

**IS THE APOCRYPHA  
INSPIRED?  
SHOULD IT BE PART  
OF OUR BIBLE?**

**By Barry C. Hodson**

## **IS THE APOCRYPHA INSPIRED? SHOULD IT BE PART OF OUR BIBLE?**

**D**uring the 400 year intertestament period between Malachi and Matthew, a large number of Jewish books were written, some of which ultimately ended up being included in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament known as the Septuagint, so-called because it was, according to tradition, originally translated in around seventy days by around seventy translators. The Jewish books which later ended up being included in the Septuagint are called the Apocrypha.

The names of the books are: 1. Esdras, 2. Esdras, the rest of Esther (i.e. additions to Esther), The prayer of Azariah and the song of the three holy young men, history of Susanna, Bel and the dragon, the prayer of Manasseh, Tobit, Judith, the wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus), the letter of Jeremiah and Baruch (combined into one book), 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees.

The last seven of these are incorporated into Roman Catholic editions of the Bible, due to being affirmed as canonical by the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546. (They were not officially canonized until then i.e. they were not officially recognized as being part of the inspired canon of the Hebrew Scriptures until 1546).

In the sixteenth century the Reformation affirmed “sola Scriptura,” i.e. only the Hebrew Old Testament was regarded as inspired Scripture and treated as the supreme and only authority. The Apocrypha was therefore denied a place among the inspired writings by the reformers. The Roman Catholic church reacted against the reformers in the Council of Trent by stating that the Apocrypha was canonical.

(The Greek word “canon” originally meant a measuring rod, hence “canonical” describes something having the right measurements or requirements. “Canonical” therefore means measuring up to the requirements of the inspired Word of God. The Roman Catholic church prefers to use the word “deutero-canonical” to describe the books of the Apocrypha. It is a term meaning ‘belonging to the second canon.’ It is not intended to imply any inferiority of authority, but only a later date of admission into the canon).

However, many Roman Catholic scholars, even through the Protestant Reformation, rejected the Apocrypha as inspired Scripture and made a distinction between the Apocrypha and the other books of the Bible. There was no unanimity of opinion among Roman Catholic scholars that these books should be considered Scripture. Even the Council of Trent had its problems trying to decide which Apocryphal books should be accepted and rejected. From all accounts it seems that the members of the council could not read or write Hebrew, and therefore

could not study the Hebrew manuscripts which were copies of the original texts of the Old Testament.

It is believed that the Roman Catholic church officially canonized Apocryphal writings, in part, because of the material which supported certain Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory, praying for the dead, and the treasury of merit.

Because the Apocryphal writings were not accepted as being canonical by the Protestants, they were therefore excluded from their version of the Bible. There are therefore forty six books in the Old Testament of the Catholic Bible, but only thirty nine in the non-Catholic's Bible. It is therefore natural to wonder if these seven extra books in the Catholic Bible (152,185 extra words) are justified, for if they are inspired by God and canonical, all Protestants should include them in their Bible and read them.

### **THE MEANING OF "APOCRYPHA"**

The term "Apocrypha" is a transliterated form of the Greek word apokruphos which means hidden, secret, concealed obscure. It is not clear when and why and by whom the term was chosen. Some say the term was applied to writings regarded as so important or precious, that they were hidden from the general public and reserved for initiates. But due to the fact that none of the Apocryphal books were ever secret or considered secret, a common view is that the term was used to mean false or spurious writings hidden away because they were not good enough, being questionable or heretical, having an unknown or doubtful origin - not inspired and non-canonical.

Over time the term Apocrypha came to be used to describe any book that was not regarded as being inspired, and for that reason non-Catholics use it in relation to those extra seven books in the Roman Catholic Bible.

Other non-canonical Apocryphal texts are usually called "pseudepigrapha" which means "false writings," in the sense that a given book is attributed to someone who obviously did not write it e.g. Enoch, Baruch, Moses etc. The apostle Paul refers to them as "Jewish fables" (Tit. 1:14). And Peter refers to them as "cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet. 1:16). "Fables" means myths, i.e. fiction.

### **ORIGINS**

**A**s mentioned before, the Apocrypha is a collection of books that were ultimately included in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) known as the Septuagint. The original Septuagint is traditionally dated to the third century B.C. to the reign of Ptolemy 11

Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 B.C.). He was a great lover of literature and was renowned for his library at Alexandria and his promotion of education and learning.

According to the traditional account of the origin of the Septuagint, preserved in the so-called letter of Aristeas, king Ptolemy commissioned the royal librarian, Demetrius of Phaleron, to collect by purchase or by copying, all the books in the world including the Hebrew Scriptures. He wrote a letter to Eleazar, the high priest at Jerusalem, requesting six elders of each of the twelve tribes, in total seventy two men, of exemplary life and learned in the Scriptures, to translate them into Greek. He wanted all the books in the world translated into Greek. His reason for this was due to the widespread usage of the Greek language.

On arrival at Alexandria, the translators, under the direction of Demetrius, completed the translation in seventy two days. When the Alexandrian Jewish community assembled to hear a reading of their Scriptures in Greek, the translators and Demetrius received lavish praise, and a curse was pronounced on anyone who should alter the text by addition, transposition or omission.

The Septuagint translation was very beneficial to the entire Greek-speaking world which could not read the Scriptures in the original Hebrew script. It also made the Scriptures available to any Jews who could no longer speak their ancestral Hebrew language. However, had it been left to the Hebrews themselves, it is unlikely that they would have taken the initiative to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

### **WAS THE APOCRYPHA IN THE ORIGINAL SEPTUAGINT?**

**A**ll the books of the original Old Testament canon were written in Hebrew by Hebrews for Hebrews. Throughout the Bible it is emphasized that God revealed the Scriptures exclusively to the nation of Israel and entrusted that nation alone with them (Ps. 78:5. 103:7. 147:19-20. Mal. 4:4. Rom. 3:1-2. 9:4-5). Therefore, anything claiming to be "Scripture" that was not originally written in Hebrew, was not regarded as being canonical by the Jews and was rejected. All the undisputed books of the Old Testament were composed in Hebrew - none of them were composed in Greek. Greek did not become the international language until about 330 B.C. which was about seventy years after the close of the Old Testament. The fact that the books of the Apocrypha in the Septuagint were never in the Hebrew Bible and were originally written in Greek, shows their late date and their lack of claim to be part of the Old Testament.

There is strong evidence that the Apocryphal books were not included in the original Septuagint commissioned by Ptolemy

Philadelphus in the third century B.C. If they were, the Alexandrian Jewish community would not have lavished praise upon the translators when the translation was presented to them. It is believed that these books found their way there gradually into later copies. The earliest extant manuscripts of the Septuagint are from the fourth century A.D. and suffer greatly from a lack of uniformity as regards containing Apocryphal books, and some also contain books classed as pseudepigrapha, from which writers in the second and later centuries quoted as being Scripture.

Cyril of Jerusalem (born about A.D. 315) stated that it was “those two and twenty books of the Old Testament which were interpreted by the seventy two interpreters ...” He clearly did not believe that Apocryphal writings were included in the original Septuagint. The fact that some of the Apocryphal writings were written after the Septuagint was written, proves that they could not have been in the original Septuagint. For example, the first book of Maccabees narrates history that occurred around one hundred years after the Septuagint was written!

Other Jewish translations of the Old Testament did not include the Apocryphal books. The Targums, the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament did not include them; neither did the earliest versions of the Syriac translation called the Peshitta.

Philo, the respected Jewish scholar of Alexandria (20 B.C. - A.D. 50) wrote prolifically, and frequently quoted the Old Testament, yet he never cited the Apocrypha, nor did he even mention these documents.

Josephus the Jewish historian (A.D. 37-95) rejected the Apocryphal writings. He wrote: “From Artaxerxes (465-424 B.C.) to our own time the complete history has been written (in Jewish and Greek writings including Apocryphal books such as Maccabees) but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records (i.e. the Old Testament) because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets ... We have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty two books, which contain the records of all past times; which are justly believed to be divine ...” (Flavius Josephus, Against Apion 1:8).

By combining several Old Testament narratives into a “book,” the thirty nine of our current editions become the twenty two alluded to by Josephus coinciding with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In a typical Jewish printing of the Scriptures the arrangement is as follows:

**The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books.

**The Prophets:** Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Ezekiel, the book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books.

**The Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth-Judges,

Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books.

In Protestant Bibles, many of the books are divided - Samuel becomes 1 and 2 Samuel, Chronicles becomes 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are separate books, as are Ruth and Judges.

Josephus' statement about the 22 books represented the Jewish position in relation to the Scriptures in the first century A.D. He clearly states that the canon of Scripture was complete with twenty two books prior to the time of Artaxerxes who was king of Persia, during which period the last books in the Old Testament were written. Furthermore, Josephus implies that all other writings besides the twenty two books since the time of Artaxerxes are not worthy of equal credit to the Old Testament Scriptures and disagree with, and contradict one another. As we shall see, Apocryphal books contradict each other and the Scriptures and support some false doctrines believed and taught by the Roman Catholics. Some believe that it was during the early stages of church history when these false doctrines were starting to be embraced, that the Apocryphal writings were added to the Septuagint.

The fact that the Apocrypha is found in the Septuagint of Christian times proves nothing because we do not have copies dating back to pre-Christian times. There is no evidence of Apocryphal writings being included in the original Alexandrian Septuagint. As mentioned before, the earliest copies we have of the Septuagint only date back to the fourth century A.D.

Apuila's Greek version of the Old Testament made about 128 A.D. which was adopted by the Alexandrian Jews, also did not include the Apocrypha.

Melito a bishop of Sardis (A.D. 170) made a list of Old Testament books and none of the Apocryphal books were included. He wrote the following: "When I came to the east and reached the place where these things were preached and done, and learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, I set down the facts and sent them to you. These are their names: the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of the kingdom, two books of Chronicles, the Psalms of David, the proverbs of Solomon and his wisdom, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, The Twelve in a single book, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra." (c.f. Eusebius, "Ecclesiastical History" 4. 26. 14. 6.25).

Origen and Tertullian who were contemporary early church fathers in the second century A.D. did not recognize the books of the Apocrypha as being canonical. Origen stated that "the canonical books, as the Hebrews have handed them down, are twenty two." ("Origen on the Canon" [www.bible-researcher.com/origen](http://www.bible-researcher.com/origen)).

Athanasius Bishop of Alexandria, wrote a letter in A.D. 367 affirming

acceptance of all the books of the present Old Testament canon (except Esther) as well as all the books of the present New Testament canon. He also mentioned some of the books of the Apocrypha saying: “They are not included in the canon, but appointed by the fathers to be read by those who newly join us, and who wish instruction in the world of godliness.”

Jerome (340-420 A.D.) who could read and write Hebrew and who translated the Latin Vulgate which is used by the Roman Catholic church, rejected the Apocrypha since he believed that the Jews recognized and established the proper canon of the Old Testament. In “Protogus Galeatus” he was among the first to declare that all books outside the Hebrew canon were “Apocryphal” (i.e. of doubtful authenticity). Jerome vigorously resisted including the Apocrypha in his Latin Vulgate version (400 A.D.), but was overruled. As a result, the standard Roman Catholic Bible throughout the medieval period contained it. Still, many medieval Catholic scholars realized that it was not inspired. Jerome said the Apocryphal books may be read for edification, but not for ecclesiastical dogmas.

Many Roman Catholic scholars, even during the time of the protestant reformation, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture.

Jerome in his letter to Laeta wrote: “Let her beware of all Apocrypha ... and if at any time she should wish to read them ... let her know that they are not the works of those whose names they bear, that many faulty things are mixed up in them, and that it needs great prudence to look for gold in mire.” Jerome also wrote the following in his preface to his Latin translation of the Old Testament: “Whatever book is not included in those which we have translated from the Hebrew, is to be classed with the Apocrypha, and is not canonical ...” (Introduction to the Apocrypha, SPCK Commentary, page 1).

