

The Apocrypha

by
Daniel J. Lewis

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Troy, Michigan
United States of America

Preface

The apocrypha may be the most well-known collection of biblical documents, other than the Old and New Testaments, which is regularly neglected and ignored. In the past these books have been highly valued for private study and devotion by both the ancient Jewish community and also the ancient Christian community. The earliest Christians used for their Bible the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament, as well as the growing number of documents which now make up the New Testament. The Septuagint contained a number of Jewish works written between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D., specifically a number of additions to Old Testament books (Esther, Daniel, Jeremiah, Chronicles) as well as other works, some fictional, some historical and some theological. These works were eventually excluded from the Protestant and Jewish canons (but eventually retained in the Roman and Orthodox canons). Their canonical status was somewhat ambiguous until the 16th century, when they were given deuterocanonical status by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent.

Though the Protestant Reformers considered such works to be less authoritative than the canonical Scriptures, they did not discard them. In fact, the apocryphal books have been printed in most versions of the English Bible (including the KJV) from earliest times until 1827, when they were omitted. Since that time, Protestants, especially, have regarded the apocryphal books with suspicion, even though they were part of the devotional literature of the Christian church for most of its history. Oddly enough, modern Protestants have shown no hesitation in using other devotional literature, both fiction and non-fiction, while neglecting the Apocrypha.

Hence, it seems appropriate for contemporary Christians, whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, to become reacquainted with these works. They are quoted in the New Testament as well as the early church fathers. Passages from them have found their way into Christians hymns and devotional literature of all denominations. They were frequently the subject of paintings by the great masters in western art. While the canonical question remains an ongoing issue, surely no one should wish to neglect those works that the apostles and early Christians deemed valuable. It is in the spirit of this sentiment that this survey has been composed.

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Introduction

It should first of all be pointed out that the term Apocrypha as used here carries a conventional meaning, referring to those books contained in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate but not in the Jewish and Protestant canons. However, the same term sometimes is used to refer to Christian writings (e.g., gospels epistles, etc.) which are non-canonical as well as other Jewish or Christian works more generally known as belonging to the pseudepigrapha.

The term Apocrypha, as used here, was fixed in the time of the Protestant Reformation, though it had a previous history stretching all the way back to the classical Greek period, where it referred to something "hidden" or "concealed," that is, something that was not generally understood by outsiders.¹ In the Protestant Reformation, however, the word came to refer to the non-canonical religious books of the Septuagint. They were judged non-canonical under the general principle that no writing could be canonical unless it was accepted as such by the whole church.² In any case, the reformers felt that a number of the stories in the Apocrypha were legendary. Consequently, the term Apocrypha, as more generally used today, refers to the books which were included in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Roman Catholic canon, and the Eastern Orthodox canon, but were rejected in the Protestant canon. Still, the books of the Apocrypha were appended to the Old Testament in most English Bibles (including Protestant Bibles) until 1827. They are:

- ♦ 1 Esdras
- ♦ 2 Esdras
- ♦ Tobit
- ♦ Judith
- ♦ Prayer of Azariah
- ♦ Song of the Three Holy Children (or Song of the Three Young Men)
- ♦ Susanna
- ♦ Bel and the Dragon
- ♦ Additions to Esther
- ♦ The Prayer of Manasseh
- ♦ The Letter of Jeremiah
- ♦ Baruch
- ♦ Sirach (Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Joshua ben-Sira)

¹For a lengthy discussion on the use and development of this word from Attic Greek until the Protestant Reformation, see T. Davies, *ISBE* (1979) I.161-162.

²Davies, 162.

- ♦ The Wisdom of Solomon
- ♦ 1 Maccabees
- ♦ 2 Maccabees³

The Canonical Issue

When the gospel began to reach into the Greco-Roman world in the mid-first century AD, the Septuagint came into its own. Translated by Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt in about 250-150 B.C., this Greek version of the Hebrew Bible was used in Jewish synagogues throughout the empire. Naturally, it became the preferred version of Christians, since Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Roman world. However, while the New Testament writers all used the Septuagint (many if not most of the Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are from the Septuagint), none of the New Testament writers explains its limits. There are, however, a number of New Testament allusions to Apocryphal books. The writer of Hebrews, for instance, alludes to the martyrdoms in 2 Maccabees 6:18--7:41 (and possibly 4 Maccabees 5:3--18:24) when he described the tortures and hardships of the faithful (cf. He. 11:35b-38). Paul alludes to the Wisdom of Solomon (compare Ro. 1:20-29 with Wis. 13:5, 8; 14:24, 27 or Ro. 9:20-23 with Wis. 12:12, 20; 15:7 or 2 Co. 5:1, 4 with Wis. 9:15). James seems to have been familiar with Ecclesiasticus (compare Ja. 1:19 with Sir. 5:11 or Ja. 1:13 with Sir. 15:11-12).⁴

Divergent attitudes, however, have characterized the use of the Apocrypha throughout Christian history. During the early Christian centuries, most of the Latin and Greek Fathers (i.e., Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian) quoted from the Apocrypha as Scripture. By the 4th century, many fathers came to recognize a distinction between the Jewish canon and the Apocrypha (i.e., Eusebius, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Amphilochius and Epiphanius), though they continued to quote from the Apocrypha. For the next several hundred years, the attitudes toward the Apocrypha were varied and often ambiguous. Jerome (5th century), for instance, spoke out emphatically in favor of the Jewish canon, thus categorizing the Apocrypha as non-canonical. Others, however, did not distinguish the Old Testament from the Apocrypha.

The Protestant Reformation brought the canonical issue to a head. In short, the Protestants refused canonicity to the books of the Apocrypha, though they continued to print them in their Bibles as books worthy of devotional use. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, convened at the Council of Trent (1546) and officially declared most

³Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees appear in some versions of the Septuagint, and though not generally counted in the Apocrypha by Protestants and Roman Catholics, they are valued in Eastern Orthodoxy.

⁴ For other possible quotations or allusions, see the final chapter in this monograph.

of the Apocrypha to be canonical while pronouncing an anathema upon any who disagreed. The Eastern Orthodox Church, which still officially follows the Septuagint, specifically declared a number of Apocryphal works to be canonical in their Synod of Jerusalem (1672) and more or less assumes the rest to be canonical. At present, then, the canonical status of the Apocrypha within the major branches of Christianity is as follows:

Protestantism	Roman Catholicism	Eastern Orthodoxy
<u>(non-canonical)</u>	<u>(non-canonical)</u>	
<i>Entire Apocrypha</i>	<i>Prayer of Manasseh</i>	
	<i>1 Esdras</i>	
	<i>2 Esdras</i>	
<u>(canonical)</u>	<u>(canonical)</u>	<u>(canonical)</u>
<i>Entire Old Testament</i>	<i>Entire Old Testament</i>	<i>Entire Old Testament</i>
	(deutero-canonical)	(Anaginoskomena, "books worthy to be read")
	<i>Tobit</i>	
	<i>Judith</i>	
	<i>Prayer of Azariah</i>	<i>Entire Apocrypha (includes Psalm</i>
	<i>(Da. 3:24-45)</i>	<i>151 and 3 Maccabees; 4 Maccabees</i>
	<i>Song of the Three Holy Children</i>	<i>and the Prayer of Manasseh are</i>
	<i>(Da. 3:46-90)</i>	<i>debated)</i>
	<i>Susanna (Da. 13)</i>	
	<i>Bel and the Dragon (Da.14)</i>	
	<i>Additions to Esther</i>	
	<i>(Est. 10:4--16:24)</i>	
	<i>Baruch (chapters 1-5)</i>	
	<i>Letter of Jeremiah</i>	
	<i>(Baruch 6)</i>	
	<i>Ecclesiasticus</i>	
	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	
	<i>1 Maccabees ,2 Maccabees</i>	

The Value and Use of the Apocrypha

The canonical issue notwithstanding, the Apocrypha is a valued resource of devotional material for Christians of all persuasions. The leaders in the Swiss Reformation declared in a formal statement in 1530, "We do not despise Judith, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the last two books of Esdras, the three books of Maccabees, the Additions to Daniel; but we do not allow them divine authority with the others." This position is probably the most balanced, at least from a Protestant perspective. Certainly almost all would agree that the historical value of 1 Maccabees is critical for our knowledge of the Maccabean Period. Sometimes Protestants have developed appreciation for portions of the Apocrypha without even knowing it, an excellent example being in the well-loved thanksgiving hymn, *Now Thank We All Our God*. In the following stanzas, the italicized words are from Sirach 50:22-24:

<i>Now thank we all our God</i>	O may this bounteous God
With hearts and hands and voices,	<i>Through all our life be near us,</i>
<i>Who wondrous things hath done,</i>	<i>With ever joyful hearts</i>
In whom His world rejoices;	<i>And blessed peace to cheer us;</i>
<i>Who, from our mother's arms,</i>	<i>And keep us in His grace,</i>
<i>Hath blessed us on our way</i>	And guide us when perplexed,
With countless gifts of love,	<i>And free us from all ills</i>
And still is ours today.	In this world and the next.

For music lovers, Handel's oratorios *Susanna* and *Judas Maccabaeus* are based on the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha provided favorite themes for many of the Renaissance masters, including the triumph of Judith over Holofernes, the adventures of Tobit and the acquittal of Susanna.

