

Class 1 - The formation of the Old Testament

Class 2 - Old Testament Apocrypha

Class 3 - The formation of the New Testament

Class 4 - New Testament Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha

Class 5 - Gospels False and True

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CLASS 1: THE FORMATION OF THE OT

1. General Dating

- Majority written 1000-400 BC
- Voice of prophecy stilled (Intertestamental Period)
- Resumption with John the Baptist
- Not to say that the Jews stopped writing (Class 2)

2. Growth of Tanakh

- Torah (Law/Instruction)
- Nevi'im (Prophets)
- Kethuvim (Writings)
- TaNaKh (acronym)
- Samaritan canon: Note that this group accepted only the Torah (slightly modified)

3. Expansion of Torah, Nevi'im, and Kethuvim: a few illustrations

- Torah: Exodus to Deuteronomy; final version in Babylon
- Nevi'im: Isa 8; Jer 36
- Kethuvim: Psalter; Proverbs

4. Incompleteness of OT

- Covenant entails writing (Jer 31)
- Hebrew OT ends in suspense: Chronicles (new beginning under Cyrus)
- Greek OT ends in suspense: Malachi (herald preceding coming of Lord)
- Second Moses (Deut 18) entails further scripture

CLASS 2: OT APOCRYPHA

- Bulk of OT written 1000-400 BC.
- Nucleus of Torah-Nevi'im-Kethuvim growing at macro and micro levels.
- Incompleteness of OT
 - Covenant entails writing (Jer 31)
 - OT ends in suspense (Heb / Gk versions)
 - Messiah still hasn't come!

2. Meaning of Apocrypha

- *Apocryphon* = hidden thing; *apocrypha* = hidden things
- Normal sense: non-canonical (not included in the canon, or rule, of the Bible)
- Doesn't necessarily imply no one knew about them, or that they were suppressed, or that there was a conspiracy!

3. Intertestamental Period

- The Jews continued writing
- Panorama of extra books
 - Historical
 - o 1-2 Maccabees (also 3-4 Maccabees)
 - o 1-2 Esdras
 - Folk tale
 - o Judith
 - o Tobit
 - Wisdom literature
 - o Wisdom of Solomon
 - o Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)
 - Additions to Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah. Also Psalm 151
- Highly useful if you want to know the flow of biblical history
- See chapter 15 in *A Quick Overview of the Bible*

4. Apocryphal excerpts

- Excerpts from *AQOB* and article at website
- Article: www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0110-apocrypha-second-thoughts/

5. Conclusion

- The Apocrypha fill in the gaps in Jewish history and thought, between the close of the OT canon and the era of the NT.
- The Apocrypha are useful to read, though not necessarily inspired.
- Whereas the OT came to be over the span of nearly a millennium (with parts of the Torah from the 13th century), the NT came to be over the course of only 50 years! And that's where we'll turn our attention next week.

Q&A 0110 – Apocrypha: Second Thoughts

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Do you still hold to your position that the Apocrypha does not belong in the Bible?

The Apocrypha: Second Thoughts (2000)

Perhaps you have heard of Tobit, Judith, or Ecclesiasticus. Maybe you have even read Wisdom of Solomon or 1 and 2 Maccabees. You may know that Catholic and Orthodox Bibles contain extra verses in such books as Daniel and Esther. In my experience, few ministers of the Gospel have ever taken the trouble to read the Apocrypha (a plural noun), and yet they have many opinions about them! As Alexander Pope said, "A little learning is a dangerous thing / Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring."

This study has been produced for the benefit of those who minister to the churches that they may (1) have an accurate knowledge of these works and (2) be stimulated to study the books themselves. (In addition, this article has been written for the benefit of our brothers and sisters in Sweden, where in most modern Bibles the Apocrypha are included.)

I. GENERAL

The Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, most of which were produced between 200 BC and 100 AD are the subject of this study. And yet before we are in a position to appreciate these misunderstood writings, it will be helpful to realize that the Jews did not have a rigorous doctrine of inspiration worked out. It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove that the Jews some two millennia ago viewed all their writings on the same level of inspiration.

At the core of the scriptures was the Torah. The next circle includes the prophets, which called people back to the Torah. Finally come the writings. It is outside this third concentric circle that we find the many apocryphal writings. And yet there is a substantial difference between the apocryphal works and the canonical writings, and this difference lies in the truth content of the writings. Although the apocryphal books do contain many lofty thoughts and interesting stories, they often contradict known facts of biblical history and sound biblical principles.

Were these books at some time meant to be included in the biblical canon? Should Christians read them? Has there been some sort of conspiracy or cover-up? After all, *apocrypha* in Greek means hidden things, though in no sense have the apocryphal writings been hidden from anyone. They have been widely read, nor was there ever any conspiracy to suppress their use. Not to say that Jewish and Christian leaders always promoted them, since the Jews backed away from the Apocrypha in the 1st century AD, and many Christians beginning in the Reformation.

The apocryphal books, including all the extra-biblical works which appear between the covers of the Bibles of the various factions of Christianity, can be grouped into 18 documents with a total equivalent of nearly 200 chapters, roughly the length of the Qur'an, or 80% the length of the New Testament. For your convenience they are listed below. In addition, at the end of this study you will find a short glossary of some of the terms which will frequently appear.

II. OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHAL DOCUMENTS

Apocryphal Book	Chapter numbers
1 Esdras	1-9
2 Esdras	1-16
<i>Tobit</i>	1-14
<i>Judith</i>	1-16
<i>Additions to Esther</i>	11-16 (Esther) -- 10-11 (Greek)
<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	1-19
<i>Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)</i>	1-51
<i>Baruch</i>	1-5
Letter of Jeremiah	6 (= Baruch 6)
<i>Song of the Three</i>	3 (between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24)
<i>Susanna</i>	13 (= Daniel 13)
<i>Bel and the Dragon</i>	14 (= Daniel 14 in Latin; added to Daniel 12 in Greek)
Prayer of Manasseh	1
<i>1 Maccabees</i>	1-16
<i>2 Maccabees</i>	1-15
<i>3 Maccabees</i>	1- 7
<i>4 Maccabees</i>	1-18
Psalms 151	1

Notes:

- Books in italics appear in standard Roman Catholic Bibles. The others appear in Bibles in the Orthodox tradition.
- Syriac psalms 152-155 have also recently been discovered in the DSS. Tobit was also discovered in the DSS, in Cave 4: 69 fragments from 5 manuscripts (4 in Aramaic and 1 in Hebrew, indicating a Semitic original).
- Another DS find was 4Q380-381, another "Prayer of Manasseh," written in the 1st C BC.

