



THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

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The word Apocrypha means concealed or hidden. The collection of books to which this term is popularly applied includes the following (the order given is that in which they stand in the English version):

- I. *1 ESDRAS*
- II. *2 ESDRAS*
- III. *TOBIT*
- IV. *JUDITH*
- V. *THE REST OF THE CHAPTERS OF THE HOLY BOOK OF ESTHER*
- VI. *THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON*
- VII. *THE WISDOM OF JESUS THE SON OF SIRACH OR ECCLESIASTICUS*
- VIII. *BARUCH (INCLUDING THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH THE PROPHET)*
- IX. *THE COMPLETION OF BOOK OF DANIEL (INCLUDING THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN IN THE IN THE FIRE WHICH IS THE THIRD HOOS OF THE MIDNIGHT HYMN OF THE COPTIC CHURCH) AND ALSO KNOWN IN THE EASTERN CHURCHES*
- X. *THE HISTORY OF SUSSANA*
- XI. *THE HISTORY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF BEL AND THE DRAGON*
- XII. *THE PRAYER OF MANASSES KING OF JUDAH*
- XIII. *1 MECCABEES*
- XIV. *2 MECCABEES*

The Apocrypha are the scriptures of Old Testament that were written in Greek and that had no Hebrew origin. They were among The Seventy Translation known as Septuagint (started in Alexandria-Egypt at the time of Ptolemceous II Philadelphus, 285-246 B.C.)



St Jerome

St Jerome (342-420 A.D.) was the first one to use the term 'Apocrypha', which was widely spread among the churches **in spite of being inaccurate terminology.**

These mentioned scriptures were written mostly between 200 B.C. and 70 A.D., i.e. before the City of Jerusalem destruction.

A Council gathered, in year 92 A.D., in Yemenia, a city in Israel, located near the Mediterranean coast, to specify the canonizing of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews who were not of Hellenic origin refused the canonization of these scriptures as they were written after the time of Ezra the Priest in the fourth century before the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian Church, however, accepted these scriptures among The Seventy (Septuagint) Translation after it was completed to contain all the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Seventy Translation included some words, phrases and sometimes complete paragraphs that were not present in the Hebrew transcripts of the Old Testament, and vice versa, that led Oreganos (185-254 A.D.) to add the missing words and paragraphs to present to us the complete scriptures in Greek in his Encyclopedia 'Hexabella'.

The Seventy Translation however remained as the only traditional Greek translation that is acknowledged.

This traditional Seventy Translation however was revised in both Egypt and Antioch at approximately the same time. The Egyptian Bishop Hisikios (martyred in 311 A.D.) revised the errors and resulted in the multiple copying of the transcripts. The Coptic translation of the Old Testament was greatly effected with this revision.

On the other hand in Antioch, the revision was made by Lokianos The Samastian (martyred in 311 A.D.). He was the Director of the Antiochian Theological School. The sermons of St. John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.) were highly affected by these revised transcripts.

The Eastern and Western Churches, till the fourth century were accepting the Apocrypha Scriptures as having the same level of canonizing as the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. They were quoted several times by each of



Klimandos The Roman (92-101 A.D.), St. Klimandos of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.), Origanos (185-254 A.D.), Aeroneos (130-200 A.D.), Tertilian (160-225 A. D.) and Kebrianos The Martyr (+285 A.D.) etc...

In the fourth century, however, many of the Greek Fathers (Eastern Fathers) As Yosabios The Historian, Pope Athanasius The Apostolic (328-373 A.D.), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 A.D.), St. Gregory The Theologian (329-389 A.D.), and St. Abifianos (310-403 A.D.) had differentiated between these scriptures and that of the Old Testament of Hebrew origin. The Apocrypha scriptures however, were considered as Biblical scriptures.

In the first half of the fourth century, the Book of ‘Apostolic Decrees’, of Antiochian origin considered only the scriptures of Judith, Meccabees and the Wisdom of Solomon were among the Old Testament of Hebrew origin, but added at the end a recommendation to teach the children the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach.

The Coptic Apostolic Rules (in the fifth century) considered the scriptures of Hebrew origin (22 scriptures) were only the canonized scriptures of the Old Testament. There was, however, a recommendation to the Copts to teach their children the Wisdom of Solomon, Judith, the three Books of Meccabees and the Wisdom of Jesus The Son of Sirach.

St Athanasius The Apostolic mentioned in his 39th Passover Letter (367 A.D.) that the Old Testament contained 22 Books in addition other Holy Books were among the canonized ones. He stated that the Fathers recommended to read those who joined the church and wanted to be apprenticed to God –Fearing Talks These are Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus The Son of Sirach, Esther, Judith then Tobit.



St Athanasius

In the West, St Jerome (342-420 A.D.) had differentiated between the Apocrypha scriptures calling them Church Books (Libri ecclesiastici) and the rest of the Old Testament

Scriptures of Hebrew origin calling them Canonized Books (Libri Canonici). St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.) however, considered the Apocrypha Scriptures as canonized ones. This was also the decision of Hippo Council in North Africa in 393 A D.

The Protestant leaders as Martin Luther, of the religious Reform Movement in the West, refused these scriptures maintaining only the Old Testament Scriptures of Hebrew origin. Marten Luther, in 1534 A.D., in his German translation of the Holy Book, added the Apocrypha Scriptures in a supplement at the end, saying ‘They are useful books and good to be read’.

Due to the strong encouragement of the Catholic Church, the Trent Council in 1548 A.D. confirmed the canonization of the Apocrypha Scriptures. The First Vatican Council also assured this in 1870 A.D.

The Greek Church, in a council gathered in Jerusalem in 1672 A.D., with the headship of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, announced that Books of Tobit; Judith; Wisdom of Solomon; Wisdom of Jesus The Son of Sirach as the only canonized scriptures among the Apocrypha Books.

The Anglican Church (Church of England), is the main center of the Holy Bible House adopting the printing and distribution of the Holy Bible in all languages of the world, put the Apocrypha Scriptures in an isolated part by itself in between the Old- and New Testaments in the King James Version that were finished in 1611 A.D. They considered them as human writing in 1646 A.D. In 1826 A.D. they announced the final printing the Apocrypha Scriptures.

In 1995 A.D. they returned to print them within a new translation of the Holy Bible. They gave it the following title “The Holy Bible: The Books of Old Testament and Books of The New Testament, The Common Arabic translation from the original languages, in addition to the Greek Books from the Seventy Translation”.

In 1955, these Apocrypha Scriptures were printed in Arabic language and published by The Coptic Orthodox Church

of The Virgin Lady of Moharram Bey in Alexandria (Egypt) under the title “The Second Canonized Scriptures”. The same church reprinted them in 1975.

In the Coptic Orthodox Ceremony, there are many readings to be read from the Books of Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Jesus The Son of Sirach and Completion of Book of Daniel, and that during the Holy Great Fast Period and Passover Week till the Night of Glorious Resurrection Day. All the Book of Tobit is found in the Katamerous, in Arabic language and is not found in the Katamerous in Coptic language. This Book is read on Friday of the sixth week of the Holy Great Fast.

The increasing historical and analytical studies of the Holy Bible made in the nineteenth century, revealed the great importance of the Apocrypha Scriptures as an attaching



Icon of Nicene Creed Fathers (325 AD)

ring between the two Testaments as well as witnessing scriptures to the understanding of Eternal Life and Resurrection of the body, the faith subjects that defended by the saints as we read in the Holy Gospel of St Mark 12: 18-27 and the Holy Book of Acts 23: 6-9.

It is important to know that Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers accepted the Apocrypha Scriptures. These Scriptures also got increasing acceptance even from those who did not hold them fast as **Holy Books promoted to the level of the rest of the Holy Scriptures of the Hebrew Old Testament.**

At the end I have to advise that there are other writings, of no canonical importance, called “New Testament Apocrypha”. They were never regarded as Divine or bound in our Holy Bibles.



Ancient comb with two rows of teeth. One side shows the Raising of Lazarus and the Healing of the Blind Man; the reverse, a saint on horseback within a garland held by two angels.