Dr. David DeSilva, Apocrypha, Lecture 9, Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon

This is Dr. David DeSilva in his teaching on the Apocrypha. This is session 9, The Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon.

We come in our last lecture in this series to consider the question of the place of the Apocrypha in the Christian Canon and in the Christian Church.

I hope that by this point, I've made a good case for the value of the Apocrypha as Jewish literature. In this lecture, I merely want to survey the place of the Apocrypha in various Christian canons and the rationales for the decisions made by one party or another. And I'd like to start by considering the place of the Apocrypha in the Jewish Bible.

Judaism doesn't seem to have had the same discussions about these books that the Christian Church has had for centuries. They were almost never considered for scriptural authority or what have you. However, by the time the early Christian movement got started, there were as yet no actual official statements about the canon of scripture in the Jewish community.

That is to say, while the early Christians inherited scriptures from the synagogue, they did not inherit a closed canon from the synagogue. Now, let's think just a little bit together about the emergence of canon in the Jewish community. As I mentioned, there's no record of internal discussions about canon that begin to reach the level of vigor, specificity, and rigor of Christian canonical debates of either the 3rd and 4th centuries or the Reformation period.

However, by, say, the 2nd century BC, we already begin to see broad references to the major groupings within an emerging Jewish canon. For example, in the 2 Maccabees and just like in the Gospel of Matthew, we find reference frequently to the law and the prophets as a way of talking about the collection of authoritative texts that define and guide the Jewish community. In some books, we find a three-part description of this body of literature.

For example, in the Prologue to Ben Sirah, Ben Sirah's grandson, in about 132 BC, talks about the law, the prophets, and the other books of our ancestors. Kind of a three-part division, which is mirrored somewhat in Luke 24 when Jesus talks about all that was written about him in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms as perhaps the single most important representative of the other books in terms of the worship life of Israel. Now, there's a clear consensus without any debate, without any discussion,

about the authority of the first of these categories, the Torah or the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses.

There also seems to be no debate about the authority of the major and the minor prophets, by which I mean Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. Those prophets that we tend to talk of as the minor prophets but were already a group of twelve by Ben Sirah's time, as he refers to them in Ben Sirah 49:10. It's likely that when Jews speak of the law and the prophets, they are referring not merely to what Christians label the prophetic books, but also the historical books, which Jews have historically referred to as the earlier prophets. As I've just mentioned, a third division of scriptures, the other books, was also recognized, but its boundaries were not nearly so clearly defined at the turn of the era.

And this is where we'll see that where there is debate, this is where the debate tends to happen. Now, some Jewish groups appear to have drawn a narrow circle around their scriptures, like the Samaritans, for whom the Torah appears to have been primary. That's not to say they didn't read the prophets, but the Torah was the core canon.

Other groups of Jews appear to have drawn a wider circle than we would expect. For example, the community at Qumran refers to books like First Enoch and Jubilees as authoritative texts, and they treat them just as they do what we would call the canonical scriptures. As an aside, Jude, the letter of Jude, interestingly, recites a passage from First Enoch and expects that to carry weight as an authoritative text with his hearers.

By the end of the first century AD, however, an understanding of a closed body of sacred books was clearly emerging within Judaism. Josephus writes, for example, in his kind of apology for the Jewish way of life against Apion, he writes, for we have only 22 books which contain all the records, sorry, which contain the records of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine. Five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of humankind until Moses' death.

The prophets who were after Moses wrote down what was done in their times in 13 books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. Now, immediately, you might be thinking, 22 books? I thought there were 37.

Josephus and his peers enumerate these books differently than we do. For example, the 12 minor prophets aren't 12 books. They are one scroll, the scroll of the 12.

So, they count as one book in the midst of these 22. And 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, even if they occupy two scrolls, they are counted as one book. So, Josephus,

we can account for most of our canonical Old Testament in Josephus' 22, although perhaps not two of the writings, perhaps not Esther and Ecclesiastes.

The author of 4 Ezra, 2 Ezra 3-14, refers to 24 inspired books that may be read by the worthy and the unworthy alike. And if we allow 24, then we basically have all the 37 books into which we divide the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible. At about the same time, at the end of the first century, the early rabbis only feel the need to make pronouncements in their writings about the authority of a few books.

In these pronouncements, we find affirmations about Esther and Ecclesiastes, but we deny the status of sacred scripture to the wisdom of Ben Sirach. What this basically tells us is that by the end of the first century, there really weren't a lot of debates going on. And these may be the only debated books.

Actually, we have to add Song of Songs because in the second century, that's still being debated in some rabbinic texts. So, these four would be the only really debated books, with a few people maybe pushing for Ben Sirach to be included. And with a few people pushing for Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs to be set aside.

Why decide against Ben Sirach and other such books while deciding on Esther and Ecclesiastes and the like? It seems to be, I mean, in terms of what's actually explicated in the literature, it seems to be the conviction that the prophetic voice no longer spoke after the rebuilding of the second temple was complete. So, with the work of prophets like Haggai, the prophetic voice ceased. You know, that last push to complete the building of the second temple and what have you.

And, of course, Ecclesiastes, being a tribute to Solomon, makes it in because it is regarded as a ninth-century B.C. text. And Esther is regarded as a Persian period text. So, they're early enough to have come along while the prophetic voice was still active.

Josephus, in the same book against Apion, bears witness to this as the primary rationale. Our history has indeed been written since Artaxerxes in a very precise manner but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forebears because there's not been an exact succession of prophets since the time of Artaxerxes. So, despite the fact that texts continue to be produced and bear witness to the sacred history of Israel after the Persian period, these books don't receive the same esteem because the prophetic voice has ceased.

You could also turn to several texts in 1 Maccabees for evidence that we are waiting for a prophet to come to give us instructions, but we don't have these regularly. In a rabbinic text, we find the same sort of chronological argument. The book of Ben Sirah and all books written from that point on do not defile the hands.

So, there's kind of this temporal sense. After a certain point, the prophetic voice has ceased. Should just mention here that the rabbinic literature uses a counterintuitive metaphor for talking about canonicity.

The books that are sacred defile the hands. What they actually communicate is holiness, but that's still something you've got to deal with before moving on to the next chore. Books that are not canonical don't defile the hands.

Now, a growing consensus in regard to a closed canon does not mean that Jews stop reading, valuing, or even esteeming texts outside of that canon. As we've already discussed, Ben Sirah is cited in rabbinic literature almost a hundred times. Sometimes, he's cited by name.

Sometimes, his material is cited, not by name. Sometimes, his material is recited as if it were coming from Proverbs. An unusual mistake for rabbis to make, but it happens.

Nonetheless, he continues to be a valued conversation partner, and even after the decision is made, it's just an ordinary book. It remains a book by a sage worth reading. And then we have this testimony from 2nd Esdras, which we've already encountered in our survey of all the books of the Apocrypha.

94 scrolls are written down within the 40 days after Esra drinks this fiery concoction, which obviously receives divine inspiration. So, he reconstitutes the 24 canonical books, but he also dictates another 70 books, which are to be read only by the worthy or the wise among the people. These extra-canonical books won't carry weight with ordinary Jews, but they continue to be read by this esoteric group, out of which the book of 4th Esra emerges.

This esoteric group considers itself to be the wise among the people. Now, as we think about the Jewish canon, I just feel it necessary to spend a brief amount of time thinking about the myth of the Alexandrian canon. This is a myth that's going away.

But one can still find in books the idea that Alexandrian Jews had a much wider canon than Palestinian Jews. One finds this especially among Greek Orthodox authors. They do not have to profile here, but it just happens that they think that their canon is based on an Alexandrian Jewish canon.

The myth is that what we find in the so-called Septuagint of the 4th and 5th-century Christian church is the same as the Septuagint that Greek-speaking Jews used at the time of Christ. This just results from confusion about the meaning of the term itself. Yes, we do talk about Septuagint in the 1st century BC.

But by Septuagint there, we mean the Greek translation of the Torah that happened about 250 BC, and eventually the Greek translation of the prophets and the writings. But we do not, therefore, mean everything that appears in the Septuagint as that is known in the Christian church in the great manuscripts, Codex Sinaiticus, and what have you, the 4th and 5th century bound Bibles of the early Christian church. The contents of the latter are no evidence for what Alexandrian Jews held to be canonical prior to the Christian era or after the Christian era, for that matter.

Instead, all the evidence that we have from a Philo of Alexandria, for example, suggests that they never went beyond what would be called the Hebrew Bible in terms of their sense of the boundaries of scripture. What does all of this have to do with the Christian canon? Well, first, yes, the church certainly inherited a body of authoritative scriptures, but the church was born too early to have inherited a closed list of scriptures from the synagogue as a given. Also, I think it's relevant that the early church was eagerly looking for a larger body of texts in which it saw its own distinctive faith, hope, and ethos reflected and supported.

Obviously, the Christian canon is going to be much fatter than the Jewish canon because we adopt the letters of Paul, the Gospels, the letters of the other apostles, and the like. And the early church craves this kind of literature. It inherits a certain body of scriptures, but the letters of Paul very quickly emerge as authoritative, helpful, foundational, and hence eventually canonical, writings for this new group.

The early church also, in this kind of quest for those texts that fed our identity, came to assign high authority to other Jewish texts beyond those of the New Testament that also did not enjoy equal esteem with the sacred scriptures in the Jewish community. Now, we've already dealt somewhat with the question of the use of the Apocrypha in the earliest churches. Did Jesus and his earliest followers regard Ben Sera, Wisdom of Solomon, or Tobit, for example, as part of their scriptures, part of a canon of sacred texts? And our answer has to be, probably not, since they never recite a passage from an Apocryphal book with a citation formula like it is written, or as the Spirit says, or with some other such introductory formula attributing authority to this material from the Apocrypha as coming from the scripture.

However, the unmistakable imprint of some of the Apocryphal writings on the New Testament writings shows that Jesus, Paul, and other apostolic period voices valued their contents as resources for ethics, reflection on God, and other matters. And I would say that as the early church developed, and here we're looking more to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, valuing the Apocryphal books alongside scripture, and even in many cases as scripture, was a distinctly Christian phenomenon. Christians of the 2nd and 3rd centuries no doubt recognized the influence of the Wisdom of Ben Sera in the Gospels, in the Letter of James.

And so, they concluded, maybe I should know the Wisdom of Ben Sera. Maybe I should familiarize myself with this, which exercised some impact on our foundational documents. They also found Apocryphal books, the books of what we now call the Apocrypha, to be helpful resources in their own struggles.

For example, the martyr stories of 2nd and 4th Maccabees, as we already explored. And so this is first-rate, go-to inspirational literature when we, as the emerging church, are facing our most serious challenges. And the early church remains aware that the Jewish community doesn't accept these texts as scripture.

So, we actually find ongoing debates from the earliest centuries on about how to use these books that come to be labeled by Protestants, Apocrypha. Do we accept the Jewish definition of canon? Or do we not? Since obviously, we didn't accept their definition of canon with regard to Jesus and the Apostles. Do we find our own way, and what have you? So, one of the important questions that emerges in this debate, and this is probably the more conservative question among the two, is which text of a particular book should function as the canonical form of that book in the Christian church, the Greek form or the Hebrew form? This question already covers then the additions to Daniel, the larger version of Esther, and oddly enough, Baruch and Letter of Jeremiah, which were almost uniformly considered additions to Jeremiah.

And so, kind of part of the Jeremiahic corpus, if you will. The Greek form, hence the fatter form of these bodies of literature, was supported and used by such authoritative figures as Irenaeus in his Against Heresies, or Hippolytus in his Commentary on Daniel, because he comments on all 14 chapters, not just 12 chapters. And even by Athanasius in his famous 39th Festal Letter, which is the go-to text for early documentation of the New Testament canon.

But that same Festal Letter talks about the Old Testament canon as well. Oddly enough, Athanasius is reserved about apocryphal books like Wisdom of Solomon and Wisdom of Ben Sirah. He promotes their use, but not their equal status, with Isaiah and Deuteronomy.

But at the same time, he promotes specifically the Greek texts of Daniel and Esther, hence the additions to Daniel, the additions to Esther, and what have you. A challenge to this practice was posed by a Christian scholar named Julius Africanus during the early 3rd century. The challenge probably arose because he spent some time living and learning in Judea.

He was exposed to Jewish practice, Jewish texts, and text types of these books there. He wrote to the origin questioning whether or not those parts of Daniel that aren't in the Hebrew text ought to bear any weight in the Christian church. And origin gives him a spirited response, to say the least.

Origin is the head of a catechetical school in Alexandria. He himself is a scholar of Hebrew. He knows well the Hebrew text tradition of the scriptures and how it differs from the Greek text tradition.

But he writes in response to Africanus. And so, when we notice such differences as the ones you've posed, are we immediately to reject as corrupted the versions of scripture used in our churches? And urge the Christian fellowship to throw away the sacred books they currently use. And to petition the Jews, persuading them to give us copies which shall be allegedly unaltered and free from forgery? Are we to think that the same providence, which is provided for the edification of all the churches of Christ by means of the holy scriptures, took no care for those redeemed with a price? Those for whom Christ died? Whom though God's Son, God who is love spared not, but gave him up for us all? That with him God might freely give us all things? In these cases, consider whether it would not be good to remember the words, and you shall not remove the ancient landmarks that your fathers set. So, Origen lays down in no uncertain terms that Africanus is wrong to make this challenge.

And he uses two arguments. On the one hand, the Christian churches have been using now for centuries the Greek texts of Daniel and of Esther. And it's wrong now to change that practice.

Remove the landmarks that your fathers have set. But he also pulls out this theological argument and raises the question. Now, let me get this straight.

The Jews who don't believe in Christ, you think, are going to have better text types than we who have believed in Christ, who have accepted this incredible gift and price that God's Son paid for us. Are we to suppose that the God who so loved us to give us his Son didn't also take some thought for the kind of scripture text type we should have, and should be using in our churches? This argument largely settles the question for Christian churches. And there aren't a lot more debates than about whether we should be using Hebrew Daniel versus Greek Daniel, Hebrew Esther versus Greek Esther.

There will be some, but not nearly as many as keep posing the second question. Is the Jewish canon determinative for the Christian canon of the Old Testament? Leaving aside the fact that the Christian church already embraces 27 books of scripture that the synagogue does not. And we do find a number of important early church fathers promoting a shorter Old Testament canon.

Even while some of these fathers promote the longer text of some of the books of the Hebrew canon, so in the late second century, Melito of Sardis presented his list of the Old Testament books, which correspond with the modern Protestant canon, minus Esther, as a fruit of his study in Palestine. As he puts it, in the very spot, or

maybe where, as Eusebius puts it, in the very spot where these things were proclaimed and took place.

A century after Origen, Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, attempted to promote the same shorter Old Testament list, now including Esther. Again, the additions to Daniel and Greek Esther, Baruch, and Letter of Jeremiah are included. He writes about the canon in his famous, festal letter.

There are other books besides these, not indeed included in the canon but appointed by the fathers to be read by those who newly join us and who wish for instruction in the word of godliness. The Wisdom of Solomon and the wisdom of Sirach and Esther and Judith and Tobit and that which is called the Teaching of the Apostles, which we know as the Didache and the shepherd of Hermas. But the former, that is to say, all the listed canonical books, the former, my brethren, are included in the canon, the latter being merely read.

Nor is there any mention of apocryphal writings in any place. And I hasten to add here that by apocryphal writings, he obviously doesn't mean the ones he just listed, Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. He's talking about New Testament apocrypha, Gnostic gospels like the Gospel of Thomas or extraneous acts of the apostles like the acts of Paul and Thecla.

