

WHY DID THE 1611 KJV INCLUDE THE APOCRYPHA?

Updated and enlarged October 4, 2005 (first published March 27, 2002) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) –

Early editions of the English Bible (as well as other Reformation Bibles, including the German Luther and the Olivetan French) contained the Apocrypha, but these books were included for historical reference only, not as additions to the canon of Scripture.

Alexander McClure, a biographer of the KJV translators, says: “... the Apocryphal books in those times were more read and accounted of than now, though by no means placed on a level with the canonical books of Scripture” (McClure, *Translators Revived*, p. 185). He then lists seven reasons assigned by the KJV translators for rejecting the Apocrypha as canonical. (1) Not one of them is in the Hebrew language, which was alone used by the inspired historians and poets of the Old Testament. (2) Not one of the writers lays any claim to inspiration. (3) These books were never acknowledged as sacred Scriptures by the Jewish Church, and therefore were never sanctioned by our Lord. (4) They were not allowed a place among the sacred books, during the first four centuries of the Christian Church. (5) They contain fabulous statements, and statements which contradict not only the canonical Scriptures, but themselves; as when, in the two Books of Maccabees, Antiochus Epiphanes is made to die three different deaths in as many different places. (6) It inculcates doctrines at variance with the Bible, such as prayers for the dead and sinless perfection. (7) It teaches immoral practices, such as lying, suicide, assassination, and magical incantation.

The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England clearly state that the Apocryphal books have no scriptural authority. “... [the Church of England] doth not apply to them to establish any doctrine.”

It is important to understand that in the early King James Bibles, the Apocryphal books were placed by themselves between the Old and New Testaments rather than intermingled among the canonical O.T. books as is done in Catholic Bibles. In the Jerusalem Bible (a Catholic Bible), for example, Tobit, Judith, and the Maccabees

follow Nehemiah; the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus follow Ecclesiastes; Baruch follows Lamentations; etc. Thus the very location of the apocryphal books denotes the canonical authority (or lack thereof) attributed to them by a Bible's publisher.

Further, it is not true that the Geneva Bible excluded the Apocrypha. One of the authors of the book *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man* (published in 1999 by Ambassador-Emerald International, Greenville, SC and Belfast, N. Ireland) claims that the Puritans and Separatists rejected the KJV in favor of the Geneva Bible because the latter excluded the Apocrypha (pp. 45-46). Dr. Jeffrey Khoo observes: "Dr. Errol F. Rhodes and Dr. Liana Lupas who edited *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface to the King James Version Revised*, present a more accurate picture: 'The books of the Apocrypha were included in the King James Version from the first as a matter of course, as they had been in all versions of the English Bible from the time of Wycliffe (c. 1384), including the Calvinist Geneva Bible of 1560. ... The deliberate omission of the Apocrypha from an English Bible is first noted in the 1640 edition of the Geneva Bible. ... Not until the nineteenth century, however, did the omission of the Apocrypha in Protestant Bibles become normal'" (Khoo, *Kept Pure in All Ages*, 2001, p. 143).

Of Bibles printed in America, David Daniell testifies: "The present writer's experience of examining Bibles printed in America throughout the nineteenth century is that in the first half more of them than not included the Apocrypha" (*The Bible in English*, 2003, p. 600).

Thus, in conclusion, the Apocrypha was never considered canonical by the Church of England or by the KJV translators. It was commonly included in Reformation Bibles in many languages until the 19th century for historical reference only, much as extensive notes and comments are included in modern study Bibles.