English translations of the Apocrypha can be found in such Bibles as *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, *The Jerusalem Bible* and *The New American Bible*. Also, for those who might wish to have the Apocrypha in a single volume, there is *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: Expanded Edition*.

The Books of Esdras

Altogether, there are four books of Esdras, including two canonical books and two apocryphal works. They are easily confused, because the titles given to them in the various versions of the Bible, beginning with the Septuagint, then in Jerome's Latin Vulgate, and finally in the English translations of the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560) and the King James Version (1611) are not consistent.

	OT Ezra	OT Nehemiah	1 Esdras (Apocrypha)	2 Esdras (Apocrypha)
LXX	Esdras A		Esdras B	
Vulgate	1 Esdras	2 Esdras	3 Esdras	4 Esdras
Geneva	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Esdras	2 Esdras
KJV	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Esdras	2 Esdras

Ezra and Nehemiah, of course, are canonical to both Jews and Christians. 1 and 2 Esdras (alternatively, 3 and 4 Esdras) are canonical only to the Eastern Orthodox Church.

1 Esdras

The book of 1 Esdras is more closely connected with the canonical Old Testament than any other book in the Apocrypha. It offers an independent account of several events that are also part of the history of 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. The theme of the book is the reformation of Israelite worship, and it gives the story of Judah from the time of Josiah until the reforms of Ezra. The work begins with a description of Josiah's great reforms and celebration of passover (1:1-31; cf. 2 Chr. 34-35). The final kings of Judah, however, did not follow Josiah's lead, but repeatedly they departed from the covenant of Moses and led the nation downward toward the judgment of exile (1:32-55; 2 Chr. 36). After the Jews had been exiled in Babylon, Cyrus, the Persian, decreed that they could return to their land and rebuild their temple (2:1-14; cf. 2 Chr. 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1-11). Sheshbazzar led the initial group back to Jerusalem. The Samaritans opposed the work, however, and correspondence between the Samaritan officials and the Persian court brought the work to a halt (2:15-25; cf. Ezra 4:7-24).

At this point a story is interposed which has no Old Testament parallel. In this account, three bodyguards of Darius, one of whom was the Jew Zerubbabel, were challenged to compose wise maxims about the greatest strength in the world. The first wrote about wine (3), the second about the Persian king (4:1-12), but Zerubbabel

about the strength of women and truth (4:13-41). Because Zerubbabel's maxim was clearly the best, he gained opportunity to plead for the cause of Jerusalem and was authorized to go on with the work of rebuilding (4:42-63).

Zerubbabel organized a second company of returning Jews, and they traveled from Persia to Jerusalem where they built the great altar, organized worship services, and laid the foundation for a second temple (5; cf. Ezra 2:1--4:5). Though local authorities tried to stop the work, the Jews persevered (6:1--7:15; cf. Ezra 5:1--6:22). Finally, Ezra arrived to teach them the Torah and lead them in necessary reforms (8:1--9:55; cf. Ezra 7:1--10:44; Neh. 7:72b--8:12).

Even though 1 Esdras covers much of the same material as found in the latter part of 2 Chronicles, Ezra and a small section of Nehemiah, the order of events is somewhat different. Still, there seems to be considerable historical value in the work, and it generally corroborates the accounts given in the canonical texts.⁵ For what it is worth, Josephus seems to have followed 1 Esdras more than Ezra-Nehemiah for his history of the period. 1 Esdras was widely used in the early Christian era up until the time of Jerome. Luther's low opinion of it is evident, however, since he said that he "threw [it] into the Elbe."

2 Esdras

2 Esdras is the only book in the Apocrypha that belongs to the genre of apocalyptic, similar to the books of Daniel and Revelation. It contains a series of visions mediated through the angel Uriel that include many symbols involving mysterious numbers, strange beasts and other highly esoteric disclosures. It was quite popular in the early Christian era, and it was translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian and Ethiopic as well as quoted by many of the church fathers.

The composition of 2 Esdras is complicated. The main body, chapters 3-14, were written by an unknown Palestinian Jew near the close of the first century A.D. Subsequently, the work was translated into Greek, and about the middle of the second century, an unknown Christian added an introductory section (chapters 1-2). About a century later, another unknown Christian added chapters 15-16, also in Greek. Much later, the KJV omitted a lengthy section of some seventy verses (originally standing between 7:35 and 7:36), because they were missing from an AD 822 manuscript. They were probably cut from this manuscript because they contained specific denials of the efficacy of prayers for the dead, which conflicted with the teachings of the Medieval Church.

⁵For a discussion of specific historical issues, see J. Myers, *I and II Esdras [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 15-16.

The structure of 2 Esdras, apart from the introduction and appendix, falls into seven revelations:

Chapters 1-2

Christian Introduction (with some quotations from the words of Jesus, i.e., 1:30//Mt. 23:37//Lk. 13:34; 1:33//Lk. 13:35//Mt. 23:38; the introduction also shows knowledge of the Revelation of John, cf. 2:42-44//Rv. 7:9; 14:1)

Chapters 3:1--5:20

First Vision of Salathiel (This vision raise questions about the problem of evil in the world and the justice of God. The answer is that God's ways are incomprehensible, given the limitations of the human mind, and that a new age will dawn when the problem of evil will be resolved. Signs of the new age are listed, very similar to the teachings of Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.)

Chapters 5:21--6:34

Second Vision of Salathiel (Salathiel reiterates the question about God's justice, especially with respect to the people of Israel, as well as other questions. Once more, he is informed that the new age must follow the present, evil age.)

Chapters 6:35--9:25

Third Vision of Salathiel (Here, the question is that if the world was created for Israel, why had not Israel inherited it? Once again, the answer lies in the future, when righteous Jews will achieve bliss in a future world following the last judgment.)

Chapters 9:26--10:59

Fourth Vision of Salathiel (In this fourth vision, Salathiel is shown the eternal glory of Moses' law, a symbolic woman in deep lamentation over her dead son, and finally, a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.)

Chapters 11:1--12:51

Fifth Vision (This vision concerns the Roman Empire, especially the tumultuous period following Nero's death in AD 68)

Chapter 13

Sixth Vision (This vision describes the Man, the Messiah, rising from the sea whom God has kept for many ages before his revelation to the world.)

Chapter 14

Seventh Vision (Here, a description is given of how Ezra rewrote the sacred literature, both the canonical twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible and seventy works of Jewish apocalyptic.)

Chapters 15-16

Appendix (The final chapters, like the first two, contain allusions to the New Testament. Assurances are provided that God will take vengeance on the wicked. Signs of the end are again enumerated, and a vision of war is followed by the condemnation of Babylon, Asia, Egypt and Syria.)

Tobit

Christians, not to mention most others in the human race, appreciate good historical fiction. In this century, the novels *Pontius Pilate* by Paul Maier, *The Robe* by Lloyd Douglas and *The Day Christ Died* by Jim Bishop are such historical fictions based on the New Testament. From the Old Testament, Marion Wyse's *The Prophet and the Prostitute*, an historical fiction surrounding the life of Hosea, is another fascinating example. Such stories are based on a core of historical events, but the plot and development of the story surrounds both real and fictional characters. Often, such stories not only provide romance and adventure, but also moral instruction and spiritual wisdom. From such literature come expressions such as "the moral of the story."

The Book of Tobit is just such an historical fiction.⁶ It has a real historical setting in Nineveh and Assyria during the period of the Assyrian Empire (late 8th century BC), some of its characters are historical figures (Shalmaneser III, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon II, all Assyrian Emperors), but the main characters and plot are fictional. The book has a strong moral theme, and it delivers its message from a plot of adventure, romance and the visitation of the angel Raphael. Punctuating the story line are devout prayers, wisdom sayings and psalms. Written by an unknown author in about the second century BC, the story is one of the best known among the apocrypha. In 1955, fragments of the book in Aramaic and Hebrew were discovered in the excavations at Qumran.

The Tragedy of Two Families

The story line concerns two pious Jewish families of the Naphtali tribe, both of

⁶A number of inaccuracies and anachronisms demonstrate that the short story is not an historical narrative. For a listing, see P. Redditt, *ISBE* (1988) IV.866.

which were exiled from northern Israel to Assyria. Tobit, the namesake of the book, lived in Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, while his cousin Raguel, lived in Ecbatana, Media. Each family had only one child, Tobit a son and Raguel a daughter. The plot begins with Tobit's ordeals. Though a devout observer of the Torah, his fortunes rose and fell under his Assyrian overlords (1:1--2:8). One night, while sleeping in the courtyard of his home, he was blinded by sparrow droppings that fell into his eyes. So bereft was Tobit he prayed that God would take his life (2:9--3:6).

Meanwhile, Raguel's family had its own problems. Their daughter, Sarah, was haunted by the demon *Asmodeus* (= the destroyer). Seven times she had been married, and on each occasion, the demon had killed her husband on the wedding night before the marriage could be consummated.⁷ Sarah contemplated suicide, but instead, she prayed that God would take her life (3:7-15). Both prayers were heard, and God dispatched the angel Raphael to see to the healing of the two families (3:16-17).

The Journey and Marriage of Tobiah

Desperate to secure the well being of his wife and son, Tobit remembered a large sum of money he had deposited with a certain man in Media. Reclaiming it would require a long trip for his son, Tobiah, but Tobit instructed his son to find a suitable companion who could accompany him. Tobiah found a man named Azariah, who was actually the angel Raphael in human guise (4:1--5:22). Together, along with Tobiah's dog, they traveled toward Media. En route, Tobiah caught a fish in the Tigris River, and Raphael instructed him to keep the fish's heart and liver, since they could be burned and the smoke would drive away demons. He also told him to keep the gall, since it was effective for curing cataracts (6:1-9).

As they approached their destination in Media, Raphael instructed Tobiah that they were to stay with a near kinsman that night, the family of Raguel. He also explained that since Tobiah was the near kinsman, it was his duty to redeem Sarah, whose former husbands all had died. Of course, since Tobiah was now armed with the smoke of the fish's heart and liver, the demon Asmodeus could be exorcised and all would be well (6:10-18). The marriage went as planned, and the demon Asmodeus was exorcised and banished to Egypt. A great wedding feast was scheduled for two weeks (7:1--8:21).

The Recovery of the Deposit and the Journey Home

Tobiah's required attendance at the two week wedding feast meant that Raphael must go alone to recover the deposit of Tobit (9:1-6). After a successful

⁷This story may have inspired the Sadducees' conundrum to Jesus (cf. Mt. 22:25-26).

mission, Raphael returned to retrieve Tobiah, and the two of them, along with Sarah, set out for Nineveh (10:1-14). Tobit and his wife, meanwhile, were anxiously awaiting the return of their son, and when Tobiah arrived, he smeared the fish gall in his father's eyes so that he was healed (11:1-18). In the end, Raphael revealed his true identity (12:1-22), and the book closes with Tobit's prayer of joy (13:1-18) and an epilogue (14:1-15).

Purpose and Value of the Book

The story was probably written to instruct Jews how they should live while dispersed in the world. It emphasizes keeping the traditions of Torah, it expounds on the providence of God, and it encourages generosity and almsgiving to the poor. In the end, it teaches that suffering is not a punishment, but a test, and that God ultimately rewards those who are faithful and pious. In the Christian church, the book is canonical for Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians, and it is read in the lectionaries in both these communions as well as in the Anglican Church (though it is not canonical in the Anglican church).

The Book of Judith

Like the Book of Tobit, the story of Judith (the name means Jewess) is an historical fiction. Its links with history, however, are less firm than the account in Tobit, for there are considerable historical and geographical inaccuracies. (The very first line, which puts Nebuchadnezzar as an Assyrian king in Nineveh, sets the pace for historical anachronism.)⁸ The theme in Judith is Jewish patriotism rather than ethics and virtue, and it generally teaches the maxim that God helps those who help themselves. In particular, it addresses the Jewish community as "a powerless people, incapable of strong defense" (5:23, NAB), a description that could have broad application to many periods of Jewish life after the exile. Its mood and theme are probably closer to the Book of Esther than any other Old Testament document, since it emphasizes the struggle of the Jewish people for self-preservation among the powerful empires of the larger world.

The Story

The story falls into two halves. The first half (chapters 1-7) describes the western conquests of Nebuchadnezzar through his general Holofernes. After sending

⁸Even Roman Catholic scholars, for whom the book is deuterocanonical, concede that the line is an "historically impossible combination." However, as they also point out, this might be intentional to create a composite representing all the traditional oppressors of Israel, cf. D. Dumm, "Tobit, Judith, Esther," *JBC* (1968) 625. For a complete discussion of the historicity of Judith, see C. Carey, *Judith [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) 38-49.

an ultimatum to all the nations of the Levant and receiving no terms of submission, he determined to punish them (1:1--2:13). With 120,000 troops and 12,000 horse-mounted archers, Holofernes marched westward to carry out his master's orders, battering down every fortified city he encountered (2:14-28). So fearful did the western nations become that they offered terms of surrender--all except the Jews, who recently had returned from Babylonian captivity and were now trying to rebuild their temple (3:1--5:4).

One of Nebuchadnezzar's newly acquired vassals, Achior the Ammonite, reported to Holofernes that the Jews were invincible so long as they did not sin against God. Holofernes took umbrage at this bold statement, and he consigned Achior to banishment among the Jews while he prepared for war against them (5:5--6:9). Achior was left bound near the fictional city of Bethulia, and the Jews of Bethulia recovered him and listened to his report about Holofernes' intentions (6:10-21). The next day, Holofernes put Bethulia under siege, cutting off the water supply (7:1-22). As expected, the siege took a heavy toll on the Jews, who urged their leaders to surrender. Uzziah, one of the city rulers, convinced them to wait another five days, and if God had not delivered them by that time, Bethulia would surrender (7:23-32).

The second half of the story (chapters 8-16) describes how the Jews were preserved through the courage and daring of the beautiful widow Judith. Upon hearing about the discouragement of the people and their willingness to give up, she contacted the city elders and announced that if they would allow her to pass through the city gates, she would "do something that will go down from generation to generation" (8:1-36). After praying for God's help in her mission (9:1-14), she dressed in her finest attire, "making herself very beautiful, to captivate the eyes of all the men who should see her." She and her maid left the city gates and walked boldly into the Assyrian camp, requesting an audience with Holofernes (10:1-23). She promised that if Holofernes would let her go out each night to a ravine for prayer, she would lead his army to Jerusalem (11:1-23).

Four days later, Holofernes held a huge banquet, and Judith was invited to attend. His intention was to seduce her, but after all the servants had left them alone together, he was so inebriated by the vast quantities of wine he had drunk that he simply lay in a drunken stupor. Judith took his own sword and hacked off his head, putting it in a bag, and then she and her maid went to the ravine for prayer without arousing suspicion, eventually making their way back to Bethulia under the cover of night (12:1--13:20).

At Judith's instructions, the head of Holofernes was exposed on the city wall. Achior, the Ammonite, was so moved that he accepted the faith of Judaism (14:1-10). The army of Holofernes, when they discovered his decapitated body, scattered

in confusion, and the Jews attacked them, slaughtering many and looting the enemy camp (15:1-11). Like Miriam of old, Judith then led the Jewish women in a victory dance, composing a psalm for the occasion (15:12--16:17). The Jews then lived in peace all during the lifetime of Judith (16:18-25).

Purpose and Value of the Book

While the precise purpose of the book depends to some degree on its dating (which is debated), it is generally conceded that the book aims at encouraging Jewish patriotism during the troubled periods following the return from exile. This message would have been equally appropriate whether composed in the Persian, Grecian or Roman period. Those who regard the book as canonical exalt Judith for her courage and piety. Protestants tend to be less generous, indicating that the book promotes the ethic that the end justifies the means. Judith, who lies, sexually entices, and executes in cold blood, seems a heroine of mixed values.⁹

Books Associated with Jeremiah

Two books in the Apocrypha are related to the time of Jeremiah, the Letter of Jeremiah and the Book of Baruch. Jeremiah, the towering prophet of the 7th century B.C., predicted the exile and lived to see it. The exile began with a first deportation of Jews in 597 BC, when after a reign of only three months, the eighteen year-old Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonians (2 Kg. 24:8-16). The city of Jerusalem was not destroyed, however, until ten years later (cf. 2 Kg. 25). In the intervening period between the first deportation and the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah corresponded with the exiles in Babylon by letter at least once (Je. 29).

Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch,¹⁰ was responsible to take dictation for substantial amounts of the canonical Book of Jeremiah (Je. 36:4, 27-28, 32; 45:1). He also served as Jeremiah's legal secretary (Je. 32:12-14) and his representative to the king's court after Jeremiah had been personally banned from the temple precincts (Je. 36:5-10), a task for which he even risked arrest (Je. 36:25-26).

It is on the basis of Jeremiah's canonical letter to the exiles and Baruch's role as Jeremiah's scribe that these two apocryphal books were composed. The apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah (not to be confused with the canonical letter in

⁹R. Stewart, "Judith," *ISBE* (1982) II.1165.

¹⁰Seldom does archaeology come face to face with someone actually mentioned in the Bible, but Baruch is one of those few. A hoard of inscribed bullae (lumps of clay impressed with a seal) was unearthed in 1975, and among them were the seals of two biblical people from the Book of Jeremiah, Baruch and Yerahme'el, King Jehoiakim's son. Baruch's seal reads, "[Belonging] to Berekhyahu son of Nerihyah the scribe," cf. H. Shanks, "Jeremiah's Scribe and Confidant Speaks from a Hoard of Clay Bullae," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1987 XIII.5) 58ff.

Jeremiah 29), presupposes that if Jeremiah wrote one letter, he may have written another. The Book of Baruch purports to have been composed by Baruch during the Babylonian captivity.

The Letter of Jeremiah

Though the exact date of composition is difficult to fix, the letter seems to have been composed no earlier than 317 BC, since the author reckons seven generations of exile (2-3).¹¹ The composition is more of a sermon than a letter, and it warns the exiles against the idolatry of the Babylonians. The theme may have been based on Jeremiah 10:11, where the canonical Jeremiah says, "Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.'"

