

DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS- INTRODUCTION TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH ARABIC VERSION

PROLOGUE.:

Some of the Christians gave the word Apocrypha to the following books which have been omitted from the Protestant publications of the Holy Bible. They are, in order:

Tobias, Judith, sequel of Esther, the wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon), Wisdom of Joshua son of Sirach, Baroukh, sequel of the Book of Daniel, Macabees first and second (and Psalm 151, following Psalm 150 in the Greek Bible).

Calling these books "Apocrypha" is a misnomer because the word "Apocrypha" means "concealed, hidden" (intended for books that contain superstitions, and nonsense contrary to Christian morals and which were not accepted by the church as part of the Bible).

But the Books of our issue are not doubtful books rather ones considered authentic by both the Orthodox and Catholic churches and known as the Deuterocanonical Books "**DEYTEROKANONIKA**".

CATEGORISATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

In this regard it is worth mentioning that the Old Testament Books are categorised into two main sections:

- ✠ The first section is the first Canonical Books "PROTOKANONA".
- ✠ The second section is the Second Canonical Books "DEYTEROKANONIKA".

The first books were collated by Ezra the Priest, as mentioned in the Book of Macabees (Ch 2:10), we learn that Nehemiah established a library in which he collated the books of Kings and Prophets, the writings of David and the letters of Kings. This first group was divided into three sections (Torah, Nebeim, Ketebeim).

Neither Ezra nor Nehemiah made mention of the second group (DEYTEPOKANONIKA) as part of the first group, the reason being the books only appeared after Ezra's death who collated the first group.

Because these books, referred to above, were collated after Ezra's death, the early Christian church considered them as authentic -second canonical books as previously stated- the traditional Christian church recognised them throughout the ages.

Based on the recognised categorisation, the Books of the Old Testament (after adding to them the second canonical books "Deuterocanonica") are divided as follows:

- 1- **TORAH:** It comprises the five books of Moses which are called in Coptic and Greek "NOMOTHETIKA".
- 2- **PROPHETIC BOOKS:** "NEBEIM" in Coptic and Greek it is called "IROCHTIKA", these are divided into two

sections: early prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and the latter prophets: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve junior prophets. All these were collated in a book titled after the group of prophets as stated in the Acts of the Apostles (Ch 13:15)

3- HISTORIC BOOKS: "KETEBEIM" in Coptic and Greek it is called "ICTORIKA" (Hagiographies) these are divided into two sections: Major holy historic books: Psalms, Job and Proverbs. The Minor holy historic books are: Ecclesiastics, Song of Songs, Lamentations. Followed by this division come the books of Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. These books were also called the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms as stated in the Gospel of Luke (Ch 24:24).

4- DIDACTIC BOOKS: These are the second canonical books referred to, they are called "DIDAKTIKA" in both Coptic and Greek.

PROOF OF AUTHENTICITY OF THE DEUTEROCANONICA:

FIRST - The council of (Hippo) held in 393 AD decided its authenticity as part of the other books, St Augustin was present in that Council. The same decision was taken by the Council of Carthage held in 397 AD regarding its authenticity.

SECOND -Fathers of the second and third generations like Clement of Alexandria, Oregan, Dionisius of Alexandria and

Cyprian, also fathers of the fourth generation as Basil, Gregory of Nizisi, Chrisosotom; all of them made equal references in the books they wrote to the protocanonical and the deuterocanonical books. We must not forget that although Abba Athanasius the Apostolic mentioned in his Paschal message in 365 AD that the number of books was 22 the same as the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabets, but he made it clear that those books were useful in teaching the catechumens and in his writings he quoted verses from them.

THIRD - When a discussion arose regarding the authenticity of these books during the early centuries of Christianity, it was unanimously agreed that with regard to its benefit it ought to be read in church services. They were called "ANALILNOCKOMENA" which means the books that must be read on the Deuterocanonicals, this opinion continued up to the era of reform in Europe.

It is also worth mentioning that some of the church people adhered to the Books of the Old Testament which were found under Hebrewism because they were influenced by the position of the Jews of Palestine who had their version without the rest of the books and they found it futile to quote any version of the deuterocanonicals as a proof or theory to defeat the allegations of Jews in dogmatic discussions with them, and for this reason they did not include them in the protocanonicals. As to those fathers who made no mention of these books with the protocanonicals, they were expressing an individual opinion only and they made it clear that church organisations did not approve of this opinion; at any rate individual opinion is not taken into consideration against the unanimity of the general churches regarding the authenticity of these books.

