

Systematic Theology

Appendix A

The Apocrypha

The Apocrypha is the collection of Old Testament era books included in the Canon by Roman Catholics but excluded by Protestants. The following is a list of reasons why the Apocrypha was not and should not be included in the Canon of Scripture.

1. Jesus and the New Testament authors quote various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures as divinely authoritative over 295 times, but not once do they cite any statement from the books of the Apocrypha or any other writings as having divine authority.

The absence of any reference to the Apocrypha, and the frequent reference to the Old Testament as divinely authoritative, gives strong confirmation that the New Testament authors agreed that the established Old Testament canon, no more and no less, was God's very words.

2. The Apocrypha was never accepted by the Jews as Scripture.

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote, "From Artaxerxes [fifth century BC] to our own times [first century AD] a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets."

3. When Jerome included the Apocrypha in his Latin Vulgate Bible (404 AD) he said they were not "books of the Canon" but "books of the church" that were helpful for believers to read.
4. The earliest Christian list of Old Testament books recorded by Melito around 170 AD included all the traditional Old Testament books (except Esther) but none of the Apocrypha.
5. There are doctrinal and historical inconsistencies with a number of these books.

"Both Judith and Tobit contain historical, chronological, and geographical errors. They justify falsehood and deception and make salvation to depend upon works of merit. The book of Wisdom teaches the creation of the world out of pre-existent matter. Ecclesiasticus teaches that the giving of alms makes atonement for sin. In Baruch it is said that God hears the prayers of the dead, and in 1 Maccabees there are historical and geographical errors."

E.J. Young

6. The Apocrypha was not declared part of the canon by the Roman Church until the 1546 Council of Trent in reaction to the teachings of Martin Luther.

The Apocrypha was declared canonical because it contained support for the Roman teaching of prayers for the dead and justification by faith plus works, not by faith alone.