The form of the composition, after the introduction, falls into ten parts, each with the refrain, "Therefore they evidently are not gods; so do not fear them" (16, 23, 29, 30, 40, 44, 49, 52, 54, 56, 59). The author derides the gods of Babylon as useless (17-23), incapable of feeling or movement (24-29), unable to help others (30-40a), dishonored by their own worshipers (40b-44), the product of human invention (45-52), impotent (53-56), less useful than even the celestial phenomena (57-65), helpless (66-69) and as lifeless as scarecrows or corpses (70-73). The sermon recalls two cultic practices of the pagans, sacred prostitution (10, 42-43)¹² and the ritual mourning for dying gods like Tammuz (31-32; cf. Eze. 8:14).

In the manuscripts and versions, the placement of the Letter of Jeremiah is varied. In Roman Catholic Bibles it usually appears as chapter 6 of Baruch, following the pattern of some Greek and Syriac manuscripts. In other versions, it appears as a separate book between Lamentations and Ezekiel.

The Book of Baruch

The five chapters of Baruch were composed both as prose (1:1--3:8) and poetry, the poetry consisting of two separate poems (3:9--4:4 and 4:5--5:9). Most scholars believe the three sections were composed by different authors and brought together in the 1st or 2nd century BC. All three sections borrow freely from Old Testament books, such as, Daniel, Isaiah, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. In fact, if all the quotations were removed, the substance of the book would be

¹¹The common Old Testament reckoning of a generation at 40 years yields some 280 years after the first deportation in 597 B.C. The canonical Jeremiah had reckoned 70 years of exile (Je. 29:10), but the apocryphal author stretched it into seven generations, probably because he lived that long after the exile.

¹²According to Herodotus, Babylonian women were apparently required once in their lifetime to engage in sacred prostitution with a stranger, cf. C. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) 348. The "cords" (42-43) were a sign that she was available.

considerably reduced.¹³ The framework of the book purports to be a composition by Baruch after his deportation to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem in 587-6 B.C. (1:1-2). The work was to have been read to all the exiles in Babylon (1:3-4), after which it was to be sent to Jerusalem and used in the liturgy at the site of the burned temple (1:5ff.). However, as in other of the apocryphal books, there are several historical discrepancies that figured significantly in its canonical rejection by Protestants.¹⁴

The prose section largely consists of a prayer for repentance, and it draws heavily upon Daniel's similar prayer (Da. 9). It confesses the guilt of the nation for violating the Torah and acknowledges God's justice and faithfulness to his covenant in dispersing the Jews among the nations (cf. Dt. 28:64-68). It also recalls the promises in the Deuteronomic code that repentance after dispersion would lead to a restoration of the land (Dt. 30:1-10). Of special interest to Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians is the reference to the prayers of the dead (3:4).

The first of the two poems exalts the wisdom of the Torah. Wisdom was not given to the other nations of the world, but to Israel through the Torah. The statement that this wisdom "appeared on earth and lived among men" (3:37, RSV) was taken by many of the Nicene Fathers to be a prophecy of the incarnation, because of its similarity to John 1:14.¹⁵ The second poem is a lamentation in which Jerusalem is personified as a mother whose children have been sent away. It is a prayer of comfort and encouragement, and as before, it looks forward to restoration following repentance.

Additions to Daniel

The Book of Daniel from the Hebrew canon comes down to us in two languages, Hebrew (chapters 1:1--2:4a, 8:1--12:13) and Aramaic (chapters 2:4b--7:28). To complicate the textual transmission even more is the fact that the Septuagint also contains four distinct sections in Greek usually called *The Additions to Daniel*. In the Septuagint (still used by the Eastern Orthodox Church) and in the Latin Vulgate (and subsequent Roman Catholic Versions), these four sections are placed in the Book of Daniel, while in Protestant versions, they appear as separate books. The verse divisions for these separate recensions are as follows:¹⁶

¹³R. Stewart, *ISBE* (1979) I.435.

¹⁴Today, such discrepancies are widely recognized, not only by biblical scholars in general, but by Roman Catholic scholars, too, cf. F. Fitzgerald, F.S.C., "Baruch," *NJBC* (1990) 563.

¹⁵Moore, 301-302.

¹⁶Because the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men are inserted between verses 3:23 and 3:24 in the Hebrew Text, verses 3:24-30 in the Protestant Bibles appear as verse 3:91-97 in Roman Catholic Bibles. Also,

Additions To Daniel

LXX, Vg., Douai, NAB, JB		KJV,RSV, etc.
<i>Da. 3:24-45</i>	<i>Prayer of Azariah</i>	<i>1:1-22</i>
<i>Da. 3:46-90</i>	<i>Song of the Three Young Men</i>	<i>1:23-68</i>
<i>Da. 13:1-64</i>	<i>Susanna</i>	<i>1:1-64</i>
<i>Da. 14:1-42</i>	<i>Bel and the Dragon</i>	<i>1:1-42</i>

It is generally accepted that *The Additions to Daniel* were added after the Book of Daniel had reached its final form. There is no manuscript evidence for their existence in ancient Jewry, and they are not quoted in the Talmud nor referred to by Josephus. It is generally agreed that they are pious legends with instructive moral value.

The Prayer of Azariah

The setting for the Prayer of Azariah is Nebuchadnezzar's challenge that all his subjects must bow before a huge golden image or face execution in a blazing furnace. The canonical Book of Daniel describes this challenge and the refusal of the three young Hebrews to comply (Da. 3:1-18). Because of their resistance, they were bound and cast into the furnace, just as they had been threatened (Da. 3:19-23). At this point, the first of *The Additions to Daniel* was inserted into the Book of Daniel, and it provides the poetic prayer offered by Azariah (Abednego) while in the flames. The prayer consists of a blessing toward God that acknowledges the sins of the nation Israel, affirms the justice of the nation's exile, and offers a plea for restoration. It contains the interesting concept, recalling the sentiments of Psalm 51:16-17, that a contrite heart and humble spirit are acceptable to God without burnt offerings and temple ritual. This idea would have been very important to Jews living dispersed in the world and far away from the second temple.

The Song of the Three Young Men

Following the prayer of Azariah, a short prose section describes the magnitude of the furnace and the descent of an angel into the flames to protect the young men. At this divine intervention, the trio of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), burst into a liturgical blessing, each refrain ending with the exaltation that God was "to be praised and highly exalted forever." All creation is called upon to praise the Lord, including all celestial bodies, rain, dew, snow, heat, cold, nights, days, flora, fauna, humans and even the spirits of the deceased. As in

verses 3:98-100 in Roman Catholic Bibles appear as verses 4:1-3 in Protestant Bibles with the succeeding verses in chapter four skewed accordingly.

Baruch 3:4, the passage in 1:64, which describes the prayers/praises of the deceased, is important for the theology of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox branches of Christianity.

Susanna

The story of Susanna has been described as "one of the finest short stories in world literature."¹⁷ Susanna (whose name in Hebrew means Lily) was the beautiful and pious wife of Joakim, one of the honored elders of Israel, who lived in the Jewish community at Babylon following the exile. Two other elders, also magistrates, became obsessed with Susanna's beauty, and finding her alone one day bathing in the garden adjoining her home, they confronted her. Either she must agree to have sex with them, or they would contrive to accuse her of adultery with some other man, which according to Jewish law, merited execution (cf. Lv. 20:10). Given their status as judges, it was unlikely she could successfully protest her innocence. When Susanna heard the terms, her response was that it was better to die under false accusation than to sin against the Lord. So, in obedience to the Torah, she screamed for help (cf. Dt. 22:23-27). The two lecherous old men duly carried out their threatened accusation, and Susanna was brought to trial.

At the trial, the testimonies of the two judges convinced the court, and Susanna was sentenced to death. On the way to her execution, however, Susanna prayed for God's help, and God heard her plea. He intervened through the wisdom of a young lad named Daniel, who loudly protested and called for the court to reconvene. When they had reassembled, he questioned the two elders separately, asking them under what tree they saw Susanna engaged in adultery with the stranger. One said it was under a mastic tree, and the other testified that it was an oak. It was now obvious to all that they had been lying and had violated the commandment against perjury. Daniel's sentence to each perjurer was a word play cleverly captured in the following English paraphrases: to the one he said, "Under a *clove* tree...the angel will *cleave* you;" to the other he said, "Under a *yew* tree...the angel will *hew* you asunder." Because they were convicted as perjurers, the two elders were executed. Thus, Susanna was rescued, by the boy, Daniel.

Bel and the Dragon

This final addition to Daniel contains two stories, both aimed at ridiculing the foolishness of idolatry. The first is a detective story, in which Daniel proved to Cyrus, the Persian, that Bel (Bel-Marduk, the chief god in the Babylonian pantheon) was a false god and that his priests were deceivers. The plot revolved around the fact

¹⁷B. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University, 1977) 213.

that the huge quantities of food and drink placed in Bel's temple disappeared each night, presumably eaten by the idol. Daniel, however, had his servants adroitly sprinkle ashes on the floor of Bel's temple, and in the morning, he showed Nebuchadnezzar the tracks of men, women and children in the ashes, thereby proving that the pagan priests and their families had entered the temple by a secret door and consumed all the food.

