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What is the Apocrypha ?

The Apocryphal are fifteen books which the Roman Catholics have included in their Bibles that came from a collection of about eighteen or more books written during the Inter-testamental Period.

This period of four hundred years began with God giving the last book of the Old Testament which was Malachi. The Inter-testamental period ended with the coming of Christ and the writing of the New Testament.

During this four hundred years God sent no prophets to Israel and was silent giving no written revelation.

The word "apocrypha" means "of questionable authenticity." These are called non canonical books because when the canon of Scriptures (the sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments) were accepted by the early Christians, they recognized that these books contained spurious material and therefore were not inspired of God.

Other names for these books are "hidden" or "deuterocanonical" books. These books are also called "pseudepigraphal", meaning "false writings" to designate them as spurious and unauthentic books of the late centuries B. C. and early centuries A. D. ;

And these books contain religious folklore and have never been considered inspired of God by biblical Christians from the earliest times of churches.

Some have referred to these books as the missing books of the Bible and conclude they are new discovers which are part of God's revelation.

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The sixty six books that comprise the Old and New Testaments are God's revelation to man and when John completed the Book of Revelation, God's word to man was complete. There is no evidence to support that God has not added to His revelation since.

The content of these spurious books shows them to be inspired by man, not of God. It is also noteworthy that the Roman Catholic Church accepts these books as scripture.

There are other religious organizations including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormons, that also accept them as scripture but no biblical Christians or churches have ever accepted them as such.

These books or writings from the Apocrypha that the Roman Catholic Church claims are inspired are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees, Letter of Jeremiah, additions to Esther, Prayer of Azariah, Susanna (Daniel 13), and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14).

Three other Apocryphal books in the Septuagint, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 & 2 Esdras, are not considered to be inspired or canonical by the Roman Catholic Church.

These books were not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church until 1546 in the Council of Trent. Therefore for over 1300 years, since the inception of the Roman Church in the fourth Century, even they did not consider them inspired.

Why do non-Catholic authorities reject the Apocrypha as being a part of the sixty six books of the canon?

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There are mainly four reasons:

1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms.
2. They teach doctrines which are false and foster practices which are at variance with inspired Scripture.
3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture.
4. They lack the distinctive elements which give genuine Scripture their divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.

Why do biblical Christians and churches reject the Apocrypha as being inspired of God?

1. These books existed before New Testament times, yet there is not one single quotation from the Apocrypha in the New Testament. Jesus quoted from twenty four of the Old Testament books, and the New Testament quotes from thirty four books of the Old Testament.

Introductory phrases like "it is written" or "thus says the Lord" are totally absent from the books and therefore the books themselves do not claim to be inspired of God.

The books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees have historical significance, but when they are compared to the Bible they shown to not be the inspired Word of God.

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Even though they have some historical value these books are clouded by the contradictions found in their text. For example, in 1st and 2nd Maccabees, Antiochus Epiphanes is made to die three different deaths in as many different places.

2. Although some of the early church fathers quoted from these writings, and even accepted them as inspired, this does not mean they were inspired. The majority of the early church writers rejected these books as being inspired.

Clearly in the Second Century and afterward there were many false teachers and heretics. It is important to know that neither Jesus nor any of the Apostles quoted from or mention any of these books.

3. Some early Greek manuscripts contain the Apocrypha, along with the Septuagint. (The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). The Septuagint was translated in Alexandria, Egypt which was a hot bed of heresy.

From Alexandria also came the corrupted manuscripts of Alpeh, A, B upon which all modern English translations are based (the Westcott-Hort text).

They including of several of these books in the LXX, (Septuagint) was the natural result of the spirit of heresy and false teaching in Egypt.

However, none of these books were ever included in the Hebrew Bible and were never accepted by the Jews. Further no Greek manuscript contains the apocryphal books as does the Roman

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Catholic Bible. Moreover, not a single ancient manuscript contains all of the apocryphal books.

Lastly, only four of the apocryphal books are found in copies of the LXX and these manuscripts date to the fourth century A.D. No copy of the Septuagint before that time has any Apocryphal books included which reflect the progression of heresy in Egypt.

4. The Jews are the ones who canonized the Books of the Old Testament and they did not include them. They have always excluded these Apocryphal books because the material in these books is heretical and contains gross doctrinal errors.

Some of these gross doctrinal errors are; prayers for the dead. (2 Macc. 12:45-46) and salvation by works. (Tobit 12:9). Praying for the dead is not biblical as Hebrews 9:27 plainly states, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

There is no second chance after death. Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states that salvation is not by works or merited by man. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The stories in the Apocryphal books are extra biblical, fanciful and clearly pure fiction. For example the story of Bel and the Dragon is clearly a fairy tale. The tale says that a pagan priest of Bel tried to deceive Daniel by using a trap door to consume food left for the idol Bel.

This pagan priest was seeking to convince Daniel that Bel was a real god who ate and drank every day. Another fanciful tale relates that

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Daniel was miraculously fed by the prophet Habakkuk, who was caught up by an angel in Judea, and taken to help Daniel in the lion's den in Babylon.

Daniel lived hundreds of years before this spurious book titled "Bel and the Dragon" was written.

Another such tale is found in Tobit. Tobit, a blind father who supposedly lived in Nineveh, sends his son Tobias on a journey to collect a debt.

On a journey Tobias is led by an angel in disguise named Raphael. The angel leads him to the house of a virgin who had been married seven times, but whose husbands were all slain by a demon on their wedding night.

Tobias marries the girl and drives away the demon by burning the heart of a certain fish in the bedroom, with the help of Raphael. He returns home with the money and his bride, and then heals his father's eyes with the fish's gall.

Some of the teachings in these books are colored and some are immoral. In Judith 9:10, 13, it says that God assisted Judith in the telling of lies.

The Apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom teach that morality is based on expedience. In other words, according to these books it is right to sin in some situations.

The Book of Wisdom 11:17 teaches that God made the universe out of pre-existing matter instead of "ex nihilo" (out of nothing) as Genesis 1:1-2, John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 11:3 plainly state.

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There are also historical errors Tobit claimed that he was alive when the Assyrians conquered Israel in 722 B. C. and when Jeroboam revolted against Judah in 931 B. C.

However it records his total life span as 158 years. These two events were actually 859 years apart. Judith also mistakenly states that Nebuchadnezzar reigned in Nineveh instead of Babylon. There are many other gross historical errors as well.

No true Bible believing church as has ever accepted the books as canonical for these reasons.

In order for a book to be considered inspired of God and included in the canon it must satisfy the follow requirements.

1. It must have been written by a prophet of God. None of the Apocryphal books claim they were.
2. It must come with the authority of God. These spurious books are strikingly absence of the ring of authority. None of them come up to or compare in any way to the character and quality of the sixty six Books of the Bible.
3. It must demonstrate that the power of God rests on the book. There is nothing transforming about these books.
4. It must tell the truth about God, man, history, science, etc. The books are full of contradictions, errors and even heresies. The Apocryphal books are full of untruth.
5. It must be accepted by biblical Christians as inspired of God. The Apocryphal books completely fail this final and fatal test.

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Why did the Catholic Church accept them as canonical?

In a nutshell, the Roman Catholic Church has never had any biblical support for its teachings such as purgatory, prayers for the dead, works for salvation, etc.

The events of the Reformation brought the Roman Catholic heresies into question and they had not scriptural authority for teachings. However, these false teachings are found in the Apocryphal books, so the Council of Trent in 1546, canonized them proclaiming them to be "sacred" books.

This ruse gave them support for their erroneous teachings.

It is always the clear mark of a cult or false church to add extra biblical revelations to the Bible in order to seek to justify their false teachings.

Historically, the Roman Catholic Church did not accept these books for the first 1300 years of their history. Clearly, the reason they changed their position was that during the Reformation the teachings of Catholicism came under scrutiny by people who were studying God's word, they could find no mention in the Bible of a place called Purgatory, prayers for the dead, paying of indulgences and other practices of the Roman church.

The Apocryphal books themselves show they are not inspired of God and mostly fictional works. They have never been truly accepted by biblical Christians as part of God's word.

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The Roman Church practice of accepting of money, called "indulgences" for the payment of sins especially came under attack as being unbiblical.

History shows that accepting indulgences brought a great deal of money into the coffers of the Roman Catholic Church. A Roman Catholic could actually purchase an indulgence in advance and then go out a commit his sin.

It was this unbiblical practice that was one of the reasons that Martin Luther wrote his "Ninety-five Thesis" and tacked it to the door of the Wittenburg church door.

His action sparked the Reformation which began in 1517 which was the also the beginning of Protestantism.

There is a statement found in 2 Maccabees 12:43-45, which says "2,000 pieces of silver were sent to Jerusalem for a sin-offering; whereupon he made reconciliation for the dead, that they might be delivered from sin."

On this brief statement the Roman Catholic Church has hung its teachings of Purgatory and paying for indulgences for payment of sins.

However, nowhere in God's word is there found any mention of a prayer or a sin offering for the dead. Hebrews 9:27 says "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27.

In God's word, there is no place called Purgatory or any prayers offered for dead men. When a man dies his fate is sealed. If a man is

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a believer, he as a child of God, goes to heaven, if he is a lost man he will go to hell.

There is no second chance after death. Paul clearly states that a Christian goes immediately into the presence of God when he dies, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8)

The false doctrines, historical, cultural, and scientific error, which are contrary to the teachings of the sixty six books of the Bible, show the Apocryphal books are not inspired of God.

The inclusion of the Apocrypha in the original printing of the King James Bible strictly for historical reasons. They were included like the materials in many of our modern Bibles for reference. These books were written during the Inter-testamental period between the Old and New Testaments.

They contained for example the books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees which record of the rebellion of the Jews against Syria leading to Roman occupation of Israel during the time of Christ.

During this 400 year period many changes occurred among the Jews such as the beginning of worship in synagogues, the rise of the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducee's, the rabbinical writings of the Talmud, etc.

May the grace of God be with you always --- Amen.

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