Cyril of Jerusalem (born about A.D. 315) was the first, so far as we know, to apply the term “Apocrypha” to the books added to the Hebrew canon in Greek Bibles. He wrote: “Learn diligently and from the church which are the books of the Old Testament and which of the new, and read not, I pray, any of the Apocrypha. For why should you, who knows not those who are acknowledged by all, take needless trouble about those which are questioned? Read the Holy Scriptures, those two and twenty books of the Old Testament which were interpreted by the seventy-two interpreters ... read the two and twenty books of these Scriptures, and have nothing to do with the Apocrypha. Those books only study earnestly which we read confidently even in church.” (Fourth Catechetical Lecture, quoted in “General Introduction to the Apocrypha,” Speaker’s Commentary, page 31).

Hilary (Bishop of Poitiers, 350 A.D.) rejected the Apocrypha (Prologue to the Psalms, Sec. 15).

Babylonian Talmud, tractate “Sanhedrin” V11-V111, 24: “After the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel” i.e. there were no more inspired prophets.

Epiphanius (360 A.D.) rejected all of the Apocryphal writings. Referring to Wisdom of Solomon and book of Jesus Sirach, he said: “These indeed are useful books and profitable, but they are not placed in the number of the canonical.”

Martin Luther did not class Apocryphal books as being Scripture, but in both the German (1534) and English translation of the Bible, the Apocrypha were published in a separate section from the other books, although the Lutheran and Anglican lists differed. In some editions (like the Westminster), readers were warned that these books were “not to be any otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.” A milder distinction was expressed elsewhere, such as in the “argument” introducing them in the Geneva Bible, and in the Sixth Article of the Church of England, where it is said that “the other books the church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners,” though not to establish doctrine.

## **DEAD SEA SCROLLS**

**W**hile it is true that the books of the Apocrypha were found among the Dead Sea scrolls, they were not the only non-canonical books that were found. The materials found at Qumran were part of a library - they were not merely books of Scripture. While commentaries of the Biblical books have been found at Qumran, no commentary has been found on the Apocryphal books. Consequently there is no evidence whatsoever that the Dead Sea community held the books of the Apocrypha to be divinely inspired. Even if evidence was found, this would prove nothing because the Essenes were a sect that was not the mainstream of Jewish thinking.

## **JESUS IMPLIED THE EXTENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

**A** statement of Jesus recorded in Matt. 23:34-36 indicates his view on the extent of the Old Testament. He said: “Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation.”

Jesus mentions Abel and Zechariah as the first and last messengers of

God that were murdered. Abel's murder is mentioned early in Genesis while Zechariah's is in 2 Chronicles - the last Old Testament book in the Hebrew canonical order. The fact that these two are specifically mentioned is particularly significant. There are other murders of God's messengers recorded in the Apocrypha that took place after the murder of Zechariah, but Jesus does not mention them. This strongly suggests he did not consider the books of the Apocrypha as part of Old Testament Scripture, and that he regarded Genesis to 2 Chronicles as being the full extent of Old Testament Scripture.

Jesus gave further testimony of the extent of the Old Testament canon on the day of his resurrection. He said: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ... and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

Note Jesus' emphasis on "all that the prophets had spoken." Later he explained the extent of "all that the prophets had spoken." He said to them: "This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms" (Lk. 24:44).

This is a reference to the three-fold division of the Hebrew Scriptures. They constitute "all that the prophets said." There is no place for an additional section like the Apocrypha and therefore no reference to it by Jesus. It formed no part in the threefold division of the Old Testament. Because the Apocryphal writings are not Scripture, it is wrong to have them bound in a single volume with holy inspired Scripture. Doing so will only mislead believers.

### SOME VALUE

**T**he fact that the Apocrypha is not considered to be Holy Scripture does not mean that it is entirely worthless. Some of the books do have some value. For example the first book of Maccabees has some valuable historical references about the period between the Old and New Testaments. However, any value these books have are only as historical works, not divinely inspired Scripture.