III. RECONSIDERING

In 1985 I scoured the Catholic Apocrypha, published an article in a London bulletin, and even put out a second version of this article a year or two later. I taught as most Protestants and independents do that these books were added to the Roman Catholic canon, albeit with deuterocanonical (second-order canon) status, during the Counter Reformation. Whether at the time I realized it or not, my conclusions were fundamentally no different to those of most scholars outside the Catholic or Orthodox camp. In 1991 I continued my study, fitting the new things I learned into the old thought paradigm. I even published an on-line piece in my [old] Bible on Trial column at Acesonline.org in early 2000, in which I stated that these books were added into the Bible in the 16th century. Now I have reconsidered.

In 2000 I carefully re-read the apocryphal books, including those normally included in Orthodox Bibles with or without official canonical status. To begin with, although my conclusion that these extra works are not inspired by God remains unchanged, I feel I was unfair in the 80s in the way I handled some of the texts, quoting them without sufficient regard to their context. Moreover, it is now my view that the Catholics did not truly add these books to their Bible at the Council of Trent on April 8 1546. Rather, Protestant reformers (like Erasmus) in their house cleaning zeal aimed to subtract them from the Bibles and worship of the day! And by the 19th century they finally succeeded.

Earlier this year, I read through several medieval manuscripts of the Bible at Duke University's Rare Book and Manuscript collection. Particularly striking was

a 13th-century Latin Vulgate Old Testament copied in France. All the Catholic extra books and 1 and 2 Esdras were present. Later I examined a 14th-century Bible at the University of Michigan's fabulous collection in Ann Arbor. Same observation! In other words, the extra books were already in Bibles long before the Reformation.

Yes, the Catholics upgraded the Apocrypha to full inspired status: In the fourth session of the Council of Trent, they decreed of the Apocrypha "If anyone does not receive these entire books with all their parts as they are accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and are found in the ancient edition of the Latin Vulgate as sacred and canonical let him be anathema". Yet, though the reformers assigned the Apocrypha only secondary status (they were deuterocanonical, to use the emerging term), they included the Apocrypha in their new Bible translations. While they could not bring themselves to consider these works inspired, neither could they bring themselves to remove them from their churches. In other words, by the 16th century the Apocryphal books for all intents and purposes had come to enjoy a position of favor and inspiration in the eyes of the church.

IV. PATRISTICS

How did I come to these conclusions? To begin with, in addition to re-reading all the OT Apocrypha, I checked every patristic reference to the Apocrypha in the first three centuries of Christianity. I noticed that there are only a few citations in the first half of the second century, yet a huge number in the second half of that century. The third century sees even more references, and the same is true of the fourth. The patristic writers routinely and consistently quote apocryphal works as scripture. See for yourself if you doubt this. I am confident you will come to no other conclusion! (Check *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* Volumes 1-9, Hendrickson.)

Two things struck me. First, these writers accepted the inspiration of the Apocrypha. At the beginning of my study, since they lived so much closer to the first century, I wondered in my heart whether perhaps it was we who got it wrong. That is, I was willing to consider whether I had rejected the Apocrypha without sufficient evidence. Second, and this is very important, it would indeed be false to say that writers from the late first to mid-second century viewed the Apocrypha as inspired. There are only 3 or 4 quotations to that effect, hardly enough on which to build a doctrine of inspiration! And despite the concerns of some 4th-century clerics about the Apocrypha (Jerome), the books were included in the influential Latin Vulgate translation.

To sum up, the Patristics show us an evolving view of the inspiration of the Old Testament Apocrypha which had matured by the mid-second century, 3 or 4 generations after the New Testament books were written. (Plenty of time for a wrongheaded understanding to develop.) From the 3rd century on, the Apocrypha were especially cherished by the Christian Church, despite some controversies in the 4th century about their true status.

V. RELATION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is significant that there are no direct quotations from the Apocrypha in the New Testament, though there are a good many allusions (e.g. Wisdom 13:5-8, 14:24-27 in Romans 1:20-29; Wisdom 12:12-20, 15:7 in Romans 9:20-23; Wisdom 9:15 in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; Wisdom 7:22-26 in Hebrews 1:1-3; 2 Maccabees 6:18-7:42 in Hebrews 11:34-35; Sirach 5:11 in James 1:19; Sirach 15:11-12 in James 1:13, etc). Considering that the New Testament quotes the OT over and over again, in addition to the hundreds or possibly thousands of allusions, it must mean something that no one can produce a single convincing New Testament quotation of an Old Testament apocryphal verse. In short, it does not appear that the NT writers (apostles of Jesus and their immediate disciples) considered these books inerrant infallible or inspired by God.

VI. THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

This article does not take up the curious case of Jude's direct quotation of 1 Enoch as this is not part of the OT Apocrypha proper. 1 Enoch is properly part of the OT Pseudepigrapha, literally works of false authorship. One thing that emerges clearly here: When people ask why the Apocrypha were excluded from the canon they seem to be totally unaware that such an enormous body of religious literature was written by the ancient Jews. The real question is Why are the canonical books in the Bible?

Let me offer an analogy. You are trying to explain the faith to a nonbeliever and you happen to walk into a Christian bookstore showing him the Bible section. Are all these other books inspired too? he asks you. No only the Bibles you reply. How odd it would be if he asked you why the thousands of other books never made it into the Bible ! In the same way there are major differences between the canonical books and all the (many) other religious writings.

VII. THE ENGLISH BIBLE

Wyclif who translated the Bible into Middle English in the late 1300s included the Apocryphal works (except for 2 Esdras) though with a caveat that they "shall be set among apocrypha that is without authority of belief" ("shal be set among apocrypha that is withouten autorite of bileue"). Wyclif worked from the Latin Vulgate which includes nearly all the Apocrypha. The earliest English Bibles excluding the Apocrypha appeared only in 1599. And in 1615 the Archbishop of Canterbury made it a crime punishable by one year in prison to produce a Bible without the Apocryphal books! The earliest editions of the King James Version (oddly considered inspired by many English speakers worldwide) which was completed in 1611 included the Apocrypha. (The first KJV edition without it appeared only in 1616.) In 1827 the English Bible stopped printing these books though they were (and are) still read in churches. Apocryphal themes and stories have had a profound influence on literature music and art which explains the reluctance of many to abandon them as inspired writings.

