CHAPTER 8

# THE APOCRYPHA IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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Q. Are the Apocrypha Books to be owned as Gods Word?
A. *No. Every word of God is pure: add thou not unto his words, least he reprove thee, and thou be found a lyar (Proverbs 30:5–6).*[1]

PROTESTANTISM is a religion based on an anthology: the Bible. English Protestants, however, generally accepted fewer holy books than Catholics. Scripture alone, rather than the papacy or church councils, was paramount. Yet which scriptures were to be accepted and which rejected was no straightforward matter. This chapter begins with a brief account of how and why certain Jewish writings came to be regarded as apocryphal, highlighting the crucial contribution Jerome's contentious canonical theory would play. It also underscores the fact that the Apocrypha was a Protestant construction, one moreover that reflected the privileging of Jewish texts available in Hebrew over those then extant in Greek. For the gradual evolution of the Apocrypha as a distinct corpus was partially a by-product of the humanist return to the sources—specifically Hebrew.

Previous studies of the Apocrypha in early modern England have tended to stress two points: first, that the removal of these books from the Old Testament was unauthorized, lacking explicit royal and ecclesiastical sanction; secondly, that their influence was greater than commonly recognized. Here I want to suggest that in addition the Apocrypha was important because of its inherent potential to exacerbate religious conflict—not just between Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists, but also between moderate churchmen and puritans. Thus, to take an emotive example, the controversial Hebraist Hugh Broughton urged printers to omit the Apocrypha from the Bible, dismissing these 'unperfect histories' as nothing better than trifling Jewish fables and 'meane wittes' work:

A Turky leprous slave might as seemly be placed in seat, cheek by cheek, betwixt two the best Christian Kings; as the wicked Apocrypha betwixt both testaments. And no monster of many legges, armes, or heades can be more ugly.[2]

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[1] Anon., *A Protestant Catechisme for Little Children* (1673), 3–4.
[2] Hugh Broughton, *Principle Positions for Groundes of the Holy Bible* (1609), 4–5, 21, 27.

# I. Historical Background and Definitions

Apocrypha is a Latin neuter plural noun (singular: *apocryphon*). It has a Greek etymology, derived from an adjective meaning hidden away, kept secret. The word occurs several times in the Septuagint (Deut. 27: 15; Isa. 4: 6, Psalms 17: 12, 27: 5), a Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures originally written on papyrus or leather scrolls and compiled, according to the legendary *Letter of Aristeas*, in the third century BC by seventy—or seventy-two—translators for the benefit of Alexandrian Jews. Initially the Greek adjective, when applied to books, was occasionally used in an approving manner to describe writings containing mysterious wisdom too profound or holy to be communicated to any save the initiated (cf. Daniel 12: 4, 2 Esdras 14: 45–6, 1 Enoch 108: 1). The Greek-speaking Origen, however, subsequently employed the term to distinguish between writings read in public worship and those of questionable value which were studied privately. Yet Origen also used the word negatively to describe something false, while his contemporary Clement of Alexandria employed it with reference to dubious secret works possessed by heretics—especially Gnostics. This last, pejorative sense eventually became prevalent among Latin speakers. Accordingly, when from the mid-fourth century the church began the process of establishing a uniform canon by drawing up authoritative lists of books regarded as sacred scripture, the adjective was applied to texts deemed heretical or spurious.

Jerome was the first to designate a particular corpus of writings as apocryphal because of their exclusion from what had by then become a closed Jewish canon. These were Jewish compositions omitted from the Hebrew Bible but with the exception of 2 Esdras nonetheless found in certain versions of the Septuagint preserved in codices, and hence generally included in the canon being defined by the church. In 382 and with the likely approval of Pope Damasus, Jerome undertook a new Latin version of the scriptures to supersede variants of what we now call an Old Latin version based on the Greek. In his much cited *Prologus galeatus* ('helmeted preface', c.392) to Samuel and Kings, Jerome asserted that books which he did not list as constituting the Hebrew Bible must be classed as apocryphal writings—specifically disbarring Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, the Shepherd of Hermas, and 1 and 2 Maccabees from the canon.[3]

There is still debate in modern scholarship as to whether or not Jerome maintained this position consistently. Elsewhere, for example, his pronouncements accorded with contemporary usage; 'beware of all apocrypha' he advised, 'they were not written by those to whom they are ascribed … many vile things have been mixed in … they require great prudence to find the gold in the filth'.[4] All the same, for our purposes what is important is that Jerome's Bible translations, which were ultimately underpinned by his faith in the 'Hebrew verity', became increasingly authoritative, at least until the advent of

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[3]  Jerome, 'Prologus Galeatus', tr. W. H. Fremantle as 'Preface to the Books of Samuel and Kings' in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser. 6 (New York, 1893), 489–90, <www.tertullian.org/fathers2/NPNF2-06/Npnf2-06-21.htm>.

[4]  Jerome, *Epistles*, 107.12, quoted in A. S. Jacobs, 'The Disorder of Books: Priscillian's Canonical Defense of Apocrypha', *Harvard Theological Review*, 93 (2000): 157.

sophisticated humanist criticism.[5] From the 1520s, they were being referred to as the *vulgata editio*, or as the English exile translators of the Douay Old Testament (1609–10) first called them, the Vulgate Latin edition.[6] Moreover, his unheeded call for the church to reject the Septuagint in favour of the Hebrew Bible as the basis of the Old Testament, together with his criteria for determining which books should be considered apocryphal, would provide vital ammunition in the polemical battles waged between Protestant reformers and their Catholic adversaries.

Following the Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus and Athanasius of Alexandria, Jerome held that the twenty-two books in the Hebrew Bible corresponded to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet (the twelve minor prophets counting as one book). Although, as Jerome acknowledged, some reckoned there were twenty-four books (corresponding to the twenty-four elders of Revelation 4: 4), this discrepancy mattered less than the tripartite division of the Hebrew Bible that he adopted; namely the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa (five, eight, and nine books respectively). Here too Jewish precedent was crucial, for the dominant strain of rabbinic Second Temple Judaism divided its Bible into three sections: the Laws (*Torah*), Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and Writings (*Ketuvim*). Furthermore, whereas Athanasius in his 39th Festal epistle (367) had distinguished three types of writings—canonical (twenty-two Old Testament and twenty-seven New Testament books), non-canonical (suitable to be read by new converts 'for instruction in the word of godliness', including Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Esther, Judith, and Tobit), and the apocrypha (which were the 'invention of heretics')—Jerome designated the non-canonical books apocryphal while likewise recognizing their didactic rather than doctrinal value: 'The Church reads [these] books … for the edification of the common people, but not as authority to confirm any of the Church's doctrines.'[7] This again significantly contributed towards establishing the boundaries of what became highly contested theological territory during the Reformation and its aftermath.

Here my definition of the Apocrypha reflects early modern English Protestant usage. They are taken to be the books designated as such in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English printed Bibles. Adhering to the sixth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1571), the King James Bible (1611) named and ordered fourteen books, giving the number of chapters in each; 1 Esdras (9), 2 Esdras (16), Tobit (14), Judith (16), the rest of Esther (6), the Wisdom of Solomon (19), the Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus (51), Baruch, with the epistle of Jeremiah (6), the Song of the Three Holy Children (1), the History of Susanna (1), Bel and the Dragon (1), the Prayer of Manasses king of Judah (1), 1 Maccabees (16), and 2 Maccabees (15). Previously 3 Maccabees had also been included in Edmund Becke's 1549 Bible, while 4 Maccabees and Psalm 151 were consistently omitted despite having been preserved in some Septuagint manuscripts.

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[5]  Jerome translated the Hebrew Bible, Tobit, Judith, and the four Gospels into Latin, but not Acts, the New Testament epistles, or Revelation.

[6]  The English word vulgate, as in vulgar or common tongue, had however been in use since at least the 1520s.

[7]  Jerome, 'Preface to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs', in Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 492.
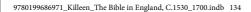
## II. The Reformation: Karlstadt, Luther and the First Printed English Bibles

Although numerous and widely used Latin translations of the Apocrypha were made before the Reformation, Jerome's acerbic views also circulated through prefatory epistles appended to his translations. Indeed, compiling a list of those influenced to varying degrees by Jerome's canonical theory is a straightforward exercise, because a Protestant royalist exile did just that in a publication of 1657, so as to emphasize the chasm separating the Church of England from Rome. Among them were Gregory the Great, Bede, Alcuin, Hugh of St Victor, Peter of Cluny [the Venerable], Peter Comestor, John of Salisbury, Hugh of Saint-Cher, the Franciscans Nicholas of Lyra and William Ockham, and the English translators of the Wycliffite Bible. Hence in the prologue to the Old Testament commonly but dubiously attributed to the heretic John Purvey, the authority of Jerome's *Prologus galeatus* was used to consign books such as Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Judith, and Tobit 'among apocrifa, that is, with outen autorite of bileue'.[8] In the same vein Alonso Tostado, Bishop of Ávila, declared that the Apocrypha had been 'set without the canon' because 'even though they are read among the other books of the Bible, and read in the Church' none were of 'so great authority that the Church argues from it to maintain any truth'.[9] Likewise, in a prologue to the Complutensian Polyglot (Alcalá, 1514–17) Cardinal Francisco Ximénes placed Old Testament books not then extant in Hebrew outside the canon, reiterating Jerome's remarks concerning their edificatory worth.

The German Thomistic theologian Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, who had sided with Martin Luther in the Leipzig disputations of 1519 against Johann Eck, issued his ground-breaking *De canonicis scripturis libellus* (Wittenberg, 1520), against a backdrop of, first, renewed interest in Hebrew pioneered successively by Johannes Reuchlin and his nephew Philip Melanchthon; secondly, hostility within reformist circles towards unpalatable aspects of the church fathers' teachings—in particular Jerome's views on fasting, monasticism, relics, virginity, and the Virgin Mary; and thirdly, resentment of papal corruption, notably the sale of indulgences. Here and in a subsequent German epitome Karlstadt drew heavily on Jerome and Augustine to justify his contention that theological disputes should be resolved by appeal to the highest authority, specifically the Bible rather than church councils, thereby confirming his adoption of the principle of *sola scriptura* ('by scripture alone'). Karlstadt then took the bold step of diverging from Augustine and subdivided the Apocrypha into two categories. On the one hand were books outside the Hebrew canon yet still *agiographi* (i.e. classed among the third and lowest rank of sacred scripture: Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Judith, Tobit, and 1 and 2 Maccabees). These were 'not to be despised' immediately but could be consulted if leisure permitted. On the other were plainly apocryphal books worthy of condemnation (1

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[8]  *The Holy Bible … Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers*, ed. John Forshall and Frederic Madden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), i. 1–2. It is noteworthy that the Wycliffite Bible did not include an English translation of 2 Esdras.

[9]  Quoted in Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Bible in the Church*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1866), 201.

and 2 Esdras, Baruch, the Prayer of Manasses, and the additions to Daniel—Three Holy Children, Susanna, and Bel).[10]

Luther was even more extreme, circumventing in his disputation with Eck a proof-text for the doctrine of purgatory (2 Maccabees 12: 45) adduced at the Council of Florence (1438–43) by excising the inconvenient book from his canon. This belligerent former Augustinian monk became convinced that justification was to be attained through faith alone. So he scorned the Epistle of James, dismissing it as a worthless unapostolic letter of straw. In his vernacular translation of the New Testament (Wittenberg, 1522) Luther separated this epistle along with that to the Hebrews (spuriously attributed to Paul), Jude (canonicity questioned by some church fathers), and Revelation (deemed neither apostolic nor prophetic) from the undisputed works, placing these *antilegomena* unnumbered at the end.

For his incomplete German Old Testament (1523–4) Luther embraced Jerome's principle of the 'Hebrew verity', distinguishing between the canon and Apocrypha with the intention—as the contents indicate—of consigning the latter to the conclusion. This radical arrangement was first implemented in the third of a four-volume Greek Septuagint edited by Luther's collaborator Johannes Lonicerus (Strasbourg, 1524–6). Similarly, in a two-volume Dutch Bible largely based on Luther's translation and published by Jacob van Liesveldt (Antwerp, 1526), the Apocrypha were placed separately after Malachi and introduced with a disclaimer: 'the books which are not in the canon, that is to say, which one does not find among the Jews in the Hebrew'. Finally, having been assisted by Melanchthon and others, a complete two-volume folio edition of Luther's German Old Testament with accompanying woodcuts designed by the workshop of Lucas Cranach was printed by Hans Lufft and issued at Wittenberg in 1534. Here, after Malachi and an interval of two blank pages, most of the Apocrypha appeared in a unique sequence with their own title-page and a caveat: 'books that are not held equal to Holy Scripture, yet they are useful and good to read'. Thus, despite its historical inaccuracies, Judith, if regarded as a divine allegory, was 'a fine, good, holy, useful book'; Wisdom of Solomon had 'very much that is good in it'; Tobit when read as a poem was 'right beautiful, wholesome, profitable'; while Sirach, which was suitable for instilling household discipline, was 'a profitable book for an ordinary man'. Luther, however, had been reluctant to translate the Greek additions to Esther and Daniel, likening them to uprooted cornflowers that he had chosen to preserve by planting them 'in a kind of special little spice garden'. He was more contemptuous of 2 Maccabees: it should be 'thrown out, even though it contains some good things'. 1 and 2 Esdras fared worse. They were omitted and slighted as inferior to Aesop's fables.[11]

