Apocrypha – (Hidden). Used in reference to a book whose origin was doubtful or unknown. Eventually, to “noncanonical” books.

**Old Testament Apocrypha**

**(Note: Wikipedia lists 72 different works, not including pseudographia (false autographs). Most are minor works, never accepted by anyone as authentic scripture. The list below contains the major works, all but three recognized as a part of the canon by the Catholic Church).**

* 3 Esdras and 4 Esdras *(Not considered canonical by Catholics) (Follow 1 Esdras [Ezra] & 2 Esdras [Nehemiah])*
  + 3 Esdras is a historical book (Ill arranged collection containing much of the same material as found in Ezra. Includes legendary material not supported by 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra or Nehemiah).
  + 4 Esdras is a prophetical book (Supposed visions of Ezra in apocalyptic language, dated about 100 A.D.) It is very inferior in quality of writing. Obviously non-canonical.
* Tobit *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + A Legendary book (written about 200 B.C.)
  + Tells of an Israelite taken into captivity by the Assyrians. Encouraged law keeping. Obvious fiction.
* Judith *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + A Legendary book
  + Name of a Jewish widow who charms and kills the leader of an enemy army, delivering her city. Believed to have been written during the Maccabean period to incite patriotism among the Jews.
* The additions to the book of Esther *(Attached to Esther)*
  + A Legendary book
  + An expansion of the text of Esther, includes numerous references to and prayers to God.
* The Wisdom of Solomon *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + An Ethical/Devotional book
  + Ancient Jewish philosophy, traces back to the city of Alexandria in the first century A.D.
* Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach) *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + An Ethical/Devotional book.
  + Written by a Palestinian Jew about 200 B.C. in the style of Proverbs.
* Baruch *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + A Prophetic book (Author supposed friend of Jeremiah)
  + Contents show clearly the book was written around the first century A.D.
* The Letter of Jeremiah (Sometimes included as the last chapter of Baruch) *(Attached to Jeremiah)*
  + A Prophetic book (probably written around 300 B.C. ) discussed the vanity of idolatry
* The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men *(Inserted after Daniel 3:23)*
  + A legendary book written much later (approx. 100 B.C.) forms no part of the genuine text of Daniel
* Susanna *(Attached to Daniel)*
  + A legendary book written much later (approx. 100 B.C.) forms no part of the genuine text of Daniel
* Bel and the Dragon *(Attached to Daniel)*
  + A legendary book written much later (approx. 100 B.C.) forms no part of the genuine text of Daniel
* The Prayer of Manasseh *(Not considered canonical by Catholics)*
  + An Ethical/Devotional book
  + A prayer put in the mouth of King Manasseh after he was taken into Babylonian captivity. Probably written in the second century B.C.
* 1 Maccabees
  + A historical book
  + An important source of information on Jewish history during the 2nd century B.C. Maccabeus was the nickname of Judas who led the Jews in revolt against Syrian oppression.
* 2 Maccabees
  + A historical book
  + Concerns the same general time frame as 1 Maccabees, but not as historically reliable as the former.

**Why Rejected?**

* Some of no use whatsoever. Some useful (example: 1 Maccabees a valuable Jewish history; Prayer of Manasseh, a beautiful prayer of repentance). However, are they inspired scripture, or not?
* Valid reasons for not accepting these works as Scripture
  + Never included in the Hebrew canon of the Scriptures. (Only officially included by the Catholics by the Council of Trent in 1546).
  + No evidence that these books were accepted as canonical by Jesus or the apostles. Apostles mention many Old Testament events, but never reference events or characters from the Apocrypha. They never quote from the Apocrypha, though they do from nearly every other Old Testament book.
  + Were not accepted as Scripture by first century Jewish writers. (Philo, Josephus, Jewish council at Jamnia, 90 A.D). Not accepted as Scripture by early Christian writers (Origen, Jerome, etc.)
  + These books do not evidence instrinsic qualities of inspiration. (Much of the apocrypha consists of events and characters that are obviously legendary and fictitious). Often they contain historical, chronological and geographical errors. They sometimes contradict accepted scripture. Sometimes they are even self-contradictory.
    - Example, Judith describes Nebuchadnezzar as the king of the Assyrians, not Babylon.
    - Even 1 Maccabees contains a few historical inaccuracies.
  + These books have always been shrouded with uncertainty. Were not recognized by the Jews. Their recognition came from some Greek speaking “Christians.” This is why they are commonly included in the Orthdox and Catholic (Latin) Bibles.
  + Because of the above, these books must not be maintained on a compromise basis! This, in part, has led to many Catholic practices and doctrines that have no basis in scripture.
  + Rome (Council of Trent, 1546), can’t “make the fallible Apocrypha infallible” by authoritative decree!

**New Testament Apocrypha**

“The New Testament Apocrypha superficially tries to imitate the kinds of books in the New Testament and thus includes a variety of literary types: Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses. Dating from the second century and later, these books were written under assumed names: the Gospel of Peter, the Protevangelium (Meaning “first gospel”) of James, the Gospel of Bartholomew, the Infancy Story of Thomas, the Acts of Peter, the Acts of John, the Acts of Paul – on and on it goes. Such words, to say the least, present highly fanciful stories of Jesus during his early years or while he was in the tomb or after his resurrection; imaginative tales about the missionary activities of the apostles; letter supposedly written by the apostles; and apocalypses of Peter and others that pretend to reveal the future. (How We Got the Bible, page 149).

Examples of silliness found in the New Testament Apocrypha:

* Infancy Story of Thomas – a child bumps Christ’s shoulder, so He strikes him dead.
* Protevangelium of James – Mary is brought up in the temple, and dedicated as a virgin from age 3.
* Acts of John – John commands bedbugs in his bed to leave and behave themselves.
* Acts of Paul – Paul baptizes a lion, who later spares him from death in the amphitheater in Ephesus.

**Conclusion:**

The Apocryphal books of both the Old and New Testament have never had a part in scripture, and are rightly rejected as scripture by Christians today.