A STUDY OF THE APOCRYPHA

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INTRODUCTION

1. All of Christendom agrees that there are at least sixty-six books of inspiration in the book of God. The dispute centers over an additional fifteen books called “apocryphal” by Protestants and “deutero-canonical” by Catholics.

2. The term “apocrypha” means, “that which is hidden,” and can have an honorable or a derogatory meaning, depending largely on the person who uses the term.

3. The following is a lengthy quotation from Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. x-xi, and will effectively introduce this study--

   In 1546 the Council of Trent decreed that the canon of the Old Testament includes them (except the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras). Subsequent editions of the Latin Vulgate text, officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church, obtained these books incorporated within the sequence of the Old Testament books. Thus Tobit and Judith stand after Nehemiah; the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus stand after the Song of Solomon; Baruch (with the Letter of Jeremiah as chapter 6) stands after Lamentations; and 1 and 2 Maccabees conclude the books of the Old testament. An appendix after the New Testament contains the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras, without implying canonical status.

   Editions of the Bible prepared by Protestants have followed the Hebrew canon. The disputed books have generally been placed in a separate section, usually bound between the Old and New Testaments, but occasionally placed after the close of the New Testament.

   Modern Roman Catholic scholars commonly employ a distinction introduced by Sixtus of Sienna in 1566 to designate the two groups of books. The terms “protocanonical” and “deuterocanonical” are used to signify respectively those books of Scripture that were received by the entire Church from the beginning as inspired, and those whose inspiration came to be recognized later, after the matter had been disputed by certain Fathers and local churches. Thus Roman Catholics accept as fully canonical those books and parts of books which Protestants call the Apocrypha (except the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras, which both groups regard as apocryphal). In short, as a popular Roman Catholic Catechism puts it, “Deuterocanonical does not mean Apocryphal, but simply ‘later added to the canon.’”

   Besides the books that are included in the present edition, many other Jewish and Jewish-Christian works have survived from the period between about 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. Since most of these profess to have been written by ancient worthies of Israel, who lived long before the books were actually composed, they are generally called “pseudepigrapha.”
4. By way of summarizing the preceding paragraphs, it may be said that for a Roman Catholic most of the books which Protestants regard as Apocrypha (but not the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras) are held to be authoritative Scripture and are called deuterocanonical. Other books, which neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics regard as inspired or authoritative, are called apocryphal by Catholics and pseudepigraphical by Protestants.

5. The various books which were doubted at first before inclusion in the New Testament canon, are called “deuterocanonical” by Roman Catholics (i.e., Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, Jude Revelation). Today, Catholics consider the proto-canonical” and “deuterocanonical” distinction as one of merely historical interest.

6. Traditionally the term “Apocrypha” is the descriptive term applied to the books listed below (some early editions include the Letter of Jeremiah along with Baruch as its last chapter, thus number only 14)--

1) 1 Esdras
2) 2 Esdras
3) Tobit
4) Judith
5) The Rest of Esther
6) The Wisdom of Solomon
7) Ecclesiasticus (or The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach)
8) Baruch
9) The Epistle of Jeremiah
10) The Son of the Three Holy Children (or The Prayer of Azariah and the Son of the Three Young Men)
11) The History of Susanna
12) Bel and the Dragon
13) The Prayer of Manasseh
14) 1 Maccabees
15) 2 Maccabees

I. DOCTRINES FOUND IN THE APOCRYPHA.

1. Suicide can be honorable (2 Maccabees 14:41-43).
2. Incense (or, fish hearts) on live coals drives the devil away (Tobit 6:5-8).
3. Angels have families (Tobit 5:15-19).
4. Salvation can be obtained by giving alms (Tobit 12:8-9).
5. It is honorable to be celibate and live a monastic life style (Judith 8:5-6).
6. Murder is honorable so long as it advances the cause of the righteous (Judith 9:2).
7. Souls in Hell (or, Purgatory) can hope to get out (Wisdom 3:1-4).
8. Prayers for the dead may release them from Purgatory (2 Maccabees 12:43-46).
9. One may drink wine so long as it is not to excess (Tobit 4:15).
10. Saints in heaven intercede for men on the earth (2 Maccabees 15:11-16).
11. Immoral behavior is sanctioned (Judith 9:9-14).

NOTE: Naturally, for any who wish to protect some of all of these teachings as sacred, the question of the “apocrypha” (or, deutero-canonicals in the case of the “protectors”) takes on a special interest.
II. ARGUMENTS FOR INCLUSION OF THE APOCRYPHA IN THE CANON.

