

Apocrypha, Old and New Testaments. *Apocrypha* most commonly refers to disputed books that Protestants reject and Roman Catholics and Orthodox communions accept into the Old Testament. The word *apocrypha* means “hidden” or “doubtful.” So those who accept these documents prefer to call them “deuterocanonical,” or books of “the second canon.”

The Roman Catholic View. Catholics and Protestants agree about the inspiration of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. They differ over eleven pieces of literature in the Old Testament (seven books and four parts of books). These disputed works became an issue in the Reformation and, in reaction to their rejection by Protestants, were “infallibly” declared to be part of the inspired canon of Scripture in 1546 at the Council of Trent (*see* BIBLE, CANONICITY OF).

The Roman Catholic Council of Trent stated: “The Synod . . . receives and venerates . . . all the books [including the *Apocrypha*] both of the Old and the New Testaments—seeing that one God is the Author of both . . . as having been dictated, either by Christ’s own word of mouth or by the Holy Ghost . . . if anyone receives not as sacred and canonical the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church . . . let him be anathema” (Schaff, 2:81). Another Trent document read: “If anyone, however, should not accept the said books as sacred and canonical, entire with all their parts, . . . and if both knowingly and deliberately he should condemn the aforesaid tradition let him be anathema” (Denzinger, *Sources* , no. 784). The same language affirming the *Apocrypha* is repeated by Vatican Council II.

The *Apocrypha* Rome accepts includes eleven books or twelve, depending on whether Baruch 1–6) is split into two pieces, Baruch 1–5 and The Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch 6). The Deuterocanon includes all the fourteen (or fifteen) books in the Protestant *Apocrypha* except the Prayer of Manasseh and 1 and 2 Esdras (called 3 and 4 Esdras by Roman Catholics. Ezra and Nehemiah are called 1 and 2 Esdras by Catholics).

Although the Roman Catholic canon has eleven more pieces of literature than does the Protestant Bible, only seven extra books, or a total forty-six, appear in the table of contents (the Protestant and Jewish Old Testament has thirty-nine). As noted in the accompanying table, four other pieces of literature are incorporated within Esther and Daniel.

The Literature in Dispute

Apocryphal Books	Deuterocanonical Books
The Wisdom of Solomon	Book of Wisdom (ca. 30 B.C .)
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	Sirach (132 B.C .)
Tobit (ca. 200 B.C .)	Tobit
Judith (ca. 150 B.C .)	Judith
1 Esdras (ca. 150–100 B.C .)	3 Esdras

1 Maccabees (ca. 110 B.C .)	1 Maccabees
2 Maccabees (ca. 110–70 B.C .)	2 Maccabees
Baruch (ca. 150–50 B.C .)	Baruch chaps. 1–5
Letter of Jeremiah	Baruch 6 (ca. 300–100 B.C .)
2 Esdras (ca. A.D . 100)	4 Esdras
Additions to Esther	Esther 10:4–16:24 (140–130 B.C .)
Prayer of Azariah (ca. 200–0 B.C .)	Daniel 3:24–90—”Song of Three Young Men”
Susanna (ca. 200–0 B.C .)	Daniel 13
Bel and the Dragon	Daniel 14 (ca. 100 B.C .)
Prayer of Manasseh (or second Prayer of Manasseh, ca. 100–0 B.C .)	

The Apocrypha as Scripture. The larger canon is sometimes referred to as the “Alexandrian Canon,” as opposed to the “Palestinian Canon” which does not contain the *Apocrypha*, because it is alleged to have been part of the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*, or LXX) prepared at Alexandria, Egypt. Reasons generally advanced in favor of this broader Alexandrian list are:

1. The New Testament reflects the thought of the *Apocrypha*, and even refers to events described in it (cf. Heb. 11:35 with 2 Maccabees 7, 12).
2. The New Testament quotes mostly from the Greek Old Testament, the LXX, which contained the *Apocrypha*. This gives tacit approval to the whole text.
3. Some early church fathers quoted and used the *Apocrypha* as Scripture in public worship.
4. Such early fathers as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria accepted all of the *Apocrypha* as canonical.
5. Early Christian catacomb scenes depict episodes from the *Apocrypha*, showing it was part of early Christian religious life. This at least reveals a great regard for the *Apocrypha*.
6. Important early manuscripts (*Aleph*, *A*, and *B*) interpose the *Apocrypha* among the Old Testament books as part of the Jewish-Greek Old Testament.

