The Deuterocanonical Writings

The deuterocanonical books, meaning ASecond Canon,A also called the Apocrypha, are important within both the Jewish and Christian traditions. Usually neglected in scholarship, they were written within the Jewish communities of Palestine and the Diaspora. They were accepted as scriptural or simply important by Jews and Christians.

The texts deal with the Jewish experience between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD. These scriptures were also embraced by early Christianity. They are part of the scriptural package that would have been meaningful to Jesus of Nazareth, as well as St. Paul and St. Peter. These texts are diverse in their genres; one finds wisdom literature, romances, folklore, historiography and religious identity, liturgy, and even apocalyptic writings.

Yet, many of the deuterocanonical books also deal with the problem of suffering in some way: Why do we suffer? How do we understand suffering? Can it benefit us? Does God make us suffer? Can prayer alleviate suffering? Given the general lack of the 21st century person to understand suffering, we will look at ancient interpretations of this still modern problem.

Additionally, the deuterocanonical books offer insight into the self-understanding of Judaism, Catholicism, the Orthodox and various Protestant denominations. In this way, they become meaningful in ecumenism. We shall explore the deuterocanonical books for their history, theology, and subsequent usage. Additionally, we shall also examine some of the apocryphal texts such as Psalm 151, the Prayer of Manasseh, and Bel & the Dragon. The successful student will come away with an enhanced knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, the Christian tradition, and the deuterocanonical books themselves.

Objectives: As a second-level theology course within the core curriculum, this class aims to help students meet certain basic objectives. These are as follows:

1. Describe theologically the basic content of the Deuterocanonical Writings and other assigned texts in terms of the original communities and present-day communities.

2. Interpret theological texts and frameworks in historical and literary contexts.
3. Articulate implications of Christian and/or other faith groups for growth in holiness and promotion of justice in the contemporary world.

Student achievement of these objectives will be assessed in the context of the examinations and writing assignments. The Grading and Attendance policies and those policies dealing with honesty and plagiarism of the current University Bulletin are in force.