1. New Testament writers frequently allude to the Apocryphal works--
   1) Romans 1:20-29 with Wisdom 13:5,8; 14:24,27.
   3) 2 Corinthians 5:1,4, with Wisdom 9:15.
   4) James 1:9 with Sirach 5:11.
   5) James 1:13 with Sirach 15:11-12.
   6) It is thought that Hebrews 11:35 alludes to 2 Maccabees.

2. Some apocryphal books were found in the first century Jewish community at Qumran.


4. Many early Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament, such as Codex Vaticanus (A.D. 325) and Codex Sinaiticus (A.D. 350) contained the apocrypha.

5. Augustine accepted all of the apocryphal books later proclaimed canonical at the Council of Trent (1546).

6. Many early church synods, such as the Synod by Pope Damascus (A.D. 382), Synod of Hippo (A.D. 393), and three synods at Carthage (A.D. 393, 397, 419), accepted the apocrypha.

7. Some later bishops and councils between the ninth and fifteenth centuries listed the apocryphal books as inspired.

8. The long line of Christian usage culminated in the official pronunciation of the Council of Trent (A.D. 1546) that the apocrypha (or, “deutero-canonical” books, as Roman Catholics call them) is part of the canon of Scripture.

III. ARGUMENTS AGAINST INCLUSION OF THE APOCRYPHA.

NOTE: Despite the long list of names and impressive looking array of arguments cited above, the apocrypha must be rejected on the following grounds...

1. The early “church fathers” do not support the inclusion of these books--not even Origen, Athanasius, and Cyril of Jerusalem. The following list, given in Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 173, will be helpful--
   1) Philo, Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 B.C.--A.D. 40), quotes the Old Testament prolifically and even recognized the threefold division, but he never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.
   2) Josephus (A.D. 30-100), Jewish historian, explicitly excludes the Apocrypha, numbering the books of the Old Testament as 22. Neither does he quote these books as Scripture.
   3) Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament.
   4) The Jewish scholars of Jamnia (A.D. 90) did not recognize the Apocrypha.
   5) No canon or council of the Christian church for the first four centuries recognized the Apocrypha as inspired.
6) Many of the great Fathers of the early church spoke out against the Apocrypha, for example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius.

7) Jerome (340-420), the great scholar and translator of the Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha as part of the canon. He disputed across the Mediterranean with Augustine on this point. He at first refused even to translate the Apocryphal books into Latin, but later he made a hurried translation of a few of them. After his death, and literally “over his dead body,” the Apocryphal books were brought into his Latin Vulgate directly from the Old Latin Version.

8) Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period rejected the Apocrypha.

9) Luther and the reformers rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

10) Not until A.D. 1546, in a polemical action at the Counter Reformation Council of Trent, did the Apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

11) A quotation does not necessarily mean that such a book was considered inspired. Apocryphal works were quoted, for example, by Origen, etc., for homiletical purposes. But, these men explicitly rejected them from being considered as canonical!

2. The early Greek Manuscripts are no help either for proponents of including the Apocrypha in the canon.

1) Very early “versions” (e.g., the Aramaic targums and Syriac Peshitta) do not contain the Apocryphal books at all.

2) Only the Septuagint (and the versions derived from it) do contain them.

3) As for Vaticanus, 1 and 2 Maccabees (canonical according to Rome) are lacking, but included is 1 Esdras (non-canonical according to Rome).

4) The Sinaitic manuscript omits Baruch (canonical according to Rome), but includes 4 Maccabees (non-canonical according to Rome).

5) Still further, the Alexandrian manuscript contains three non-canonical books: 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, and 4 Maccabees.

3. The apocryphal books contain frequent historical, chronological, and geographical errors--

1) **Judith 1:1**--“In the Twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh, in the days of Arphaxad, who ruled over the Medes in Ecbatana.”

   1- On this passage, May & Metzger comment--“Nebuchadnezzar (605 [or 604]-562 B.C.) was second ruler over the Neo-Babylonian Empire (not over the Assyrians).

   2- It was he who destroyed Jerusalem in 587-86 B.C., and carried the Jews off into their Babylonian Exile (2 Kgs 24:1--25:26).

   3- The author of the Book of Judith, in complete disregard of history, represents him as flourishing after the Exile (4:3; 5:19).

   4- Some scholars believe that the historical confusion of the book, of which this is but one example, is deliberate, intended to stamp the work unmistakably as fiction” (p. 76).