Some believe that the four hundred year period between the Old and New Testaments during which there were no inspired words from the Lord, was predicted in Amos 8:11-12: "Behold the days come, says the Lord, that I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a famine of water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

## THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS NEVER CLAIM TO BE INSPIRED

**T**he books of the Old Testament claim to be the Word of God hundreds of times with such expressions as: “The Word of the Lord came to me” or: “Thus says the Lord,” yet the Apocryphal books never claim to be the inspired Word of God. Not once is there a “Thus says the Lord” or “The Word of the Lord came to me.” In fact, some of the Apocryphal books actually deny being inspired. In the prologue of Ecclesiasticus, the writer states: “Ye are intreated therefore to read with favour and attention, and to pardon us, if in any parts of what we have laboured to interpret, we may seem to fail in some of the phrases.”

None of the Apocryphal books claim to be written by a prophet, and 1 Maccabees, which is considered to be the most valuable Apocryphal book, acknowledges that there were no prophets in those days: “And they laid up the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill till there should come a prophet, to tell them what to do with them” (1 Maccabees 4:46). “And there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them” (1 Maccabees 9:27). “And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise” (1 Maccabees 14:41).

While our Old Testament contains hundreds of verifiable prophecies to substantiate its claim to be the inspired Word of God, the Apocrypha contains no specific verifiable prophecies. Prophecy is the hallmark - the divine seal of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Apocryphal writings lack this hallmark and seal. Almost 30% of the Old Testament is prophecy. 0% of the Apocrypha is prophecy! Prophecy is given as proof of inspiration in the Old Testament. The Apocrypha is devoid of this proof.

The entire Old Testament (not to mention the New Testament) has one consistent theme focusing on the Messiah, yet the Apocrypha does not maintain that theme.

## NOT QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**R**eferences are made by Jesus and New Testament writers to the Old Testament Scriptures and their authors by name hundreds of times, but they make no specific reference to the Apocryphal books by name or their authors. Nowhere does Jesus say: “It is written” and then quote the Apocrypha. Nowhere does Paul say: “The Scriptures say,” and then quote the Apocrypha. References are made repeatedly to the Hebrew Scriptures being divinely inspired, but reference is never made to the Apocryphal writings being inspired.

So, in view of the argument of some, that Jesus and the New

Testament writers quoted largely from the Septuagint which contained the Apocryphal books, it is surely significant that there is not a single clear-cut case of a citation from any of those books. Not once are those Apocryphal books quoted or explicitly referred to. The most that can be said is that the New Testament writers show acquaintance with Apocryphal writings and perhaps allude to them indirectly, but do not quote them as inspired Scripture or cite them as authority.

Due to similarity of wording, some argue that the New Testament does quote the Apocrypha. But similarity of wording does not prove in itself that one is quoting the other. Resemblances between passages in the New Testament and Apocrypha could be due to later doctoring of the Apocryphal books in order to give them an apparent authority. It could also be that both are using the same Old Testament passage, or both are using the common phraseology of the day.

Those who support the canonicity of the Apocrypha argue that when Jesus and the New Testament writers quoted Old Testament passages, they were quoting from the Greek Septuagint and seeing that it included the additional books of the Apocrypha, they must have accepted the Apocrypha as well.

However, as noted previously, the claim that the Septuagint of New Testament times included the Apocrypha has not been proved. The earliest manuscripts we have of the entire Septuagint are from the fourth century A.D. The original Septuagint was written around six hundred years earlier, leaving plenty of time for alterations and additions. Also remember that although the fourth century copies do include the Apocryphal books, none include the same list of books.

It can be argued that instead of using the Greek Septuagint, which was probably available at the time, Jesus and his disciples used the Hebrew text. The scroll of Isaiah handed to Jesus to read in the synagogue at Nazareth, was no doubt written in Hebrew. It is generally believed that the scrolls of the Old Testament read in Hebrew synagogues to the Hebrew people throughout the world were all Hebrew scrolls.

## QUOTATIONS FROM HEATHEN WRITERS

**T**he Roman Catholics argue that early Christians quoted from the Apocrypha, and on this basis they believe it proves it belongs to the Bible. But even if it were true that early Christians quoted from the Apocrypha, that alone does not give the Apocrypha Scriptural status. The New Testament writers allude to, and even quote a number of heathenworks that neither Protestants nor Roman Catholics claim to be inspired.