According with echoes of Jerome's criteria for canonicity, heard most notably in reservations expressed by Desiderius Erasmus, Sanctes Pagninus, and Cardinal Tommaso Cajetan, these important Lutheran precedents were swiftly adopted by certain continental reformers. For example, the Zürich Bible (1524–9) which was translated into Swyzerdeutsch and Oberdeutsch by Huldrych Zwingli and his fellow preachers included a separate volume for

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[10]  Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt, *De canonicis scripturis libellus* (Wittenburg, 1520), K2ʳ–K3ʳ.

[11]  Martin Luther, 'Prefaces to the Apocrypha' (1533–4), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia and St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–86), xxxv; Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, 259–63. In conversation Luther was if anything even more hostile, reportedly wanting to throw 2 Esdras into the River Elbe, while loathing 2 Maccabees so much that he wished it had never survived.

the Apocrypha based on both the Septuagint and Vulgate prepared by Leo Jud. Its title-page affirmed: 'these are the books which are not reckoned as biblical by the ancients, nor are found among the Hebrews'. Likewise, Pierre Robert Olivétan's French Bible (Neuchâtel, 1535), which included an address by his cousin Jean Calvin, had after the last book in the Hebrew canon a distinct title-page for 'The volume of all the Apocryphal books, contained in the common translation, which we have not found in Hebrew or Chaldean'. This translation resembled that of an earlier French Bible by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples with some minor amendments.

In Henrician England there was antipathy by Catholic traditionalists towards issuing Bibles in the vernacular which meshed with a desire to maintain a clerical monopoly on interpretation. Accordingly, copies of William Tyndale's complete English translation of the New Testament (Worms, 1526) were seized and publicly burned, his body eventually meeting the same fate at Antwerp in October 1536. Significantly, although Tyndale followed Luther's treatment of New Testament *antilegomena* (Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation), his incomplete Old Testament (Antwerp, 1530–1) suggests he did not intend excluding the Apocrypha from the canon. That unauthorized initiative was undertaken by Miles Coverdale, whose translation of the entire Bible was based on a medley of five sources, although none were in the original Hebrew or Greek: the Vulgate and another Latin version by Pagninus together with vernacular renderings found in Luther, Tyndale, and the Zürich Bible. Completed at Antwerp, where the enterprise was sponsored and where—despite much speculation to the contrary—it was almost certainly printed by Martin de Keyser, who finished the job on 4 October 1535, Coverdale's Bible was soon reprinted with minor amendments by James Nicolson (Southwark, 1535 and 1537).

Undoubtedly the most important of these changes was the addition of a dedication to Henry VIII, who had dramatically reversed his opposition to vernacular Bibles. Here the Apocrypha, which were mainly translated from the Zürich Bible and to a lesser extent the Vulgate and Luther, were introduced by an illustrated title-page with a caveat derived from the Zürich Bible: 'the bokes and treatises which amonge the fathers of olde are not rekened to be of like authorite with the other bokes of the byble, nether are they fou[n]de in the Canon of the Hebrue'. Invoking Jerome, Coverdale justified this extraordinary move by explaining that there were many passages in the Apocrypha which seemed repugnant and contradictory to the 'manyfest treuth' found in other biblical books. Even so, he had not gathered the Apocrypha together so that they might be despised or undervalued. As he could not prove they were false writings, Coverdale simply warned that:

> These & many other darck places of scripture have bene sore stered and myxte with blynde and cuvetous opynions of men, which have caste soch a myst afore the eyes of y$^e$ symple, that as longe as they be not co[n]ferred with the other places of scripture, they shall not seme other wyse to be understonde, then as cuvetousnes expoundeth them.[12]

After Tyndale's execution, his associate John Rogers, who was then based in Antwerp, helped perpetuate his legacy by preventing the seizure of Tyndale's unfinished manuscript translation of the Old Testament. Together with Coverdale's version of the Old Testament and material drawn from the French Bibles of Lefèvre d'Étaples and Olivétan,

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[12] *Biblia the Bible, That Is, the Holy Scripture*, tr. Miles Coverdale ([Cologne], 1535).

this provided the basis for Rogers's own edition of the Bible. Known as Matthew's Bible because of its spurious attribution to Thomas Matthew, it appears to have been printed by Matthew Crom at Antwerp and was published by Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch in 1537. This too was dedicated to the King and unlike Coverdale's Bible issued with a prized royal licence. Again, the Apocrypha constituted a discrete part with their own illustrated title-page and admonition: 'the volume of the bokes called Apocripha: Contayned in the comen transl[ation] in Latyne, whych are not founde in the Hebreue nor in the Chalde'. The translations were those of Coverdale, with the addition of the Prayer of Manasses done by Rogers. The one-page apologetic address to the reader was taken directly from Olivétan who, as was becoming standard, had cited Jerome; since these books were not taken as legitimate and lawful either by the Jews or the whole church, men might read them to edify the people, but not to confirm and strengthen the doctrine of the church.