2) **Baruch 1:1**--“These are the words of the book which Baruch the son of Zedekiah, son of Hasadiah, son of Hilkiah, wrote in Babylon” (Emphasis mine, DRL).
1- In contrast, the book of Jeremiah clearly indicates that Baruch was taken with Jeremiah to Egypt.

2- (Jer 43:6-7) “Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. {7} So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they even to Tahpanhes.”

3) **Epistle of Jeremiah 6:3**—“Therefore when you have come to Babylon you will remain there for many years, for a long time, up to seven generations; after that I will bring you away from there in peace.”

1- This statement contrasts with an inspired statement actually recorded by Jeremiah.

2- Jer 29:10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

4) **Tobit 1:4-5**—“Now when I was in my own country, in the land of Israel, while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of Naphtali my forefather deserted the house of Jerusalem. This was the place which had been chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, where all the tribes should sacrifice and where the temple of the dwelling of the Most High was consecrated and established for all generations for ever. (5) All the tribes that joined in apostasy used to sacrifice to the calf Baal, and so did the house of Naphtali my forefather” (emphasis mine, DRL).

1- May & Metzgar point out—“Since the rebellion of the northern tribes against Jerusalem (1 Kg 12:19-20) occurred about 922 B.C., Tobit could not have been still a young man, or even born, when it happened.

2- Such chronological, and other historical difficulties make it clear that the story is fiction (compare v. 15n., 6:1n., 9:2n, 14:15n)” [p. 63].

4. No Apocryphal book was quoted as Scripture in the New Testament. There are allusions to and citations of even certain truthful statement of pagan poets whose books were not considered Scripture (cf., Acts 17:28).

5. The Qumran community was not an orthodox Jewish community and cannot, therefore, be an official voice for all of Judaism.

6. Neither early synods nor Augustine ever listed the apocryphal books as inspired until after the appearance of Greek translations of the Old Testament which contained them (i.e., after A.D. 325).

7. Even up to the Reformation period (A.D. 1517) some Roman Catholic scholars, including Cardinal Cajetan, who so strongly opposed Luther, did not accept the Apocrypha as authentic Old Testament books.

8. Use of the Apocrypha has varied throughout church history.

1) For instance, before Augustine, “church fathers” quoted and read some of the apocryphal books in public services while excluding them from their canon lists.

2) Further, the use of the Apocrypha was so varied and inconsistent whereas the use of clearly accepted Scripture was so consistent that it seems to suggest a “doctrinal” canon used to determine matters of the faith (i.e., Scripture) and a “homiletical” canon used to illustrate and expand upon such beliefs.
3) This seems to be approximately the same as our use of Scripture and illustration material or secular quotations in sermons today.

1- No one confuses the two, even though both are used.
2- Certainly, Scripture usage is (or, should be) much more frequent and consistent, whereas the other material is used more sparingly and with far greater variety.

9. The Council of Trent inconsistently accepted only eleven of the Apocryphal books as canonical.
1) They rejected the Prayer of Manasseh, 1 Esdras, and 2 Esdras, [which contains a strong verse against praying for the dead (7:105)].
2) BUT, they accepted one with a verse supporting prayer for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:45).
3) Twenty-nine years earlier, Luther strongly opposed the practice of praying for the dead.
4) It is significant that the book supporting Luther’s position was rejected, whereas the one opposing him was accepted!

10. A highly significant statement made by Norman L. Geisler (p. 365), will introduce this point--
1) “What is the extent of the Old Testament canon according to the Jews? To this question there is only one answer, as even Roman Catholic scholars readily admit, the twenty-four (thirty-nine) books of the Jewish and Protestant Bibles of today comprise the Jewish Old Testament canon.
2) Josephus, Against Apion I, 83, lists twenty-two books as belonging to the Jewish canon.
   1- There were the five books of Moses and thirteen books of the prophets (the “minor” prophets were counted as one book).
   2- The four remaining books were Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.
   3- Ruth was likely appended to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah, thus accounting for the figure of twenty-two rather than twenty-four.
   4- Then, Josephus declares that the succession of Jewish prophets ended in the fourth century B.C.
   5- This is highly significant, since the Apocryphal books were written from 250 B.C. to the time of Christ.
3) The Babylonian Talmud, “Sanhedrin,” VII-VIII, 245, says--“after the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah ... and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel.”
4) So then it should not be a surprise that not only is the claim of inspiration never made in the apocryphal books, but it is often specifically disclaimed--
1- 1 Maccabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41--refer to a time when inspired prophets were not among the people. For example--“Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them” (9:27).
2- Prologue to Ecclesiasticus--“Whereas many great teachings have been given to us through the law and the prophets and the others that followed them, on account of which we should praise Israel for instruction and
wisdom; and since it is necessary not only that the readers themselves should acquire understanding but also that those who love learning should be able to help the outsiders by both speaking and writing, my grandfather Jesus, after devoting himself especially to the reading of the law and the prophets and after acquiring considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom, in order that, by becoming conversant with this also, those who love learning should make even greater progress in living according to the law.”

