from the Hebrew canon.

- The need for giving due consideration to the Jewish stand in this matter is clearly stated by the apostle Paul at;

- What, then, is the **superiority of the Jew**, or what is the benefit of the circumcision? (**Romans 3:1**)
- A great deal in every way. First of all, because they were entrusted with the sacred pronouncements of God. (**Romans 3:2**)

• Additional Ancient Testimony

- One of the chief external evidences against the canonicity of the **Apocrypha** is the fact that **none of the Christian Bible writers quoted from these books**. While this of itself is not conclusive, inasmuch as their writings are also lacking in quotations from a few books recognized as canonical, such as Esther, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Solomon, yet the fact that **not one of the writings of the Apocrypha is quoted even once is certainly significant**.
- Not without weight also is the fact that leading Bible scholars and church fathers of the **First Centuries of the Common Era**, on the whole, gave the **Apocrypha** an inferior position. Origen, of the early **Third Century C.E.**, as a result of careful investigation made such a distinction between these writings and those of the true canon.
- Jerome, who is described as the best Hebrew scholar of the early church and who completed the **Latin Vulgate** in **405 C.E.**, took a definite stand against such **Apocryphal** books and was the first, in fact, to use the word **Apocrypha** explicitly in the sense of noncanonical as referring to these writings. Thus, in his prologue to the books of Samuel and Kings, Jerome lists the inspired books of the Hebrew Scriptures in harmony with the Hebrew canon in which the 39 books are grouped as 22 and then says:
- Thus there are twenty-two books. This prologue of the Scriptures can serve as a fortified approach to all the books which we translate from the Hebrew into Latin, so that we may know that whatever is beyond these must be put in the **apocrypha**.
- In writing to a lady named Laeta on the education of her daughter, Jerome counseled. **Let her avoid all the apocryphal books, and if she ever wishes to read them, not for the truth of their doctrines but out of respect for their wondrous tales, let her realize that they are not really written by those to whom they are ascribed, that there are many faulty elements in them, and that it requires great skill to look for gold in mud.** [**Select Letters, CVII.**]

· Internal Evidence

- The internal evidence of these **Apocryphal** writings weighs even more heavily against their canonicity than does the external. They are **completely lacking in the prophetic element**. Their contents and teachings **at times contradict those of the canonical books** and are also **contradictory within themselves**. They are **rife with historical and geographic inaccuracies and anachronisms**.

- The writers in some cases are **guilty of dishonesty in falsely representing their works as those of earlier inspired writers**. They show themselves to be under pagan Greek influence, and at times resort to an **extravagance of language and literary style wholly foreign to the inspired Scriptures**. Two of the writers imply that the Bible was not inspired.

See Also CANON