VIII. BOOK-BY-BOOK

In the next section we will touch lightly on each book of the Apocrypha noting strong and weak points truth and error. As you will see when you read the Apocrypha for yourself some sections are awesome others awful. It certainly is the mixture of error and truth which is problematic for those who insist on the inspiration of these books.

1 Esdras

- * This historical book consisting of nearly unchanged excerpts from the LXX of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah is also called 3 Esdras in the Vulgate.
- * It is the apocryphal book most intimately connected with the OT.
- * Its aim: to emphasize the contributions of Josiah Zerubbabel and Ezra to the reform of Israelite worship.
- * Despite its historical value there are many minor discrepancies with the canonical OT accounts. For example see 5:73.
- * Since Trent (1545-1563) it has usually appeared in an appendix after the NT.

2 Esdras

- * This apocalyptic work (the same genre as Revelation) consists of 7 revelations coming through the mediation of the archangel Uriel.
- * Like 1 Esdras, since Trent 2 Esdras has been placed in an appendix as 4 Esdras (4 Ezra).
- * Chapters 3-14 are considered to have been written in the late 1st century by a Jewish author.
- * Chapters 1-2 are considered to have been written in the 2nd century AD and chapters 15-16 in the 3rd century AD. Chapters 1-2 15-16 missing in all eastern versions.
- * The central concern is theodicy (the justice of God / the problem of suffering).
- * 3:36 interestingly teaches that although all the pagan nations are lost there are some individual Gentiles who are obedient to God's commandments.
- * 6:42 teaches that six sevenths of the earth is land and only one seventh water. (In actuality well over three quarters of the earth's surface is covered with water.) Moreover in 16:58 2 Esdras teaches that the earth is suspended over the waters.
- * 7:28 is a highly messianic section quite interesting for understanding first century expectations. Chapters 13-14 equate the Messiah with the Son of God. (This may explain Jesus preference for the more neutral term Son of Man which is found in Ezekiel and Daniel.)
- * 7:36ff. explicitly denies the efficacy of prayers for the dead. For this reason this section was cut out by the Roman church. (Cp. 2 Maccabees 12:43-45 which affirms the value of prayers for the dead.) Similarly 7:105 allows no intercession for the wicked on the day of judgment.
- * 10:45 says that the first sacrifice was offered when the world was 3000 years old. And yet the OT never once attempts to provide a picture of the age of the earth.
- * 14:44 says that 94 books have been revealed: this would include the 24 canonical OT books (remembering that several books were combined into one

such as The Twelve which we divide into the Minor Prophets) and another 70 esoteric (apocryphal) works.

Tobit

* This short story was one of the most popular books among the Jews. It is interesting and enjoyable reading.

* Tobit and Judith (next work) were placed between Nehemiah and Esther.

* In 1:8 we see that Tobit gave not just a tithe but three tenths.

* There are some historical inaccuracies such as in 1:15. Another error is in 14:15 an anachronism based on confusion among names which was common in the Judaism of Tobit's day.

* In 4:15 we find the Silver Rule or negative Golden Rule. And yet Tobit is not portrayed as a stingy person. In 4:16 Tobit teaches his son Tobias to give all your surplus to charity. There are many passages in the Apocrypha where insist on the power of almsgiving such as Tobit 12:9: For almsgiving delivers from death and it will purge away every sin.

* 4:17 apparently approves of the practice of offering food to the dead.

* In 6:6-8 we find blatant superstition: Then the young man said to the angel Brother Azarias of what use is the liver and heart and gall of the fish? He replied As for the heart and the liver if a demon or evil spirit gives trouble to anyone you make a smoke from these before the man or woman and that person will never be troubled again. And as for the gall anoint with it a man who has white films in his eyes and he will be cured. Two observations here: Jesus never followed this advice -- and exorcism is totally absent from the OT even though the pagan nations surrounding Israel were controlled by their fear of demons. Again in 8:3 we find that a demon is repulsed by an offensive odor.

* In 14:4 the prophecy of Jonah about the destruction of Nineveh is still to be fulfilled! And yet Nineveh is in the wrong location geographically. (Even the Greek historian Xenophon c. 400 BC didn't know its location.) The guess was inaccurate.

Judith

* Judith is another popular folk tale about a pious and beautiful woman who saves her people.

* And yet as is common with the Apocrypha we find errors in history. In 1:1-6 the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar is placed after the Exile!

* In the final chapter we read about a hell of infinite conscious torment. Woe to the nations that rise up against my people! The Lord will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment-- fire and worms he will give to their flesh -- they shall weep in pain forever (16:17). This is significant because it is a misunderstanding of the fire and worms of Isaiah 66:24. They do not eternally torment their victims -- they consume insentient corpses. The same incorrect doctrine is taught in Sirach 7:17 and 4 Maccabees 9:9. And yet it is not at all certain that Jesus endorsed the apocryphal view of hell.

Additions to Esther

* 107 extra verses are interspersed throughout the canonical Esther.

* The main purpose seems to be to add a religious element. (God does not explicitly appear in the canonical Esther.)

Wisdom of Solomon

* Also called the Book of Wisdom, or simply Wisdom.

* Composed in the 1st century BC, this Greek book was quite possibly originally written in Hebrew.

* 2:12-3:9 contains a phenomenal messianic passage. (Read it for yourself.)

* Despite the great wisdom of this book (no sarcasm intended), there are some theological problems: Interestingly, in 18:13, Israel is God's son, just as in the four servant songs of Isaiah, where the Servant alternately functions as Israel, the Messiah, or both. See Jim McGuiggan's *The Book of Isaiah* (Fort Worth: Star Bible Publications, 1985).

* Wisdom and Sirach (next entry) are heavily cited in the Patristic writers.

Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)

- * This is the only apocryphal book whose author's name is known.
- * The oldest manuscript is a fragment found at Qumran (the famous Dead Sea community) in 1952 -- nearly two millennia old.
- * Allusions to Sirach are found in the book of James (for example, 2:1-6 || James 1:2-4, 12-15; 2:3 || James 5:7-8; 5:11 || James 1:19 etc) and in the Sermon on the Mount (7:14 || Matthew 6:7).
- * And yet not everything is theologically correct. 12:4-7 teaches the opposite of Luke 6:27-31 (don't give to the unrighteous). In 25:24-26, we read we may divorce a wife if we are having marriage problems. And in 30:1 we read, "He who loves his son will whip him often..." Although it is similar to the teaching of Proverbs, it goes just a bit too far doesn't it?
- * Good advice is found for stock investors in 31:1 -- "Wakefulness over wealth wastes away one's flesh, and anxiety about it removes sleep."
- * In chapters 31-32, we find extensive advice on etiquette, including table manners!
- * In 33:24-31 and 42:5, the treatment of slaves comes to the fore. "Yoke and thong will bow the neck, and for a wicked servant there are racks and tortures" (33:26 -- yikes!). "[Do not be ashamed...] of whipping a wicked servant severely."
- * In 50:25-26, anti-Edomite and anti-Samaritan prejudice are extreme. "With two nations my soul is vexed, and the third is no nation: Those who live on Mount Seir and the Philistines and the foolish people that dwell in Shechem."
- * To sum up, "He is a theologian of rank and a teacher of religious truth but nonetheless a man of the world proud of his practical philosophy. Put your trust in the Lord (32:24-33:1), but trust also the wisdom that comes of experience. His advice to the sick man, 38:1-15, may serve for partial illustration: "My son, when you are ill, pray to the Lord and he will heal you. Cleanse your heart from sin, offer your sacrifice, and then put yourself in the hands of a physician, for God created him (this is said twice): let him not go from you. A wise man will not refuse to take medicines" (Torrey, *The Apocryphal Literature* 94).

Baruch

* Though pretending to be written by Jeremiah's secretary, this short work was written in the 2nd or 1st century BC -- three or four centuries too late.

Letter of Jeremiah

* Like Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah also appears with the canonical Jeremiah.

* This is a polemic against idolatry and was written 4th-2nd century BC.

* The oldest manuscript was found at Qumran and dates from 100 BC.

Song of the Three

* The three are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and in this add-on to Daniel we find embellishments galore, as the three wax eloquent while strolling about in the fire.

Susanna

* In the Septuagint and Vulgate, Susanna is Daniel 13.

* Lecherous elders attempt to seize her, but are unsuccessful.

Bel and the Dragon

* Another add-on to Daniel, Bel [the Babylonian god] and the Dragon teaches (incorrectly) that those who worship God will be preserved through every trial! The theology is reminiscent of that of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar in Job's day, or that of the pious people and priests in Jesus' day (Matthew 27:41-43).

* Stunningly, in verse 33, the prophet Habakkuk is still around!

* One final blooper: in verses 31 and 40, Daniel has been in the lions' den for seven days, not just on an overnigher as in canonical Daniel. Oh well!

Prayer of Manasseh

* This is a stirring, humble prayer though only rarely appearing in the Apocrypha. The wicked king Manasseh -- who did indeed repent in the OT account -- pours out his heart.

* One problem: It is claimed Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not sin against God (8).

1 Maccabees

* Written in the 2nd century BC, this book is extremely valuable for filling in the gaps in our understanding of Israel's history. Furthermore, for the 2nd century it is our only source.

* Facing the Hellenistic challenge -- the pressure to eat pork, embrace idolatry, violate the Sabbath, "uncircumcise" themselves etc., the faithful admirably resist. "But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die" (1 Maccabees 1:62-63).

* The Romans are flattered in a way to make Luke shudder. In 8:14-16, it is claimed the Romans don't struggle with pride!

* In 13:22, we read of a heavy snow. It does occasionally snow in Israel, and occasionally we find meteorological insights in the apocryphal writings.

* Finally, for the reader of Daniel 10-12 (the program of paganization carried out under Antiochus IV in the 2nd century BC), 1-2 Maccabees supplies the necessary intertestamental details picturing the resistance of the people of God against dominating "Hellenizing" Greeks. This shaped Jewish nationalism and messianic hopes for generations to come.

2 Maccabees

* Composed around 100 BC, 2 Maccabees is a jazzed-up version of 1 Maccabees 1:10-7:50.

* And yet is not a sequel. 2 Macc is more of a "prequel" to 1 Macc.

* The most famous section is the story of the martyrdom of the seven brothers and their mother, which is found in chapter 7. This in fact is the subject of 4 Maccabees.

* 2 Macc would prove to shape Christian thinking about martyrdom, especially in the years c.100-300.

* In 12:43-45, we find approval of prayer and sacrifices for the dead; and in 15:11-16, intercessory prayer for the dead.

* As with the Apocrypha in general, there is no "Thus says the Lord." Consider 15:37c-38: "So I too will here end my story. If it is well told and to the point that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre that was the best I could do." Such "insecurity statements" are typical not only of the Apocrypha but of most religious scriptures outside the Bible.

3 Maccabees

* Set in the 3rd century BC, long before the Maccabean period, the name of the book is a real misnomer. The situation is somewhat similar to the 2nd century Maccabean one: a pagan king is persecuting Jews. Probably written in 1st century BC.

* 3 Maccabees represents Orthodox Judaism.

4 Maccabees

* Written AD 20-54, possibly during the reign of Caligula (37-41).

* 4 Maccabees was influential in the Eastern churches, though never canonized.

* The thesis is that reason can control the emotions. 4 Maccabees is a philosophical piece based on 2 Macc 6:12-7:42 (the martyrdom of the 7 brothers).

* A more suitable title would be "The Apocalypse of Shealtiel."

* In 1:11, 17:21, 18:4 we find the substitutionary atonement of martyrs.

* In 7:19 and 16:25, the martyrs are immediately immortal.

Psalm 151

* This psalm is found in the Greek LXX.

* It also appears in several other ancient versions: Old Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic and Arabic.

* An expanded version of Psalm 151 was found at Qumran in Cave 11.

IX. LINGERING QUESTIONS

Before we conclude this study, there are a couple of unanswered questions which may be fruitful to explore. First of all, if the LXX contained the Apocrypha and the Greek-speaking church used the LXX as their Old Testament, does this not mean that they accepted the inspiration of the Apocrypha?

It is true that the LXX contains the Apocrypha except for 2 Esdras. (Note: the Vulgate usually included both 1 and 2 Esdras, although, as noted above, these books are no longer found in the OT section of Catholic Bibles.) This being the case, it is certain that the early Christians were familiar with the Apocrypha, and we have already considered evidence that this is the case. Whether or not certain disciples considered the Apocrypha to be inspired is one matter; whether God in his Word has clarified that they are inspired is quite another. It remains to ask why these books are never once *directly* quoted from in the NT if they are part of God's revelation to us.

There may be no indisputably direct quotations from the Apocrypha in the NT, but there are a good many allusions. Here are thirteen. Wisdom: 2:15-16 in Matthew 27:43; 7:26 in Hebrews 1:3; 9:13 in Romans 11:34; 9:15 in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4; 13:5-8, 14:24-27 in Romans 1:20-29; 12:12-20, 15:7 in Romans 9:20-23; Tobit: 4:7 in Luke 14:13; 4:15 in Luke 6:31; 1 Maccabees: 4:59 in John 10:22; 2 Maccabees: 6:18-7:42 in Hebrews 11:34-35; Sirach: 5:11 in James 1:19; 7:14 in Matthew 6:7; 15:11-12 in James 1:13; 35:9 in 2 Corinthians 9:7). Even the original edition of the King James Version, which included the Apocrypha, had 113 cross-references in the canonical books to the Apocryphal works.

What are we to make of these allusions? There are numerous citations in scripture of pagan writers. All seem to serve by way of illustration; Paul, for example, does not believe that the Plato whom he occasionally quotes is inspired by God. Thus it is not clear that the NT writers (the apostles of Jesus and their immediate disciples) considered the Apocrypha to be inspired scripture. Another

question is, Why are the Apocrypha not in Hebrew Bible? After 70 AD, as you know, with the Temple and its cultus dismantled, the Jews turned to study of Torah. A fierce concern grew that no other writings should even appear to be on a par with the most sacred books.

Moreover, the Christians were circulating more and more Hebrew and Aramaic writings, some of which cogently supported the new faith. The Christian reliance on the Semitic texts actually catalyzed the Jews to define their own canon. For example, Wisdom 2:12-3:9 is often quoted by early Christians as they set out proofs that the Righteous One, the Messiah, would be rejected by the religious establishment. Probably this is why Rabbi Akiba said, "Among those who have no part in the world to come is he who reads the outside books" (Jerusalem Sanhedrin x 1 fol. 28a; also Bab. Sanhedrin 100b). And Gamaliel II, around 80 AD, pronounced an anathema on the Christians (virtually including their books and any who should read them). The result of these "anti-apocryphal" factors was a systematic destruction of the disturbing books. This meant the Semitic originals of all extra-canonical literature -- not only the Christian writings, but also the apocrypha, which the Christians were using. (Similarly, only two of Tyndale's 6000 Bibles survived the biblical purge of the 1500s.)

"Whosoever brings together in his house more than twenty-four books [the canonical thirty-nine books as grouped by the Jews] brings confusion" (Midrash Qoheleth 12:12). And so Jewish popular literature no longer flourished. Ironically, as the Jews relinquished their own popular literature (the Apocrypha), the Christians were increasingly making use of it in their own apologetics, worship, and study.

X. CONCLUSION

The Apocrypha are certainly useful reading for understanding what happened between the end of canonical OT times (the 400s BC) and the beginning of the NT times (1st century AD). As Torrey rightly says, "Acquaintance with the Jewish uncanonical religious writings of the pre-Christian period is now generally recognized as belonging to the equipment of every serious student of the Bible in either Testament, for they throw light in both directions" (*The Apocryphal Literature* v). I highly recommend that men and women of the Book read the Apocrypha -- at least once -- and this is one reason this study has been written. It never hurts to be informed!

Do these books have any authority of their own? There is no "thus says the Lord" anywhere, in sharp contrast to the books of the OT and NT, which are replete

with authority statements. As someone put it, when you are driving along the highway, it helps to see clearly the road signs put there to help you on your journey: the OT and NT frequently provide such helpful signs the "outside books" do not. The Apocrypha lack the decisive "Thus says the Lord."

It is indeed true that the Apocrypha makes no claim to inspiration. Yet sometimes weak arguments against the inspiration of the Apocrypha have been elaborated. (I have done so myself in the past!) Passages like 1 Maccabees 4:46, 9:27, 14:41; and Song of the Three 15 are cited: passages which mention the passing of the age of prophecy. But since when is prophecy the essential criterion for legitimate scripture? In Psalm 74:9 and Lamentations 2:9, the "voice of prophecy" has been silenced; but if that means the document in which this lament is found is not inspired, then Psalms and Lamentations must be merely of man and not of God.

The nub of the issue is the error of the Apocrypha; amidst all the good, there is the bad. Amidst the precious and even the "inspiring," there is the dross. How different from the canonical scriptures: "And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6). (Yes, I am aware that if we prejudice ourselves, we could rationalize away certain books of the O.T., just as Luther dismissed several books of the N.T.)

Still, it remains that the Apocrypha is good reading! The thinking disciple ought not to fear that this admission is a concession to inspiration. The popular *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, often quoted and bandied about in the internet these days, make for inspiring reading; and yet this is not inspired either! "Inspiring" does not mean "inspired."

The Bible is crystal-clear that we are not to entertain additions to the Word (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19). Despite this plain biblical truth, many appeal to the Apocrypha or to other extrabiblical works to justify their beliefs. These apocryphal writings attempt to touch on areas not covered in the Scriptures, as well as improve on the revelation God has given to his people. As Paul wrote, "learn... the meaning of the saying *Do not go beyond what is written.* "

The early church ended up accepting the authority and inspiration of the Apocrypha. The Reformation attempted (partially) to remedy the error, while the Counter Reformation entrenched itself and elevated the outside writings to inspired status. We are wrong if we continue to preach, "The Catholic Church added the Apocrypha to their Bibles in 1546," for practically-speaking it for

centuries had been a part of their Bible. Quite the opposite: Protestants were beginning to remove it, though they did not succeed for another three hundred years. And if we learn the lessons that emerge from our study of church history -- with all the ambivalence towards outside writings -- then we may avoid the proven pitfalls of adding to the Word.