FOURTH - These books were included in the canonical books in the Apostolic Canons, this was proved by sheik El-Safie Bin El-Assal in his Book "The Collection of Canons" (Chapter Two).

FIFTH - The traditional churches (the Egyptian, the Byzantine, the Roman, and the rest of the traditional churches) accepted these books as part of the first books.

The Catholic Church determined the authenticity of these books at the Trente Council in 1546 AD, as also previously determined by Hippo Council and St Augustin, this Council announced that whoever does not accept the books referred to, and whoever does not recognise their authenticity (as they were read in the Catholic church and were, The "Volgata" version) would be ex-communicated. During the Reform Period, these books became part and parcel of the Catholic belief.

The Greek church considers them authentic. When the Protestants discussed these books with the Greek church, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dcusathus held a meeting in 1682 A. D. and issued a resolution saying "We consider these books authentic and believe that they are part of the Bible because we received them from the holy church since older times". The church of Antioch abode by the point of view of the first church concerning the validity of these books.

SIXTH - These books were found in the Septuagint version which was a translation of Hebrew to Greek under the reign of Patmus II at Alexandria in 282. It was translated by 72

Jewish Scholar Rabbis, which indicates that they entered these books with the other books giving them the same status.

If one reads the most ancient copies of the Septuagint ie. the three copies of the famous manuscripts written in the fourth century after Christ: Sinaite, Alexandria, Vatican; one will find these books included. They were also found in the Coptic version, all dialects, which is considered the oldest translation after the Septuagint; although only sections of it were found which were published by foreign scholars, these books were also found in the old Latin version.

SEVENTH - In John's Gospel (Ch. 10:22) Christ the Lord mentioned the Feast of Dedication- this Feast was not mentioned in the Bible in the Protocanonica while it was proved in the Book of Maccabees that Judas Maccabeus was the first to initiate this feast when he purified the temple of the profanities of the gentiles and renewed the altar. This is a clear evidence that the Jews received the commemoration of this feast from this Book.

EIGHTH - The writers of the gospels of the New Testament made quotations from these books in the same way they made quotations from the Protocanonica, few examples are quoted hereunder:

A - From the book of Tobias:

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Luke 14:13-14).	4:7	10,17
It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality. (I Th 4:3).	4	13
Accordingly, whatever you would have people do for you, do the same for them. (Matt 7:12, also Luke 6:13)	4	16
This temporal suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Rom 8, 18)	4	23

B -- From the Book of Judith:

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
Neither should we become a trial to the Lord as some of them tried Him and were destroyed by serpent. (I Cor 10:9)	8	24,25
Blessed are you among women. (Luke 1:42)	31	23

C - From the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
If the dead are not raised "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die". (I Cor 15:32)	2	6
He trusts in God? Let Him rescue Him now, if He wants Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God' . (Matt 27:43)	2	13
The world hates Me because I testify about it, that its works are wicked. (John 7:7)	2	15
Then will the righteous radiate like the sun in their Father's kingdom.(Matt 13:43)	3	7

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
Are you not aware that the saints will judge the world? (1 Cor 6:2)	3	8
As the reflection of God's glory and the true expression of His being (Heb 1:3)	7	26
The rains came down, the flood rose, the winds blew and beat upon that house and it collapsed. And the wreck of it ",as complete. (Matt 7:27)	4	4
For there is no authority except from God; and those in authority are divinely constituted. (Rom 13: 1, also 1 Peter 2:13-14)	6	4
God's indignation was revealed from heaven against all impiety and wickedness of men who through their wicked ways suppress the truth; Because, although they had knowledge of God, they failed to render Him the praise and thanks due to God. Instead they indulged in their speculations until their stupid mind were all in the dark. (Rom 1: 18,2 1)	13,	1,5,7
Does not the potter have the right with the clay to make from the same lump one utensil for noble use and another one for ignoble use? (Rom 9:21),	15	7

D -.From the Book of the Son of Sirach:

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
All who want to live devotedly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (II Tim 3:12)	2	1
"If anyone loves me, he will keep My word."(Jn 14:23)	2	18
Doing nothing out of selfishness or conceit, but with humility regarding others superior to yourselves. (Phil 2:3)	3	20
And I will say to my soul "Soul, you have much wealth laid up for many a year. Take it easy; eat, drink, enjoy yourself," But God said to him, "Fool, this night your soul will be demanded of you. (Luke 12:19,20)	11	19,20
Be not yoked unequally with unbelievers; for what common grounds is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what association is there between light and darkness? Or what harmony is there between Christ and Belial, or what partnership between a believer and an unbeliever? What agreement has God's temple with idols? (II Cor 6:14-16)	13	21-22

