

and perhaps the best current edition is the OXFORD ANNOTATED EDITION OF THE APOCRYPHA. For information on the council of Jamnia, incidentally, IBRI has a nice treatment of this as prepared by Dr. Newman.

From a Protestant point of view we conclude the canon to have been completed in the pre-Christian era and accepted so by the Hebrew community and then, in turn, by the oncoming Christian church.

d. The Question of Esther

Esther was omitted from the list of Melito and so far no fragments have been found in Qumran. It did not have the approval of Luther, incidentally, although he made no move known to me to remove it from the canon...it was simply too "Jewish" for his anti-Jewish sentiments. But the omissions has made the position of Esther precarious for many scholars.

Many conservative scholars think the edition of Esther with the apocryphal chapters added was the problem. The name of God does not occur in Esther (although the rabbis still pronounce it as making the hands unclean) but in the additions to it in the apocrypha the name of God occurs with great and often unnecessary frequency. It is thought that when Melito talked with the rabbis, etc., he quoted from the LXX Esther and so the rabbis did not approve. No one knows for sure about this.

There is certainly no indication the Jews in Jesus time had any misgivings about Esther. The feast of Purim grows from its account and the book was regularly read in the synagogue at that point in the calendar.

So in this circle we argue for its place in the canon being correct simply on the basis of history. The absence of God's name, we think, is purposeful to show how well God can care for His people even when they are not particularly conscious of His presence.