In 1539 the evangelical reformer Richard Taverner, a Greek scholar noted for his translation of Erasmus as well as propagandizing on behalf of Henry VIII's chief minster Thomas Cromwell, issued a revision of Matthew's Bible. Presumably with Cromwell's sanction he drew the sting from Rogers's controversial renderings. As before, the Apocrypha were separated from the Old Testament but for the first time without explanation. Taverner's Bible, however, was quickly superseded by a more thorough revision of Matthew's Bible also supported by Cromwell. This was undertaken by Coverdale, initially at Paris, because of its superior printing presses. Despite serious obstacles which delayed the process, a first printing was completed at London in April 1539. Called the Great Bible because of its size rather than the superior quality of its translation, this 'authorized' version used Sebastian Münster's annotated Latin translation of the Hebrew (1534–5) to correct the Old Testament. It also departed from the arrangement of New Testament books in Matthew's Bible, thus abandoning Luther's *antilegomena* in favour of the Vulgate's sequence. Again the Apocrypha were separated and preceded with a translation of Olivétan's prologue. The text was essentially the same with one significant difference: the word Hagiographa was substituted for Apocrypha and used synonymously rather than, as we would expect, in Jerome's sense as signifying the third part of the Hebrew Bible.

A second folio edition with a preface by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, was issued in April 1540 and appointed to be read in the churches. Its title-page for the Hagiographa (i.e. Apocrypha) was new, featuring sixteen woodcuts largely illustrating scenes from the text. Subsequent editions of the Great Bible contained variations, the most significant being the erasure of Cromwell's arms from the title-page following his execution in July 1540, while one 1541 edition omitted Olivétan's introduction to what was described as neither Apocrypha nor Hagiographa but simply the fourth part of the Bible. This suggests a pragmatic decision—perhaps taken by traditionalist Catholic prelates then in ascendancy—to restore these books to the Old Testament canon without incurring the expense of printing a new edition of the Bible.

Although no further editions of the Great Bible were printed from 1542 until after Henry's death in January 1547, it is noteworthy that Coverdale's version of four books attributed to Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Wisdom), together with Sirach, were frequently reprinted as a collected volume between 1540 and 1551. Furthermore, an anonymous translation of Jeremiah's epistle dissuading people from idolatry, ordinarily appended to Baruch in

the Apocrypha, was issued separately (Southwark, 1539?) with a warning against the superstitious veneration of saints' images.[13]

By the end of Henry VIII's reign the Apocrypha had been separated from the Hebrew Bible. This initiative had been taken without royal or ecclesiastical approval but was nonetheless partially facilitated by Cromwell's reformist agenda. It followed a radical Lutheran model, presenting a discrete text for the edification of readers that was essentially an English version of a Swiss-German cum French translation of the Greek. These books, moreover, were shortly preceded by an apology written by a French reformer. Yet if thus far English Protestants had merely followed the precedents of their continental brethren, the most extreme among them would, by the turn of the seventeenth century, disparage the Apocrypha in hitherto almost inconceivable ways.

## III.  From Trent to Hampton Court, and Beyond

On 8 April 1546, after three months of debate and disagreement, the Council of Trent following the example of orthodox church fathers as well as conciliar decisions taken at Laodicea (363–4), Hippo (393), Carthage (397), and Florence (1438–43), approved what it determined to be all the books of the Old and New Testaments as the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. With the exception of the Prayer of Manasses and 1 and 2 Esdras, texts judged apocryphal by Jerome but forming part of the 'old Latin Vulgate edition' were decreed 'sacred and canonical … in their entirety and with all their parts'—with an anathema pronounced on anyone believing the contrary.[14]

In the wake of this Tridentine judgement, Sixtus of Siena, possibly a converted Jew and certainly a former heretic, produced *Bibliotheca sancta ex præcipuis Catholicæ Ecclesiæ auctoribus collecta* (1566). Drawing on patristic precedent, Sixtus advocated a tripartite division of biblical books: the protocanonical, deuterocanonical, and apocryphal. While the protocanonical writings were universally accepted, the deuterocanonical—which included Esther, Tobit, Judith, Baruch with the epistle of Jeremiah, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, the additions to Daniel and 1 and 2 Maccabees as well as several New Testament texts—were considered problematic, since they 'were not generally known till a late period'.

This distinction between proto- (i.e. first) and deutero- (i.e. second) canonical was, Sixtus emphasized, one of 'cognition and time, not of authority, certitude, or worth, for both orders received their excellency and majesty from the same Holy Spirit'.[15] The Jesuit Robert Bellarmine reiterated the distinction while continuing to defend both the second category

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[13] This translation of Jeremiah's epistle differs from Coverdale's version which was printed without alteration in Coverdale's Bible, Matthew's Bible, Taverner's Bible, and the Great Bible.

[14] R. H. Charles has suggested that the exclusion of 1 Esdras may have been based on a misunderstanding. Also omitted was 3 Maccabees. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), i, pp. vii, ix–x.

[15] Quoted in J. H. Hayes, 'Historical Criticism of the Old Testament Canon', in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, ii. *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 991.

of books, whose 'authority was not always equally clear and confirmed', and the accuracy of the Vulgate itself, declaring 'there is no error in this translation in matters pertaining to faith and morals'.[16] Afterwards a critical three-volume edition of the Vulgate was issued under the patronage of Pope Sixtus V. Known as the Sixtine Bible (1590), it was superseded by a heavily amended version sponsored by Clement VIII, the Clementine (1592). These Bibles incorporated most of what Protestants regarded as the Apocrypha within the sequence of Old Testament books; Judith and Tobit, for example, succeeded Nehemiah; Wisdom and Sirach came after the Song of Solomon; with the Maccabees concluding the Old Testament. The Prayer of Manasses and 1 and 2 Esdras, however, were scorned by Sixtus and omitted from the Bible bearing his name. In the Clementine revision these texts were restored but still deemed apocryphal. Consequently they were printed in smaller typeface and without marginal notes as an appendix after the New Testament, in case they should perish altogether.

English Protestants in the meantime generally continued to regard the Apocrypha as edifying if subordinate to other biblical books. Thus in the preface to *The Volume of the Bokes Called Apocripha* (1549), which formed the fourth part of Edmund Becke's revision of Taverner's Bible, the translator explained that, although they lacked the same authority, these texts still contained 'moste godly examples and preceptes of the feare and loue of God and our neyghboure'. Accordingly, he recommended that they be diligently read and 'the learning in them earnestly' followed.[17] In the same vein, the lectionary prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer (1549) contained 108 prescribed daily lessons from Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, and Baruch that were to be read between 5 October and 27 November. The revised lectionaries contained in amended prayer books issued during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth (1552, 1558, 1561) even added to the number of lessons taken from the Apocrypha at the expense of Old Testament verses. Similarly, the books of Homilies (1547, 1562, 1571) cited all the apocryphal books except 2 Maccabees and 1 and 2 Esdras (echoing Luther) in homilies mainly written by Cranmer and Bishop John Jewel concerning subjects such as swearing, excess of apparel, idolatry, and giving alms.