7. Early church councils accepted the *Apocrypha* : Rome (382), Hippo (393), and Carthage (397).
8. The Eastern Orthodox church accepts the *Apocrypha* . Their acceptance shows it to be a common Christian belief, not one unique to Catholics.
9. The Roman Catholic church proclaimed the *Apocrypha* canonical at the Council of Trent (1546) in accord with the early councils noted and the Council of Florence not long before the Reformation (1442).
10. The apocryphal books continued to be included in the Protestant Bible as late as the nineteenth century. This indicates that even Protestants accepted the *Apocrypha* until very recently.
11. Apocryphal books in Hebrew were among Old Testament canonical books in the Dead Sea community at Qumran, so they were part of the Hebrew Canon (*see* DEAD SEA SCROLLS).

Answers to the Catholic Arguments. The New Testament and the Apocrypha. There may be New Testament allusions to the *Apocrypha* , but not once is there a definite quotation from any *Apocrypha* book accepted by the Roman Catholic church. There are allusions to Pseudepigraphical books (false writings) that are rejected by Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, such as the *Bodily Assumption of Moses* (Jude 9) and the *Book of Enoch* (Jude 14–15). There are also citations from Pagan poets and philosophers (Acts 17:28 ; 1 Cor. 15:33 ; Titus 1:12). None of these sources are cited as Scripture, nor with authority.

The New Testament simply refers to a truth contained in these books which otherwise may (and do) have errors. Roman Catholic scholars agree with this assessment. The New Testament never refers to any document outside the canon as authoritative.

The Septuagint and the Apocrypha. The fact that the New Testament often quotes from other books in the Greek Old Testament in no way proves that the deuterocanonical books it contains are inspired. It is not even certain that the *Septuagint* of the first century contained the *Apocrypha* . The earliest Greek manuscripts that include them date from the fourth century A.D .

Even if these writings were in the *Septuagint* in apostolic times, Jesus and the apostles never once quoted from them, although they are supposed to have been included in the very version of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*) that the Lord and apostles usually cited. Even notes in the currently used Roman Catholic New American Bible (NAB) make the revealing admission that the *Apocrypha* are “Religious books used by both Jews and Christians which were not included in the collection of inspired writings.” Instead, they “. . . were introduced rather late into the collection of the Bible. Catholics call them ‘deuterocanonical’ (second canon) books” (NAB , 413).

Use by the Church Fathers. Citations of church fathers in support of the canonicity of the *Apocrypha* is selective and misleading. Some fathers did seem to accept their inspiration; other

fathers used them for devotional or homiletical (preaching) purposes but did not accept them as canonical. An authority on the *Apocrypha* , Roger Beckwith, observes,

When one examines the passages in the early Fathers which are supposed to establish the canonicity of the *Apocrypha* , one finds that some of them are taken from the alternative Greek text of Ezra (1 Esdras) or from additions or appendices to Daniel, Jeremiah or some other canonical book, which . . . are not really relevant; that others of them are not quotations from the *Apocrypha* at all; and that, of those which are, many do not give any indication that the book is regarded as Scripture. [Beckwith, 387]

Epistle of Barnabas 6.7 and Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.22.5, are not quoting Wisd. 2.12 but Isa. 3:10 LXX , and Tertullian, *On the Soul* 15, is not quoting Wisd. 1.6 but Ps. 139.23, as a comparison of the passages shows. Similarly, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 129, is quite clearly not quoting Wisdom but Prov. 8.21–5 LXX . The fact that he calls Proverbs “Wisdom” is in accordance with the common nomenclature of the earlier Fathers. [Beckwith, 427]

Frequently in references, the fathers were not claiming divine authority for any of the eleven books infallibly canonized by the Council of Trent. Rather, they were citing a well-known piece of Hebrew literature or an informative devotional writing to which they gave no presumption of inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

The Fathers and the Apocrypha. Some individuals in the early church held the *Apocrypha* in high esteem; others were vehemently opposed to them. J. D. N. Kelly’s comment that “for the great majority [of early fathers] . . . the deuterocanonical writings ranked as scripture in the fullest sense” is out of sync with the facts. Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Origen, and the great Roman Catholic biblical scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, Jerome, all opposed inclusion of the *Apocrypha* . In the second century A.D . the Syrian Bible (Peshitta) did not contain the *Apocrypha* (Geisler, *General Introduction*, chaps. 27, 28).

Catacomb Art Apocrypha Themes. As many Catholic scholars admit, scenes from the catacombs do not prove the canonicity of the books whose events they depict. Such scenes indicate little more than the religious significance the portrayed events had for early Christians. At best, they show a respect for the books containing these events, not a recognition that they are inspired.

Books in the Greek Manuscripts. None of the great Greek manuscripts (*Aleph* , *A* , and *B*) contain all of the apocryphal books. Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) are found in all of them, and the oldest manuscripts (*B* or *Vaticanus*) totally exclude the Books of Maccabees. Yet Catholics appeal to this manuscript in support of their view. What is more, no Greek manuscript has the same list of apocryphal books accepted by the Council of Trent (1545–63; Beckwith, 194, 382–83).