3- 2 Maccabees 15:37-39—“This, then, is how matters turned out with Nicanor. And from that time the city has been in possession of the Hebrews. So I too will here end my story. If it is well told and to the point, that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do. For just as it is harmful to drink wine alone, or, again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious and enhances one’s enjoyment, so also the style of the story delights the ears of those who read the work. And here will be the end.”


1) Every book is represented, except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

2) Frequently, these are introduced by such statements as: “God said,” “it is written,” “Scripture saith,” etc.

3) On the other hand, the apocryphal books are never quoted in any way, certainly never as Scripture.

4) Alleged allusions to them in the New Testament are doubtful and may be explained by coincidences of language.

5) In short, neither Christ nor the apostles show the slightest attempt to present apocryphal books as the word of God, in spite of the fact that these books were readily available and well known to them!

NOTE: The material above was gleaned from class notes given by brother Dick Sztanyo in a class on Apologetics at the Brown Trail Preacher Training School, Hurst, TX, 1982.

IV. FIVE TESTS OF CANONICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.
(from Charles Pledge, Getting Acquainted, pp. 83-85)

1. Inspiration. Did God make the revelation or did the book spring from the human will? Edward J. Young stated a very important fact when he said, “The criterion of a book’s canonicity, therefore is its inspiration. If a book has been inspired of God, it is canonical, whether accepted by men as such or not. It is God and not man who determines whether a book is to belong in the canon. Therefore, if a certain writing has indeed been the product of divine inspiration, it belongs in the canon from the moment of its composition” [Young, Introduction, p. 38].

2. Was it written or endorsed by a spokesman of God? Any writing that was not written by God’s spokesman could not truly lay claim to be inspired. Therefore, we would understand that the former prophets, so specified in the Hebrew canon, must be written by a prophet, even though we might not in every case be able to determine who he was.
This fact is necessitated due to the very nature of the Jew’s religion. They were
forbidden to listen to any who claimed to be a prophet whose prophecies were not
verified by their fulfillment (Deut 18:22). The consequence of being a false prophet is
stated in Deut 18:20... Therefore, no Jew would dare presume to palm off upon the
whole Jewish nation as a revelation from God Almighty in writing, that which God
would refuse to verify. Hence we see that it is important that the one who wrote or
endorsed it be a spokesman for God.

3. Can it be proved to be genuine? Is it possible for us to find out who wrote it, or, if not the
author, can we determine that it contains the same matter that it did when it was first
written?

4. Is it an authentic book? Authenticity merely means the factualness of a matter. If a
book is authentic, that means that it presents the facts as they were. Therefore, when we
ask, is it an authentic book, we are asking, is it a book which accurately presents the facts
as they originally were.

5. Does the testimony of those who lived in or close to the time of writing favor the
canonicity of the book? Do those who lived when the book was written or at least in the
same age that the book was written, testify to its divinity? If they do, then this is strong
evidence that the book should be in the canon. However, one could not accept this alone
as a conclusive test.

V. THE ULTIMATE TEST IS INSPIRATION!

Furman Kearley suggests that our definition of “inspiration” ought to include the following
points--
1. Since God is perfect and infallible, an inspired book is absolutely infallible and errorless
in its facts and doctrines in the original manuscript.
2. Since God is perfectly holy and pure, an inspired book must present only holy and pure
doctrines.
3. Since God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, then an inspired book should
reflect these characteristics in such ways as prophecy which is fulfilled, accurate
statements with regard to geography, astronomy, science, math, psychology, and all areas
of knowledge to the extent that it makes reference to these. If God is the creator of the
world and man, he could not make an inaccurate statement about them. A book that does
is not inspired.
4. Since God is absolute truth, one inspired book cannot contradict another.
5. Since God is absolutely just and fair, an inspired book must be impartial, without
prejudice toward anyone.
[“Which Books Belong...,” in *Holy Scriptures*, p. 112.]