Although the status of the Apocrypha had not been established as ecclesiastical dogma in either the Ten Articles (1536) or the Forty-Two Articles (1552), this omission was rectified in both the original Latin and slightly enlarged English version of the sixth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1563, 1571). Here Jerome's authority was once more invoked. Regarding these 'other bookes'—that is, those whose canonical status had previously been doubted: 'the Church doth reade for example of life, and instruction of maners: but yet doeth it not applye them to stablishe any doctrine'. This sixth article drew on the phraseology of the Protestant Württemberg Confession of Faith (1552), and also resembled the sixth article of the Belgic confession (1561) penned by the Walloon pastor and martyr Guy de Brès. Yet as scholars long ago observed, it formulated a definition of the canon that was ambiguous. Moreover, its provisions appeared to contradict the thirty-fifth article which declared that second book of Homilies contained 'godly and wholesome doctrine'

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[16] Quoted in Alastair Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 90–1; Eugene Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 187.

[17] *The Volume of the Bokes Called Apocripha* (1549), A2$^{r-v}$. It has been suggested that 1 Esdras, Tobit, and Judith were new translations commissioned for this Bible. H. Howorth, 'The Origin and Authority of the Biblical Canon in the Anglican Church', *Journal of Theological Studies*, os 8 (1906), 17. 3 Maccabees also appeared here for the first and only time in a printed English Bible.

even though the message of these homilies was sustained by more than forty references to the Apocrypha.[18]

The prevailing, albeit far from uniform, view of the Apocrypha within the Elizabethan church can be usefully compared with contemporary attitudes towards Jewish law. Thus the seventh of the Thirty-Nine Articles reaffirmed the conventional Christian division of Mosaic Law into three categories—the moral, judicial, and ceremonial. The moral law was derived from the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 1–17) and regarded as inviolate by all but a handful of Christians. Its authority can be considered analogous to that of the Old Testament canonical books. It was generally agreed, on the other hand, that the judicial laws had been annulled by the coming of Christ. Yet like the Apocrypha they too could serve as non-binding exemplars.

Returning to the Apocrypha's place in various editions of the English Bible, the Geneva version was the first to be printed in roman type and the first to subdivide the text by incorporating verses as well as chapters. Produced by English exiles in the heartland of Calvinism, a city idealized as 'the patron and mirrour of true religion & godlines',[19] this reader-friendly Bible with its prefaces, helpful if sometimes provocative marginalia, woodcut illustrations, maps, and indexes was originally issued in quarto in May 1560 and remained extremely popular among Protestants until eventually supplanted by the King James Bible.[20] Here the Apocrypha came after Malachi (with the noteworthy exception of the Prayer of Manasses, which was appended to 2 Chronicles). Lacking a separate title-page they were preceded by a caveat which implicitly challenged the Book of Common Prayer's provisions for reading daily lessons taken from these texts while nonetheless acknowledging that private study of the Apocrypha would promote understanding of Jewish history:

> These bokes … were not received by a com[m]une consent to be red and expounded publikely in the Church, nether yet served to prove any point of Christian religion, save in asmuche as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical … but as bokes proceding from godlie men, were received to be red for the advancement and furtherance of the knowledge of the historie, & for the instruction of godlie maners.[21]

By contrast the home-grown black letter Bishops' Bible (1568), a revised translation initiated by Archbishop Matthew Parker and collectively undertaken mainly by bishops, respected the arrangement of some later editions of the Great Bible in designating the Apocrypha as the fourth part of the Bible. The relevant books were assigned to the Bishops of Norwich and Chichester, John Parkhurst and William Barlow. But, instructed to intervene only when correcting significant deviations in meaning from the original Greek, they barely amended the text of the Great Bible. Notwithstanding a separate title-page and the adoption of Genevan chapters and verses, Olivétan's introduction was again discarded.

Following a suggestion made at the Hampton Court conference of January 1604 by John Rainolds, a distinguished Greek scholar, puritan theologian, and then President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, a new translation was commissioned by James I. This so-called

[18] *Articles Whereupon It Was Agreed by the Archbishoppes and Bishoppes* (1571), 6, 21.
[19] 'To the Reader Mercy and Peace through Christ Our Saviour', *The Newe Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1575), ¶2ᵛ.
[20] On the interpretive machinery of the Geneva Bible, see the chapter by Femke Molekamp in this volume.
[21] *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament* (Geneva, 1560), 386.

King James Bible (1611) was built on the solid foundations laid by its predecessors. The work was split into six companies, with the second of two Cambridge groups in charge of revising the Apocrypha. Chiefly selected for their skill in Greek and headed by John Duport, Master of Jesus College, the other members were John Bois (whose notes on some of the discussions survive in manuscript copies), William Branthwaite, Andrew Downes, Jeremiah Radcliffe, Robert Ward, and Samuel Ward.[22] Although criticized for apparent carelessness, inelegance, and use of colloquialisms, not to mention their reluctance to depart from inferior renderings in the Bishops' Bible (Tobit excepted),[23] the translators were diligent, making use of an extensive range of then available sources; principally the Complutensian Polyglot (1514–17), Aldine Bible (1518–19), and Roman Septuagint (1586), as well as Latin manuscripts and a paraphrase by Franciscus Junius for 2 Esdras. In addition, they supplied an estimated 1,018 marginal notes that dealt primarily with variant readings, the exact sense of the original, or alternative forms of proper names, citing, among others, Herodotus, Pliny, and especially Josephus as authorities. No apology was given, however, for separating these books from the Old Testament and the Apocrypha followed immediately after Malachi, lacking both a distinct title-page and prefatory remarks. Doubtless these were deliberate omissions, their absence replicating the corresponding page layout of the Geneva Bible apart from an innocuous ornamental woodcut replacing the Genevan eleven-line introduction.

The Apocrypha's treatment in the King James Bible differed markedly, as might be expected, from its Catholic competitor the Douai Old Testament (1609–10). Adhering to post-Tridentine orthodoxy, this professedly literal version depended first and foremost upon the Vulgate and it followed the Clementine Bible in declaring the Prayer of Manasses and 1 and 2 Esdras apocryphal (they were placed after 2 Maccabees, considered the last historical book of the Old Testament). Here justification for distinguishing between canonical and apocryphal books was provided by a brief prefatory note which maintained that only the Catholic Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, could affirm which books were divine scriptures.