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
And I tell you to use unrighteous wealth so that you win friends who, when it fails, may welcome you into eternal dwellings. (Luke 16:9)	14	13
All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass (1 Peter 1:24 also James 1: 10)	14	18
He would have given you living water. (John 4: 10)	15	3
If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments (Matt 19:17)	15	16
Not a creature exists that is hidden from Him, but all things lie bare and exposed before the eyes of Him with whom we have to reckon. (Heb 4:13)	15	20
Who will reward each person according to his deeds. (Rom 2:6)	16	15
There is no authority except from God, and those in authority are divinely constituted. (Rom 13:1 also 1 Peter 2:13,14)	17	14
Pray unceasingly. (1 Th 5:17)	17	24

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
Sin, then, must not be king in your mortal body, to have you yield to its passions. (Rom 6:12)	18	30
If your brother should do wrong against you, go and show him his fault privately. (Matt 18: 1 5 also Luke 17:3)	19	13
But no human being is able to tame the tongue. (James 3:8)	19	17
Whoever makes no mistake with the tongue is certainly a perfect man.(James 3:2)	25	11
For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you too, (Matt 6:14 also Mark 11:25)	28	2
But if you do not forgive people, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt 6:15 also Mark 11:26)	28	1
Let each one give as he has planned in his heart, neither grudgingly nor by compulsion; for God loves a happy giver. (II Cor 9:7)	11	35
"How well He has done everything." (Mark 7:37)	39	21,39

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
Anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has in heart already committed adultery. (Matt 5:28)	41	27

E - From the Book of Maccabees (2)

Quotation	Chapter	Verse
Others who refused release so that they might procure a better resurrection were tortured. Still others suffered mocking and flogging, and chains and imprisonment. They were stoned; they were tempted to sin; they were saved in two; they were killed with the sword. In sheepskins and in goatskins they roamed about, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated. (Heb 11:35-37)	6	9-19
Through faith overcame kingdoms, administered justice, procured promised blessings, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped being killed by the sword, were made powerful when they had been weak, became mighty in war, turned to fight foreign armies. (Heb 11:33-34)	8	5-6

NINTH - Since olden times the Coptic Church used some chapters of these books as part of the readings of Lent and the Holy Week in the following sequence:

A.-. LENT READINGS

Matins Friday of the third week A Chapter of the Son of Sirach

Matins Tuesday of the fourth week A Chapter of the Son of Sirach

Matins of Wednesday of the sixth week A Chapter of the Son of Sirach

Matins of Thursday of the sixth week A Chapter of the Son of Sirach

Matins of Friday of the sixth week The whole Book of Tobias

Matins of Tuesday of the seventh week A chapter of the Son of Sirach

B.-. HOLY WEEK READINGS

Matins Monday A chapter of the Son of Sirach

Sixth Hour Prayer -Monday A chapter of the Wisdom

Eleventh Hour Prayer - A Chapter of the Son of
Monday Sirach

Third Hour Prayer- Tuesday A Chapter of the Son of
Sirach

Eleventh Hour Prayer A chapter of the Wisdom
Wednesday evening

Third Hour Prayer- Wednesday A Chapter of the Son of
Sirach

Sixth Hour Prayer- Wednesday A Chapter of the Son of
Sirach

Third Hour Prayer Thursday A Chapter of the Son of
Sirach

Matins - Friday A Chapter of the Wisdom

Dawn - Saturday Psalm 151, Prayer of the three
lads and the story of Susanna

Easter Eve A chapter of the Book of
Wisdom

SUMMARY

From what has been previously stated, it is evident that there is no trace of truth in the name "Apocrypha" which is given by some to these books. The church ruled that we include them in the canonical books recognised by all Christians, ie. the fathers of the early church gave them the same status of other canonical books.

As to the books so called "Apocrypha" by traditional churches also called "unauthentic" by some Christians, these are many; most significant are those related to the Old Testament eg. third and fourth Book of Ezra, the book of Enoch which was not found anywhere else except in the Ethiopian Version. Also the Books relating to the New Testament which are several Books of gospels, acts of apostles, epistles, group of heretics to advocate for their opinion.

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