

Pseudepigrapha

What We Believe — Scripture

A question that has been asked for centuries, but has gained more attention since 1947, is "What about the lost books of the Bible?" The only scriptural answer to that question is, "There are no lost books of the Bible!" We might add that no books were removed from the Bible, nor is any text missing from the 66 books of our modern Bibles. Every word that God intended to be in the Bible is in the Bible. There have been and still are many legends and tales of books that were lost or destroyed, but, in each case, they were not. Instead of being lost or destroyed, they were rejected as not being inspired by God.

Many definitions are needed to fully understand what is and is not scripture. The collection of texts that make up the Bible is referred to as the **canon of scripture**. Most questions of what texts belong in the canon of scripture are solved by defining where they came from, who wrote them, and what was the purpose in writing. Only two primary words that describe the texts excluded from the Bible are discussed briefly in this article. The two are Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

The adjective "apocryphal" describes things like legends and anecdotes that are purported to be confirmed through repetition but have never been proven or verified. Therefore, they are most likely not factual. Both "Apocrypha" and "apocryphal" come from the Latin form of the Greek verb *apokryptein*, meaning "to hide away," from "*kryptein*" (meaning "to hide"). In modern usage, apocryphal writings profess to reveal knowledge hidden from all but a select few. The Greek name for our Book of Revelation is *Apokalupsis*, or the revealing of knowledge God wants His children to know. It is about spiritual things we cannot know, but that are revealed to the world through John's visions. In the study of religious writings, the term "Apocrypha" refers to texts not authorized as belonging to the canon of scripture. However, the Old Testament Apocrypha appear between the Old and New Testaments in some Bible versions. In more general use, the word refers to writings or statements whose origin is in doubt.

The noun "Pseudepigrapha" refers to pseudonymous writings, texts written by someone other than the named author. These writings are different from modern books authored by someone using a pseudonym. A pseudonym is a known name used by a known individual. The pseudepigrapha authors are unknown. They are primarily Jewish and Greek philosophical writings ascribed to various biblical patriarchs and prophets but composed within approximately 200 years of the birth of Jesus Christ. The primary purpose in writing them was to deny the deity of Jesus and replace miracles with natural events. The authors of pseudepigrapha aimed to destroy or cause doubts about the spiritual realm and the God of Heaven.

Between 200 BCE (Before the Christian Era) and 200 CE (Christian Era), thousands of religious books and papers appeared. Most were written during times of great trouble and persecution and provided encouragement and comfort to the people. Some give a history of the times like 1 Maccabees but do not follow the format of the Jewish scrolls. A book titled "Wisdom of Solomon" gives teaching based on scripture but was written years after Solomon, and New Testament writers do not reference it. There are letters written to friends and relatives that contain short quotations from scripture as encouragement and testimony of what the author learned. However, there is no way to prove that God inspired these texts. They fall into the literature category of religious fiction, as do modern novels written by Tessa Afshar, Angela Hunt, or Janette Oke. If we read any of these

books, old or modern, we have to treat them as fallible human-generated works and not as the inspired, inerrant Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Although the late pseudepigraphical writings for both Old and New Testaments contain many exaggerations and lies, most built their myths and fabrications on things the writer saw or passages taken from inspired writings. A study of the Apocrypha reveals that eastern mysticism from China, Tibet, Persia, or Babylon influenced the retelling of the events or sayings. The difference in thoughts and quotations found in them compared to text in our Bible can give us insight into the errors opposing God's servants in Bible times. Such a study can give us even greater confidence in the story of Israel and Jesus, which is in our Bible. As the pseudepigraphical writings rephrase, paraphrase, and contradict a clear passage of scripture, we can see that they were composed after the inspired text had been circulated, proving that the Bible text is the original, accurate, and inspired version. However, there is little to learn from most of these later texts, and we can trust none of them as containing truth.

A rare exception is a quotation from the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch (Jude 1:14-15). However, Enoch also contains "The Book of the Watcher," which tells the story of fallen angels that took wives, created the Nephilim, and taught advanced technology to mankind, ultimately leading to the great flood and their destruction. It may be that Enoch was a real person who prophesied and is quoted by Jude, the writer of the pseudepigraphical book, however, uses that one quote along with errors in the remaining content.