

What is the source of the Apocrypha?

“I shall bring my work to an end here too. If it is well composed and to the point, that is just what I wanted. If it is worthless and mediocre, that is all I could manage”—2 Maccabees 15:37-38 NJB. The writer of the Apocryphal book 2 Maccabees, in effect, admits that he is not inspired by God.

The Apocrypha is accepted as being genuine by some people and some large religious organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, today, but rejected by many others. Some of it is included in various versions of the Bible, but is absent in most. The Apocryphal books accepted as canonical and part of the Old Testament (OT), by the Roman Catholic Church are: ***Tobit, Judith, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach, or Ben Sira), Baruch, and several additions to Esther and Daniel.***

Is it inspired by God, or invented by humans? Let’s examine some evidence to see if we can find the answer.



The Jews knew of the Apocrypha, but NEVER ACCEPTED any of it as canonical. For the Jews, any books written after Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi’s time (such as the Apocrypha) were not considered inspired. They considered the canon closed after this time (by circa 400 BCE or before).

Jesus said **“Whoever serves me must follow me.” (John 12:26 NIV)** He spoke against those who **“nullify the word of God by your tradition.” (Mark 7:13 NIV)** What did Jesus consider the Old Testament (OT) to be?

Is the Apocrypha inspired by God or invented by humans?

“The Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44 NIV) What books were included in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms (the Writings)? There were 24 by their count; 39 by our count today.

The Law contained five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The Prophets was composed of eight books: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (as one book).

The Writings included eleven books: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (one book) and Chronicles.

Notice that no Apocryphal books are included in these three OT sections! Jesus and the New Testament (NT) writers quoted from all three of these OT sections, but THEY NEVER QUOTED FROM THE APOCRYPHA! Since most of the NT quotes of the OT are from the Greek Septuagint Version (LXX), the absence of even a single quote by Jesus or NT writers from any of the numerous Apocryphal books speaks volumes!

The above Scriptures were kept at the Temple according to **Deuteronomy 31:24-26** and **1 Kings 22:8-13** and Josephus, down to the time of its destruction in 70 CE. But the APOCRYPHAL BOOKS WERE NEVER KEPT AT THE TEMPLE.

Following Jesus means accepting the same OT books that he accepted as inspired, which are the 39 books of the OT from Genesis to Malachi, but not including **“cleverly devised stories”** such as the Apocrypha. **(2 Peter 1:16 NIV)**

In fact, early Christians (and we today) were commanded not **“to devote themselves to myths,”** which would certainly include the Apocrypha, since it’s full of myths! **(1 Timothy 6:3-4 NIV)**

The Septuagint is the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and was in Greek. There is no

evidence that the Septuagint originally included the Apocrypha. There is no evidence that the apostles made use of the Apocrypha. The NT does not quote it. There is solid evidence against it. Inspired scriptures told Christians **“not to concern themselves with myths,” which would rule out the Apocrypha for Christians. (1 Timothy 1:4 NAB)** Also, the Apostles preached: **“Admonish them sharply, so that they may be sound in faith, instead of paying attention to Jewish myths,”** which precludes Apocryphal writings from Christians. **(Titus 1:13-14 NAB)**

The Apocryphal books were never “taken out” of the Septuagint, as some claim, because they were never there to start with. When the Apostle Paul was **“trying to convince** [the Jewish leaders in Rome] **about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets,”** he was using the 24 (our 39 today) OT books. **(Acts 28:23 NAB)**

Luke 24:44 proves that Jesus and the early Christians did not accept the Apocrypha, since these books were not included in “the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.”

The Jewish Council of Jamnia (90 CE) explicitly excluded all Apocrypha. The canon they accepted were the 22 books that both Josephus and Jerome said were inspired (our 39 today), and none of the Apocrypha! The Jews were aware of the Apocrypha, but did not accept any of it as inspired.

The expressions below include the 39 OT books, but none of the Apocrypha:

- **“The Law or the Prophets.” (Matthew 5:17 NJB)** The entire OT - but no Apocrypha.
- **“From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah.” (Matthew 23:35 NJB)** From the beginning to the end of the OT, as arranged in Jewish Bible - but no Apocrypha.
- **“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets.” (Luke 24:27 NIV)** The entire OT - but no Apocrypha.
- **“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44 NIV)** The entire OT - but no

Apocrypha.

Jesus and the early Christians obviously did not accept the Apocrypha.

The Apocryphal books – in contrast to the canonical books – are riddled with numerous mistakes, contradictions, myths, superstitions, etc. Here are just a few examples. Many, many more could be cited. This is easy to check for oneself.

- From **Tobit 1:4-5** and **1:10-13**, Tobit lived more than 250 years, but **14:1** says he lived 112 years – about a 140 year discrepancy.
- **Judith 1:1, 7** says Nebuchadnezzar reigned over the Assyrians in Nineveh, but **Daniel 1:1** and history tell us he was **“king of Babylon.”**
- Solomon is presented as the author of Wisdom, but the book cites verses from Bible books written long after Solomon’s death, by quoting the Septuagint, which was translated 800 years after Solomon’s death – an obvious anachronism!
- Ecclesiastichus contradicts **Romans 5:12-19** by saying, **“Sin began with a woman and thanks to her we must all die.” (25:24 NJB)**
- **Baruch 1:1-2** represents him and Jeremiah, at the destruction of Jerusalem, as carrying the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant to a cave in the mountain where Moses viewed the land of Canaan. The tabernacle had been replaced by the temple more than 400 years earlier.
- **Tobit 12:9** says, **“Almsgiving saves from death and purges all sin” (NAB)**. This teaches that a person can buy their way out of sin. **Tobit 6:6-8** says, **“‘what medicine is the fish’s heart, liver and gall?’ He answered: ‘As for the fish’s heart and liver, if you burn them to make smoke in the presence of of a man or a woman who is afflicted b a demon or an evil spirit, any affection will flee and never return. As for the gall, if you apply it to the eyes of one who has white scales, blowing right into them, sight will be restored’” (NAB)**. This promotes the use of magic or superstition.

While **1 Maccabees** has historical information, and, to a lesser degree, **2 Maccabees** also

does, the rest of the Apocryphal books are simply fictional. This article has given just a few of many examples that could be cited to prove that much of the Apocrypha is **“worthless,”** and the rest is **“mediocre,”** at best. **(2 Maccabees 15:38 NJB)**

Catholic Objections in defense of the Apocrypha are in italics below:

The OT, including the “extra” books are seen as only a shadow of the NT (Hebrews).

While the NT includes many **“types” (Romans 5:14 NAB)** and **“shadows” (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 10:1 NAB)** drawn from the OT, by quoting and referencing liberally from all three sections (the Law, the Prophets, the Writings) **(Luke 24:44)**, none are drawn from the Apocrypha!

Catholics did not build their Church on the Bible.

This is true. They built it on the **“sand” (Matthew 7:26-27)** of **“human tradition” (Colossians 2:8 NAB)**, including the Apocryphal books.

The Dead Sea scrolls have some of these books also which mean that the Essenes believed that they were divinely inspired.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are approximately 50% Biblical and 50% non-Biblical. Among the non-Biblical are many secular documents. Simply being found in one of the Dead Sea caves in the Qumran area in no way elevates a document to being canonical, or divinely inspired. It cannot even be proven that the Essenes owned the Scrolls. That is speculation.

The facts show that the Apocryphal books were rejected by Jesus and the early Christians as being uninspired by God. We should likewise reject them today!