'Finally, a word for you who have the Apocrypha in your Bibles. How should you view this addition? Most of us have "helps" in the back pages of our Bibles: tables of weights and measures, maps, even reference notes. This material is useful, but not inspired. In the same way that we may grow rather fond of the extra material at the end of our Bibles, so the early church grew fond of the extra material in their books. In time, the mistake was made of elevating it to virtually inspired status.

So benefit from these materials if you are so inclined, and especially if you have already read the entire true Bible through. (I usually recommend that until someone has read the entire OT three or four times it is best to stay away from the extra writings.)

The Apocrypha may not be inspired, yet I strongly recommend that you read them, for that is the best way to become familiar with what happened "between the testaments."

Terminology

Apocrypha

In the broader sense, the non-canonical literature; in the narrower, the additional books (and portions of books) interspersed throughout the OT. Literally, Greek for "hidden things."

Apocryphon

The singular of apocrypha

Canon

Literally, the "measure" or yardstick: the officially accepted list of the books of the Bible

Council of Trent

The Roman Catholic Council 1545-1563, at which issues raised by the Protestant Reformation were considered as Catholicism fortified its position

Counter Reformation

The Catholic reaction to the Protestant Reformation

Deuterocanonical

Of a second order of inspiration or canon, as opposed to protocanonical (like the word Deuteronomy, or second giving of the law)

DSS

The Dead Sea Scrolls

LXX

Roman numerals for 70, the supposed number of translators of the Septuagint in the 3rd century BC. LXX represents the Greek Septuagint translation of OT and Apocrypha made in Egypt for the Jews there who spoke Greek better than Hebrew.

Patristics

Study of the writings of the early church fathers -- principally from the late 1st to the late 4th Cs AD

Pseudepigrapha

Writings of false or pseudonymous authorship. All the OT Apocrypha are anonymous/ pseudonymous except for Sirach, and yet, properly speaking, the Pseudepigrapha are works which appear outside the official OT Apocrypha.

Qumran

The monastic community in ancient Israel which preserved the Dead Sea Scrolls, found 1947.

Reformation

The Protestant movement against the moral and doctrinal corruption of the medieval Catholic church. Though rooted in the work of reformers in the 14th and 15th centuries, Luther is generally credited with having launched the Reformation in 1517.

Septuagint

The Greek translation of the OT scriptures made by Egyptian Jews of the 3rd-2nd centuries BC; the Bible of the Greek-speaking Christians. From *septuaginta*, Latin for 70.

Vulgate

The common ("vulgar") Latin translation of the OT Apocrypha and NT undertaken by Jerome in Bethlehem around the year 400.

CLASS 3: NT FORMATION

Introduction

- > OT process over period of centuries. Note on the Samaritan Canon
- > More books written between the testaments. Note on the Ethiopic 1 Enoch.
- > Yet OT spoke of a new covenant, a New Testament

- Read article on Apocrypha (www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0110-apocrypha-second-thoughts/)!
- Four phases in process of canonization
- This class: canonical NT; next class: non-canonical (apocryphal) works

I. Dictation

- amanuensis
- explains differences in style
- multiple copies?
- local issues and needs
- letters before gospels (generally)

II. Circulation & Exchange

- Ephesians 1, Revelation 1, Colossians 4
- Move from particular to the general (normative)
- Exchange of oral sources, reminiscences (consider Polycarp of Smyrna), apostolic documents, and other written pieces.

III. Collection

- challenge of Marcion (140s) (shrink) 10 Pauline + Lk

- Tatian's Diatessaron – from 4 gospels to one (c.170)
- challenge of Gnostics (major 2nd century heresy)
- Justin Martyr (c.140) – “Memoirs of Apostles”
- Irenaeus (c.170) – fourfold gospel
- Muratorian Canon (c.180)
- collection of Paul's letters p46
- Origen (c.220) – excluded James 2 Pet 2-3 Jn
- More on additional writings of 2nd and 3rd century next class
- Exclusion: 2 types: Removal v. not being admitted. The non-canonical documents were of the 2nd type.
- Codex (suggests a canon)

IV. Ratification

- Ratification is not the same as production
- Viewpoint of Eusebius, church historian at court of Constantine
- 4th C councils
- > Nicaea (325): Constantine commissions 50 Bibles (?) for chs of Constantinople. No canon determined.
- > Laodicea (363): not Rev
- > Athanasius (367): Paschal letter
- > Carthage (397)
- > Some in E slow to accept Rev • Stimulated by teachings and writings of heretics.

- Apostolicity: consistency with apostolic message (not directly related to authorship)

Conclusion

- Like OT the NT came into being gradually –
- Not over the course of centuries, but in decades.
- More will be written, though unlike the OT apoc, the NT apoc would never be regarded as scripture.

CLASS 4: NT APOCRYPHA & PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

Why timely

- 1945 discovery
- Appeal to individualism
- Effect of feminism (some women in special relationship to Jesus)
- Historical Jesus movement
- Fracturing of the Christian church

Definitions

- apocrypha -- not necessarily dangerous or deviant
- pseudepigrapha – false attribution
- patristics – church fathers
- canon – measure or rule
- Gnosticism – gnosis = knowledge
- > Valentinian & Sethian
- > Salvation is liberation from the material world
- > Humans are hylic, psychic, or pneumatic
- > salvation for very few (3 out of 30,000 who die daily!)
- codex – writings in book form
- papyrus – reed growing by Nile and converted into writing material
- manuscript – hand-written document

2nd century writings

- Patristics: 1 Clement, Ignatius, apologists... These are not the subject of our class, though rich stuff

- Non-Gnostic writings

- > attempt to fill in the gaps

- > assume canonical writings

Later centuries

- Medieval era: legends pertaining to secondary characters

- > Gospel of Nicodemus (Acts of Pilate, c.500), on descent of Christ to Hades

- > History of Joseph the Carpenter and the Arabic Infancy Gospel (c.500)

- Manuscripts many centuries after canonical writings

- Gnostic writings

- > 47 writings discovered at Nag Hammadi near a Pachomian monastery

- > no link with history of Israel

- > attempt to fill in the gaps

- > Jesus reveals knowledge, post-resurrection

- > salvation from this world – salvation by knowledge

- > dualistic rejection of the body

- Overview of NT Apocrypha

- > fragmentary gospels (e.g. Egerton papyrus, Gospel of Peter— resurrection)

- > gnostic "gospels" (Thomas, Mary, Philip [where Jesus kisses Mary Magdalene on the mouth, Bartholomew])

Thomas: quotes over half of NT documents

ARTICLE: <http://www.douglasjacoby.com/q-a-0210-the-gospel-of-thomas/>

Secret sayings (1), asceticism (27,56), celibacy (23,49,106), detachment (42).
Other Gnostic elements (11,28-29,50,52,61,87).

