

**DEUTEROCANONICAL BOOKS
INTRODUCTION TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX
CHURCH ARABIC VERSION**

**By
Dr. Murad Kamel**

PROLOGUE,

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

- 1- **Tobias**
- 2- **Judith**
- 3- **sequel of Esther**
- 4- **the wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon)**
- 5- **Wisdom of Joshua son of Sirach**
- 6- **Baroukh**
- 7- **sequel of the Book of Daniel**
- 8- **Macabees first and second**
- 9- **(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 categorized into two main sections:

E The first section is **the first Canonical Books "PROTOKANONA"**.

E 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 recognized them throughout the ages.

Based on the recognized categorization, **the Books of the Old Testament (after adding to them the second canonical books "Deuterocanonia') are divided as follows:**

1- TORAH: It comprises the five books of Moses that 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 (Ch13: 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, and 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 Augustine 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 protocananica and the deuterocononica books. We must not forget that although Abe 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 make 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 Deuterocanonica, 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 deuterocanonica 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 protocanonica. As to those fathers who made no mention of these books with the protocanonica, they were expressing an individual opinion only and they made it clear that church organizations 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 Augustine, this Council announced that whoever does not accept the books referred to, and whoever does not recognize their authenticity (as they were read in the Catholic church and were, The "Vulgata" 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 that 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 i.e. 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.