

Apocrypha: Why Not in Scripture?

Old Testament

When Jerome first translated the OT into Latin, he refused to include several books within the main body of Scriptures. Instead, he established a separate section he named "The Apocrypha." The books in the Apocrypha were written after the Canon of the Hebrew Bible was complete (about 425 BC). The word apocrypha means "hidden" or "secret" but due to their doubtful authenticity, the word has come to mean "fraudulent, or forged" by some scholars.

Although some feel there are many more, the Apocrypha is normally made up of 14 books, which are found in Greek and Latin translations, but never in the Hebrew OT. Only 11 of these are included in the Catholic Bible today, but all 14 can still be found in the Orthodox Bible.

The Apocrypha was removed from the Protestant Bible altogether at the time of the Reformation. Here are several reasons why many Christian authorities reject the writings of the Apocrypha:

1. The Apocrypha was never in the Hebrew Canon.
2. Neither Jesus Christ, nor any of the NT writers, ever quoted from the Apocrypha. (Jude mentioned Enoch, but Enoch was not the author of the books that bear his name.)
3. Josephus (a well-known historian from the Biblical era) excluded them from his list of sacred scripture. He felt they were lacking authenticity or validity in essence or origin.
4. During the first four centuries, there was no mention made of the Apocrypha in any catalog or canonical book. They were believed to be slipped in during the fifth century. There are reputed to be 263 quotations and 370 allusions to the OT in the NT, but not one of them refers to the Apocryphal writings.
5. The books of the Apocrypha were never asserted to be divinely inspired or to possess divine authority in their contents.
6. No prophets were connected with these writings. Each book of the OT was written by a man who was a prophet.
7. These books are replete with historical, geographical and chronological errors. In order to accept the Apocrypha one would have to reject the OT narratives.
8. The Apocryphal doctrines and practices are often contrary to the Canon of Scripture.

There is some historical insight to be gained from the Apocrypha, since they were written in the time between the Old and New Testaments. But extreme caution must be exercised.

These books weren't written by the people whose names are mentioned in their titles, and they are neither theologically nor historically accurate. You should test the things they say against other reliable sources before accepting them as valid.

What about the NT? The Gospel of Judas , Gospel of the Hebrews, infancy gospels, etc.

The NT had pretty much come together by 150 AD, but there continued to be discussion about a few books until about 400 AD. It was not officially canonized until the Council of Trent in the 1500's. For inclusion in the New Testament, books under consideration had to meet three basic criteria.

1. Were the authors either eyewitnesses to the events they wrote about or at least directly taught about them by the Apostles?
2. Was each book's teachings consistent with church practice and tradition?
3. Was each book already in general use by the church, and accepted as the Divine Word of God?

In both Old and New Testaments, the books included had to be generally viewed as the work of divinely inspired writers who faithfully converted God's Word into written form (2 Peter 1:20-21). The books you mentioned, along with others that were considered, failed to meet these criteria.