CONCLUSION

1. The subject of the canon is much more extensive than this paper can deal with fully.
2. However, evidence is quite adequate to conclude that the fifteen apocryphal books must
be excluded from the canon of Scripture.
3. Along with Kearley, we say—“we believe that God’s divine providence has provided ample internal and external evidences to prove that the 66 books of our Bible are inspired by Him” (Kearley, p. 119).
A BRIEF ANNOTATION OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

NOTE: Sources will be referred to in this order: (1) Pledge; (2) McDowell; (3) May and Metzgar.

1. **I Esdras.**
   1) I Esdras is composed largely of three versions of part of 2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Its history hints of the authentic, although it is not altogether reliable. Josephus used this in preference to the Greek version of the canonical Ezra-Nehemiah, perhaps due to its superiority of Greek style.
   2) I Esdras (about 150 B.C.) tells of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine after the Babylonian exile. It draws considerably from Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, but the author has added much legendary material.
   3) The book which is known in the Apocrypha as 1 Esdras is called 3 Esdras in the Latin Vulgate Bible, where it is now placed (since the Council of Trent) in an appendix after the New Testament. None of the other apocryphal books is so intimately connected with the Old Testament. Beginning somewhat abruptly with a description of the great passover held by King Josiah in Jerusalem (about 621 B.C.), the book reproduces the substance of 2 Chr 35:1--36:23, the whole of Ezra, and Nehemiah 7:38--8:12, breaking off in the middle of a sentence after an account of Ezra’s reforms (about 398 B.C.). There are numerous minor discrepancies between the apocryphal and canonical accounts, including a rearrangement of the materials; and the story of the three young men in the court of Darius (3:1--5:6) has no parallel in the Old Testament.
      . . . The purpose of the unknown author was to emphasize the contribution of Josiah, Zerubbabel, and Ezra to the reform of Israelite worship.

2. **II Esdras.**
   1) Second Esdras is Jewish in composition and some think it could have been written about 100 A.D. It is Apocalyptic in character and describes a series of seven visions.
   2) II Esdras (A.D. 100) is an apocalyptic work, containing seven visions. Martin Luther was so confused by these visions that he is said to have thrown the book into the Elbe River.
   3) The book commonly known as 2 Esdras differs from the other fourteen books of the Apocrypha in being an apocalypse ... in which the seer is instructed by the angel Uriel concerning some of the great mysteries of the moral world. ... The purpose of the original author of 2 Esdras was not only to denounce the wickedness of Rome (under the image of “Babylon”) and to lament the sorrows that had befallen Jerusalem, but to wrestle with one of the most perplexing of all religious questions, the problem of theodicy, that is the reconciliation of God’s justice, wisdom, power, and goodness with the many evils that beset mankind. In spite of the essentially pessimistic outlook of the book, the seer’s strong religious faith enabled him to rise above the fires of adversity to high spiritual levels. His agonizing is both honorable and pathetic as he seeks “to justify the ways of God to man.”

3. **Tobit.**
1) Tobit is a religious romance of the captivity, supposedly based upon historical facts. It is not pure history, but it does show Jewish life in its best form and has a somewhat moral overtone.

2) Tobit (early 2nd cent. B.C.) is a short novel. Strongly Pharisaic in tone, it emphasizes the Law, clean foods, ceremonial washings, charity, fasting and prayer. It is clearly unscriptural in its statement that almsgiving atones for sin.

3) A fascinating amalgam of Arabian Nights romance, kindly Jewish piety, and sound moral teaching, Tobit is one of the most popular of the books of the Apocrypha. Originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, probably sometime during the second century B.C., its author is unknown, as is also the place where he wrote it, although Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria have all been suggested as possibilities.

Besides the intrinsic interest of the tale, which is compounded in large part of themes derived from ancient folklore, the book’s principal value lies in the picture it gives of Jewish culture and religious life in an age not too remote, either in time or temper, from that of the New Testament.

The ostensible setting of the story is the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, where the people of Northern Israel had been taken captive in the latter part of the eighth century B.C. (2 Kg 17:1-6). There it is said, dwelt the pious Tobit, who, despite his many charitable deeds, became blind and poor (chs. 1-2). But God heard his prayer, sent the angel Raphael to save them both (ch. 3). When Tobit commissioned his son Tobias to collect a deposit of money he had made long before in Media, the angel accompanied him and revealed magic formulas which would heal his father’s blindness and exorcise Sarah’s demon-lover, Asmodeus (chs. 4-6). Tobias successfully completed his mission and married Sarah (chs. 7-14).