> acts: Peter Pilate Paul & Thecla

> apocalypses: Peter etc

Pistis Sophia (Mary Magdalene asks questions)

> gospels: infancy gospels (Protevangelium Jacobi — James -- over 100 manuscripts and even in Ethiopic: avoiding anything sexual; Jos an old man, pseudo-Mt (baby confronts dragons, speaks), Thomas (learns to control powers), Arundel ms, Arabic Infancy Gospel, The History of Joseph the Carpenter

> Jewish gospels (Gospel of the Hebrews, Gospel of Nazoreans, etc)

Apocryphon of John

Expanded role of women, but then expanded role for other disciples, too (Philip, Thomas, Matthias...)

- Some exist only in fragments

> Clement of Alexandria quotes Gospel of the Egyptians and Gospel according to Matthias)

> Papyrus Egerton 2 (narrative)

> Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 840 (dispute between Jesus and a Pharisee)

> Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1224 (small piece of a story and a saying of Jesus)

> Gospel of Peter (c.180). 8th century ms discovered in Egypt 1886, as well as a papyrus fragment from the 3rd C. Eusebius refers to it as an apocryphal work. Starts just before the crucifixion, and ends with exit from tomb. Has some details in common with Matthew, Luke, and John. Resurrection account very jazzed up.

- Why rejected

- > not quoted by Fathers
- > Rejected by 2nd-C writers Justin, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement
- > diverge from creed (e.g. incarnation and resurrection)
- > Downplay Christ's suffering
- Other reasons to reject them
- > too late
- > fill in the gaps; clearly using canonical gospels as starting place
- > no emphasis on character and deeds of Christ, but discovering who you are
- > highly individualistic. Fits well with Enlightenment ideals and American individualism, but poorly with biblical faith
- > break with Jewish heritage of Christianity

Why there was no conspiracy

- Many copies, obviously these works were read!
- they were never in the canon, thus not "removed." ("The Lost Books of the Bible that Were Never Missing")
- why conspiracy views popular today
- > anti-establishment currents in society, e.g. the 1960s
- > feminism

Conclusion

- These "extra" books never in the canon
- canonical works all 1st century; apocryphal works 2nd century - c.500 AD
- some contain unbiblical emphases (ESP continence & sexuality)

- others deny the gospel

- > death & redirection of Christ

- > God of OT

- > the essential goodness of the creation (Gen 1) and the body

- Don't be taken in. > discovery of Gnostic corpus 1945 > conspiracy theories sell books!

- > postmodernism: suspicion of texts

(1960s suspicion of authority and the establishment; suspicion of texts naturally followed)

Q&A 0210 – The Gospel of Thomas

POSTED: JULY 16, 2003

I understand that Thomas went as far as India, but I am not so sure whether he is the one who wrote The Gospel of Thomas. Should this book be in the Bible? -- Fauston (Brazil), Daniella (North Carolina), and several others.

Indeed, tradition is strong that the apostle Thomas established the church in India sometime in the 50s. Although I started out skeptical about the various accounts, I have read enough now to be fairly convinced. I have even seen Thomas' tomb in south India. There seems little reason to doubt the veracity of the tradition. But the "gospel" attributed to him is another matter.

Thomas was considered by some Gnostics to be the twin brother of Jesus. "Judas Thomas the Twin" is the key phrase. The Egyptian Gnostics who created this "gospel" in fact identified Thomas with the Jude we know from the New Testament as one of Jesus' four brothers.

The Gospel of Thomas is increasingly popular these days, especially among people who want us to believe that the New Testament is not a complete or accurate record of what Jesus taught during his earthly ministry. Actually, this book, or collection of supposed sayings of Jesus, is not really a "gospel" at all, since the Passion narrative is totally absent. There is no emphasis either on self-sacrificing love, except possibly one saying about carrying one's cross.

Unlike the four canonical gospels, Thomas is only a sayings list. Many of these are obviously taken from Matthew or Mark. Before I present an assortment of passages from Thomas, let me reiterate that I doubt strongly that Thomas is in any way responsible for its creation. The theology of the book, if there is a real theology, is Gnostic. Insight is more important than morality, spirit more real and significant than matter. Gnosticism is making a comeback today in the New Age Movement. This was a philosophy-religion that appealed to the ego, without requiring any real commitment.

Manuscripts, complete or partial, have been found from the second and third centuries, so probably Thomas was written no later than about 180. Even in the first century, proto-Gnosticism was a growing threat to the nascent church. (See,

for example, 1 Timothy, which is full of warnings about the Gnostic teachers.)
Note: *Gnosis* is the Greek word for "knowledge'," as in 1 Timothy 6:20. The numbering of the following excerpts may vary slightly from edition to edition, but given the shortness of Thomas, you should have no trouble locating the original sayings if you decide to go further in your study.

The Gospel of Thomas (Excerpts)

Prologue

These are the secret sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Judas Thomas the Twin recorded.

Comment: Here is purported to be a "secret" source for a competing tradition about Jesus. Fragments of Thomas were discovered in the late 1800s, and by 1945 the Egyptian desert had begun to yield more or less complete copies. By reading these sayings, you enter an elite circle who know what Jesus really said.

Arcane sayings

A number of sayings in Thomas seem to defy analysis. What did they mean? What was their original context? For example, consider the following two sayings. While explanations have been offered, no one really knows what the writer--whoever he was--meant to convey.

Saying 3: Jesus said, "the kingdom is inside you and outside you."

Saying 7: Jesus said, "Happy is the lion whom the man eats, so that the lion becomes a man; but woe to the man whom the lion eats, so that the man becomes lion!"