Finally notice needs to be taken of the last and most comprehensive of the Polyglot Bibles. Beginning with the Prayer of Manasses and then following the sequence in the King James Bible, volume 4 of the London Polyglot Bible (1653–7) reproduced each book of the Apocrypha in most of the languages it was then known to be extant. Thus besides the Septuagint and Vulgate there were, for example, Syriac versions of 1 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, and Wisdom of Solomon; two forms of a Hebrew text of Tobit; and Arabic renderings of Wisdom and Sirach. Even so, 2 Esdras was reproduced only in Latin despite John Gregory's discovery of an important Arabic manuscript witness in the Bodleian Library.

## IV.  A Patchwork of Human Invention

Within the wider context of the rise of Elizabethan puritanism, the Apocrypha became a renewed source of religious controversy from the early 1570s. Partly this was an aspect

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[22]  On Bois's scholarship, see the chapter by Nicholas Hardy in this volume.
[23]  The KJB version of Tobit clearly depended upon the Geneva Bible translation.

of Calvinist responses to the Council of Trent, partly a feature of growing opposition within Presbyterian circles to the Book of Common Prayer. The orthodox Calvinist position was that the primitive church had been pure. Built on the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles it had subsequently become corrupted over the generations by intermeddling popes and councils. Among the godly, canonical scripture was sufficient for establishing rules of faith and virtuous conduct in daily life. Knowledge of extra-canonical texts—including the Apocrypha—was deemed unnecessary for attaining salvation, while certain unwritten traditions were judged contrary to God's immaculate word. Although some traditions were, as the Calvinist theologian William Perkins conceded, 'true and profitable', Protestants consistently objected against their use by the Catholic Church to supplement scripture.[24] As with the Apocrypha, these 'unwritten verities' were superfluous for confirming doctrine. To quote a preacher fulminating against post-Tridentine apologetics: 'Traditions are gathered of an evill egge: digge the Papists never so deep, they shall not find the myne nor spring of them in the Primitive Church.'[25]

Meanwhile 'popish abuses' embedded within the Prayer Book, including lessons taken from the Apocrypha, had proved a flashpoint in the major controversy between John Whitgift, future Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Cartwright, 'true progenitor of English Presbyterianism'.[26] The religious separatist Henry Barrow was yet more extreme, denouncing the Book of Common Prayer as a pregnant idol full of abominations and bitter fruit. Fuming against the Apocrypha's customary presence in church worship (a relic of Popery), he demanded if it were ever read, reverenced, and received as God's sacred word? For these writings, Barrow insisted, swarmed with 'unsufferable forgeries, lies and errors'.[27] He was not alone. Indeed, at the Hampton Court conference, John Rainolds voiced the concern of puritan delegates that by subscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles they would be endorsing the Prayer Book, and with it the lectionary and its chapters drawn from the Apocrypha—some of which, such as Sirach 48: 10, contained 'manifest errors, directly repugna[n]t to the scripture'.[28] King James somewhat agreed with this position, observing, in an unwitting endorsement of the Geneva Bible's marginalia, that although the books of Maccabees' account of Jewish persecution was instructive, their teaching on praying for the dead and seeking death in battle was mistaken.[29] Accordingly, a revised edition of the Prayer Book was issued (1604) to accommodate puritan sensibilities. This measure, however, failed to stifle criticism and despite the amendments dissenters protested that the Book of Common Prayer still gave 'too much honour' to the Apocrypha: about 104 of 172 chapters continued to be read publicly in church compared with only 592 of 779 canonical chapters of the Old Testament.[30]

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[24]  William Perkins, *A godlie and learned exposition upon the whole Epistle of Jude* (1606), 111.

[25]  Samuel Otes, *An Explanation of the Generall Epistle of Saint Jude* (1633), 309–11.

[26]  Patrick Collinson, 'Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603)', *ODNB*, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4820>.

[27]  Henry Barrow, *A Collection of Certaine Sclaunderous Articles Gyven out by the Bishops* (1590), F3ᵛ; Henry Barrow, *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church* (1590), 65–6, 76.

[28]  William Barlow, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference* (1605), 59–63.

[29]  Cf. Geneva Bible annotations to 2 Maccabees 12: 44, 14: 37–46.

[30]  *An Abridgement of that Booke Which the Ministers of Lincolne Diocese Delivered to His Majestie* (1617), 6–8; Samuel Hieron, *A Defence of the Ministers Reasons* (Amsterdam?, 1607), part 2, 115–17.

Rainolds himself had from the late 1580s frequently lectured at Oxford on the Apocrypha, directing his ire at the Jesuit Bellarmine. These 250 lectures were published posthumously as *Censura librorum apocryphorum veteris testamenti* (Oppenheim, 1611), a monumental work of erudition whose central arguments influenced various shades of Protestant thinking on the subject throughout the seventeenth century. Other contemporaries repeated Rainolds's complaint that these books sometimes contradicted both scripture and each other. Their grievances, moreover, were reminiscent of Jerome and Luther. 1 and 2 Esdras were dismissed as creditless works 'stuffed full of vayne fables, fitter to feede curious eares, then tending to edification'.[31] The History of Susanna was a 'lying story', Bel and the Dragon a fable, while the presence of Tobias's dog together with the exorcism of the evil spirit Asmodeus by means of burning a fish's heart and liver made Tobit an outlandish tale. Indeed, in the words of the separatist John Canne, these '*false, wicked,* and *abominable*' books contained a number of '*shamefull lies, horrible blasphemies, vaine vanities, plaine contradictions, ridiculous fooleries*', impieties, and fables that made them fitter for pagans than God's people.[32] Furthermore, since divinely inspired prophecy was believed to be absent from the Apocrypha there was nothing in them—with the crucial exception of 2 Esdras—that might be interpreted as prophesying Christ's coming and his kingdom. To quote John Rogers, renowned puritan preacher of Dedham, Essex, 'we finde no Testimony of our Savior Christ, Evangelist or Apostle, cited out of them'.[33]