1) Judith is a romance supposedly belonging to the time of Nebuchadnezzar, which proposes to show Jewish courage and devotion to the law. It has little or no historical basis and its morality is not the highest. This book teaches the new morality, or situation ethics, indicating that the end justifies the means.

2) Judith (about the middle of 2nd cent. B.C.) is also fictitious and Pharisaic. The heroine of this novel is Judith, a beautiful Jewish widow. When her city was besieged she took her maid, together with Jewish clean food, and went out to the tent of the attacking general. He was enamored of her beauty and gave her a place in his tent. Fortunately, he had imbibed too freely and sank into a drunken stupor. Judith took his sword and cut off his head. Then she and her maid left the camp, taking his head in their provision bag. It was hung on the wall of a nearby city and the leaderless Assyrian army was defeated.

3) Rising slowly to a climax of unforgettable horror, the plot of Judith is a masterpiece of ancient Jewish narrative art. Although obviously a work of fiction, the atmosphere of the tale is entirely realistic ... The stirring narrative has inspired numerous works of painting, sculpture, and literature, notably an Anglo-Saxon epic of which extensive fragments survive.

5. The Rest of Esther.
1) The remainder of Esther was written in Greek and consists of visions, letters, and prayers designed to explain supposed difficulties in Esther and further to expand the story of Esther.

2) *Additions to Esther* (about 100 B.C.). Esther stands alone among the books of the Old Testament in having no mention of God. We are told that Esther and Mordecai fasted but not specifically that they prayed. To compensate for this lack, the Additions have long prayers attributed to these two, together with a couple of letters supposedly written by Artaxerxes.

3) After the book of Esther had been translated from Hebrew into Greek, six Additions totally 107 verses were incorporated at various points in the narrative. These supplementary sections were also included in the Old Latin translation, which was based on the Greek. In the fourth century A.D. Jerome, when making the Latin Vulgate Bible, removed all of the Additions and placed them at the end of the book of Esther. Rearranged in their proper chronological order, and with chapter and verse numbering which reflects Jerome’s order, the six Additions are:

- 13:1-7, The king’s letter ordering the massacre of the Jews;
- 13:8-14, The prayers of Mordecai and Esther;
- 15:1-16, Esther risks her life to appeal to the king;
- 16:1-24, The king’s second letter, denouncing Haman and directing his subjects to help the Jews;
- 10:4--11:1, Mordecai’s dream interpreted and the book attested as genuine.

The Additions make frequent reference to God, emphasize his choice of Abraham and Israel, and give prominence to prayer. They occasionally contradict the canonical Book of Esther, and have little or no historical value.

6. **The Wisdom of Solomon.**

1) *The Wisdom of Solomon* is an ethical treatise commending wisdom and righteousness and condemning sin and idolatry. The object of the book is supposedly to protect Hellenistic Jews against Paganistic influences surrounding them. An anonymous writer impersonates Solomon in the Old Testament wisdom literature.

2) *The Wisdom of Solomon* (about A.D. 40) was written to keep the Jews from falling into skepticism, materialism, and idolatry. As in Proverbs, Wisdom is personified. There are many noble sentiments expressed in this book.

3) *The Wisdom of Solomon,* which the Latin Vulgate entitles simply the book of Wisdom, professes to have been written by Solomon (7:1-14 and 8:17--9:18 recall Solomon’s prayer for wisdom in 1 Kg 3:6-9 and 2 Chr 1:8-10). Internal evidence, however, indicates that the book was composed in Greek by an unknown Hellenistic Jew, probably at Alexandria during the latter part of the first century B.C.

7. **Ecclesiasticus.**

1) *Ecclesiasticus,* which is also called “the wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach,” is a long ethical treatise instructing in morality and practical goodness. This book is patterned after Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job. It was originally written in the Hebrew language about 180 B.C. and translated into the Greek by the author’s grandson about 132 B.C.

2) *Ecclesiasticus,* or *Wisdom of Sirach* (about 180 B.C.), shows a high level of religious wisdom, somewhat like the canonical Book of Proverbs. It also contains
much practical advice. For instance, on the subject of after-dinner speeches it says--

“Speak concisely; say much in few words”...
“Act like a man who knows more than he says”
“Prepare what you have to say, And then you will be listened to” (32:8; 33:4).

3) Ecclesiasticus, or The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, is the only book in the Apocrypha of which the name of the author is known (50:27). From internal hints we may infer that Joshua ben Sira—which is Hebrew for “Jesus the son of Sirach”—was a Jewish scribe, that is, a professional teacher of the Old Testament law. The invitation in 51:23 suggests that the author conducted an academy, probably in Jerusalem, where he lectured to young men on ethical and religious subjects. About 180 B.C. this seasoned scribe and sage committed to writing the distilled wisdom that he had been accustomed to impart orally. Though the material is loosely arranged and the author almost desultory in passing from one subject to another, it appears that he intended to compose a work in two volumes (chs. 1-23 and 24-51), each of which commences with an encomium on wisdom. ....

In the Latin Church during the third century A.D. the book of Sirach came to be known as Ecclesiasticus, which means, “The Church Book.” This rather nondescript title was apparently meant to suggest that the book is the most important of the several deuterocanonical books which, though not in the Palestinian Jewish canon of the Scriptures, are accepted as inspired by the Roman Catholic Church.

8. Baruch.

1) Baruch is a weak imitation of Jeremiah’s language, consisting of prayers and confessions of the Jews in exile with promises of restoration. This book is supposedly written by Baruch the Scribe and is unquestionable uncanonical.

2) Baruch (about A.D. 100) represents itself as being written by Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, in 582 B.C. Actually, it is probably trying to interpret the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The book urges the Jews not to revolt again, but to be in submission to the emperor. In spite of this the Bar-Cochba revolution against Roman rule took place soon after, in A.D. 132-35. The sixth chapter of Baruch contains the so-called “Letter of Jeremiah,” with its strong warning against idolatry—probably addressed to Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.

3) The book which goes under the name of Baruch purports to have been written during the Babylonian captivity by Baruch, the companion and secretary of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 32:12; 36:4), and sent to Jerusalem to be read on feast days as a confession of sins (1:14). The first part, which is in prose, comprises an introduction (1:1-14) and a confession of Israel’s guilt (1:15--3:8). The second part is made up of two poems, one lauding wisdom as God’s special gift to Israel (3:9--4:4) and the other dealing with the themes of comfort and restoration (4:5--5:9).

9. The Epistle of Jeremiah.

1) The Epistle of Jeremiah was appended to Baruch as a warning to the Babylonian captives against idolatry.
2) The sixth chapter of Baruch contains the so-called “Letter of Jeremiah,” with its strong warning against idolatry—probably addressed to Jews in Alexandria, Egypt.

3) The so-called Letter of Jeremiah, which professes to be a copy of a letter sent by Jeremiah in 597 B.C. to those Jews who were about to be taken as captives to Babylon (v. 1), is an earnest though rambling discourse against the folly of idolatry. It can be characterized as an impassioned sermon on Jeremiah 10:11, ...

Elaborating upon this text, the author draws upon Jer 10:3-9, 14 and Ps 115:4-8 (compare also Isa 40:18-20; 41:6-7) for a variety of arguments to prove the utter impotence, whether for good or ill, of gods of wood and silver and gold. The style of the tractate is florid and declamatory, with no logical connection in the sequence of its statements. In a mechanical way the author divides his homily into sections by a refrain repeated with slight variations, insisting that “this shows that they are no gods” (vv. 16, 23, 29b, 40a, 44b, 52, 56b, 65, 69).

10. **The Song of the Three Holy Children.**

1) *The Song of the Three Holy Children* consists of a prayer of Araizah [sic], and furnishes an account of the miraculous deliverance and the song of praise of three Hebrew children who had been cast into the fiery furnace.

2) *The Song of the Three Holy Children* follows Dan 3:23 in the Septuagint and the Vulgate. Borrowing heavily from Psalms 148, it is antiphonal like Psalms 136, having 32 times the refrain: “Sing praise to him and greatly exalt him forever.”

3) According to the book of Daniel, three Jewish captives in Babylon, named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. By way of punishment for their refusal they were found and thrown into the burning fiery furnace (Dan 3:23). Then follows the interpolation, which has three sections: vv. 1-22, the prayer of Azariah (Azariah is his Hebrew name; Abednego, his pagan name; see Dan 1:7); vv. 23-27, details about the furnace; vv. 28-68, the song of the three. This song is in two parts: the first is a liturgy addressed to God (vv. 29-34), and the second is a series of exhortations addressed to all creatures, animate and inanimate, to praise the Lord (vv. 35-68).