So here what we find is that position that would reemerge in the Reformation of a shorter, a delineation of a shorter Old Testament canon, but the ongoing promotion of the reading of these extra books, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Sirach, et cetera, as useful literature that edifies, but simply doesn't possess the authority of canonical scripture. The greatest champion of the Hebrew version of a shorter Old Testament canon and the Hebrew text type of canonical books was Jerome, a fourth-century scholar and bishop. Jerome learned Hebrew in Palestine from a rabbi.

He produced his Latin translation that would come to be known as the Vulgate Bible, based largely on the Hebrew texts to the extent possible. He noted and marked the differences between the Greek and the Hebrew versions of Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah, even though he provided a translation of the whole thing. He also designated the books that we call Apocrypha as ecclesiastical books.

Again, he translated them but marked them off as a second order of books. Ecclesiastical meaning is valued in the Christian Church, properly read in churches, and used as edifying resources, but a second order of books. Now, Augustine strongly disagreed with his contemporary Jerome.

He named Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, the Wisdom of Ben Sirach, and the Wisdom of Solomon, which he also ascribed to Ben Sirach for some reason, among the books of the Old Testament, following the practice of the majority of

Christians in the Western Church, among whom these books had gained recognition as being authoritative. Augustine's position was affirmed in the list of books to be read in the church under the title of Divine Scripture, drawn up by the bishops that were gathered together at the Council of Carthage in 397 AD. The additions to Daniel and Esther, incidentally, though not specifically mentioned by Augustine or in this list, are naturally included because it's the Greek text type of Daniel and Esther that is used in the West.

In the Eastern Church, Origen's own teacher, Clement of Alexandria, regarded Wisdom of Solomon and the wisdom of Ben Sirach as scripture. And John Chrysostom, who's a towering divine in the Greek Orthodox Church, affirmed Tobit, Judith, Ben Sirach, and wisdom, in addition to the Greek texts of Daniel and Esther, and possibly the additions to Jeremiah, as canonical scripture as well. Another kind of evidence for canon comes from the fourth and fifth-century Bibles, the bound codices, the bound codex of the Bible.

And nothing says canon like a front and a back cover, delimiting what would be included. But even here, we find remarkable variation between the three surviving codices from the fourth and fifth centuries. Codex Sinaiticus includes first Esdras, Tobit, Judith, first and fourth Maccabees, the wisdom of Solomon and Ben Sirach.

All of these, incidentally, preserve the longer forms and hence the additions to Daniel and Esther. But, you see, there's variety among the extra books between all three of these. Codex Vaticanus will include first Esdras, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Ben Sirach, Judith, Tobit, Baruch, and the letter of Jeremiah, but not the books of the Maccabees.

Codex Alexandrinus includes Baruch, the letter of Jeremiah, Tobit, Judith, the first Esdras, all four books of the Maccabees, as well as Psalm 151 and Prayer of Manasseh, within a kind of hymnal supplement that shows up right after Psalms called the Odes. This is a collection of biblical and, to some extent, extra-biblical hymns for use in the church. I say extra-biblical, I mean Psalm 151 and Prayer of Manasseh.

Now, two of these codices even include some additional New Testament books. For example, Sinaiticus is included in an appendix, which says something like Epistle of Barnabas and Shepherd of Hermas. Alexandrinus adds First and Second Clement after the Book of Revelation.

And according to the Table of Contents, although it's missing now, it once included Psalms of Solomon. Not wisdom, but Psalms of Solomon in an appendix to the New Testament. Now, clearly, it's not suggesting a fatter New Testament canon, because these look like appendices.

But the apocryphal books that I've mentioned are all interspersed among the Old Testament. So, what we have here is evidence of still an amorphous Old Testament in this period. There's an ongoing question of the extent of the Old Testament canon, all the way up to the Reformation in the Catholic Church itself.