Acceptance by Early Councils. These were only local councils and were not binding on the whole church. Local councils often erred in their decisions and were later overruled by the universal church. Some Catholic apologists argue that, even though a council was not

ecumenical, its results can be binding if they were confirmed by a Pope. However, they acknowledge that there is no infallible way to know which statements by Popes are infallible. Indeed, they admit that other statements by Popes were even heretical, such as the monothelite heresy of Pope Honorius I (d. 638).

It is also important to remember that these books were not part of the Christian (New Testament period) writings. Hence, they were not under the province of the Christian church to decide. They were the province of the Jewish community which wrote them and which had, centuries before, rejected them as part of the canon.

The books accepted by these Christian Councils may not have been the same ones in each case. Hence, they cannot be used as proof of the exact canon later infallibly proclaimed by the Roman Catholic church in 1546.

Local Councils of Hippo and Carthage in North Africa were influenced by Augustine, the most significant voice of antiquity who accepted the same apocryphal books later canonized by the Council of Trent. However, Augustine's position is ill-founded: (1) Augustine himself recognized that the Jews did not accept these books as part of their canon (Augustine, 19.36–38). (2) Of Maccabees, Augustine said, "These are held to be canonical, not by the Jews but by the Church, on account of the extreme and wonderful sufferings of certain martyrs" (Augustine, 18.36). On that ground *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* should be in the canon. (3) Augustine was inconsistent, since he rejected books not written by prophets, yet he accepted a book that appears to deny being prophetic (1 Macc. 9:27). (4) Augustine's mistaken acceptance of the *Apocrypha* seems to be connected with his belief in the inspiration of the *Septuagint* , whose later Greek manuscripts contained them. Augustine later acknowledged the superiority of Jerome's Hebrew text over the Septuagint's Greek text. That should have led him to accept the superiority of Jerome's Hebrew canon as well. Jerome utterly rejected the *Apocrypha* .

The later Council of Rome (382) which accepted *Apocrypha* l books did not list the same books accepted by Hippo and Carthage. It does not list Baruch, thus listing only six, not seven, of the *Apocrypha* books later pronounced canonical. Even Trent lists it as a separate book (Denzinger, no. 84).

Acceptance by the Orthodox Church. The Greek church has not always accepted the *Apocrypha* , nor is its present position unequivocal. At the synods of Constantinople (1638), Jaffa (1642), and Jerusalem (1672) these books were declared canonical. But even as late as 1839 their Larger Catechism expressly omitted the *Apocrypha* on the grounds that they did not exist in the Hebrew Bible.

Acceptance at the Councils of Florence and Trent. At the Council of Trent (1546) the infallible proclamation was made accepting the *Apocrypha* as part of the inspired Word of God. Some Catholic scholars claim that the earlier Council of Florence (1442) made the same pronouncement. However, this council claimed no infallibility and neither council's decision has any real basis in Jewish history, the New Testament, or early Christian history. Unfortunately, the decision at Trent came a millennium and a half after the books were written and was an obvious polemic against Protestantism. The Council of Florence had proclaimed the *Apocrypha*

inspired to bolster the doctrine of Purgatory that had blossomed. However, the manifestations of this belief in the sale of indulgences came to full bloom in Martin Luther's day, and Trent's infallible proclamation of the *Apocrypha* was a clear polemical against Luther's teaching. The official infallible addition of books that support prayers for the dead is highly suspect, coming only a few years after Luther protested this doctrine. It has all the appearance of an attempt to provide infallible support for doctrines that lack a real biblical basis.

Apocryphal Books in Protestant Bibles. *Apocryphal* books appeared in Protestant Bibles prior to the Council of Trent, and were generally placed in a separate section because they were not considered of equal authority. While Anglicans and some other non-Roman Catholic groups have always held a high regard for the inspirational and historical value of the *Apocrypha*, they never consider it inspired and of equal authority with Scripture. Even Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period distinguished between deuterocanon and canon. Cardinal Ximenes made this distinction in his *Complutensian Polyglot* (1514–17) on the very eve of the Reformation. Cardinal Cajetan, who later opposed Luther at Augsburg in 1518, published a *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* (1532) after the Reformation began which did not contain the *Apocrypha*. Luther spoke against the *Apocrypha* in 1543, including its books at the back of his Bible (Metzger, 181f.).

Apocryphal Writings at Qumran. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran included not only the community's Bible (the Old Testament) but their library, with fragments of hundreds of books. Among these were some Old Testament *Apocryphal* books. The fact that no commentaries were found for an *Apocryphal* book, and only canonical books were found in the special parchment and script indicates that the *Apocrypha* I books were not viewed as canonical by the Qumran community. Menahem Mansoor lists the following fragments of the *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha*: Tobit, in Hebrew and Aramaic; *Enoch* in Aramaic; *Jubilees* in Hebrew; *Testament of Levi and Naphtali*, in Aramaic; *Apocrypha* I Daniel literature, in Hebrew and Aramaic, and *Psalms of Joshua* (Mansoor, 203). The noted scholar on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Millar Burroughs, concluded: "There is no reason to think that any of these works were venerated as Sacred Scripture" (Burroughs, 178).

The Catholic Arguments in Summary. At best, all that the arguments urged in favor of the canonicity of the apocryphal books prove is that various apocryphal books were given varied degrees of esteem by various persons within the Christian church, usually falling short of claims for the books' canonicity. Only after Augustine and the local councils he dominated pronounced them inspired did they gain wider usage and eventual infallible acceptance by the Roman Catholic church at Trent. This falls far short of the kind of initial, continual, and full recognition among Christian churches of the canonical books of the Protestant Old Testament and Jewish Torah (which exclude the *Apocrypha*). True canonical books were received *immediately* by the people of God into the growing canon of Scripture (see Geisler, *General Introduction*, chap. 13). Any subsequent debate was by those who were not in a position, as was the immediate audience, to know whether they were from an accredited apostle or prophet. Hence, this subsequent debate over the antilegomena was over their *authenticity*, not canonicity. They were already in the canon; some in subsequent generations questioned whether they belonged there. Eventually, all of the antilegomena (books later questioned by some) were retained in the canon. This is not true

of the *Apocrypha*, for Protestants reject all of them and even Roman Catholics reject 3 Esdras, 4 Esdras and The Prayer of Manasseh.

Arguments for the Protestant Canon. Evidence indicates that the Protestant canon, consisting of the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Bible and excluding the *Apocrypha*, is the true canon. The only difference between the Protestant and ancient Palestinian Canon lies in organization. The ancient Bible lists twenty-four books. Combined into one each are 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra–Nehemiah (reducing the number by four). The twelve Minor Prophets are counted as one book (reducing the number by eleven). The Palestinian Jews represented Jewish orthodoxy. Therefore, their canon was recognized as the orthodox one. It was the canon of Jesus (Geisler, *General Introduction*, chap. 5), Josephus, and Jerome. It was the canon of many early church fathers, among them Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.

Arguments in support of the Protestant Canon can be divided into two categories: historical and doctrinal.

Historical Arguments. The test of canonicity. Contrary to the Roman Catholic argument from Christian usage, the true test of canonicity is propheticity. God determined which books would be in the Bible by giving their message to a prophet. So only books written by a prophet or accredited spokesperson for God are inspired and belong in the canon of Scripture.

Of course, while God *determined* canonicity by propheticity; the people of God had to *discover* which of these books were prophetic. The people of God to whom the prophet wrote knew what prophets fulfilled the biblical tests for God’s representatives, and they authenticated them by accepting the writings as from God. Moses’ books were accepted immediately and stored in a holy place (Deut. 31:26). Joshua’s writing was immediately accepted and preserved along with Moses’ Law (Josh. 24:26). Samuel added to the collection (1 Sam. 10:25). Daniel already had a copy of his prophetic contemporary Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2) and the law (Dan. 9:11 , 13). While Jeremiah’s message may have been rejected by much of his generation, the remnant must have accepted and spread it speedily. Paul encouraged the churches to circulate his inspired Epistles (Col. 4:16). Peter already had a collection of Paul’s writings, equating them with the Old Testament as “Scripture” (2 Peter 3:15–16).

There were a number of ways for immediate contemporaries to confirm whether someone was a prophet of God. Some were confirmed supernaturally (Exodus 3–4 ; Acts 2:22 ; 2 Cor. 12:12 ; Heb. 2:3–4). Sometimes this came as immediate confirmation of their authority over nature or the accuracy of their predictive prophecy. Indeed, false prophets were weeded out if their predictions did not come true (Deut. 18:20–22). Alleged revelations that contradicted previously revealed truths were rejected as well (Deut. 13:1–3).

Evidence that each prophet’s contemporaries authenticated and added his books to a growing canon comes through citations from subsequent writings. Moses’ writings are cited through the Old Testament, beginning with his immediate successor, Joshua (Josh. 1:7 ; 1 Kings 2:3 ; 2 Kings 14:6 ; 2 Chron. 17:9 ; Ezra 6:18 ; Neh. 13:1 ; Jer. 8:8 ; Mal. 4:4). Later prophets cite earlier ones (e.g., Jer. 26:18 ; Ezek. 14:14 , 20 ; Dan. 9:2 ; Jonah 2:2–9 ; Micah 4:1–3). In the New Testament, Paul cites Luke (1 Tim. 5:18); Peter recognizes Paul’s Epistles (2 Peter 3:15–

16), and Jude (4–12) cites 2 Peter. The Revelation is filled with images and ideas from previous Scripture, especially Daniel (see, for example, Revelation 13).

The entire Jewish/Protestant Old Testament was considered prophetic. Moses, who wrote the first five books, was a prophet (Deut. 18:15). The rest of the Old Testament books were known for centuries as “The Prophets” (Matt. 5:17 ; Luke 24:27). Eventually these books were divided into The Prophets and The Writings. Some believe this division was based on whether the author was a prophet by office or by gift. Others believe the separation was for topical use at Jewish festivals, or that books were arranged chronologically in descending order of size (Geisler, *General Introduction*, 244–45). Whatever the reason, it is clear that the original (cf. 7:12) and continual way to refer to the entire Old Testament up to the time of Christ was the twofold division of the “The Law and The Prophets.” The “apostles and prophets” (Eph. 3:5) composed the New Testament. Hence, the whole Bible is a prophetic book, including the last book (for example, Revelation 20); this cannot be said for the *Apocryphal* books.

Nonauthenticated prophecy. There is strong evidence that the apocryphal books are not prophetic, and since propheticity is the test for canonicity, this fact alone eliminates them from the canon. No apocryphal books claim to be written by a prophet. Indeed, Maccabees disclaims being prophetic (1 Macc. 9:27). Nor is there supernatural confirmation of any of the writers of the apocryphal books, as there is for prophets who wrote canonical books. There is no predictive prophecy in the *Apocrypha* , as there is in some canonical books (e.g., Isaiah 53 ; Daniel 9 ; Micah 5:2). There is no new Messianic truth in the *Apocrypha* . Even the Jewish community, whose books these were, acknowledged that the prophetic gifts had ceased in Israel before the *Apocrypha* was written (see quotes above). Apocryphal books were never listed in the Jewish Bible with the Prophets or in any other section. Not once is an apocryphal book cited authoritatively by a prophetic book written after it. Taken together all of this provides overwhelming evidence that the *Apocrypha* was not prophetic and, therefore, should not be part of the canon of Scripture.

Jewish Rejection . In addition to the evidence for the propheticity of only the books of the Jewish and Protestant Old Testament, there is an unbroken line of rejection of the *Apocrypha* as canon by Jewish and Christian teachers.

Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish teacher (20 B.C .– A.D . 40), quoted the Old Testament prolifically from virtually every canonical book. However, he never once quoted from the *Apocrypha* as inspired.

Josephus (A.D . 30–100), a Jewish historian, explicitly excludes the *Apocrypha* , numbering the Old Testament as twenty two books (= thirty-nine books in Protestant Old Testament). Neither does he ever quote an *Apocrypha* l book as Scripture, though he was familiar with them. In *Against Apion* (1.8) he wrote:

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have,] *but only twenty-two books, which are justly believed to be divine; and of them, five belong to Moses, which contain his law, and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death.* This interval of time was little short

of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned at Xerxes, *the prophets* , who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in *thirteen books* . The remaining *four books contain hymns to God* , and precepts for the conduct of human life. [Josephus, 1.8, emphasis added]

These correspond exactly to the Jewish and Protestant Old Testament, which excludes the *Apocrypha* .

The Jewish teachers acknowledged that their prophetic line ended in the fourth century B.C . Yet, as even Catholics acknowledge, all apocryphal books were written after this time. Josephus wrote: “From Artaxerxes until our time everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased” (Josephus). Additional rabbinical statements on the cessation of prophecy support this (see Beckwith, 370). Seder Olam Rabbah 30 declares “Until then [the coming of Alexander the Great] the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit. From then on, ‘Incline thine ear and hear the words of the wise.’ ” Baba Bathra 12b declares: “Since the day when the Temple was destroyed, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to the wise.” Rabbi Samuel bar Inia said, “The Second Temple lacked five things which the First Temple possessed, namely, the fire, the ark, the Urim and Thummin, the oil of anointing and the Holy Spirit [of prophecy].” Thus, the Jewish fathers (rabbis) acknowledged that the time period during which their *Apocrypha* was written was not a time when God was giving inspired writings.

Jesus and the New Testament writers never quoted from the *Apocrypha* as Scripture, even though they were aware of these writings and alluded to them at times (e.g., Heb. 11:35 may allude to 2 Maccabees 7 , 12 , though this may be a reference to the canonical book of Kings; see 1 Kings 17:22). Yet hundreds of quotations in the New Testament cite the Old Testament canon. The authority with which they are cited indicates that the New Testament writers believed them to be part of the “Law and Prophets” [i.e., whole Old Testament] which was believed to be the inspired and infallible Word of God (Matt. 5:17–18 ; cf. John 10:35). Jesus quoted from throughout the Old Testament “Law and Prophets,” which he called “all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27).

The Jewish Scholars at Jamnia (ca. A.D . 90) did not accept the *Apocrypha* as part of the divinely inspired Jewish Canon (see Beckwith, 276–77). Since the New Testament explicitly states that Israel was entrusted with the oracles of God and was the recipient of the covenants and the law (Rom. 3:2), the Jews should be considered the custodians of the limits of their own canon. As such they have always rejected the *Apocrypha* .

Early church council rejection. No canonic list or council of the Christian church accepted the *Apocrypha* as inspired for nearly the first four centuries. This is significant, since all of the lists available and most of the fathers of this period omit the *Apocrypha* . The first councils to accept the *Apocrypha* were only local ones without ecumenical force. The Catholic contention that the Council of Rome (382), though not an ecumenical council, had ecumenical force because Pope Damasus (304–384) ratified it is without grounds. It begs the question, assuming that Damasus was a Pope with infallible authority. Second, even Catholics acknowledge this council

was not an ecumenical body. Third, not all Catholic scholars agree that such affirmations by Popes are infallible. There are no infallible lists of infallible statements by Popes. Nor are there any universally agreed upon criteria for developing such lists. At best, appealing to a Pope to make infallible a statement by a local council is a double-edged sword. Even Catholic scholars admit that some Popes taught error and were even heretical.

Early fathers' rejection. Early fathers of the Christian church spoke out against the *Apocrypha*. This included Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and the great Roman Catholic Bible translator, Jerome.

Rejection by Jerome. Jerome (340–420), the greatest biblical scholar of the early Medieval period and translator of the Latin Vulgate, explicitly rejected the *Apocrypha* as part of the canon. He said the church reads them “for example and instruction of manners” but does not “apply them to establish any doctrine” (“Preface” to Vulgate *Book of Solomon*, cited in Beckwith, 343). In fact, he disputed Augustine’s unjustified acceptance of these books. At first, Jerome even refused to translate the *Apocrypha* into Latin, but later made a hurried translation of a few books. After listing the exact books of the Jewish and Protestant Old Testament, Jerome concludes:

And thus altogether there come to be 22 books of the old Law [according to the letters of the Jewish alphabet], that is, five of Moses, eight of the Prophets, and nine of the Hagiographa. Although some set down . . . Ruth and Kinoth among the Hagiographa, and think that these books ought to be counted (separately) in their computation, and that there are thus 24 books of the old Law; which the Apocalypse of John represents as adoring the Lamb in the number of the 24 elders. . . . This prologue can fitly serve as a Helmet (i.e., equipped with a helmet, against assailants) *introduction to all the biblical books* which we have translated from Hebrew into Latin, so that we may know that *whatever is not included in these is to be placed among the apocrypha*. [ibid., emphasis added]

In his preface to Daniel, Jerome clearly rejected the apocryphal additions to Daniel (Bel and the Dragon and Susanna) and argued only for the canonicity of those books found in the Hebrew Bible. He wrote:

The stories of Susanna and of Bel and the Dragon are not contained in the Hebrew. . . . For this same reason when I was translating Daniel many years ago, I noted these visions with a critical symbol, showing that they were not included in the Hebrew. . . . After all, both Origen, Eusebius and Appolinarius, and other outstanding churchmen and teachers of Greece acknowledge that, as I have said, these visions are not found amongst the Hebrew, *and therefore they are not obliged to answer to Porphyry for these portions which exhibit no authority as Holy Scripture*. [ibid., emphasis added]

The suggestion that Jerome really favored the apocryphal books but was only arguing that the Jews rejected them is groundless. First, he said clearly in the above quotation that they “*exhibit no authority as Holy Scripture*.” Second, he never retracted his rejection of the *Apocrypha*. Third, he stated in his work *Against Rufinus*, 33 that he had “followed the judgment of the churches” on this matter. And his statement “I was not following my own personal views”

appears to refer to “the remarks that they [the enemies of Christianity] are wont to make against us.” In any event, he nowhere retracted his statements against the *Apocrypha*. Finally, the fact that Jerome cited apocryphal books is no proof that he accepted them. This was a common practice by many church fathers. He had stated that the church reads them “for example and instruction of manners” but does not “apply them to establish any doctrine.”

Rejection by scholars. Even noted Roman Catholic scholars during the Reformation period rejected the *Apocrypha*, such as Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther. As already noted, he wrote a *Commentary on All the Authentic Historical Books of the Old Testament* (1532) which excluded the *Apocrypha*. If he believed they were authentic, they certainly would have been included in a book on “all the authentic” books of the Old Testament.

Luther, John Calvin, and other Reformers rejected the canonicity of the *Apocrypha*. Lutherans and Anglicans have used it only for ethical/devotional matters but do not consider it authoritative in matters of Faith. Reformed churches followed *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) which states: “The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of the Scriptures; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than any other human writings.” In short, the Christian church (including Anglicans, Lutherans, and Protestants) has rejected the deuterocanonical books as part of the canon. They do so because they lack the primary determining factor of canonicity: The apocryphal books lack evidence that they were written by accredited prophets of God. Further evidence is found in the fact that the apocryphal books are never cited as authoritative in Scripture in the New Testament, it was never part of the Jewish canon, and the early church did not accept the *Apocrypha* as inspired.

The Mistake of Trent. The infallible pronouncement by the Council of Trent that the apocryphal books are part of the inspired Word of God reveals how fallible an allegedly infallible statement can be. This article has shown that the statement is historically unfounded. It was a polemical overreaction and an arbitrary decision involving a dogmatic exclusion.

Trent’s pronouncement on the *Apocrypha* was part of a polemical action against Luther. Its sponsors deemed an inspired *Apocrypha* necessary to justify teaching Luther had attacked, particularly prayers for the dead. The text of 2 Maccabees 12:46 reads “Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from his sin.” Since there was an agenda for accepting certain books, the decisions were rather arbitrary. Trent accepted 2 Maccabees, which supported prayers for the dead and rejected 2 Esdras (4 Esdras in the Catholic reckoning), which had a statement that would not support the practice (cf. 7:105).

The very history of this section of 2 (4) Esdras reveals the arbitrariness of the Trent decision. It was written in Aramaic by an unknown Jewish author (ca. A.D. 100) and circulated in Old Latin versions (ca. 200). The Latin Vulgate printed it as an appendix to the New Testament (ca. 400). It disappeared from Bibles until Protestants, beginning with Johann Haug (1726–42), began to print it in the *Apocrypha* based on Aramaic texts, since it was not in Latin manuscripts of the time. However, in 1874 a long section in Latin (seventy verses of chap. 7) was found by Robert Bently in a library in Amiens, France. Bruce Metzger noted, “It is probable that the lost section was deliberately cut out of an ancestor of most extant Latin Manuscripts, because of

dogmatic reasons, for the passage contains an emphatic denial of the value of prayers for the dead.”

Some Catholics argue that this exclusion is not arbitrary because this writing was not part of earlier deuterocanonical lists, it was written after the time of Christ, it was relegated to an inferior position in the Vulgate, and it was only included among the *Apocrypha* by Protestants in the eighteenth century. On the other hand, 2 [4] Esdras was part of earlier lists of books not considered fully canonical. According to the Catholic criterion, the date of writing has nothing to do with whether it should be in the Jewish *Apocrypha* but whether it was used by early Christians; it was used, alongside the other apocryphal books. It should not have been rejected because it held an inferior position in the Vulgate. Jerome relegated all these writings to an inferior position. The reason it did not reappear in Latin until the eighteenth century is apparently because some Catholic Monk cut out the section against praying for the dead.

Prayers for the dead were much on the mind of the clerics at Trent, who convened their council just twenty-nine years after Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses against the sale of indulgences. Doctrines of indulgences, purgatory, and prayers for the dead stand or fall together.

Doctrinal Arguments. Canonicity . The true and false views of what determines canonicity can be contrasted as follows (see Geisler, *General Introduction*, 221).

Incorrect View of Canon	Correct View of Canon
Church Determines Canon.	Church Discovers Canon.
Church Is Mother of Canon.	Church Is Child of Canon.
Church Is Magistrate of Canon.	Church Is Minister of Canon.
Church Regulates Canon.	Church Recognizes Canon.
Church Is Judge of Canon.	Church Is Witness of Canon.
Church Is Master of Canon.	Church Is Servant of Canon.

Catholic sources can be cited to support a doctrine of canonicity that looks very much like the “correct view.” The problem is that Catholic apologists often equivocate on this issue. Peter Kreeft, for example, argued that the church must be infallible if the Bible is, since the effect cannot be greater than the cause and the church caused the canon. But if the church is regulated by the canon, not ruler over it, then the church is not the cause of the canon. Other defenders of Catholicism make the same mistake, giving lip-service on the one hand to the fact that the church only discovers the canon, yet on the other hand constructing an argument that makes the church the determiner of the canon. They neglect the fact that it is God who caused (by inspiration) the canonical Scriptures, not the church.

This misunderstanding is sometimes evident in the equivocal use of the word *witness* . When we speak of the church as being a “witness” to the canon after the time it was written we do not mean in the sense of being an eyewitness (i.e., relating first-hand evidence). The proper role of

the Christian church in discovering which books belong in the canon can be reduced to several precepts.

Only the people of God contemporary to the writing of the biblical books were actual eyewitnesses to the evidence. They alone were witnesses to the canon as it was developing. Only they can testify to the evidence of the propheticity of the biblical books, which is the determinative factor of canonicity.

The later church is not an evidential witness for the canon. It does not create or constitute evidence for the canon. It is only a discoverer and observer of the evidence that remains for the original confirmation of the propheticity of the canonical books. Assuming that it is evidence in and of itself is the mistake behind the Roman Catholic view.

Neither the earlier nor later church is the judge of the canon. The church is not the final arbiter for the criteria of what will be admitted as evidence. Only God can determine the criteria for our discovery of what is his Word. What is of God will have his “fingerprints” on it, and only God is the determiner of what his “fingerprints” are like.

Both the early and later church is more like a jury than a judge. The jury listens to the evidence, weighs the evidence, and renders a verdict in accord with the evidence. The contemporary (First-Century) church looked at the first-hand evidence for *propheticity* (such as miracles), and the historic church has reviewed the evidence for the *authenticity* of these prophetic books which were directly confirmed by God when they were written (*see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE*).

In a certain sense, the church does “judge” the canon. It is called upon, as all juries are, to engage in an active sifting and weighing of the evidence as it renders a verdict. But this is not what the Roman Church practiced in its magisterial role in determining the canon. After all, this is what is meant by the “teaching magisterium” of the church. The Roman Catholic hierarchy is not merely ministerial; it is magisterial. It has a judicial role, not just an administrative one. It is not just a jury looking at evidence; it is a judge determining what counts as evidence.

Therein lies the problem. In exercising its magisterial role, the Roman Catholic church chose the wrong course in rendering its decision about the *Apocrypha*. First, it chose to follow the wrong criterion, *Christian usage* rather than *propheticity*. Second, it used *second-hand evidence* of later writers rather than the only *first-hand evidence* for canonicity (divine confirmation of the author’s propheticity). Third, it did not use *immediate confirmation* by contemporaries but the *later statements* of people separated from the events by centuries. All of these mistakes arose out of a misconception of the very role of the church as judge rather than jury, as magistrate rather than minister, a sovereign over rather than servant of the canon. By contrast, the Protestant rejection of the *Apocrypha* was based on an understanding of the role of the first witnesses to propheticity and the church as custodian of that evidence for authenticity.

New Testament Apocrypha. The New Testament *Apocrypha* are disputed books that have been accepted by some into the canon of Scripture. Unlike the *Apocrypha* of the Old Testament, the New Testament *Apocrypha* has not caused a permanent or serious controversy, since the church universal agrees that only the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are inspired (

see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). Books of the *Apocrypha* have been enjoyed for their devotional value, unlike the more spurious (and usually heretical) books of the New Testament pseudepigrapha. Pseudepigraphal writings are sometimes called “*Apocrypha*,” but they have been universally rejected by all traditions of the church.

The New Testament *Apocrypha* includes *The Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas* (ca. A.D. 70–79), *The Epistle to the Corinthians* (ca. 96), *The Gospel According to the Hebrews* (ca. 65–100), *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* (ca. 108), *Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve* (ca. 100–20), *The Seven Epistles of Ignatius* (ca. 110), *Ancient Homily* or *The Second Epistle of Clement* (ca. 120–140), *The Shepherd of Hermas* (ca. 115–40), *The Apocalypse of Peter* (ca. 150), and *The Epistle to the Laodiceans* (fourth century [?]).

Reasons for Rejecting. None of the New Testament *Apocrypha* have experienced more than a local or temporary acceptance. Most have enjoyed at best a quasi-canonical status, merely appended to various manuscripts or listed in tables of contents. No major canon or church council accepted them as part of the inspired Word of God. Where they were accepted into the canon by groups of Christians it was because they were believed wrongly to have been written by an apostle or referred to by an inspired book (for example, Col. 4:16). Once this was known to be false they were rejected as canonical.

Conclusion. Differences over the Old Testament *Apocrypha* play a crucial role in Roman Catholic and Protestant differences over such teachings as purgatory and prayers for the dead. There is no evidence that the *Apocryphal* books are inspired and, therefore, should be part of the canon of inspired Scripture. They do not claim to be inspired, nor is inspiration credited to them by the Jewish community that produced them. They are never quoted as Scripture in the New Testament. Many early fathers, including Jerome, categorically rejected them. Adding them to the Bible with an infallible decree at the Council of Trent shows evidence of being a dogmatic and polemical pronouncement calculated to bolster support for doctrines that do not find clear support in any of the canonical books.

In view of the strong evidence against the *Apocrypha*, the decision by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches to pronounce them canonical is both unfounded and rejected by Protestants. It is a serious error to admit nonrevelational material to corrupt the written revelation of God and undermine the divine authority of Scripture (Ramm, 65).

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