In Acts 17:28 Paul quotes line 5 from “Aratus’ Phaenomena” (Aratus

was a Greek poet from Sicily). In Titus 1:12 Paul quotes a hexameter line of the Cretan philosopher Epimenides, who wrote a work “concerning oracles” about six hundred B.C. Among the Romans he was reputed to have foretold the future, so Paul refers to him as a “prophet,” no doubt in inverted commas, meaning “a prophet so-called.” In 2 Tim. 3:8 Paul cites the names of the magicians of Pharaoh who opposed Moses, namely Jannes and Jambres. But these names are not mentioned in the Old Testament.

In v14 of his epistle, Jude quotes what Roman Catholics (and some Protestants) believe to be the book of Enoch 1:9, but which neither the Protestants nor the Roman Catholics claim to be inspired. This book was not one of the Apocryphal books, but part of the pseudepigrapha, which was a set of supposed Scripture that were universally rejected as false writing. For that reason the Roman Catholics have not included it in the Apocryphal section of their Bible.

So then, by their own admission, Jude’s quotation from the pseudepigrapha does not belong to the inspired canon of Scripture. This being the case, they would have to conclude that New Testament quotations of non-Old Testament writers does not automatically prove they were inspired.

However, Jude was not quoting from the pseudepigrapha. The Enoch to whom Jude was referring was not someone who lived during the intertestament era of Apocryphal writings. Jude makes this clear by saying the Enoch to whom he was referring was the seventh generation from Adam which was several thousand years before the Apocryphal period. This is why he made what would otherwise be a superfluous chronological statement. The Holy Spirit obviously revealed the words of Enoch’s prophecy which Jude quoted, but because there was no written historical record of the prophecy, a false prophet by the name of Enoch or who appropriated the name, laid claim to it. The Apocryphal book of Enoch is an extravagant and unbelievable account of antediluvian history and rightly rejected as uninspired.

Another argument that is presented is that the Apocryphal books cannot be rejected as uninspired on the basis that they are not quoted in the New Testament, because Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon are also never quoted in the New Testament, yet we all accept them as inspired.

The rebuttal to this argument is that these books had already been accepted as inspired books of the Old Testament whereas the Apocrypha had not. The Jews recognized the Old Testament canon and they did not include the Apocrypha in it. This is significant in the light of what Paul says in Rom. 3:1-2: “What advantage has the Jew? ... Much in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.”

This means that they are the ones who know what the inspired Scriptures are, and they never accepted the Apocrypha!

Reference should also be made to the sub-Biblical content and literary style in the books of the Apocrypha, which is below the standard of canonical Scripture. When a comparison is made between the style of the Apocrypha and the style of the Hebrew Scriptures, there is considerable inferiority. They come across like the ring of a dud coin! There is a superficiality and artificiality in the Apocrypha by comparison. Several of the books read like legends. Some are downright superstitious like references to driving out a demon by making smoke from the liver, heart and gall of a fish, and holding it in front of the person possessed.

A case is also given of a woman who had seven husbands, all of whom died. The reason given is because a demon was in love with her, and killed her husbands out of envy. The demon was driven away by making smoke from the organs of a fish in the bride chamber.

Superstitions such as these were typical of those held by the pagan nations, and it hardly requires any explanation as to how they found their way into Apocryphal writings.

## ERRORS

**A** critical study of the contents of the Apocryphal writings reveals that they could not be the product of the Spirit of God, because they contain a great variety of historical, geographical, chronological, moral and doctrinal errors. The following examples are ample evidence of this:

1. Creation contradiction: The Bible teaches that God's Holy Spirit Power brought creation into existence out of nothing. His divine energy formed the basis of all matter. But the Apocrypha says God created the world out of pre-existent matter - "formless matter" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:17). The Bible says God created the world out of things that were not visible (Heb. 11:3).

2. Alms for sins: The Apocrypha supports the Roman Catholic doctrine of justification by works. It teaches that one may atone for sins by the giving of alms: "It is better to give alms than to lay up gold: Alms deliver from death and purge away all sin" (Tobit 4:8-10. 12:9). The Bible teaches that no man can redeem or give to God a ransom for another with alms (Ps. 49:6-8. 1 Pet. 1:18-19. Act. 8:18-24).