It was the pseudonymous puritan pamphleteer Martin Marprelate, suspected to be either Job Throckmorton or his accomplice John Penry, who in 1589 appears to have first demanded that the Apocrypha be removed from the rest of the Bible. Despite Archbishop Whitgift's retort calling for such 'giddy heads' to be bridled (Penry was executed),[34] a 1599 edition of the Geneva Bible was bound without the Apocrypha between the Old and New Testaments. Then in December 1608, it was reported that some puritan bookbinders in Fetter Lane, London, were leaving the Apocrypha out of the Bible.[35] The practice must have spread for in 1615 Archbishop George Abbot threatened any stationer caught excising the Apocrypha from a published Bible with a year's imprisonment. Yet the risk was taken. Between 1616 and 1633 several editions of the King James Bible were printed lacking the Apocrypha, probably due to the growing demand for inexpensive, less cumbersome Bibles. And in December 1634 an apprentice London stationer denied, when questioned by ecclesiastical commissioners, that he had sold editions of the bible without the Apocrypha.[36]

Henry Burton would doubtless have welcomed these developments. An Independent minister famously persecuted by the Laudian church (his ears were cut off for libel and sedition) he likened the binding of the Apocrypha between the two Testaments to a blackamoor '*placed between two pure unspotted Virgins*'.[37] For the Hebraist John Lightfoot, inserting the Apocrypha between Malachi and Matthew placed an earthly barrier between two cherubim whose wings—unlike those inside the innermost room of the Jerusalem Temple

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[31] Andrew Willet, *Synopsis Papismi … Now This Second Time Perused and Published* (1594), 8.

[32] John Canne, *A Necessitie of Separation from the Church of England* (Amsterdam, 1634), 108–9.

[33] John Rogers, *A Godly & Fruitful Exposition upon All the First Epistle of Peter* (1650), 100.

[34] Thomas Cooper, *An Admonition to the People of England* (1589), 49.

[35] *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman McClure (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), i. 276 n. 1.

[36] John Bruce (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1634–35* (London: Longman, 1864), 355.

[37] Henry Burton, *A Replie to a Relation* (1640), 196–7.

(1 Kings 6: 27)—were prevented from touching. Preaching a fast sermon before the House of Commons in March 1643 he expressed his wish to see the Old and New Testaments joined 'sweetly and neerely' together. Thus 'divinely would they kisse each other', but 'the wretched *Apocrypha* doth thrust in betweene'. Not for him the typical contemporary recognition that these books, while ranking below the indisputable messianic truths of the Old Testament, still had edificatory value. Rather, Lightfoot insisted that this 'patchery of humane invention' was a direct precursor to the superstitious fables found in the Talmud (hitherto frequently burned at the behest of Popes and Inquisitions), written before an unsuspecting world became better acquainted with the vanity of Jewish learning and its impieties.[38] Similarly, in a tract provocatively entitled *Unholsome Henbane between Two Fragrant Roses* (1645) John Vicars marvelled at the 'ill misplacing' of the most vile, vicious, erroneous, and unholy apocryphal writings in English Bibles. Comparing them to the noxious weed darnel infesting a wheatfield, he urged the Westminster Assembly of Divines to expunge this 'uncomely and corrupt' piece of '*patcherie*' from the Bible.[39] More moderate in tone if not puritan sentiment, Edward Leigh, biblical exegete and MP for Stafford, also hoped in a work dedicated to Parliament and licensed June 1646 that the Apocrypha would be expurgated from the Bible and no longer read in church; an appeal shortly answered.[40]

In 1640 a Geneva Bible had been printed at Amsterdam, probably for members of the English Reformed church there, which deliberately omitted the section dedicated to the Apocrypha (the Prayer of Manasses, however, was retained since it was appended to 2 Chronicles). It contained after Malachi an admonition 'to the Christian reader' explaining that these were neither divinely inspired books nor accepted as such by Jews and hence uncanonical. This justification was translated from an introduction to the Apocrypha in a recently published Dutch Bible (Amsterdam, 1637), a preamble itself sanctioned by proceedings at the ninth and tenth sessions of the Synod of Dort (November 1618). Such a bold step would have been hazardous in England during the Laudian ascendancy. Yet with the parliamentary dissolution of the ecclesiastical Court of High Commission (July 1641) and then the abolition of episcopacy (October 1646), the Westminster Assembly, which had been initially commissioned by Parliament in June 1643 to revise doctrine, liturgy, and church government, confronted the issue. Their Confession of Faith was drafted by committee, debated, amended, and approved, presented to the House of Commons (September 1646), discussed there, and the Assembly's advice licensed for publication (December 1646). A final version incorporating scriptural proofs in the margins was eventually authorized by both Houses of Parliament (21 June 1648). Replacing the Thirty-Nine Articles with Thirty-One Articles of Christian Religion, the first chapter concerning 'Holy Scripture' resolved that:

> The Books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of Divine inspiration, are no part of the Canon of the Scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other humane Writings.[41]

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[38]  John Lightfoot, *Erubhin* (1629), 116–17; John Lightfoot, *Elias Redivivus* (1643), 5–6.
[39]  John Vicars, *Unholsome Henbane* (1645), 1, 8.
[40]  Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of Divinity* (1646), 83–91, 90.
[41]  *Articles of Christian Religion* (1648), 4; *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms* (1649), 4. It is noteworthy that a 1648 edition of the King James Bible printed for the London Stationers' Company purposefully omitted the Apocrypha.

Another of the Westminster Assembly's significant outputs was a Directory for Public Worship, which replaced the Book of Common Prayer in January 1645. First proposed, like the Confession of Faith, by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Directory decreed that the Apocrypha was not to be read publicly. At a stroke the smouldering resentment puritan ministers had felt at being obliged to deliver what they considered a number of unscriptural daily lessons to their congregations, was extinguished. But in the wake of the restoration of the monarchy came a restored prayer book. Following the Savoy Conference a revised Book of Common Prayer (1662) was issued which added more readings from the Apocrypha to the lectionary, spanning from 28 September to 24 November. Many nonconformist ministers baulked at this prospect, objecting especially to the stories of Tobias's dog, Bel and the dragon, and Judith and Baruch, 'which they found the most celebrated bishops and doctors of the church owning to be false and fictitious'.[42] All the same, in a spirit of accommodation Richard Baxter suggested that, while it was not ordinarily lawful to read lessons from the Apocrypha, it was still permissible—with certain provisos—to draw upon these manifestly untruthful and fabulous books publicly. After William III's accession revisions to the prayer book were mooted as one of the means of reconciling Protestant dissenters to the new regime. These would have included substituting the apocryphal lessons with chapters chiefly from Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. But nothing came of this proposal and substantial alterations were not undertaken until 1867, when the number of apocryphal daily lessons was drastically reduced.