For example, Gregory the Great, John of Damascus, Hugh of St. Victor, Nicholas of Lyra, and even Cardinal Thomas Cajetan, who was a famous opponent of Martin Luther, argued against treating the apocryphal books as part of and equal to the narrower Old Testament canon. In the East, Gregory Nazianzus would argue for a shorter Old Testament canon, even while he preaches the texts of the Apocrypha. Now, what is not questioned at any point throughout this period is the value of the apocryphal books for informing Christians, providing models of piety and faithfulness, and otherwise supplementing the religious and ethical knowledge to be gained from those books that are accepted universally throughout the Christian Church as useful.

We come at this point then to think about the Apocrypha and the Reformation. The reformers' principle of sola scriptura, Scripture alone, asserting the authority of Scripture above the rulings of church councils, popes, scholastic theology, and tradition, as the ultimate norm by which Christian doctrine and practice were to be evaluated, prioritized settling the question once for all, what constitutes Scripture? Where are the limits? The classical reformers are aware of the historical debate concerning the Apocrypha. And, as we've already noted in our march through the Apocrypha, there are some specifically problematic texts within the Apocrypha.

We looked at Tobit 4 and what it has to say about works of mercy, laying up a treasury for oneself with the Most High, which becomes a text that is used to support the idea that we can have works of merit with God. And even that, we can build up a treasury of merit that other people can draw upon to help them before God. We looked at 2 Maccabees 12:43 to 45, which becomes a text used to support prayers and offerings on behalf of the dead.

What we find, though, among all the first-generation reformers is not the rejection of the Apocrypha but a moderation of the use of these texts. The reformers themselves continued to exhibit high regard for these texts. For example, Martin Luther takes the trouble to translate the books of what he considers to be now the apocrypha as part of his efforts to create a German Bible.

But he places them, including the additions to Daniel and the additions to Esther, which he separates out now from the books of Daniel and Esther in the Old Testament. He places them in a separate section between the Testaments, where, frankly, they belong chronologically. From his preface to this new section, this first printed apocrypha, if you will, between the Testaments, he writes, These are books that, though not esteemed like the Holy Scriptures, are still both useful and good to

read. If we look at some of the other prefaces that he writes to particular books among the Apocrypha, we see other instances of his specific commendation and valuing of the books of the Apocrypha, in effect telling his Lutherans to keep reading them.

From his preface to Wisdom of Solomon, we read, There are many good things in it, and it is well worth reading. This book is a good exposition and example of the first commandment. That is the main reason why this book is to be read: so that one may learn to fear and trust God, so that he may help us by his grace.

I just had this thought for promoting the apocrypha. On the back, I'm going to have a list of endorsements now, and it'll be well worth reading, Martin Luther. From Luther's preface to First Maccabees, we read this commendation.

This book is one of those that do not form part of the Hebrew Bible, but its words and discourses are almost as enlightening as those of the other books of Holy Scripture. And it would not have been wrong to count it as such because it is a very necessary and useful book, as witnessed by the prophet Daniel in the 11th chapter. For this reason, it is also useful for us Christians to read and know it.

Luther there very rightly points out that if we're going to make proper sense of Daniel 11, we need to know a lot more about intertestamental history because Daniel 11 follows the story of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids in their war against one another and focuses especially on the activity of Antiochus IV. And so many, many people have misread Daniel 11 because they didn't take Luther's advice, so they read First Maccabees and familiarized themselves with the intertestamental history. The Swiss reformers also took what would be considered a high view of the Apocrypha when compared with the view taken by most of their descendants.

Ulrich Zwingli, in his preface to the 1531 Zurich Bible, affirms that the Apocryphal books, which he also separates out and prints in a separate place, are not part of the Old Testament. He affirms that the Apocryphal books contain much that is true and useful, fostering piety of life and edification. He compares the Apocryphal books to a mirror, wherein, sorry, I take that back.

He compares the unquestioned canonical books of the Old Testament to a mirror, wherein piety is clearly reflected. And the Apocrypha to water, sometimes clear, sometimes disturbed and troubled water. And no doubt he's thinking of Second Maccabees 12 and Tobit 4, at places like that, as places like that.