The second story involves a live serpent (dragon) that was worshipped as a god.¹⁸ Daniel agreed to prove that the snake was not divine. He mixed a potion of pitch, fat and hair, boiling them together and forming them into patties, which he fed the snake, causing it to rupture. "You weren't worshipping this, were you?" Daniel asked the king. The Babylonians, for their part, were furious that Daniel had killed their living snake-god. Under pressure from them, the king consigned Daniel to six days in a lion's pit. At that very time, the prophet Habakkuk in Judea¹⁹ was instructed by an angel to prepare a dinner for Daniel, and the angel grasped him by the hair and carried him to Babylon, just as Ezekiel had once been carried in a vision (cf. Eze. 8:3), so that he might give Daniel the dinner. Thus, Daniel was sustained and protected during his ordeal.

The Prayer of Manasseh

The shortest work in the Apocrypha is the little book called *The Prayer of Manasseh*. It is canonical for the Eastern Orthodox Church, though not for the Roman Catholic Church (though the Catholics include it in an appendix following the New Testament). Protestants have generally included it in the English versions containing the Apocrypha, i.e., Matthews Bible (1537), Great Bible (1539), Bishop's Bible (1568), King James Version (1611) and Revised Standard Version (1952). The author, time and circumstances of composition are unknown.

The Old Testament background for the work is the terrible reign of Manasseh, Judah's worst king (696-642 BC). Manasseh erected altars to the zodiac in the Jerusalem temple, he sacrificed his own son in the fire, he eagerly followed the occult, and he shed so much innocent blood in Jerusalem that he filled the city "from end to end" (2 Kg. 21:1-16). Even though Josiah, his son, led the nation in reform, God would not relent from his decision to destroy Judah because of Manasseh's evil (2 Kg. 23:25-27; 24:3-4). Still, however much evil he committed, the Chronicler

¹⁸In the Septuagint, the Greek term *drakon* was used to translate a wide variety of Hebrew words, including the wolf, the snake, and large reptiles as well as marine animals. This "dragon" was a living creature, possibly a python or a boa constrictor, not a mythological monster, cf. Moore, 142.

¹⁹The date of Habakkuk's ministry is debatable, but it is possible that he was contemporary with Daniel, who went to Babylon during the first deportation of Jews from Jerusalem in 597 BC.

states that after Manasseh had been exiled to Babylon in bronze shackles and with a hook in his nose, he repented fervently, and God forgave him (2 Chr. 33:10-13, 15-16, 19).

The *Prayer of Manasseh* in the Apocrypha purports to be Manasseh's repentance, when he pled with God for mercy and forgiveness. It begins with an invocation to the God who displays both wrath and mercy (1-7). Manasseh confesses his great personal sinfulness with transgressions "more in number than the sands of the sea" (8-12). The prayer closes with his plea for forgiveness and his confidence that God will be merciful (13-15). One of the great metaphors of contrition appear in this work, when Manasseh says, "And now I bend the knee of my heart..." (11a). However it was composed, the prayer serves as a wonderful guide to heartfelt and sincere repentance in any age.

Additions to Esther

Like the *Additions to Daniel*, the *Additions to Esther* (107 verses comprising six additions) are expansions of the text in the Hebrew Bible. In the Septuagint and Roman Catholic Bibles, the *Additions to Esther* is interspersed in the text of Esther. In Protestant versions, they are not treated as individual stories but collected together.

KJV, RSV		R. Catholic
ADDITION A	11:2--12:6 <i>Dream of Mordecai</i>	Prologue
ADDITION B	13:1-7 <i>Edict Against the Jews</i>	After 3:13
ADDITION C	13:8--14:19 <i>Prayers of Mordecai and Esther</i>	After 4:17
ADDITION D	15:1-16 <i>Esther Before Xerxes</i>	After 4:17
ADDITION E	16:1-24 <i>Edict of Defense</i>	After 8:12
ADDITION F	10:4--11:1 <i>Meaning of Mordecai's Dream</i>	After 10:3

It is generally thought that at least some of the additions were introduced by Lysimachus, a Jew in Alexandria, Egypt, who translated Esther into Greek in about 114 BC. The reason for the additions is not hard to discover. The canonical Book of Esther is different from all other books in the Old Testament in that it does not contain the name of God or any direct reference to him.²⁰ Why this is so can only be

²⁰Some Jewish scholars have pointed out that the Book of Esther may have cryptic references to God hidden in the six unique spellings of the word *y'hudim* (= Jews). The word appears thirty-six times in its normal spelling, but six times with an extra letter *yod* (4:7; 8:1, 7, 13; 9:15, 18). The letter *yod* also doubles for the word "hand," and double *yods*, as appear in these six spellings, are a common abbreviation in the Jewish prayer book for Yahweh, the name of God. Thus, these six spellings may contain a cryptic reference to the "hand of God," cf. R. Sabua, "The Hidden

speculated, though one plausible suggestion is that the book was composed during a time when Jewish references to God were censored or unwelcome. In any case, the additions, by contrast, contain copious references to God, Jewish piety and devotion.

Prologue: The Dream of Mordecai

The first addition offers a prelude to the Book of Esther in the form of a dream. In it, Mordecai dreamed of two great dragons poised for war, and at their lead, the nations of the world prepared to fight against "the race of the just," i.e., the Jews. The prologue also describes in more detail an event only briefly alluded to in canonical Esther, the plot that Mordecai uncovered against Xerxes (cf. Est. 6:1-2).

Edict Against the Jews

Canonical Esther indicates that the pogrom against the Jews instigated by Haman took the form of an edict authorized by Xerxes (cf. Est. 3:8-14). The second addition offers a copy of this edict in which the Jews are defamed and sentenced to destruction.

Prayers of Mordecai and Esther

When the edict had been published throughout all Persia, Mordecai convinced Esther that she would have to appeal to Xerxes in behalf of her people, but at the risk of her life (cf. Est. 4). The third addition consists of two prayers for survival, the prayer of Mordecai and the prayer of Esther.

Esther Before Xerxes

Canonical Esther describes Esther's bravery in appealing to Xerxes in behalf of the Jews (Est. 5:1-8; 7:1-6). The fourth addition enlarges upon this appeal by describing Esther's entrance before Xerxes, which climaxed with her fainting before him, thus arousing his compassion.

Edict of Defense

Even though Haman's plot was discovered (cf. Est. 7), Xerxes still had to contend with a tricky governmental policy. The policy was that Medo-Persian law, once instituted, could not be retracted (cf. Est. 1:19; 8:8; Da. 6:8, 12, 15).²¹ Thus, however unfair the pogrom instigated by Haman, the edict of extermination still stood. To counteract this decree, a second edict was issued which authorized the

Hand of God," *BR* (Feb. 1992) 31-33.

²¹In fact, an incident in the reign of Darius III bears out this policy historically, when Darius executed a man he knew to be innocent because of the immutability of Medo-Persian law, J. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1978) 128.

Jews to defend themselves against any attacks (Est. 8:11-13). The fifth addition offers a copy of Xerxes' letter to all the provinces of Persia.

Meaning of Mordecai's Dream

The final addition serves as an epilogue to the book and unravels the strange dream of the prologue. The two dragons were Mordecai and Haman.

The Wisdom Literature

In the Hebrew Bible, the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job are significant examples of wisdom literature. The Apocrypha, also, has two works in this genre, *The Wisdom of Solomon* and *Sirach*. Scholars now recognize that Hebrew wisdom was part of a larger wisdom movement common to the whole ancient Near East. Wisdom was "the intensely practical art of being skillful and successful in life."²² It was the life of piety extended to the home and marketplace. It had more to do with character than intellect. Such wisdom was drawn largely from observations about life, and for the Jew, such observations were made through the lens of piety. True wisdom came from God, the author of all wisdom. Often, the teachings about wisdom appear as a description of two competing paths, the path of wisdom as opposed to the path of folly.

Wisdom of Solomon

The book called *The Wisdom of Solomon* (or simply *The Book of Wisdom* in Roman Catholic Bibles) is a celebration of Wisdom, who is personified as a celestial companion of Almighty God. This same kind of personification is already present in Proverbs, where wisdom "cries aloud in the streets" (Pro. 1:20-33) and is "appointed from eternity" to assist God in the creation (8:22-31). In *The Wisdom of Solomon*, wisdom is more comprehensive, embracing not only the Hebrew wisdom of moral and religious virtue, but also all the wisdom of the Greeks as well.²³ The work seems to have been composed for a Greek-educated Jewish community, presumably Alexandria, Egypt. While there are no clear quotations in the New Testament, a number of passages are so similar to the thought of New Testament writers that allusions are a distinct possibility (cf. Wis. 16:26//Mt. 4:4; Wis. 5:17-19//Ep. 6:13-18; Wis. 5:16a//1 Pe. 5:4; Wis. 3:5-6//1 Pe. 1:6-7//5:10; Wis. 7:24-26//He. 1:1-3; Wis. 10:6//2 Pe. 2:7-8; Wis. 13:6-9//Ro. 1:18-20; Wis. 15:7//Ro. 9:21; Wis. 9:15//2

²²W. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979) 189.

²³It seems apparent that the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* must have been familiar with the Greek classics given his enumeration of the cardinal virtues (8:7) and other elements that seem derived from Greek thought, cf. M. Hadas, *IDB* (1962) IV.861.

Co. 5:1-4; Wis. 18:15-16//Rv. 10:1, 5-6).

The book naturally falls into three sections. The first (chapters 1-5) generally follows the wisdom tradition of the "two ways." It points to the respective destinies of the pious and the wicked. The wicked are content to live for the moment, saying, "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds ere they wither" (2:8 NAB).²⁴ However, in the hidden counsels of God, the souls of the just are in his sovereign hand (3:1). The present sufferings of the righteous will be recompensed with eternal life (5:15), while the wicked will pass from memory (5:14).

In the second section (chapters 6-9), the writer poses as Solomon, the Hebrew king famous for his wisdom (1 Kg. 4:29-31). He explains how he sought wisdom to be his bride and counselor (8:2-16). In a reflection upon God's epiphany to Solomon in 1 Kg. 3:5-15, the author offers a version of Solomon's prayer for wisdom (9:1-18).

The third section (chapters 10-19)²⁵ demonstrates the value of wisdom in the history of Israel. It traces the effectiveness of wisdom in the lives of Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph and Moses as well as the folly of forsaking wisdom in the lives of Cain, the Sodomites, Lot's wife and Laban. In a lengthy section, the writer celebrates wisdom as the special providence of God during the exodus. Within this historical reflection, there are two significant digressions, one on crime and punishment, which shows how God fits the punishment to the crime, though he is merciful (11:15--12:22), and the other on the folly of idolatry (13:1--15:17). It contains the curious assessment that although all worship of false gods is wrong, the worship of the heavenly bodies is less objectionable than the worship of man-made idols (13:6-7).

The Wisdom of Solomon was used extensively in the early church and is considered canonical in Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions. Though it is not canonical in Protestant churches, a number of its passages are still used in the lectionary cycle for public reading.

Sirach

The Book of Sirach is the only work among the Apocryphal books in which its author identifies himself. He was Jesus ben Sira, a Jewish scribe who wrote in about 180 BC (50:27). His grandson translated the work into Greek in the thirty-eighth year of Ptolemy VIII of Egypt (called Euergetes in Sirach), that is, about 132 BC (from The Prologue). Until the past century, our knowledge of the text of Sirach

²⁴This line receives a somewhat more positive assessment by 17th century poet Robert Herrick: "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," in his poem, *To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time*.

²⁵Some scholars include chapter 10 with the second section, cf. D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979) 5-6.

depended upon its translations in Greek, Latin and Syriac, but more recently, Hebrew fragments of the book were found at Masada, Qumran and the Cairo Genizah (an ancient synagogue depository for worn texts).

The general pattern of the Hebrew canon seems to have been recognized by the time of the writing of this book, since the prologue refers to "the Law, the prophets, and the others (i.e., the writings)." Whether Sirach considered his work to be on a level with "the others" is unclear, but certainly it was well respected by the early Christians. In fact, so widely used was this book in the early centuries of Christianity that by the 3rd century it had earned a second name, Ecclesiasticus, which means "The Church Book." In Roman Catholic Bibles it appears with the other wisdom books of the Old Testament following Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and the Wisdom of Solomon.

Like the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach is wisdom literature, and it most resembles the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, especially with its characteristic *bicola* (i.e., poetic statements phrased in couplets). Also as in Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, wisdom is personified as the first of God's creation, and she was embodied in the Torah and given as the inheritance of Israel (24:3-12). Near the end of the book, ben Sira offers a tribute to the ancestors of Israel's faith, including Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, the Judges, Samuel, Nathan, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve (i.e., the Minor Prophets), Zerubbabel, Joshua and, finally, Adam, the father of all (chapters 44-49). In chapter 50, he praises Simon II, the last of the priestly house of Zadok to observe the law faithfully (he held priestly office in 219-196 BC). Simon renovated the temple and fortified it, dug a reservoir for water supply, and carried out his priestly duties with integrity and ceremony.

There is no clear scheme of arrangement in the book. It has been pointed out that the book may be divided into two major sections (Chapters 1-23 and Chapters 24-51), each with a preface extolling the virtues of wisdom. Still, apart from this general division, the various subjects treated seem random. One suggestion is that Ben Sira, who served as a teacher of wisdom to educated Jews in Alexandria, rewrote his lecture notes in poetry, but even if so, there is no discernible comprehensive scheme. On the other hand, many of the wisdom sayings about certain topics are grouped together. For instance, there is a group of sayings on honoring one's father and mother (3:1-16), a group of sayings about choosing friends carefully (6:5-17), a group of sayings distinguishing between evil and virtuous women (25:13--26:18), and so forth.

As in Proverbs, the key to wisdom is the fear of the Lord (1:8, 11-14, 16, 18, 20, 27-28, 30, etc.). Many of the themes in Proverbs reappear in Sirach, including the evils of careless speech (19:5-16; 23:7-15; 28:12-26), the value of corporeal

punishment (30:1-2), the dangers of promiscuity (9:1-9), the sin of pride (10:6-18), and the blight of laziness and foolishness (22:1-18).

Books of the Maccabees

Hellenism, a term that describes Greek civilization as it spread throughout the Mediterranean world from the late 4th century BC, was the cultural ideal of Alexander the Great. After his death (323 BC), the empire was divided among his generals, and Palestine was sandwiched between two competing domains, Syria, where the Seleucid dynasty ruled, and Egypt, where the Ptolemies ruled. Though both domains sought to control Palestine, both also championed Hellenism to greater or lesser degrees. Many Palestinian cities were won over to the Greek way of life with its elected representatives, public forums, such as, gymnasiums and amphitheaters, and a strong affectation for the Greek style of art and aesthetics. Circumcision, the sign of God's covenant with Abraham, was denigrated by the Greeks, and a number of Jews became uncircumcised by a surgical operation.²⁶ Furthermore, the influence of Hellenism was deeper than simply external cultural values, for it brought with it a syncretism of many religions, including homage to the Greek pantheon, Persian Zoroastrianism, the Babylonian pantheons and zodiac worship. All these influences were threats to the Jewish tradition and way of life. Among wealthy and aristocratic Jews there was a strong Hellenizing party, and as might be expected, this pro-Syrian attitude was deeply resented by more orthodox Jews.²⁷

The struggle of Judaism to survive in the midst of forced Hellenism is the background for the books of the Maccabees, of which there are four.²⁸ Properly speaking, the title *Maccabeus* (= hammer) is applied to only one man, Judas, third son of the priest Mattathias, the first leader of the Jewish revolt against the Seleucid kings who persecuted the Jews (cf. 1 Mac. 2:4, 66). However, by extension the term eventually came to be applied to the entire resistance movement and any Jew who was martyred in the struggle against Hellenism. The four books of the Maccabees are uneven, the first being more of a straightforward history of the Maccabean Revolt, the second a theological history of the same, the third a quasi-historical account of the earlier struggle between Judaism and the Ptolemies of Egypt, and the fourth a Jewish interpretation of Stoic philosophy. While none of the Maccabees

²⁶The idea of circumcision reversal, called epispasm, may seem odd (or even impossible), but there is significant evidence that techniques were developed for just such a procedure, cf. R. Hall, "Epispasm: Circumcision in Reverse," *BR* (August 1992) 52-56.

²⁷D. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 13-27.

²⁸There is a pseudepigraphical work called 5 Maccabees, but its influence in Christianity and Judaism has been minimal.

books are canonical to Jews or Protestants, the Roman Catholic Church along with the Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes 1 and 2 Maccabees, while only the Orthodox Church recognizes 3 and 4 Maccabees (and about 4 Maccabees canonicity is debated).

1 Maccabees

Written in about 100 BC, 1 Maccabees is generally given high marks for historical reliability. Unlike the historical fictions of Tobit, Judith, and other apocryphal books, most of the historical circumstances in 1 Maccabees can be corroborated by other historical material. The author details the Maccabean revolt against Syria by the priest Mattathias and his sons, which resulted in Jewish independence for about a century prior to Palestine's subjugation to Rome in 63 BC. The providence of God over his Jewish people during the Greek era is the theme of the book, much as this same divine providence during the Persian period is the theme of Ezra-Nehemiah. The book can be divided into five parts:

Historical Prologue (1)

Here, the author provides a short sketch of the events leading up to the Maccabean revolt. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Epiphanes = God Manifest) of Syria, the Greek overlord of Palestine who ascended to the throne in 175 BC, determined to abolish Jewish ceremonialism and compel the Jews to conform to Hellenistic culture. After a successful raid into Egypt, he looted the temple, sacked Jerusalem, forbade sabbath-keeping, outlawed circumcision on pain of death, set up pagan sacrifices within the temple, and burned the Torah scrolls. Women who had their male children circumcised were executed, and their infants were hung from their mother's corpses. Among the Jews, there were many who embraced the pagan ideals, but many others, especially the Hasidim (= men of the covenant), chose to die rather than forsake their covenantal traditions.

Career of Mattathias (2)

Mattathias, a priest in Modein (a village a few miles north of Jerusalem), began active resistance. Not only did he refuse to offer a pagan sacrifice, he killed a pro-Syrian Jew who came to offer a pagan sacrifice as well as the Syrian officer who was presiding. He tore down the pagan altar, gathered a resistance movement, and escaped with his sons and those sympathetic to him into the Judean hills to begin a new life as a freedom fighter. In 166 BC, he died, leaving the resistance movement under the leadership of his son, Judas Maccabeus.

Career of Judas Maccabeus (3:1--9:22)

The Judean hills were particularly well suited for guerrilla warfare, and Judas Maccabeus was comparable to David as a military strategist. Against numerically superior odds, Judas and his guerrillas won victory after victory against the Syrians. By 165 BC, he had freed Jerusalem from the pagan decrees, solemnly cleansed the temple, and restored the priesthood and worship of God. The cleansing of the temple was celebrated for eight days, and the annual celebration of Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication) commemorates the event even to this day.

The success of Judas in Jerusalem, however, spurred a severe reaction against Jewish minorities who still lived in cities of mixed population. Wherever Jews were persecuted by their Hellenistic lords, Judas organized punitive raids, himself leading raids in the Transjordan and his brother, Simon, leading raids in Galilee. (Galilee was as yet only sparsely populated with Jews.) When Antiochus Epiphanes died (164-3 BC), Judas attempted to capture the citadel in Jerusalem, the Syrian military outpost symbolizing Syrian authority. This time, however, Judas was unsuccessful, and if a political threat in Syria had not created a diversion, he might have lost his life.

The successor to Antiochus Epiphanes, Demetrius I, continued to exert pressure against the Jews in Palestine. He appointed a high priest for the Jerusalem temple, who although he was from the Aaronic line, was pro-Syrian. This priest, Alcimus, ordered the inner wall of the temple court torn down so as to allow the pagans access to the sanctuary. Judas and his guerrillas continued to resist, and when a large Syrian army was sent to oppose him, Judas was killed in battle in 161 BC.

Career of Jonathan (9:23--12:53)

At the death of Judas Maccabeus, Jonathan, his youngest brother, was pressed into command. Though early on he contented himself with guerrilla action in the Judean hills, as the Syrians left him more and more to himself, he was able to solidify his position. Playing "both ends against the middle," he took advantage of the overtures from competing claimants to the Seleucid throne, accepting an appointment as high priest in Jerusalem (153 BC) and another as the city's military and civil governor (150 BC). In the end, Jonathan was assassinated through the plot of a supposed ally (143 BC).

Career of Simon (13-16)

Simon, the last survivor of Mattathias' sons, now assumed control of the resistance movement. By careful bargaining with Syria and because he carried out strategic raids in Judea, he succeeded in achieving independence from Syrian suzerainty. The Syrians were ejected from the citadel in Jerusalem, and Judea

entered into a new era of peace and prosperity. In 135 BC, Simon, along with two of his sons, was assassinated in Jericho. An attempt was made upon the life of John Hyrcanus, his surviving son, but John escaped to succeed his father as high priest from 134--110 BC.

Important Ideas in 1 Maccabees

Besides its historical value as a record of the Maccabean revolt, the book of 1 Maccabees testifies to several important concepts in the intertestamental period. First, it is clear that the spirit of prophecy was assumed to have ceased with the last of the writing prophets in the Hebrew canon (4:46; 9:27; 14:41), thus giving some justification to the title "Silent Years" for the intertestamental period. At the same time, it was clearly anticipated that in God's providence a new prophet would arise (4:46; 14:41), presumably the eschatological "prophet like Moses" (cf. Dt. 18:18). Second, the use of the term "salvation" for military victory (3:6; 4:25; 5:62) naturally leads to the title of "savior" for a military deliverer (9:21). This connection, in turn, helps us to understand the close association between the concepts of salvation and military success among the Jews during the time of Jesus. Third, 1 Maccabees demonstrates the substitution of the euphemism "Heaven" for the name of God (3:18-19, 50; 4:10, 24, 40, 55; 5:31; 9:46; 12:15; 16:3), a substitution that one finds in the New Testament in Matthew's "Kingdom of Heaven" as opposed to the other evangelists' "Kingdom of God." Fourth, Abraham's justification by faith, as demonstrated by his offering of Isaac, is described in 1 Maccabees in the same way as in the New Testament Letter of James (Ge. 15:6; 22:1ff.; 1 Mac. 2:52; Ja. 2:21-23). Finally, the early distinctions between the Hasidim and the Hasmonean (Maccabean) family would eventually evolve into the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, a distinction that carried on into the time of Jesus.²⁹

2 Maccabees

Like 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees describes the Jewish wars of independence against the Seleucids of the Syrian Greek Empire. 2 Maccabees roughly parallels 1 Maccabees 1:10--7:50, the period just prior to and including the career of Judas Maccabeus. The author describes his work as an abridgement of a larger, five-volume work (no longer extant) written by one Jason of Cyrene (2:23-28).

All commentators agree that 2 Maccabees is a theological history, that is, it is a description of divine providence and intervention in behalf of the Jews during the Maccabean wars. Whereas 1 Maccabees presents the Jewish war of independence in an objective, straightforward historical manner, 2 Maccabees offers alongside the

²⁹S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, W. Meeks, ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987) 143-150.

historical events a description of various miracles, deliverances and spiritual phenomena. In the opening, for instance, the book says that the holy fire of the temple's altar, which had been hidden by priests before the exile, later was recovered by Nehemiah after the exile in liquid form. When it was replaced on the altar of the second temple, it ignited spontaneously (1:19-22, 31-32, 36). In another anecdote about a Syrian raid against the temple, the invader was confronted by a supernatural apparition of horse and rider, along with two supernatural beings, who scourged him until he was senseless (3:23-40). In a description about Antiochus Epiphanes' invasion of Egypt, golden-clad apparitions of armed horsemen charged through the air for forty days (5:2-4). In yet another battle between Judas Maccabeus and the Syrians, five angelic-like horsemen surrounded Judas to protect him, while they showered thunderbolts upon the enemy (10:29-30).

The outline of the book is theological, not chronological, and in fact, there are a number of factual and chronological discrepancies, not only as compared with the record in 1 Maccabees, but even within 2 Maccabees itself. The contents are as follows:³⁰

Prologue (1-2)

First, there are copies of two letters (1:1-9; 1:10--2:18) from the Judean Jews to the Jewish community in Egypt concerning the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). Then, the author describes his abridgment of the larger five-volume work of Jason (2:19-32).

Divine Protection of the Temple (3)

Under the priesthood of Onias, God intervened to protect the temple from desecration by Heliodorus.

God Punishes Jerusalem for Apostasy (4-7)

Because of the intrigues of the priesthood and the hellenizing tendencies of the people, God allowed Antiochus Epiphanes to profane the temple (5:15-20; 6:1-6). Still, this persecution was a kindly discipline to bring God's people back to repentance (6:13-16; 7:33).

God Delivers the Jews and Purifies His Temple (8:1--10:9)

Like Nehemiah before him, Judas Maccabeus, a devout hero, arose to save his people and restore the temple with God's help. He and his freedom-fighters recovered Jerusalem and the temple, cleansing it of pagan intrusions and restoring

³⁰W. Brownlee, *IDB* (1962) III.206.

proper ritual and worship.

God Supports the Maccabean Resistance Movement (10:10--13:26)

The numerous victories of Judas and his guerrillas were given divine aid, sometimes by angelic warriors (10:29-31; 11:6-9).

God Defends Jerusalem Through Judas Maccabeus (14:1--15:36)

During yet another Syrian invasion, the Jewish resistance force was encouraged by a holy dream. In the dream, Jeremiah appeared in order to give Judas a golden sword, the gift of God, to vanquish his enemies (15:11-16). Once again, the Jews were victorious, and in Jerusalem they exposed for ridicule the enemy general's head and right arm.

Several issues of significance for Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians appear in 2 Maccabees. The book offers high praise for martyrs. It describes several martyrdoms, the most vivid being the torturous death of Eleazar, who refused to eat swine's flesh (6:18-31), the martyrdom of seven sons along with their mother (7:1-41), and the martyrdom-suicide of Razis (14:37-46). The book also depicts Judas Maccabeus offering prayers and sacrifices for the dead (12:39-46), and it describes the sainted dead intervening in the heavenlies for those on earth (15:11-16). Of more general interest to all Christians, the book contains the first explicit reference to creation *ex nihilo* (7:28), a viewpoint certainly consonant with the New Testament (cf. He. 11:3). It also demonstrates a vibrant faith in the resurrection of the dead (7:9, 11, 14, 23; 14:46), a theme later to be central to the theology of the Pharisees. It also contains the earliest tradition that the ark of the covenant was not destroyed by the Babylonians during the exile, but it was hidden in a transjordan cave by Jeremiah (2:4-5).

3 Maccabees

Canonical only in the Eastern Orthodox Church, due to its inclusion in the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta and Armenian Versions (it was not included in the Latin Vulgate), 3 Maccabees is misnamed, since its contents do not deal with the Maccabean wars. 3 Maccabees describes in three stories the struggles of Egyptian Jews who suffered under Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 BC) about half a century before the Maccabean revolt. In the first story, Ptolemy attempted to enter the Most Holy Place in the second temple, and God temporarily struck him with paralysis and dumbness for his arrogance (1:1--2:24). In the second, he tried to exclude Jews from Alexandrian citizenship by requiring all citizens to sacrifice at the local temple, else they would become slaves (2:25-33). The third account narrates his attempt to instigate a pogrom against Jews living in the Egyptian interior, but he was thwarted

by repeated divine interventions (3-7).

4 Maccabees

4 Maccabees (also called *On the Supremacy of Reason* in Josephus) roughly parallels 2 Maccabees 6:12--7:42. It is dedicated to the premise that all true philosophy is found in the Torah, and it seeks to show, especially through martyrdoms, that if interpreted properly, even Judaism embodies the best of Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism. The author sees martyrdom as a substitutionary atonement that expiates the nation's sins and purifies the land (1:11; 17:17-22; 18:3-4). When the martyrs die, they are immediately received into heaven with the patriarchs (7:16-19; 16:25). 4 Maccabees is one of the latest Apocryphal books to be written with most scholars placing its composition in the first half of the first century AD.

Psalm 151

The final book in the Apocrypha appears as a short psalm, giving rise to the title in Codex Sinaiticus of "The 151 Psalms of David." This psalm is canonical only in the Eastern Orthodox Church. A Hebrew text among the Dead Sea Scrolls contains an expanded version of this extra psalm, and it is present in Greek texts and several ancient versions (Old Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic and Arabic).

The psalm is presented as a first person reminiscence of David about his life as a shepherd, musician and anointed king. Some versions of the psalm have the odd statement that David slung three stones at Goliath, which seems to conflict with the record in 1 Samuel 17:49-50.

Assessing the Apocrypha

It cannot be denied that the Bible of the earliest Christians, the Septuagint, contained the Apocrypha. More to the point, writers of the New Testament often quote from the Septuagint and occasionally quoted from or alluded to the Apocrypha. With no attempt to be exhaustive, the following quotations or allusions in the New Testament to passages in the Apocrypha serve to illustrate the point.

New Testament	Corresponding Apocrypha Passages
Mt. 23:37-38	2 Esdras 1:30
John 1:14	Baruch 3:37
Ro. 1:18-20	Wisdom 13:6-9
Ro. 1:20-29	Wisdom 13:5, 8; 14:24, 27
Ro. 9:21	Wisdom 15:7
Ro. 9:20-23	Wisdom 12:12, 20; 15:7
Ep. 6:13-15	Wisdom 5:17-19
2 Co. 5:1, 4	Wisdom 9:15
He. 1:1-3	Wisdom 7:24-26
He. 11:35b-38	2 Macc. 6:18—7:41; 4 Macc. 5:3—18:24
He. 11:3	2 Macc. 7:28
Ja. 1:13	Sirach 15:11-12
Ja. 1:19	Sirach 5:11
1 Pe. 1:6-7; 5:10	Wisdom 3:5-6
1 Pe. 5:4	Wisdom 5:16a
2 Pe. 2:7-8	Wisdom 10:6
Re. 7:9; 14:1	2 Esdras 2:42-44
Re. 10:1, 5-6	Wisdom 18:15-16

At the same time, the fact that the books of the Apocrypha are not universally recognized as Scripture calls for special assessment. All Christians agree on the canonical status of the Old and New Testaments, and the extent of the Old Testament matches exactly the canonical books of the Hebrew Bible (though the chronology is different). With the Apocrypha, however, Protestants and Jews agree that they are not inspired Scripture, while Roman Catholics and the Orthodox conclude that they are. Even here, though, Catholics and the Orthodox disagree on a few sections, since the Orthodox listing includes Psalm 151, the Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees and possibly 4 Maccabees, all books which Roman Catholics exclude.

As mentioned earlier, Protestants, even though they did not admit the Apocrypha into the canon, traditionally printed the Apocrypha in the English Bible, including the King James Version until 1827, though they did so in a collection between the Testaments or as an appendix rather than within the chronology of the Old Testament books. Luther's preface to the Apocrypha set the general tone for Protestants: "Apocrypha: these books which are not held equal to the Sacred Scriptures and yet are useful and good for reading." Various Protestant opinions have appeared, some more severe, some less, than Luther's preface. In the English

Coverdale Bible (1535), for instance, the Apocrypha was included with the assertion that these books might be read "for example of life and instruction of manners," though not "to establish any doctrine." The Westminster Confession (1647) described the Apocrypha in more harsh terms as "not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of the Scripture and therefore are no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved." The scholar John Lightfoot (1643) was even less generous when speaking of "the wretched Apocrypha."

By the 20th century, conservative Protestants were virtually ignorant of the Apocrypha except as a designation for unadvisable reading material, though some mainstream Protestant Bibles, such as the Revised Standard Version, were published with the Apocryphal books as an appendix.

The Issues

Several issues are germane to any assessment of the Apocrypha, and most important among them are the issues of inspiration, historicity, tradition, doctrine and value for edification. Though they overlap somewhat, each of these issues is distinct. Inspiration is an article of faith, but it cannot be demonstrated historically, of course. The fact that church history contains considerable ambivalence about these books exacerbates the problem. In the ancient church, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), Gregory Nazianzus (d. 390), Eiphanius (d. 403), Rufinus (d. 410), Jerome (d. 420) and John of Damascus (d. 749) all expressed doubts about the inspiration of the Apocryphal books. On the other hand, a number of early Christian leaders, such as, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Hermas, Irenaeus and the author of *Barnabas* (all 2nd century fathers), had no hesitation in using them freely as sacred books. So, ancient opinions about inspiration are inconsistent, while the traditional use of the books is varied.

It is now generally agreed that the Apocryphal books are considerably diverse as to their historical reliability. 1 Maccabees receives very high historical marks (by many scholars, higher than, say, Esther in the Old Testament). Tobit and Judith, however, seem to be historical fictions with only a very general correlation with known ancient history. Thus, frequently one finds the value of Apocryphal books to be more along the lines of spiritual edification than historical reconstruction. In the second of Wycliffe's versions, for instance, the prologue recommends the book of Tobit "because of the encouragement it provides to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, teaching them to be true to God in prosperity and adversity, and...to be patient in tribulation; and go never away from the dread and love of God."

It is fair to say that during the Middle Ages there was little interest in creating well-defined limits to the sacred books. Most people were illiterate in any case, and those who were not showed a marked lack of concern over which books were canonical. With the Protestant Reformers' principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture

Alone) as the sole base for authority in the Church, the question naturally arose as to just how far this "Scripture" extended. Certain doctrines which had become popular in the Medieval church, particularly prayers for the souls of the dead (2 Mac. 12:39-46), the existence of the archangels Raphael and Uriel (Tobit 5:4; 2 Esdras 4:1), the belief that the deceased righteous intercede for the living (Bar. 3:4; Song of the Three 1:64; 2 Mac. 15:11-16), the elevation of martyrs (2 Mac. 6:18-31; 7:1-41; 14:37-46), the existence of purgatory (2 Mac. 12:39-45), and the idea of a treasury of merits (2 Mac. 15:12-16; Prayer of Azariah 1:12) were all grounded in passages from the Apocrypha. If the Apocrypha was not suitable for forming doctrine, then these beliefs carried no authority. It was precisely these doctrines which the Reformers resisted, and it is fair to say that doctrines such as prayers for the dead, intercession by the righteous dead, and purgatory underlay the whole system of selling indulgences. Luther's famous denigration of 2 Maccabees is instructive: "I hate Esther and 2 Maccabees so much that I wish they did not exist; they contain much Judaism and no little heathen vice." Of course, Esther was not part of the Apocrypha, but Luther was not noted for his reserve.³¹

The Apocrypha and Contemporary Evangelicals

The issues concerning the Apocrypha are far from trivial, but at the same time there is something to be said for a middle ground between the Council of Trent, where the Roman church canonized the Apocrypha, and conservative Protestants, who for the past century and a half have ignored it altogether. If nothing more, the Apocryphal books offer significant material, both in history and theological development, for the background study of the New Testament. But surely there is more. The devotional value of the Apocrypha, which supports a tenacious faith in the face of determined opposition and persecution, must surely count for something, too. The experience of John Bunyan, the separatist preacher, is a case in point, where during a period of deep depression, his mind was fixed upon a text which said, *Look at the foundations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord and was confounded?* For a year, he attempted to find this verse in the Bible. (We should remember that he did not have the convenience of a modern concordance.) He even asked others to help him, all to no avail, until some time later he finally wrote, "...casting my eyes upon the Apocryphal books, I found it in Ecclesiasticus, chap. 2:10. This at first did somewhat daunt me, because it was not in those texts that we call holy and canonical; yet as this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it. And I bless God for that word, for it was of good to me. That word doth still oft-times shines before my face."³²

³¹F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988) 101.

³²Bruce, 110.

Contemporary evangelicals still read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. They read C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, St. Augustine's *Confessions* and a host of other devotional works that, though not canonical by any means, are still valuable for their spiritual insight. At the very least, the books of the Apocrypha should stand alongside these and other examples of devotional literature. Because of their longstanding use in the history of Christianity, both in the ancient church as well as later, it seems appropriate to accord them a place of honor--if not the honor of canonicity, at least the honor of edification, encouragement, wisdom and tradition.