## V. Conclusion

Unfortunately lack of space does not permit a full discussion of the Apocrypha's wider impact on early modern English literature, drama, art, music, and indeed religious culture. Still, it is worth mentioning in passing that various apocryphal books were rendered into English or Latin verse by, among others, the preacher and reputed Geneva Bible collaborator John Pulleyne, the clergyman James Calfhill, the surgeon John Hall, the playwright Anthony Munday, the poet Robert Whitehall, and another clergyman Thomas Warton, while John Milton alluded to Tobit when writing of 'Asmodeus with the fishy fume' and describing Raphael as a 'sociable spirit', the 'affable archangel' (*Paradise Lost*, 4.166–71, 5.220–3, 7.40–1). On stage, much as the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (c.600) had provided the basis for the fourteenth-century mystery play the *Harrowing of Hell* (Corpus Christi cycle), so Judith's encounter with Holofernes was performed at Derby (1572) and Bartholomew Fair (c.1721).[43] Then there is William Shakespeare, whose two daughters Susanna and Judith shared their names with figures from the Apocrypha. Evidently he used a Bible bound with these books since his plays contain numerous allusions to them: Portia's 'The quality of mercy is not strain'd / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven', for example, and Shylock's exclamation

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[42] Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformist's Memorial*, ed. Samuel Palmer (London: Button & Son, 1802–3), i. 42.

[43] Judith and Holofernes also inspired dramatic treatments by Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas (c.1574) as well as several German playwrights; notably Georg Wickram (1539), Cornelius Schonaeus (1592), Martin Behm (1618), and Friedrich Hebbel (1840).

'A Daniel come to judgment!'; referencing first, Sirach 35: 20, and second, young Daniel's rescue of the virtuous Susanna from false witnesses (*Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.184–6, 223–4).

As one of the female Jewish worthies Judith—along with Deborah, Esther, and Jael—was a model of courage in adversity, a heroine who resisted tyranny by seducing and then decapitating Holofernes. Queens were compared to her: Mary of England, Mary of Guise at her funeral, and Elizabeth, notably in John Aylmer's defence of government by a woman, and at a pageant on entering Norwich in August 1578. 'Judith with the head of Holofernes' was also portrayed by continental Protestant artists such as Hans Baldung (c.1525) and Lucas Cranach the elder (1530), yet in England, besides sixteenth-century tapestries woven at various workshops, the subject seems to have received little attention until William Hogarth depicted it as the frontispiece to William Huggins's *Judith: an Oratorio; or, Sacred Drama* (1733).

Likewise, scenes from Tobit inspired works by Adam Elsheimer, Wenceslaus Hollar, Rembrandt, and Titian, but not their English Protestant contemporaries. The same can be said of Flemish representations of 1 Esdras, which lacked an English counterpart. Again, whereas Edward I's Painted Chamber in the royal palace at Westminster had featured a cycle of murals (1292–7) devoted to the Maccabees—imagery which probably mirrored the King's aspiration for another crusade—the extremely rare references to the Maccabees as holy warriors in the rhetoric of Parliamentarian Civil War sermons or indeed the absence of apposite quotations from these books in *The Souldiers Pocket Bible* (1643) is noteworthy. There is a similarly silent interlude when it comes to the Apocrypha and music. Although verses 35–66 of the Song of the Three Holy Children were converted into a canticle ('Benedicite, omnia opera') sung at morning prayers, it was not until the Hanoverian period that composers began returning to the Apocrypha for inspiration.

Just as the Apocrypha began receiving renewed cultural attention in Hanoverian England so it is equally significant that critical commentaries on the majority of these books were not published until the mid-eighteenth century. Hitherto, they had been treated summarily in introductions to the Bible, had been belatedly incorporated in concordances, and had also been selectively paraphrased. As might be expected, the Apocrypha were occasionally cited and quoted in sermons and a variety of other works by moderate churchmen throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries. What is striking, however, is their near total disappearance from the texts of religious radicals; unless it was to repudiate content, caution against misuse, or draw historical parallels.

Hence John Bunyan was unusual in deriving spiritual comfort from a passage in the uncanonical Sirach, while Diggers and Ranters appear to have shown little familiarity with the Apocrypha.[44] Moreover, Quakers seldom referred to these books: there are only scattered mentions of Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Bel and the Dragon, and Maccabees, as well as an untypical citation of 2 Esdras foretelling the suffering of the Lord's chosen people. Indeed, several notable Quakers seemed ostensibly more interested in other extra-canonical texts such as the book of Enoch and the forged Pauline epistle to the Laodiceans. Among them were James Nayler (who provocatively wore his hair long and centre-parted in imitation of Publius Lentulus' spurious description of Christ) and the controversialist Samuel Fisher. Fisher defended Quakers from the calumny that they slighted the scriptures by highlighting

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[44]   John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding* (1666), 17–18.

at enormous discursive length the Bible's inherent flaws, stressing that the creation of the biblical canon had been an arbitrary process. Suggestively, the Irish freethinker John Toland later adopted a similar polemical strategy.

Yet there was one apocryphal book that received consistent attention, a work that neither Jews, post-Tridentine Catholics, nor the Church of England accepted as canonical, namely 'the *Apocrypha* of the *Apocrypha*', 2 Esdras.[45] This Jewish apocalypse was extensively studied by Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, and Familists alike, its central vision of an eagle rising from the sea with twelve feathered wings and three heads variously understood as a portent of the destruction of the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, or the papacy. Other verses concerning the whereabouts of the ten tribes of Israel were interpreted as foretelling the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and the deliverance of the church from Antichrist. But as the reception of this composite text with its Christian additions and interpolations has been thoroughly documented, it is best now to conclude.[46]

Broadly speaking, in Protestant England the 'Hebrew verity' ultimately triumphed over both unwritten verities and the Septuagint. Consequently, the Apocrypha's influence when compared with that of the canonical books of the Old Testament was marginal. Nevertheless, that is not where its importance lies. For in addition to its wider religious and cultural impact, the Apocrypha's presence in the Bible and the lectionary prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer was a perennial grievance for dissenters from the Elizabethan Reformation to the Glorious Revolution.

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[45] Thomas Fuller, *A Pisgah-Sight of Palestine* (1650), v. 192.

[46] See Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse*.

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