So, he advises the critical use of these books, and he even cites First Thessalonians 5:21 to that effect. Test everything, and hold fast to what is good. The important thing that I would bring out from that is that he does, in fact, urge reading the Apocrypha and sifting through it.

He would not condone neglecting it completely. The Zurich Confession of 1545 also goes on to affirm the Apocrypha as useful and fruitful for Christians as long as the contents are interpreted in line with the canonical scriptures. John Calvin's stance is essentially the same in his earlier writings.

For example, in the Preface to the Old Testament of the 1546 Geneva Bible, which is often attributed then to John Calvin, we read this. It is true that the Apocrypha is not to be despised, insofar as it contains good and useful teaching. At the same time, he, of course, makes a careful distinction between those books, the Apocryphal books, and those, quote, given to us by the Holy Spirit, which should have precedence over what has come from human beings.

Menno Simons, who, of course, is the father of the Mennonites and Anabaptist, important Anabaptist pietist movements, he also retained a very high view of the Apocrypha. In fact, he goes beyond his peer reformers. He quotes them alongside books of the Hebrew Bible as having equal authority.

And he particularly values the texts concerning the martyrdoms under Antiochus IV, 1 Maccabees 1 and 2 Maccabees 6-7, because these texts were very important resources to help sustain Anabaptists in the face of persecution, both by Catholic and Protestant opponents. In the English Reformation, we find, again, the commendation of the qualified use of the Apocrypha. Thomas Cranmer, who gave us the 39 articles of religion, writes in the sixth article, the other books, as Jerome said, the church reads for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet it does not apply them to establish any doctrine.

So here again, we have that famous differentiation between using the Apocrypha for matters of theology versus using the Apocrypha for matters of piety, devotion, and ethics. Readings from the Apocrypha continue to be used in public services of worship in the newly formed Church of England. All printed Bibles were to include the Apocrypha, though, as in the Luther and Geneva Bible, they would be printed as a separate section.

Now, in response to this move by reformers, the Roman Catholic Church took a move of its own. In the Council of Trent in 1546, the Roman Catholic Church reaffirmed an earlier decision that had been made at the far less well-known Council of Florence in 1442, which by that point had already represented the majority position within the Catholic Church. It officially affirms Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ben Sirah, Baruch, and First and Second Maccabees, as well as all the material contained in the longer versions of Daniel and Esther, as part of the Old Testament canon.

This decisive affirmation or reaffirmation on the part of the Catholic Church seems to have spawned a counter-movement among some Protestants. In fact, it motivates

them in a kind of reaction formation to become less moderate in their own position about the value of the Apocrypha. So, Calvin will later say in life, after the Council of Trent, I am not one of those who want to damn altogether the reading of these books, but put trust in them? That has never been their lot hitherto.

So, we find, I think, even in Calvin's lifetime, a move away from a clear affirmation of their value to even greater reserve as the Roman Catholic Church, in response to the Reformation churches, continues to make this more and more of an issue of definition between the two movements. The Westminster Confession of 1647 specifically ranks the Apocrypha alongside any human writing with no special commendation whatsoever. There we read, the books commonly called the Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the Church of God, nor to be otherwise approved or made use of than other human writings.

Now, what we find there for the first time in a Reformation text is a purely negative statement about the Apocrypha, what authority they don't have without the corresponding positive statements, namely saying that they are still good and useful to read. And I think this represents something of a major turn in Protestant assessment, Reformation period assessment of the Apocrypha. But I hasten to point out that it was not the position of Luther, Zwingli, or the pre-council of Trent, Calvin.

In English, well, not just in the English Church, we do see that nevertheless, despite this turn, Bibles continue to be printed with the Apocrypha. The King James Version in 1611 included the Apocrypha and would consistently through 1631. When Joachim Morgenweg published the Hamburg-Luther Bible as late as 1708, it also contained the Apocrypha.

Morgenweg also defended the practice on the basis of the intrinsic value of the Apocrypha. He writes, they are appended to the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and provided for Christians to read because they are very useful for the edification of the people of God and are also a mirror of divine providence and help. Christian wisdom, good household discipline, and wholesome moral teaching, despite their not being of direct divine origin but written by mere human beings.

After 1631, Bibles for personal use begin to be printed without the Apocrypha, though Bibles for use in churches, the great altar and pulpit Bibles, continue to include these books since readings from several Apocryphal books would continue to be prescribed by the lectionary throughout the year. This printing of Bibles without the Apocrypha happens for the first time as an innovation by Bible publishers, not ecclesial bodies. They are able, by this innovation, to provide a product for individual purchase and consumption that was 20% thinner and therefore 20% less expensive than Bibles produced for church use.

Puritans would lobby for the complete removal of the Apocrypha from every Bible. They represented a very non-Reformation position in this regard. And foreign missionary and Bible societies would finally accomplish the removal of the Apocrypha from most printed Protestant Bibles by the 19th century.

And they argued for this on the grounds that the funds that they raised, which accounted for most printing of Bibles in the world at that point, the funds that they raised were intended for the publication and dissemination of the scriptures and not for the additional books. As access to the Apocrypha diminished, ignorance of their content, combined with an ongoing prejudice and polemics against the Roman Catholic Church, led Protestants to dissociate themselves from the Apocrypha more and more as a badge of their identity. The Reformers' judgment that these texts were good and useful was thereby forgotten.

How did the Apocrypha function in the churches of today? Eastern Orthodox churches generally received these books as deuterocanonical. But there is a wide variety within what we call Eastern Orthodox churches in regard to this practice: Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, and what have you. And true to their tradition, they officially affirm a wide variety of local views and practices and historical decisions regarding the use and authority of any given Apocryphal book.

So, Eastern Orthodox churches continue to live in the situation that they have always lived in from the beginning. Namely, a variety of views about how these extra books should be used and read. And continue to tolerate the debate and the ambiguity rather than forcing decisions that might fracture the Orthodox communion further.

Roman Catholic churches, following the Council of Trent, affirm most of the books that we have been talking about as Apocrypha as part of their Old Testament. And that list, again, is Tobit, Judith, the Greek versions of Esther and Daniel, and therefore all the editions, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Ben Sirah, Baruch, and the Letter of Jeremiah, and First and Second Maccabees. In Anglican and Episcopal churches, though these are clearly not canonical Old Testament texts, they remain optional, or I should say readings from them remain optional lessons in the lectionary for certain Sundays, for certain special events.

For example, Baruch 3 is still an optional lesson connected with, oh, and now I'm embarrassed. I can't forget the exact occasion. But in keeping with its historic use, and also in services of burial and marriage, you still might hear Wisdom of Solomon 3 or Tobit 8 read.

The Prayer of Manasseh and the Song of the Three are used to this day as canticles within the liturgy of morning prayer across the Anglican Communion. And, of course, other Protestant churches have removed the public reading of these texts entirely

from their churches. And, to a greater or lesser extent, have allowed themselves to drift into complete unacquaintance with their contents.

I would say, in large measure, against the recommendations of the founders of many of these Protestant churches. In conclusion, I would point out a few things. First, the nearly 2,000-year debate within the church bears witness to the importance of the books that make up the Apocrypha for the Church Universal.

That is to say, my primary takeaway from the history of all these canonical debates is that of all the Jewish literature written between about 250 BC and 100 AD, the Christian church has really found these books to be important. Because they've played a large role. And for most Christians, they've never disappeared completely from view.

They've always exercised some role and been affirmed even by those who didn't affirm their canonical status. The options in the debate were generally either to regard these books as of equal value to the rest of the Old Testament canon or to esteem them at a level just below the level of Scripture. The position that the Church Universal has least recommended, including Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, and even John Calvin in his early days, is the position of willful neglect or even contempt for these texts that the Church Universal has largely treasured throughout its existence.

This is Dr. David DeSilva in his teaching on the Apocrypha. This is session 9, The Apocrypha in the Christian Church and Canon.