Comment: In short, because we do not understand what these sayings refer to, and because they are lacking the literary and historical contexts that would give us the necessary clues, they must remain shrouded in mystery. For all intents and purposes, they are arcane. Authentic sayings? Some of the sayings reflect the genuine gospel tradition. In fact, it is not possible to "prove" that none of these sayings is authentic--especially with a little imagination!

Saying 2: Jesus said, "Let not him who seeks desist until he finds. When he finds he will be troubled; when he is troubled he will marvel, and he will reign over the universe."

Saying 47: A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows, and a servant cannot serve two lords.

Saying 64: Business people and merchants will not enter the realm of my Father.

[This saying appears at the end of Thomas' version of the Parable of the Banquet. The beginning of the story is not especially problematic, despite its rather disturbing ending.]

Saying 98: Give Caesar what is Caesar's, give God what is God's, and give me what is mine!

Comment: Once again, there is no reason that some of Jesus' words unrecorded in the scriptures (John 21:25) could not have found their way into various sayings sources. Yet who is to assay them? Who will assess whether they are authentic?

Absurd sayings

The following three sayings reflect the Gnosticism of the early heretics, and the middle one appears to be pantheistic. (Pantheism is the doctrine that God is everything.) It is highly unlikely Jesus is the one behind any of them.

Saying 67: Jesus said, "He who knows the All and has no need but of himself has need everywhere."

Saying 77: Jesus said, "I am the light which shines upon all. I am the All. All has gone forth from me and All has come back to me. Cleave the wood, and there am I; raise the stone, and there you will find me."

Saying 113/114: Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, because women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "Behold, I shall guide her so as to make her male, so that she may become a living spirit like you men. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

Conclusion

So is the N.T. missing any books? Not at all. Nothing is "missing," because nothing was removed or lost.

Quite simply, the early church did not recognize the authority of this "gospel," nor has any part of Christianity subsequently. Next time your friends or workmates drop comments about the Gospel of Thomas, hopefully you will be well equipped to respond!

Further study

Are you interested in further reading? Translations from the original Coptic are easily obtainable. Try *The Secret Teachings of Jesus: Four Gnostic Gospels*, tr. Marvin W. Meyer (New York: Random House, 1984), or *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, F. F. Bruce (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974). Or listen to my 2-CD set, *The Lost Books of the Bible that were Never Missing*.

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CLASS 5: CANON, PROCESS, CONFIDENCE

SUMMARY

I. OT books came together in a process superintended by God over a period of centuries.

II. Documents were written in later centuries of Judaism, though they were rejected from the canon.

III. NT books came together in a process superintended by God over a period of decades.

IV. Documents were written in later centuries, though they were never in the canon. They aren't inspired.

V. In this final class we will talk about

<> The possibility of an open canon

<> The role of process in the action of God

<> The strongest reasons for trusting scripture.

I. OPEN CANON?

- Opened and closed twice-- so why not again!

- Open canon? No.

- Jude 3: refers to content, not necessarily books. But that is exactly what the pretenders attempt to do: to add content.

- This is no trivial matter. Just as nothing was to be added to the Law (Deut 4:2), and nothing was to be added to the gospel (Rev 22:18-19), we must be careful not to go beyond what is written.

- The apostolic age is over. The Lord made certain exclusive promises to the apostles: John 14:25-26, 16:12-13; see Eph 2:20, 3:5, 4:11.

II. PROCESSES

- God usually works through processes
 - > History of Israel
 - > Formation of character
 - > Creation of universe
 - > Creation of life
 - > Formation of canon
- Processes take time, and may be influenced by external forces.
- Scripture has two aspects: divine and human.
 - > Word as Christ
 - > Word as Scripture
 - > Two aspects because the Lord comes into our world, descending to our level. This is not a weakness, but a great strength.

III. CONFIDENCE

- This material is faith-building
 - > The lost
 - > The skeptic
 - > You
- Could you defend scripture from the attacks of the skeptic or the apathy of the self-absorbed?

PRACTICALITY

- 1a. Message matches reality.

1b. It works! • Not to say the narrow road is easy; it requires willpower, discipline, integrity, stamina, humility, focus.

- Given the sinful nature of the human race, it's not so surprising that the world is generally unaware of the power of the word. Nor is it surprising that the world resists the word when it is challenged by the light.

RELIABILITY

2a. Preservation of message was more than adequate.

2n. The manuscript evidence refutes the claims of Muslims, Mormons, and skeptics that the documents have been corrupted.

- The manuscript record doesn't prove the Bible is true, only that the temporal gap between us and biblical times creates no insurmountable problems.

EVIDENCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

3a. Prophecy

3b. Attests to God

3c. Transformation that transcends mere human effort or planning.

CONFIRMATION

4a. Illuminated by history, geography, archaeology, and other fields.

4b. External points of contact support our confidence, making it easier to believe; for some seekers, makes it possible to believe.

- Although there are many impressive facts of Christian evidences, we shouldn't overvalue them, or link our faith to them. Many are subject to reevaluation and revision, and in some cases rejection.

COHERENCE

5a. The Testaments mesh together.

5b. Each book supports the apostolic message, just as

5c. The apostolic message is faithful to Jesus' words.

5d. The message is consistent, neither self-contradictory nor chaotic.

COMPARISON

6a. Compared to (other) man-made scriptures, the NT is stellar.

6b. Though few have the time to make extensive investigations into the claims and supporting evidence of the many religions of the world, if we did, the process of elimination leaves us with only one option.

EXPERIENCE

7a. In accord with the truths of the Old and New Testaments, we have experienced God.

7b. The Spirit of God commends the word of God to the open heart.

7c. Conscience confirms the word. Though conscience isn't infallible, it is invaluable in the process.

- Our experience qualifies all of us as witnesses.
- Gifted with this special knowledge and access, we have a divine responsibility to relay the message.

[CONCLUSION]

- Let's think clearly about the function of scripture. We worship Christ -- who is the incarnate Word of God, but we don't worship the Bible (bibliolatry), the written word of God.

- "We don't believe in Christ because we believe in the Bible; we believe in the Bible because we believe in Christ." -- Martin Kahler

- If this series has helped you, please tell others about it. Be sure to put the what you've learned to good use. Let's make a difference in someone's life.