11. **The History of Susanna.**

1) *The History of Susanna* is a religious romance of deliverance of a woman from the schemes of two immoral men through the wisdom of Daniel. It narrates how the godly wife of a wealthy Jew is cleared of false charges.

2) Our Book of Daniel contains 12 chapters. In the first century before Christ a thirteenth chapter was added, the story of Susanna. She was the beautiful wife of a leading Jew in Babylon, to whose house the Jewish elders and judges frequently came. Two of these became enamored of her and tried to seduce her. When she cried out, the two elders said they had found her in the arms of a young man. She was brought to trial. Since there were two witnesses who agreed in their testimony, she was convicted and sentenced to death. But a young man named Daniel interrupted the proceedings and began to cross-examine the witnesses. He asked each one separately under which tree in the garden they had found Susana with a lover. When they gave different answers they were put to death and Susanna was saved.
3) In Hebrew the name Susanna means “a lily” and the name Daniel means “God has judged.” Both are obviously appropriate names for the heroine and hero in a story that tells how Susanna was cleared of a false charge of adultery through the timely intervention of a sagacious and brave youth.

12. **Bel and the Dragon.**

   1) *Bel and the Dragon* is a melodramatic story with Daniel as the hero and tells of the destruction of the idol Bel, and the Dragon, the two objects of Babylonian worship, and of deliverance of Daniel from the lions’ den.

   2) *Bel and the Dragon* was added about the same time [as Susanna] and called chapter 14 of Daniel. Its main purpose was to show the folly of idolatry. It really contains two stories.

   3) The first story tells of the great statue of Bel, the patron deity of Babylon, which every night devours huge quantities of food and drink and thus proves itself to be a living god. By clever detective work Daniel unmasks the chicanery of Bel’s priests. The second story tells of Daniel’s refusal to worship a monstrous dragon as a god, and his killing it with a ridiculous concoction of pitch, fat, and hair. The Babylonians, enraged by the death of their god, demand that Daniel be thrown into the lions’ den. He is kept safe among the lions for six days, and is provided with food brought from Judea by the prophet Habakkuk. On the seventh day the king removes Daniel and throws into the den his enemies, who are immediately devoured.

13. **The Prayer of Manasseh.**

   1) *The Prayer of Manasseh* is supposedly the deeply Penitential prayer of Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah, when he was carried away prisoner from Babylon by the Syrians. It was supposed to follow 2 Chronicles 33:18-19. Its date is uncertain.

   2) *The Prayer of Manasseh* was composed in Maccabean times (2nd cent. B.C.) as the supposed prayer of Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah. It was obviously suggested by the statement in II Chron 33:19—“His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him ... behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.” Since this prayer is not found in the Bible, some scribe had to make up the deficiency!

   3) One of the finest pieces in the Apocrypha is the little classic of penitential devotion known as *The Prayer of Manasseh*. Constructed in accord with the best liturgical forms and full without being protracted, this beautiful prayer breathes throughout a spirit of deep and genuine religious feeling.

14. **First Maccabees.**

   1) First Maccabees is a generally reliable historical narrative. It is important because it covers the inter-testamental period in which it gives a full and allegedly trustworthy account of the Maccabean wars and the Jewish struggle for independence.

   2) *I Maccabees* (1st cent. B.C.) is perhaps the most valuable book in the Apocrypha. For it describes the exploits of the three Maccabean brothers--Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. Along with Josephus it is our most important source for the history of this crucial period in Jewish history.
3) The author of *I Maccabees* was probably a Palestinian Jew who lived in Jerusalem. He modeled his work on the historical books of the Old Testament, particularly the books of Kings and Chronicles. After an introduction briefly sketching the conquests of Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.), the division of his empire, and the origin of the Seleucid Empire (1:1-10), he recounts the principal events of Judea’s history from the accession of Antiochus IV (175 B.C.) to the reign of John Hyrcanus I, which marked the period of the successful struggle for Jewish independence.

15. **Second Maccabees.**

1) Second Maccabees covers a part of the same period as the first, from 175 to 160 B.C., but this book offers a stark contrast to the first Maccabees book. Second Maccabees deals in the fanciful and supernatural and stresses moral and religious lessons. The history of second Maccabees is not considered trustworthy as is first Maccabees.

2) *II Maccabees* (same time) is not a sequel to I Maccabees, but a parallel account, treating only the victories of Judas Maccabeus. It is generally thought to be more legendary than I Maccabees.

3) It often supplements the information contained in 1 Maccabees, but its historical veracity is, on the whole, less trustworthy than that of 1 Maccabees.
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