3. Praying for the dead: The Apocrypha teaches by implication the false doctrine of Purgatory by teaching that prayer can be made for the dead: "Therefore he made the propitiation for those who had died, that they might be released from their sins" (2 Maccabees 12:44-45).

The Apocrypha even says that God hears the prayers of the dead: "O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the dead of Israel,

the children of those who sinned before you, who did not heed the voice of the Lord their God, so that calamities have clung to us” (Baruch 3:4). This, along with a passage in the book Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-5, implies the immortality of the soul which is a fundamental contradiction of Bible teaching. The Bible clearly teaches that death is a sleep - an unconscious state and life after death is only possible by physical resurrection.

4. Pre-existence: The Apocrypha teaches the common belief among heathen nations that people pre-existed prior to their physical bodily existence: “As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot; or rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body” (Wisdom 8:19-20). The Bible never teaches pre-existence, only post-existence through resurrection from the dead.

5. Magical potions and superstitions: The Apocrypha advocates magical and superstitious practices. It describes magical potions and practices which are alleged to drive away demons (Tobit 6:1-17). The Bible is opposed to such magic and condemns it as “sorcery.”

6. Internal contradiction: There are two contradictory accounts of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes in the second book of Maccabees. The record in 2 Macc. 1:13-16 says Antiochus and his company were “cut to pieces in the temple of Nanaea by the treachery of Nanaea’s priests,” whereas the record in 2 Macc. 9:19-29 says Antiochus was “taken with a noisome sickness” and so “ended his life among the mountains by a most piteous fate in a strange land.”

7. Where was Baruch? According to Jer. 52:12-13, Nebuchadnezzar burned Jerusalem on the tenth day, fifth month, of the nineteenth year of his reign. Subsequent to this, both Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch were taken into Egypt (Jer. 43:6-7). However, at this same time, the Apocrypha claims that Baruch was actually in Babylon (Baruch 1:1-2).

8. False history: In 2 Maccabees 1:18 it is stated that Nehemiah built the temple and altar at Jerusalem. This is referring to the rebuilding of the temple when the Jews returned to their land after seventy years captivity in Babylon. But the Biblical account distinctly says in Ezra chapter 3 that the altar and temple were built by “Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren.” This took place around 536 B.C. But Nehemiah didn’t visit Jerusalem until about ninety years later in 446 B.C. and was instrumental in rebuilding the city of Jerusalem not the temple!

9. False history: The book of Judith starts with the words: “In the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in his great capital city of Nineveh ...” This is untrue, for Nebuchadnezzar was never king of Assyria and his capital city was never Nineveh but Babylon which was around 500 kilometres south of Nineveh as the crow flies. But in the book of Judith, Nebuchadnezzar is continually referred to

as being king of Assyria with his capital at Nineveh and his army being an Assyrian army. Not once is the fact told that he was a Babylonian and that his capital was Babylon.

10. False history: One of the worst contradictions of history is in Judith chapter four, which refers to Nebuchadnezzar's army coming to attack Jerusalem some time after the Jews had returned there as a result of the Persians conquering Babylon and giving them permission to return and rebuild their temple. The writer of the book of Judith was obviously ignorant of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 B.C. twenty five years before the Jews even returned to Jerusalem in 537 B.C.

11. False history: The writer of the book "Bell and the Dragon" states that Daniel was in the lion's den for seven days, whereas the book of Daniel makes it quite clear that the prophet was in the den for one night only.

A study of the so-called historical books of the Apocrypha make us realize how infinitely superior are the historical records in the Bible.

Such contradictions and other errors clearly indicate that the Apocryphal writings have not been inspired by God and do not therefore belong to the canon of Scripture, and should not be used as a basis to define doctrine. The non-canonical Apocryphal writings have largely contributed towards the situation predicted by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 4:3-4: "The time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they accumulate for themselves teachers who will tell them what their ears are itching to hear. And they will turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables."