

Books of the Bible – Deuterocanonical and Apocrypha.

DEUTEROCANONICAL Those books (and parts of books) of the Old Testament whose inclusion in the Catholic **canon** was disputed at one time: Judith, Tobit, Sirach, Wisdom, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Baruch; also Dan 3:24–90 and chapters 13 and 14 and Esth 10:4–16 and chapter 24. The term “deuterocanonical” (from the Greek for “second canon”) was first used by the Dominican Sixtus of Siena (died 1569). Books regarded as canonical with little or no debate were called “protocanonical” (from the Greek for “first canon”).

The Catholic Church accepts both the protocanonical and deuterocanonical books as divinely inspired and canonical and treats them with the same reverence. The Orthodox churches also accept them, along with additional works found in ancient codices of the Greek **Septuagint**: 1 Esdras (or 3 Ezra), the Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees, and Psalm 151, which are not accepted in the Catholic canon. Rabbinic Judaism and the founders of Protestantism rejected the deuterocanonical books; some Protestant Bibles print them in a separate section called “**Apocrypha**.”

The deuterocanonical books were accepted by the Church from the earliest times, and their inclusion in the Canon of Scripture was given formal definition at the Council of Trent on April 8, 1546, in the dogmatic decree *De Canonicis Scripturis*. The Council Fathers declared the **Vulgate** to be the authentic Latin version of the Bible and promulgated the list of the books accepted as entirely canonical. The Canon of the Bible, including the deuterocanonical books, consisted of the forty-six books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

In addition to the OT deuterocanonical books, parts of the NT have also been subject to dispute at times: the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, 2 Peter; 2 and 3 John, Revelation, and Mark 16:9–20; also Luke 22:43 and John 5:4, 7:53; 8:1–11. Sometimes these sections of the NT are also described as “deuterocanonical,” but most modern Christians accept them as Scripture.¹

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS (Greek *apokrypha*, “hidden things”) The name used for various Jewish and Christian writings that are often similar to the inspired works in the Bible, but that were judged by the Church not to possess canonical authority.

¹ Hahn, S. (Ed.). (2009). In *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (pp. 213–214). New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday.

Catholics and Protestants disagree over the precise use of the term “apocryphal.” Protestants apply that name to the **deuterocanonical** books—works that are found in the Catholic canon but that were omitted from the Protestant canon when it was formulated in the sixteenth century. Protestants reject Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 and 2 Maccabees, and parts of Esther and Daniel, terming these “apocryphal” books. The Protestant “apocrypha” also include 1 and 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, books that often appeared as noncanonical appendices to the Vulgate (*see Versions of the Bible*). For the books called apocryphal by the Catholic Church, Protestants use the term **pseudepigrapha**.

The apocryphal writings are of considerable value as works of religious literature and religious history, preserving important details of the development of Judaism and early Christianity, as well as offering scholars the means of tracing the emergence of heretical doctrines in the nascent Christian community (e.g., Gnosticism). Old Testament apocrypha offer a means of appreciating the different currents in formative Judaism, the influence of Hellenism on Jewish culture, and the impact of the destruction of the Herodian Temple in A.D. 70 on the culture, religious outlook, and political institutions of the period.

Old Testament apocrypha include writings of Messianic expectations, private revelations, visions, and proverbial and didactic passages. New Testament apocrypha include gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses.²

² Hahn, S. (Ed.). (2009). In *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (p. 54). New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday.