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Alex Andersen

Southeastern University - Lakeland, aanderson@seu.edu

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Southeastern University

Reconsidering the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

Alex Andersen

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Abstract

For centuries, Protestants have debated with Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians over the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, a collection of seven books and two additions to books composed from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. and considered to be canonical by all major non-Protestant Christian denominations. This thesis plunges into this discussion on the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity, contending that the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is noncanonical. First, this thesis propounds two broad models for canonicity, the Community Canon Model and the Intrinsic Canon Model, and maintains that the Intrinsic Canon Model is a better model for canonicity than the Community Canon Model. It then explains that many books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha do not fit the Intrinsic Canon Model's criteria for canonicity. Next, an argument is made that the Jews had fixed the Hebrew canon during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles and that this Hebrew canon excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. This thesis then establishes that Jesus and the apostles implicitly and explicitly accepted the Hebrew canon and thereby rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity. Finally, the popular notion that the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is canonical because most Christians in the early and medieval church accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity is refuted.

Reconsidering the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

In Psalm 119:105, a psalmist declared, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (*English Standard Version*). All Christians would agree that God’s Word, the Bible, guides humanity toward goodness and truth. Nevertheless, at present, Christians widely disagree on what the exact content of the Bible should be. All major Christian denominations believe that the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible are God’s Word. However, according to *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, whereas Protestant denominations have only thirty-nine books in their Old Testament (OT), all major non-Protestant Christian denominations include, in their Old Testaments, books or parts of books which are outside of the Protestant Bible and are from a collection known as the “Apocrypha” or “Deuterocanon” (3-4). Thus, either Protestants omit books which are really the Word of God from their Bibles, or non-Protestants consider certain books which are not divinely inspired to be God’s revelation to humanity. It is therefore important to ask: are the books of the Apocrypha worthy of canonicity? This thesis will first address the definitions of the terms “Apocrypha” and “canon,” as well as two models of canonicity and their differing criteria. Then, this thesis will show that the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is noncanonical for three reasons: the proper criteria for canonicity disqualify the Apocrypha, the first century Hebrew canon excluded the Apocrypha, and Jesus and the apostles rejected the Apocrypha. Finally, this thesis will examine and refute one reason why many Christians accept the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

Defining “Apocrypha” and “Canon”

Before examining the canonicity of the Apocrypha, it is important to explain what the Apocrypha is. According to Beckwith, Origen, a third century Christian writer, stated that Jews used the term “Apocrypha” to designate books which they highly valued but which they nevertheless did not accept as canonical (2581). Jerome, a fourth century Christian theologian who translated the Bible into Latin and thereby created the Vulgate, became the first Christian to use the term “Apocrypha” to designate books which Christians esteemed but which he believed were noncanonical (Beckwith 2581). The term “Apocrypha” comes from the Greek word “apokrypha,” which means “having been hidden away” (Beckwith 2581). This term was perhaps coined because in ancient times, Jews would hide certain highly regarded religious books and leave them to decay naturally instead of burning them (Beckwith 2581). At present, Roman Catholics employ the term “Deuterocanon,” a term coined by Sixtus of Sienna in 1566, to identify their canonized portion of the Apocrypha, and they identify the Protestant Bible by the term “protocanon” (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 3-4). This thesis will employ the more widely used terms “Apocrypha” and “apocryphal” instead of the Roman Catholic terms “Deuterocanon” and “Deuterocanonical.”

Although Jerome’s list of apocryphal books was broader than the modern list of apocryphal books, at present the term “Apocrypha” refers to a distinct collection of fourteen books (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, 3 Maccabees, 2 Esdras, and 4 Maccabees) and two additions to books (the Additions to Esther and the Additions to Daniel) (Beckwith 2581; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). Most, if not all, of these books were written after the

composition of the book of Malachi and before the writing of the last book of the New Testament (NT): more precisely, between about 300 B.C. and A.D. 100 (Gentry 2602).

The number of apocryphal books which non-Protestant Christian denominations accept as canonical varies (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). Currently, all main non-Protestant Christian denominations accept as canonical the Roman Catholic Apocrypha (the Deuterocanon), consisting of Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, the Additions to Esther, and the Additions to Daniel (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). However, in addition to the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the Greek Orthodox Church recognizes 1 Esdras, the Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151, and 3 Maccabees as canonical (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). Furthermore, in addition to the books accepted by the Greek Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church accepts 2 Esdras as canonical (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). A few Christian denominations, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, even accept books outside of the Protestant Bible and the Apocrypha as canonical (Blocher 83). Despite this disagreement over the biblical canon, because all non-Protestant Christian denominations agree on the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, this thesis will examine the canonicity of only the seven books and two additions to books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

It is also important to define what is meant by “canon,” “canonical,” and “canonicity.” According to Hunt, the word “canon” derives from the Akkadian word “ganu” (meaning “rod,” often referring to a measuring rod) and the Greek word “kanon” (meaning “rule” or “standard”) (55). From about A.D. 350 onward, Christians began using the term “canon” to refer to both a doctrinal and a moral standard, and eventually this word meant a collection of divinely inspired texts (Hunt 55). The Jews, however, called their authoritative books “sacred writings” rather

than “canonical books,” and they divided their authoritative books into two groups (Hunt 55-56). The first collection comprised books which “defiled the hands” because of their sacred nature and were authoritative both for theological doctrine and for moral practice¹ (Hunt 56). This collection consisted of the Hebrew canon, which is identical in content to the Protestant Old Testament (Hunt 56). The second collection were books which Jews highly esteemed yet could not “defile the hands” because they lacked divine inspiration (Hunt 56). The latter group of books included authoritative examples of how to properly apply the theological doctrines found in the Hebrew canon, but these writings were not authoritative for theological doctrine (Hunt 56). For the Jews, this less authoritative assortment of books included the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha (a collection of writings purportedly written by biblical figures), the Talmud (which included the Mishnah [ancient interpretations of the books of the Law] and commentaries on the Mishnah called the Gemara), and the Halakah (interpretations of the books of the Law written after the Mishnah and Gemara) (Hunt 56). Today, Anglican Christians still retain a similar distinction: the canonical books of the Protestant Bible are authoritative for both doctrine and moral practice, while the apocryphal books are revered only as examples of righteous living (Hunt 63). Following the Jewish definition of divinely inspired writings, a “canon” refers to the complete collection of canonical books, a book which is “canonical” is one which God has divinely inspired and is authoritative for both doctrine and morality, and “canonicity” denotes the canonical status of a book.

Models of Canonicity

On what framework is one to judge whether the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is canonical? According to Peckham, there are two broad models regarding canonicity: the Community Canon Model (CCM) and the Intrinsic Canon Model (ICM) (230). The first of these models, the CCM, believes that humans have the authority to determine which books should be considered canonical (Peckham 230). Although proponents of the CCM may differ greatly in their theological beliefs, all of them, to some degree, believe that the community of faith which uses theological texts also has the authority to determine the canonicity of these texts (Peckham 230). The second of these models, the ICM, asserts that God, not humans, possesses the authority to determine the biblical canon (Peckham 230). In the ICM, a community of faith recognizes, but does not determine, which books are canonical (Peckham 230).

Depending on which model of canonicity one uses, different criteria are employed when determining which books to recognize as canonical. Because these models of canonicity are broad, not everyone who accepts the same model uses the same criteria. However, according to Peckham, the most important criterion for canonicity essential to the CCM is a writing's acceptance by a pertinent community of faith (231, 244). While Roman Catholics accept some of the criteria for canonicity of the ICM, they also believe that the apocryphal books are canonical both because of their general usage within the church and because of important church decisions, so Roman Catholics consider church acceptance as a significant criterion for canonicity (Peckham 231; Akin).

On the other hand, those who accept the ICM maintain that because God, not humans, determined the content of the canon, acceptance by a community of faith is not a criterion for

canonicity (Peckham 244). Peckham wrote that “the intrinsic canon model views usage as a product of canonicity, rather than a criterion” (245). In the ICM, although a church’s acceptance of a book as canonical is valuable for ecclesiastical history, it is not valuable in determining canonicity because God determined the canon (Peckham 245). Instead, those who accept this model largely believe that God placed internal evidences in canonical books so that people could recognize these books as canonical (Peckham 244). Thus, those who accept the ICM mainly consider the internal merits of books in order to determine whether these books should be regarded as canonical (Peckham 234).

Peckham suggested that the ICM utilizes four criteria, all of which look at the intrinsic qualities of books, to aid people in recognizing canonical books: propheticity, proper antiquity, consistency, and self-authentication (240-244). First, in the ICM, biblical books must meet the criterion of propheticity in order to be canonical (Peckham 240). In other words, a prophet must have written a book in order for that book to merit canonicity. The term “prophet” does not only apply to what are traditionally designated as the major and minor prophets of the OT, but this term instead broadly refers to anyone who has been endowed with divine inspiration when dictating or writing a book of the Bible. Peckham maintained, “For a book to be canonical the author of the book must simply be a writer endowed with divine authority” (240). If a book was not written by a divinely inspired prophet, that book is noncanonical.

According to Peckham, the second criterion for canonicity in the ICM is that of proper antiquity (242). This criterion is closely related to (and helps define) the criterion of propheticity, since the criterion of proper antiquity relates to the lifetimes of divinely inspired writers (Peckham 242). Obviously, a book which a prophet supposedly wrote must have been composed during the lifetime of that prophet (Peckham 242). If the date of composition of a

writing predated or followed the lifetime of a book's purported author, then obviously that book cannot have been written by that author (Peckham 242). Furthermore, if there ever was a time after which prophecy ceased, books written after that time would not be canonical (Peckham 242).

In fact, according to Jewish tradition, there was a general date after which prophecy ceased. Many rabbinical writers agreed that after the books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were written, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel so that prophecy ceased (Beckwith 2579; Wegner 2586; Blocher 85; Peckham 242). For example, the Babylonian Talmud (a collection of ancient rabbinical Jewish writings) stated that "our Rabbis have taught: When Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel" ("Folio 48b"). First Maccabees itself observed in multiple places that prophets did not arise in Israel during the Maccabean period² (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 220). In another example, the Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the late first century A.D., stated, "From Artaxerxes to our own times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier record, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets" (Against Apion 1.41; qtd. in Beckwith 2579). Most likely Josephus is referencing 1 and 2 Maccabees, among other books, since both 1 and 2 Maccabees concerned the Maccabean period and were written long after the reign of Artaxerxes (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 197-198; 241-242). Whatever Josephus' exact reference, here he implied that mainstream Jews rejected the canonicity of books written after the reign of Artaxerxes because they had been written after the time of prophecy³ (Beckwith 2579). The time which Jews cite as the end of the period of prophecy, a time immediately after the reign of Artaxerxes and after the deaths of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, is often dated to around 450 B.C. (242; Beckwith 2579). Thus, any

book dated after approximately 450 B.C., according to the ICM, cannot be considered part of the Christian OT.⁴

The third criterion for canonicity in the ICM is that of consistency (Peckham 242). Apocryphal books must be consistent with other biblical books for them to be canonical. Canonical books, being the words of a truthful God, must be truthful, and obviously, two truths cannot be inconsistent with each other. Thus, the criterion for canonicity of consistency means that if a book of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha does not align with the teachings of books in the Protestant Bible (which books are assumed to be canonical), the apocryphal book in question is not canonical.

The final and most important criterion for canonicity is that of self-authentication (divine inspiration) (Peckham 243). Without divine inspiration, books cannot be from God and therefore cannot be considered Scripture. A book is self-authenticating if it claims or implies that it is a divinely inspired book, and a book de-authenticates itself if it claims or implies that God did not inspire it. Peckham asserted that, while all canonical books are inspired, not all books which have been considered inspired are canonical (243-244). The Bible lists numerous books which were supposedly written by prophets but which are no longer extant, including “the Chronicles of Nathan the prophet, and ... the Chronicles of Gad the seer” (1 Chr. 29:29; Peckham 244). Whether these books are canonical is not the question at hand. Rather, for this thesis, a book from the Roman Catholic Apocrypha must declare (or, at the very least, must not deny) that it is divinely inspired for it to be worthy of canonicity.

Which of these two models should Christians use to determine the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha? Christians should adopt the ICM and its criteria rather than the CCM and its criterion when determining the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. This

is because the CCM employs a subjective criterion (church acceptance) in determining the canon and does not provide a solid foundation for Christian theology.

First, the CCM necessarily uses the subjective criterion of church acceptance to ascertain the correct canon. Although it is possible for Christians to accept the true biblical canon due to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, church acceptance based solely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit is a subjective and unusable criterion (Peckham 244). The Holy Spirit works on humans to convict and guide them through internal feelings which cannot be tested and which can be misinterpreted. Because of this, it is oftentimes impossible to know when the Holy Spirit works within people. The fact that the Holy Spirit has not always guided the church is evident from the consideration that the views of early, medieval, and modern Christians on which books to include in the biblical canon have greatly varied and have oftentimes been inconsistent. In addition, Blocher pointed out that because different non-Protestant Christian denominations accept different apocryphal books as canonical, it would be very difficult to determine which canon of which denomination one should accept based solely on the criterion of church acceptance (85). Thus, because of the subjectivity of church acceptance, this criterion cannot be used in determining the biblical canon. Because the CCM, by definition, uses the criterion of church acceptance in determining the biblical canon, the CCM should be discarded as well.

Another reason that the CCM should be rejected in favor of the ICM is that the CCM, according to Peckham, does not provide a solid foundation for Christian theology (246). This is because the CCM permits fallible and inconsistent human decisions to play a significant role in determining the biblical canon (Schnabel 20). If church acceptance was a criterion for canonicity, as the CCM necessarily concedes, the church could theoretically change which books God divinely inspired by rejecting the canonicity of a book at one point in time and later

accepting that book as canonical, or vice versa. To suggest that humans can change the divinely inspired status of books denies the reality that the divine inspiration of canonical books cannot change. By contrast, according to Peckham, Christians should adopt the ICM when examining the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, since the ICM posits that God alone, who inspired the writing of the canonical books and is therefore the only Being who surely knows which books are divinely inspired, determined the biblical canon as He inspired people to write biblical books (230). In Peckham's words:

While the community canon model leaves a shifting foundation for theology because the canon, or the standard, changes according to the collective will of the community or tradition, the intrinsic canon model sees objective evidence for the canonical books and finds therein *the* theological foundation (246; emphasis his)

The ICM, unlike the CCM, does not consider acceptance by a community of faith to be a criterion for canonicity (Peckham 244). By rejecting this subjective criterion and instead employing other objective criteria to aid Christians in recognizing the biblical canon, the ICM places the basis of theology on God's revelation, not on the decisions of humans (Peckham 246). Thus, Christians should use the ICM and its criteria, not the CCM and its criterion of church acceptance, to help recognize the correct canon.

Besides employing the ICM's criteria, this thesis will use another criterion, that of divine sanction, to determine the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. The criterion of divine sanction means that if a book in the Protestant Bible accepts or rejects a book of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, then that apocryphal book is canonical or noncanonical accordingly. All major Christian denominations, both those who accept the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical and those who reject its canonicity, believe that the entirety of the Protestant Bible is

canonical, and no Christian denominations accept the Roman Catholic Apocrypha and yet reject the Protestant Bible. This thesis will therefore assume that all of the books of the Protestant Bible are canonical and therefore can be used as authorities on the canonicity of books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the canonicity of which Christians widely debate. In like manner, because the NT asserts in multiple passages that Jesus is fully God,⁵ Jesus Christ has the utmost authority on what constitutes the Hebrew canon. If, in the NT, Jesus accepted or rejected books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, these apocryphal books are canonical or noncanonical accordingly.

Arguments Against the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's Canonicity

The books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha are noncanonical for three main reasons: the proper criteria for canonicity disqualify the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the first century Hebrew canon excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, and Jesus and the apostles rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

The Proper Criteria for Canonicity Disqualify the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

First, the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha are noncanonical because these books do not fit all four of the ICM's criteria for canonicity: propheticity, proper antiquity, consistency, and divine inspiration. Because the ICM's criteria of propheticity and proper antiquity are related, these criteria will be dealt with together. Some of the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha do not fit these first two criteria of the ICM, for these books were written after divine

revelation had ceased in Israel at around 450 B.C. Although the dates of composition of a few of the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha are debatable (for example, Wisdom was supposedly written by Solomon, who lived in the tenth century B.C.), some apocryphal books were definitely written after the time when the Jews believed that prophecy had ceased, and these books therefore could not have been written by a divinely inspired prophet. For example, Sirach is widely dated to about 180 B.C., since, among other reasons, the author's grandson translated the book shortly after "the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Euergetes" (i.e., 132 B.C.) (Pro. Sir.; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 99, 101; Hunt 59). Furthermore, 1 Maccabees must have been written well after 450 B.C., since it considers events from about 150 B.C. to be past events (see, for example, 1 Macc. 13:30) (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 233). Indeed, 1 Maccabees 9:27 admits that "prophets ceased to appear," indicating that this book was written after the time when prophecy had ceased from among the Israelites (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 220). Likewise, 2 Maccabees was probably written in 124 B.C., and this apocryphal book also treats events from the Maccabean revolt as past events (see, for example, 2 Macc. 1:9) (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 242). Therefore, at the very least, the books of Sirach, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees do not fit the ICM's criteria of propheticity and proper antiquity.

Neither are all of the apocryphal books consistent with statements in the Protestant Bible, and these books therefore do not fit the third criterion for canonicity (that of consistency). For instance, Wisdom 8:19 declares that "As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 80), and Sirach 1:14 states that "wisdom ... is created with the faithful in the womb" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 102; Beckwith 2583). These verses seem to imply that people can be born morally good, a belief which is in contradiction to Romans 3:10-12, which states that "...None is righteous, no, not one" (Beckwith

2583). Because Paul's epistle to the Romans, a book in the Protestant Bible, contradicts teachings from Wisdom and Sirach, these latter books should be regarded as noncanonical. In addition, Tobit 12:9 states that "almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 26), and Sirach 3:3 teaches that "Those who honor their father atone for sins" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 104). However, the NT is clear that God's grace alone, not human actions, can rescue people from sin and its eternal consequences. Among other instances, Paul stated in Ephesians 2:8-9 that "by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Since teachings from Tobit and Sirach contradict teachings in the Protestant Bible, these apocryphal books do not fit the criterion for canonicity of consistency.

At least one of the apocryphal books, 2 Maccabees, does not fit the criterion of divine inspiration. In 2 Maccabees 15:38-39, the last verses of the book, the author comments on the quality of his work by noting,

If it is well told and to the point, that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do. For just as it is harmful to drink wine alone, or, again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious and enhances one's enjoyment, so also the style of the story delights the ears of those who read the work. (2 Maccabees 15:38-39; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 274)

Protestant reformer John Calvin criticized 2 Maccabees because of these verses; and rightly so (Blocher 86). While the meaning of the metaphor concerning wine and water is rather unclear, it is unambiguous that the author of 2 Maccabees considered it a possibility for his work to be "poorly done and mediocre" (2 Maccabees 15:38), which could certainly not be a possibility if God had inspired the composition of 2 Maccabees (Blocher 86; *The New Oxford Annotated*

Apocrypha 274). Moreover, the aim of 2 Maccabees, “to please those who wish to read” (2 Macc. 2:24; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 245), is not an objective of divine revelation. Thus, 2 Maccabees fails to fit the criterion of divine inspiration.

It is also important to note that Tobit and Judith have glaring internal problems. In one place in the book of Tobit, Tobit reveals that “while I was still a young man, the whole tribe of my ancestor Naphtali deserted the house of David and Jerusalem” (1:4; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 11). The tribe of Naphtali, along with the rest of Israel, separated from Judah (the birthplace of David) in 928 B.C., so Tobit was born before 928 B.C. (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 12). Later, Tobit was carried away to Assyria as a captive when the Israelite kingdom fell to the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser, who reigned from 727-722 B.C. (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 12). By this reckoning, Tobit lived over 200 years, a lifespan well over the average of first millennium B.C. Israelites (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 12). Nevertheless, Tobit 14:2 announces that “Tobit died in peace when he was one hundred twelve years old” (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 28). Thus, there is a glaring inconsistency regarding Tobit’s lifespan in the book of Tobit.

Additionally, the book of Judith is perhaps more inconsistent with history than any other book in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. Philip Essley noted,

We have a seventh century B.C. Assyria, under the rule of a sixth century Chaldean (Babylonian) king, invading a fifth century restored Judah, with an army led by a fourth century Persian general (Holofernes was the Persian general under Artaxerxes III in the successful campaign against Egypt in the fourth century B.C.). In truth, no major attacks were made on Jerusalem while under Persian rule in the fifth and fourth centuries (an unprecedented period of peace for war-weary Canaan). (Essley, qtd. in Blocher 86)

Although the book of Judith treats the events it records as factual, these blatant historical inaccuracies are great evidences against the historicity of the events recorded in this apocryphal book. Because canonical books must be truthful, they can be neither internally inconsistent nor contradict truths about the past. Therefore, since Tobit is in fact internally inconsistent, and since Judith is historically inaccurate, these apocryphal books cannot be canonical.

Using the ICM's criteria for canonicity, one discovers that many books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha do not meet the proper criteria. Some apocryphal books were written after the date when Jews believed prophecy had ceased; others expound non-biblical teachings. One of the apocryphal books implicitly denies being divinely inspired, and at least two apocryphal books include dire inaccuracies. Therefore, Christians should not accept the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

The First Century Hebrew Canon Excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

The second main reason that the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is not canonical is that the Hebrew canon in the first century A.D., during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles, did not include the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. The first century A.D. Jewish view of the canon does not, by itself, determine the proper Christian view of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity because God, not humans, determined the canon. Nonetheless, the extent of the Hebrew canon during the first century A.D. is greatly important in determining what Jesus and the apostles thought of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. For if Jesus and the apostles accepted the Hebrew canon as the proper Christian OT, and if the Hebrew canon did not include the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, then Jesus and the apostles rejected the

canonicity of these apocryphal books. History gives compelling evidence that the Jews in the first century A.D. had fixed the extent of their canon before the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles and that this Hebrew canon did not include the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures

In order to demonstrate that the Jews had fixed the content of the Hebrew canon by the first century A.D. and that this Hebrew canon excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, it is necessary to understand the history of its canonization. According to Beckwith, the present Jewish canon is divided into three groups: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings (2577). This ordering is based on the Masoretic text (MT), which is the Hebrew text of the present OT (Hunt 57). According to the Talmudic ordering, the Law section of the Hebrew canon (also known as the Torah and the Pentateuch) included Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Beckwith 2578). The Prophets section of the Hebrew canon included Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and The Book of the Twelve (i.e., the twelve Minor Prophets) (Beckwith 2578). Lastly, the Writings section of the Hebrew canon (otherwise known as the Hagiographa) included Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles (Beckwith 2578). Although modern Jews have sometimes changed the ordering of these books in their Scriptures, they have retained the same tripartite division of Scripture and the same books in each group of canonical writings as the Talmud (Hunt 57). According to Beckwith, the present Hebrew canon is the same as the Protestant OT (Beckwith 2577). In the traditional Hebrew canon, some originally independent books were combined (e.g., Ruth and Psalms, Ezra and Nehemiah, etc.), and in the modern

Protestant OT some originally single books (e.g., Samuel, Kings, etc.) have been separated into distinct books (Beckwith 2578). There is great evidence that the content of all three of these collections were fixed by the first century A.D. and that only these collections were considered canonical by Jews at that time, although the precise date after which Jews accepted the canonicity of all three of these sections is debatable.

First, the Jews considered the Law to be canonical well before the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles. Even in Moses' time, Israelites revered the Law: Deuteronomy 31:24-26 records that "Moses commanded the Levites ... 'Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you'" Furthermore, the Israelites considered the Law to be the words of God and worthy of full obedience (Ex. 24:3-4; Ex. 24:7). The Israelites were not to add to or take away from the Law of Moses (Deut. 4:2), but instead were to teach the Law to their children (Deut. 4:9). Many other books of the OT considered the Law of Moses to be authoritative.⁶ When, in 2 Kings 22, the high priest Hilkiyah discovered the Law in the Temple, King Josiah read the Law in the hearing of the Israelite people, and both the king and the Israelite people swore to obey the mandates in the Law (2 Kings 22:8; 2 Kings 23:2-3). In Nehemiah 8:13-18, the post-exilic Israelites try to obey the Law, and Jewish literature after the time of Nehemiah also unwaveringly agrees on the authority of the Law. Reflecting on the authority which the OT gives the Law, Hunt concluded his discussion of the Jewish acceptance of the Law by noting that "by 621 B.C., or 450 B.C. at the latest, the Torah had reached a canonical status" (59). Consequently, by 450 B.C., the Jews considered the Law to be a canonical portion of their Scriptures.

In addition, just as the Jews considered the Law to be canonical throughout Israelite history, they also accepted the Prophets section of the Hebrew canon to be divinely inspired and

authoritative well before Jesus' ministry. One OT author, Daniel, referred to a distinct group of canonical books which included a book from the Prophets section. According to Wegner, "the first mention of a collection of biblical books is in Daniel 9:2, which suggests that by the time of Daniel, the book of Jeremiah was part of a larger collection of authoritative works that he calls 'the books'" (2586). In addition, many ancient Jewish writings outside of the Protestant OT, including the Prologue of Sirach (132 B.C.), 2 Maccabees (second century B.C.), and 4 Maccabees (first century A.D.), mention a collection of authoritative books entitled "the Prophets" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 101, 273, 380). When Sirach (c. 180 B.C.) retells Israelite history, he relates the prophetic books in the same order as the traditional Jewish ordering (Sir. 46:1-49:13; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 161-166; Schnabel 17). Some believe that, since 2 Maccabees 2:13 records Nehemiah collecting various biblical books (an event not recorded in the Protestant Bible), Nehemiah solidified Jewish acceptance of the Prophets as a fixed group of canonical writings by around 450 B.C. (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 245; Hunt 59). Hunt stated that "most scholars believe that between 450 B.C. (the last prophet) and 165 B.C. (the Maccabean age), the Prophets achieved canonical status" (59). Whether or not Nehemiah decisively effected the Jewish acceptance of the Prophets as a canonical group, it is evident that the Jews did consider the Prophets to be a canonical section of the Bible well before Jesus' ministry.

Finally, Jews believed the Writings to be a distinct, canonical section of the Hebrew Scriptures before the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles, albeit later than the Jewish acceptance of the canonicity of the Law and the Prophets. According to Sundberg, multiple references exist in ancient Jewish literature concerning a tripartite division of Scripture which includes another collection (the Writings) alongside the authoritative sections of the Law and the Prophets (209).

The Prologue of Sirach (132 B.C.) references this third section of Scripture as “the other books” or “the other books of our ancestors,” and Philo of Alexandria (c. 30 B.C.-A.D. 50), in *On the Contemplative Life*, references this section of writings as “the Psalms and the others” (Pr. Sir.; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 101; Sundberg 60; Hunt 60). In *Against Apion* 1:8, written about A.D. 90, Josephus also referenced a trifold division of Scripture, although he divided the Hebrew canon in a unique way⁷ (Sundberg 209). Thus, there was, at the very least, a common consensus among Jews that there was a collection of divinely inspired books besides the Law and the Prophets.⁸ Furthermore, the Jewish tradition that prophecy ceased after circa 450 B.C. would have given the Jews a definite criterion by which to solidify the contents of the Writings and to reject the canonicity of the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, since the latter collection was largely (if not entirely) written after 450 B.C. (Beckwith 2579). Some believe that Judas Maccabeus helped close the Writings section of the Jewish Scriptures by compiling the Scriptures in 165 B.C., as 2 Maccabees 2:14 records (Beckwith 2579; Hunt 60; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 245). Whether or not Judas Maccabeus solidified the Writings portion of the Hebrew canon for the Jews, Beckwith concluded that the Hebrew canon’s “final form must be due to a single thinker, living before c. 130 B.C.” (2579). Therefore, the Jews had fixed the extent of all three of the major divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings) before the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles, and these canonical sections did not include the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

Additionally, many Jewish witnesses around the time of Jesus support the notion that the first century A.D. Hebrew canon was fixed and was limited to the Hebrew canon of Jews today. In *Against Apion* (c. A.D. 90), Josephus maintained that “there are not with us myriads of books,

discordant and discrepant, but only twenty-two, comprising the history of all time, which are justly accredited” (1.8; qtd. in *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 9). Twenty-two is one of the traditional numberings of the books in the present Jewish canon (some Jews and early Christians combined OT books to reach a twenty-two book enumeration, perhaps so that the number of canonical books would correspond to twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet) (Peckham 238; Sundberg 223). In addition, a tractate from the Tosefta, Yadayim 2:13, specifically stated that Sirach (c. 180 B.C.) and the books written after Sirach were not included in the Hebrew canon (Schnabel 18). Finally, 2 Esdras, perhaps written sometime from the first to third century A.D., limited the number of “public” books to twenty-four, which is another traditional numbering of the Hebrew canon (14:45; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 353). These Jewish witnesses give great evidence that the Jews at large accepted the Hebrew canon and thereby rejected the canonicity of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles.

Historical Myths Concerning the Closing of the Hebrew Canon

A popular hypothesis, which Schnabel called the “Jamnia hypothesis” (17), has threatened the idea that the Jews possessed a fixed Writings portion of the Hebrew Scriptures during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Akin; Hunt 61; Sundberg 211-214). The Jamnia hypothesis claims that the Council (or Synod) of Jamnia (A.D. 90) was the first council to definitively solidify the content of the Writings in the Jewish Scriptures and that the Jews therefore decided to reject the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha only after the Christian church was firmly established (Akin; Hunt 61). Because, according to the Jamnia hypothesis,

the Jews decisively delimited the Hebrew Scriptures only after the advent of Christianity, Akin has claimed that the Jews who created the Hebrew canon (and, by implication, the Hebrew canon itself) held no authority for the early Christian church, which had already significantly split with Judaism by A.D. 90. Thus, if the Jamnia hypothesis were true, the Christian church would be free to decide the proper OT canon on its own.

However, although some have accepted idea that the Council of Jamnia fixed the Writings portion of the Hebrew canon for the Jews, Schnabel noted that not much is known about the happenings at Jamnia (17). The Council of Jamnia did not fix the extent of the Hebrew canon; it was merely a discussion at the school of Jamnia which concluded only by confirming the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs (Beckwith 2578). Furthermore, the Council of Jamnia was not a final decision on the canonicity of the Writings for the Jews, since rabbis continued to debate the canonicity of Esther well into the second century A.D. (Beckwith 2578). Therefore, the Council of Jamnia did not close the Writings section for the Jews: the Jews had fixed the Hebrew canon before the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles.

Others have claimed that, since some first century Jewish groups rejected many of the books in the Hebrew canon, the Jews did not have a fixed canon at that time. For instance, some have professed that the Sadducees, rejecting both the Prophets and the Writings, only considered the Pentateuch to be authoritative during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Blocher 84). When describing the customs of the Sadducees, Josephus recorded that “Nor do they regard the observation of any thing besides what the law enjoins them” (Antiquities of the Jews 18:4; Josephus). Nonetheless, in Blocher’s words: “Experts on the Sadducees rather doubt their having another canon: only *in practice* did they concentrate on the Law and disregard the Prophets and the Writings” (84; emphasis his). Josephus’ statement on the Sadducees only

demonstrates that the Sadducees disregarded moral practices outside of the Law, not that they rejected the canonicity of the Prophets and the Writings entirely. The Sadducees, then, while focusing on the Law, did not reject the canonicity of the Prophets and the Writings.

Likewise, some have asserted that because the Samaritans, followers of Jewish tradition, accepted the Law alone as Scripture during the first century A.D., not all Jews accepted the entire Hebrew canon during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Beckwith 2577). Although the Samaritans rejected the Prophets and the Writings, they had already broken their bonds with Judaism in 110 B.C., after the Jews destroyed their temple, and therefore one should not consider first century A.D. Samaritans to be Jews (Beckwith 2578).

In addition, because some rabbis, even after the lifetime of Jesus, raised objections to certain biblical books, especially to books in the Writings, some have argued that the Jews did not possess a fixed canon in the first century A.D. (Beckwith 2577-2578). Nevertheless, not all rabbis who seriously raised objections to books in the Hebrew canon rejected the canonicity of these books, since, according to Beckwith: “the rabbinical literature notes similar problems with many other biblical books, including all five books of the Pentateuch” (Beckwith 2578). Therefore, it is unlikely that Jews subtracted from the Hebrew canon; on the contrary, mainstream Jews used a fixed Hebrew canon during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles.

Historical Myths Concerning the Jewish View of the Apocrypha

Another popular misconception, which Sundberg dubbed “the Alexandrian canon hypothesis” (205), argues that many Jews during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles accepted the canonicity of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha (Sundberg 205). First suggested

by John Grabe (1666-1711) and John Semler (1725-1791), the Alexandrian Canon Hypothesis claims that Alexandrian Jews accepted the Apocrypha as canonical and therefore placed apocryphal books in their translation of the Jewish Scriptures, the Septuagint (also known as the LXX) (Sundberg 206; Gentry 2601). The LXX is a Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures which Alexandrian Jewish scholars composed sometime from the third to first centuries B.C. (Gentry 2601). The LXX rivaled the proto-MT (a Hebrew text upon which the MT was based) in popularity due to the dominance of Greek as a language in and around Palestine during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Gentry 2602). According to Gentry:

Almost all other translations of the OT (Old Latin, Syro-Hexapla, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Gothic, Old Georgian, Old Slavic) were made from the Septuagint rather than directly from the Hebrew. (But the Syriac Peshitta version and the Latin Vulgate made extensive use of a Hebrew text, and the Samaritan Pentateuch was itself a Hebrew text). (2602).

The use of the LXX as a basis for most early versions of the OT lends evidence to the idea that Jews widely used the LXX during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Gentry 2602).

Therefore, if the LXX included the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the Jews during Jesus' time would have widely considered the Roman Catholic Apocrypha to be canonical. Proponents of the Alexandrian canon hypothesis argue that, because the oldest extant Septuagintal codices contain apocryphal books, the original LXX included the Roman Catholic Apocrypha (Beckwith 2581; Blocher 82-83). Therefore, it is argued, many Jews accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles (Akin).

However, scholars have successfully refuted the Alexandrian Canon Hypothesis and few scholars today accept the idea of a distinct and enlarged Alexandrian canon which included the

Roman Catholic Apocrypha (Blocher 82). For one thing, there is no strong evidence that Alexandrian Jews accepted any canon outside of the Hebrew canon (Blocher 82). Philo, perhaps the most prominent Alexandrian Jewish writer, often quoted from books in the Hebrew canon, but he never quoted from the Roman Catholic Apocrypha (Hunt 60). Furthermore, although Philo commented on all of the books in the Hebrew canon, he did not write commentary on any apocryphal book (Gentry 2602). Moreover, Alexandrian Jews often kept in contact with Palestinian Jews (who accepted the Hebrew canon alone) and migrated to Jerusalem to attend religious festivals, which shows the continuity between the religious customs of these two Jewish groups (Blocher 82; Sundberg 206). Such continual contact between Palestinian and Alexandrian Jews, along with the Alexandrian Jews' considerable reliance upon Palestinian Jewish teaching, makes the notion that Alexandrian canon included the Roman Catholic Apocrypha implausible (Blocher 82; Beckwith 2581).

Nor do early Septuagintal codices including the Apocrypha conclusively demonstrate that the Alexandrian Jews accepted the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical.

According to Blocher, the three oldest complete extant manuscripts of the LXX, all of which contain some books from the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, are Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century A.D.), Codex Vaticanus (fourth century A.D.), and Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century A.D.) (82-83). Because these codices are Christian texts written in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., they do not necessarily indicate which books the Alexandrian Jews, who created the LXX hundreds of years before these Christian codices, accepted as canonical (Blocher 82-83; Gentry 2602).

Importantly, these codices are not copies of a single biblical text which contained an enlarged Alexandrian canon, for they do not all contain the same apocryphal books (Blocher 83). Codex Sinaiticus includes 4 Maccabees but omits Baruch; Codex Vaticanus omits 1 and 2 Maccabees

but includes 1 Esdras; and Codex Alexandrinus includes 1 Esdras and 4 Maccabees (Blocher 83). Also, these Christian codices do not adhere to a tripartite division of the OT and do not maintain the regular Jewish ordering of the OT books (Blocher 89). Interestingly, all Greek manuscripts of the Psalms from the fifth century A.D. (including Codex Alexandrinus) interspersed the Magnificat (Lk. 1:46-55), the Benedictus (Lk. 1:68-79), and Nunc Dimittis (Lk. 2:29-32) among the Psalms (Blocher 89; Grudem 1945). Codex Alexandrinus even placed 1 and 2 Clement, two very early Christian writings, after the NT (Lightfoot 25). Considering these facts, it is much more likely that these codices were meant to be a collection of revered writings to be used for liturgical purposes rather than accurate copies of the LXX as originally translated and used by Alexandrian Jews (Blocher 83). Thus, it is highly improbable that the Alexandrian Jews accepted the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical or that the original LXX included these books.

One could argue that the Essene community regarded the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles, since Tobit, portions of Sirach, and the Letter of Jeremiah were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 8). However, scholars do not know what authority the Essene community granted to the apocryphal books found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (Schnabel 17). In addition, Beckwith wrote that “the inspiration claimed at Qumran [i.e., within the Essene community] was an inspiration to interpret the Scriptures, not to add to them” (2582). The Essenes only believed that they knew the proper interpretation of the Hebrew canon, not that they could create a new and improved Hebrew canon (Beckwith 2582). That the Essenes did not consider the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha to be canonical is also evinced by the fact that the Essenes introduced quotations from the books of the Hebrew canon with unique phrases

(Beckwith 2578). Because of these facts, and because the Essenes did not attempt to intersperse any books from the Roman Catholic Apocrypha among the books of the Hebrew canon, the books from Roman Catholic Apocrypha which are found among the Dead Sea Scrolls should be considered at most as an interpretative appendix to the Hebrew Scriptures (Beckwith 2578).

Hence, the Essenes accepted the limits of the Hebrew canon.

Scholars have also claimed that many first century Jews besides the Essenes defended and accepted the canonicity of some apocryphal books because they referenced events in these books as historical or quoted these books in their writings. For instance, Jewish rabbis referenced events recounted in 1 and 2 Maccabees, and the Babylonian Talmud retells the story of Susanna from the Additions to Daniel (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 8). Josephus used 1 Maccabees and the Additions to Esther as historical sources (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 9). Such references to these apocryphal books may show that Jews considered them to be canonical. Furthermore, according to *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, rabbis often quoted Sirach and may have considered the books written by Baruch to be canonical because many rabbis believed that Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe (Jer. 36:4), was a prophet (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 8). Nonetheless, the fact that Jewish texts quoted or referred to books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha does not mean that these Jews assumed the canonicity of these apocryphal books (Schnabel 20). Indeed, the OT quotes both Jewish and pagan works, but no one considers these works to be canonical (Schnabel 20). Thus, these objections do not show that Jews accepted the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in the first century A.D.

In sum, mainstream Jews had defined the extent of the Hebrew canon and had rejected the canonicity of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha by the first century A.D. The Council of Jamnia did not definitively define the extent of the Writings, and other arguments in

favor of a fluid or varying Jewish canon in the first century A.D. are unsound. Additionally, the Alexandrian Jews, the Essenes, and other Jews accepted the Hebrew canon and thereby rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity in the first century A.D.

Jesus and the Apostles Rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

The third reason that the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is not canonical is that Jesus and the apostles accepted the Hebrew canon, which did not include the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, as the proper Christian OT.⁹ If Jesus and the apostles rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the Roman Catholic Apocrypha fails to fulfill the criterion for canonicity of divine sanction and therefore should not be considered canonical. Jesus and the apostles rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha both implicitly and explicitly.

First, Jesus and the apostles implicitly rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha by accepting the Hebrew canon as the correct Christian OT. Jesus and the apostles did consider a distinct collection of older, authoritative texts to exist, as is evident from the repeated use of the word "Scriptures" throughout the NT.¹⁰ What, according to Jesus and the apostles, did the Scriptures include? The Scriptures of Jesus and the apostles must have been the Scriptures of the Jews during the first century A.D. Because of the respect which Jesus had for the Jewish Scriptures,¹¹ Jesus and the apostles would have needed to assert that Christians should accept books outside of the Jewish canon as canonical books in the OT for Christians to have any warrant to accept the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. Yet Jesus and the apostles did no such thing. According to Beckwith, neither Jesus nor the apostles ever argued with the Jews about the biblical canon (2579). Although Jesus and the apostles quoted the OT about three hundred

times, they never quoted from an apocryphal book (Beckwith 2582). Since Jesus and the apostles never even implied a change in the Hebrew canon, the OT Scriptures which Jesus and the apostles accepted was Hebrew canon. Taken another way, because Jesus and the apostles often spoke to Jews and Jewish leaders when using the term “Scriptures,”¹² the Scriptures to which they referred must have been the same Scriptures which the Jewish leaders and Jews widely accepted as authoritative during their lifetimes. Otherwise, the appeals of Jesus and the apostles to the Scriptures would have involved an equivocation and would have nullified the effectiveness of their appeals. Therefore, by implicitly accepting the Scriptures which the Jews used as the correct OT, Jesus and the apostles implicitly accepted the Hebrew canon as the proper Christian OT and thereby rejected the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

Additionally, Jesus and the apostles explicitly declared their acceptance of the Hebrew canon as the correct Christian OT. It is likely that Jesus and the apostles accepted the same divisions of the Jewish OT which the Jews used. In at least five instances, Jesus and some NT authors referred to the Scriptures as “the Law and the Prophets.”¹³ If, as some scholars suggest, Jesus and the apostles referenced the entire Hebrew canon by referring to “the Law and the Prophets,” Jesus and the apostles accepted the exact content of the Hebrew canon (Peckham 238). At one point, Jesus even mentioned a trifold division of Scripture: in Luke 24:44, he referred to the Scriptures as “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.” If, in this verse, “the Psalms” is an instance of metonymy, a figure of speech wherein the part (in this case, the largest part) represents the whole (the Writings), Jesus explicitly accepted the whole Hebrew canon in this verse. Furthermore, in Matthew 23:34-35, Jesus may have referenced the beginning and the end of the Hebrew canon:

Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and

crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.

The martyrdom of Abel is mentioned in Genesis 4:8, and the Israelites murdered a man named Zechariah between the sanctuary and the altar of the Temple in 2 Chronicles 24:21. Since Chronicles was the end Hebrew canon, some scholars see this reference to the first and last martyrdoms recorded in the Hebrew canon as evidence that Jesus accepted the Hebrew canon as the correct OT (Wilkins 1872; Blocher 90).¹⁴ Thus, implicitly and explicitly, Jesus and the apostles accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as the correct Christian OT.

However, some scholars have asserted that Jesus and the apostles implicitly accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. Because NT authors alluded to the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in numerous places, Akin has argued that the NT authors used the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as an authoritative source. As an example of a NT allusion to the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, Hebrews 11:35 states that “Some [righteous people] were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.” Although the Protestant OT does not recount such an event, 2 Maccabees 7 does (Akin; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 255-256).

Furthermore, according to deSilva, Jesus and James espoused very similar teachings to Sirach, and Paul had very similar teachings to Wisdom¹⁵ (402-404). Many of these similarities between NT and apocryphal teachings could be regarded as NT allusions to the Roman Catholic Apocrypha and could therefore demonstrate that Jesus and the apostles used and implicitly accepted the Apocrypha. Nevertheless, an allusion, or even a quotation, of a source by a NT author does not necessitate that the quoted book be authoritative. Not all sources which NT

authors used (or even quoted) are canonical: Jude quotes 1 Enoch (Jude 14-15), a pseudepigraphal book, and Paul quotes pagan Greek writings (e.g., Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12-13). Few, if any, Christians have thought that the pagan Greeks whom Paul quoted produced divinely inspired texts, and the vast majority of Christians have denied 1 Enoch canonical status (Sundberg 226). Even though NT authors occasionally quoted from noncanonical works, they clearly distinguished between the Jewish Scriptures and other writings in the NT (2579). NT authors introduced quotations of the OT with phrases such as “Scripture says” (e.g., John 19:37), “it is written” (e.g., Mt. 4:4), and similar introductions, and NT authors only introduced OT books from the Hebrew canon in this way (Beckwith 2579).

Furthermore, on the assumption that the LXX included the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, some have argued that Jesus and the apostles accepted the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha based on the NT authors’ prolific use of the LXX (Akin). About two-thirds of NT quotations of the OT are quotations from the LXX, and NT authors even occasionally quoted the LXX in OT passages where the LXX and MT differ greatly from each other (Akin; Gentry 2602). Because the NT authors quoted the LXX even more than the MT, one could contend that Jesus and the apostles accepted the canon of the LXX over that of the MT (Akin). Furthermore, Akin argued that Jesus implicitly accepted the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha because NT writers did not warn against using the widely popular LXX. However, as demonstrated above, the LXX did not include the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in the first century A.D., so Jesus and the apostles neither implicitly accepted the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha nor needed to warn against Christians using the LXX. Thus, it is unlikely that Jesus and the apostles implicitly accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical.

In summary, Jesus and the apostles implicitly and explicitly accepted the Hebrew canon, which did not include the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, as the proper Christian OT. While Jesus and the apostles did allude to apocryphal books and did use the LXX as its primary OT source, these facts do not demonstrate that Jesus and the apostles accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity. Thus, the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha fails to fit the criterion for canonicity of divine sanction, so the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha are noncanonical.

Church Acceptance of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha

Roman Catholics have proposed a significant argument for accepting the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. Described by Blocher as “ecclesio-centric” (83), this ecclesio-centric argument contends that Christians should accept the canonicity of the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha because most early church leaders accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 4). Some of the earliest Christian writings outside of the NT (including the Didache, 1 Clement, Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, and the Epistle of Barnabas) quote at least one apocryphal book¹⁶ (Akin; Lightfoot 30, 43). Later, prominent figures in the early church including Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, and Pope Damasus quoted books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, and many of these church fathers explicitly considered some or all of the apocryphal books to be canonical (Akin; Hunt 63). Many important early church councils, including the Council of Rome (A.D. 382), the Council of Hippo Regius (A.D. 393), the Council of Carthage I (A.D. 397), and the Council of Carthage II (A.D. 419) accepted all of the books in

the Roman Catholic Apocrypha to be canonical (Akin). All main Septuagintal Christian codices of the Bible from the fourth and fifth centuries include some of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in varying degrees, and presumably both Pope Victor's Old Latin translation (c. A.D. 190) and Jerome's Latin Vulgate (c. A.D. 380.) included the Roman Catholic Apocrypha (deSilva 400; Hunt 62; *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 3). In the West, medieval church councils, such as Nicaea II (787) and the Council of Florence (1442), as well as modern Roman Catholic Church councils, such as the Council of Trent (1546), Vatican I (1870), and Vatican II (1965), affirmed earlier conciliar decisions by accepting the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical (Akin). In the East, the Orthodox Church agreed with the Roman Catholic Church's acceptance of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in the Second Council of Trullo (692), the Council of Florence (1442), and the Synod of Jerusalem (1672) (Akin; Blocher 83). How can the testimonies of all these important church leaders and councils be incorrect?

This is, in fact, an exposition of the criterion for canonicity based on church acceptance as some Catholics expound it (Akin; Peckham 231). As noted above, this criterion is subjective, since it relies in part on the collective decisions of Christians in determining what is and what is not God's Word, and Christians, therefore, should not use church acceptance as a criterion for canonicity. Not only should Christians reject church acceptance as a criterion for canonicity because of its subjectivity, but Christians should also reject this criterion because Christian decisions concerning the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity have been inconsistent throughout church history.

Indeed, early church acceptance in favor of the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha was by no means unanimous. Prominent Christian scholars, including Julius Africanus, Epiphanius, Amphilochus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, and Jerome, rejected

the canonicity of some or all of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha by maintaining a 22-book numbering of OT books in accordance with traditional number of books in the Hebrew canon (Beckwith 2582; Sundberg 221). While some of these Christian leaders rearranged the Hebrew canon in a different way from the traditional Hebrew ordering, at times even omitting OT books, it is notable that they attempted to maintain the same number of books as the Hebrew canon possessed, showing that they desired to keep the Hebrew canon intact (Sundberg 221). By accepting a traditional numbering of the Hebrew canon, these early Christians excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha from their Old Testaments. Some Christians who rejected the canonicity of apocryphal books, including Jerome and Epiphanius, were highly respected and very learned Christians (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 3; Beckwith 2581-2). At times, Jerome, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Gregory of Nazianzus seem to have treated some apocryphal books as historical or Scriptural, but, at the very least, they rejected some apocryphal books (Beckwith 2582; Sundberg 223). Significantly, the Council of Laodicea's Canon LX (c. A.D. 360), which predated the decisions by church councils in favor of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, rejected all of the books outside the Hebrew canon (except Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah) from being in the OT or even read in church¹⁷ (Blocher 83; *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* 159). As noted above, each of the early Christian codices of the Septuagint did not include the same books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, showing that early church decisions concerning the content of the OT varied (Blocher 83). Again, these early Christian codices were probably meant to be used as liturgical books, not as accurate copies of Scripture (Blocher 83). Furthermore, the farther back in history one searches, the fewer apocryphal books one finds to be considered as Scripture (Beckwith 2582). Neither Justin Martyr nor Theophilus of Alexandria, who were both prominent second century A.D. church leaders, referred to any apocryphal books

(Beckwith 2582). In the second century A.D., Christians only cited Tobit, Sirach, and Wisdom as Scripture (Beckwith 2582). Some of the earliest church canon lists do not include all of the apocryphal books, and the earliest canon list, that from Melito (c. A.D. 170), did not include any of the apocryphal books as Scripture (Beckwith 2582). While these testimonies from early church leaders and writings do not demonstrate that most early Christians rejected the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, they do indicate that the early church was inconsistent on which books it considered to be canonical.

Furthermore, neither in the Middle Ages nor in modern times did a consensus on the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha exist. Throughout the Middle Ages, some Christian opposition to the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha existed (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 5). In the Western Church, opposition to apocryphal canonicity came from such renowned people as Pope Gregory the Great and Hugh of St. Victor (Blocher 84). John Wycliffe rejected the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha in his English translation of the Bible while keeping them in his translation (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 5). Soon after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, opposition to the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha became widespread soon after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 5). Protestants first separated the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha from the books in the Hebrew canon in a 1526 Dutch Bible, and in 1599, the first Protestant Bibles excluding the apocryphal books were published (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 5-6). After 1827, it became standard for Protestant Bibles to exclude the apocryphal books altogether (Akin). In the East, John of Damascene, Patriarch of Constantinople Nicephoros, Patriarch Cyril Lukaris, and Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Plato were among those Christians who rejected the Roman Catholic

Apocrypha's canonicity (Blocher 84). Thus, even though most early church leaders may have accepted the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical, the church never reached a consensus, and the church has therefore been inconsistent on the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

In summary, because church acceptance is a subjective and inconsistent criterion, it should not be used as a criterion for determining the Roman Catholic Apocrypha's canonicity. According to Schnabel, what fallible and inconsistent human beings think about the Roman Catholic Apocrypha should not dictate which books God divinely inspired certain people to write in the past (20). The church simply does not have the authority to dictate what is and what is not God's Word.

If the Jews, Jesus, and the apostles all rejected the canonicity of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, how did most Christians come to believe the Roman Catholic Apocrypha to be canonical? One should remember that, according to Hunt, the Jews read the Apocrypha as examples of righteous living while rejecting the Apocrypha as authoritative for doctrine (56). Christians may have originally encountered the apocryphal books, as well as other noncanonical Jewish literature, through interaction with Jews or Jewish converts to Christianity, and may have therefore originally used them as the Jews did: as edifying literature, but not as wholly canonical texts (Hunt 56). Then, through widespread circulation and use of the apocryphal books among Christians, especially among those who were ignorant of Judaism, some Christians may have obliterated the distinction between the books in the Hebrew canon and the apocryphal books altogether. Beckwith is consonant with this hypothesis by stating that "The growing willingness of the pre-Reformation church to treat the Apocrypha as not just edifying reading but Scripture itself reflected the fact that Christians - especially those living outside Semitic-speaking countries - were losing contact with Jewish tradition" (2582).

In short, the Roman Catholic Apocrypha may have spread originally from the Jews, and soon thereafter Christians, ignorant of the Jews' distinction between the Roman Catholic Apocrypha and the Hebrew canon, may have begun treating the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as canonical writings. Of course, all this is merely an educated speculation, but it is a plausible way to explain the acceptance of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha among most Christians during the late early church period and throughout the Middle Ages.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Roman Catholic Apocrypha is noncanonical because the proper criteria for canonicity disqualify the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, the first century Hebrew canon excluded the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, and Jesus and the apostles rejected the Roman Catholic Apocrypha.

If the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha are noncanonical, why read them? There are, in fact, many reasons for Christians to read the Roman Catholic Apocrypha. First, according to Beckwith and Blocher, the Roman Catholic Apocrypha provides valuable information on the theological thought and history of the Jews during the time between the composition of the OT and NT (Beckwith 2582; Blocher 87). Furthermore, the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha give readers the earliest extra-biblical Jewish interpretation of the OT available today, providing a helpful link between Jewish views during OT and NT times on such subjects as angelology, demonology, anthropology, and Christology (Beckwith 2582; Blocher 87). As such, the Roman Catholic Apocrypha gives Christians important insight into the theological views of Jews during the lifetimes of Jesus and the apostles and adds background into their

cultural milieu (deSilva 407). So read the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha; just don't consider them to be the words of God!

Notes

1. Scholars debate the precise meaning of the phrase “defile the hands” as used in rabbinical literature (Hunt 56). Perhaps Jewish rabbis thought that the biblical books “defile the hands” in the sense that touching them could cause people to be ritually impure (which may explain why some Jews only allowed specific Jewish religious authorities to handle these books) (Hunt 56). The important point is that the Jews made a significant distinction between their Scriptures and other Jewish writings.

2. See 1 Maccabees 4:46, 9:27, and 14:41; see also 2 Baruch 85:3 for another Jewish testimony to the absence of the Holy Spirit among Jews after a certain date.

3. According to Jewish tradition, prophecy of some kind did occasionally occur after the deaths of the last prophets (Blocher 84). For example, Josephus himself asserted that he saved his own life by correctly prophesying that Vespasian would become the Roman Emperor (Blocher 84-5). In addition, some rabbinical writings mention what is known as a “Bath Kol,” an audible voice from heaven which occasionally occurred after a time when prophecy ceased (“Folio 48b”). However, these events did not mitigate the Jewish notion that prophecy worthy of canonical status had ended after a specific date (Blocher 85). Jewish rabbis clearly believed that prophecy ceased with the end of divine inspiration by the Holy Spirit in about 450 B.C., since Sotah 48b calls Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi “the latter [prophets],” signifying that divine inspiration worthy of canonicity ceased after them (“Folio 48b”; Peckham 242).

4. When using the ICM to determine the canonicity of the NT, the first and second criteria relate to apostolic authorship and the dates of the lifetimes of the apostles rather than to OT prophetic composition and the dates of the lifetimes of the prophets (Peckham 240-242). For

further explanation, see Peckham, “The Canon and Biblical Authority: A Critical Comparison of Two Models of Canonicity” 240-242.

5. See John 1:18, Colossians 2:9, and 1 John 5:20 for clear examples of Jesus’ divinity.

6. See, for instance, Joshua 1:8, Joshua 23:6, 1 Kings 2:3, and 1 Chronicles 22:13.

7. In *Against Apion* 1:8, Josephus declared that, of the twenty-two canonical books which Jews accepted as canonical:

five belong to Moses: which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind, till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years. But as to the time from the death of Moses, till the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the Prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times, in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God; and precepts for the conduct of human life. (Josephus)

In this passage, Josephus’ list of the books in the Prophets and the Writings sections differs from the Talmudic ordering, and some scholars have used this passage to argue that the Jews had not yet fixed the content of the Prophets and Writings sections of the Hebrew canon (Sundberg 209). However, Sundberg suggested that Josephus reorganized the Prophets and the Writings sections in order to place all of the books outside of the Law which recorded Jewish history in the Prophets section, placing all canonical books outside of the Law which were not histories in their own collection (Sundberg 210). Such a suggestion makes sense of the other content in *Against Apion* 1:8, in which Josephus primarily describes the Jewish Scriptures as a history of the Jews (Josephus).

8. However, some scholars have suggested that these references to a tripartite division of the Hebrew Scriptures does not necessarily show that Jews largely considered the Writings to be a

distinct, canonical collection of books before Jesus' ministry, since the witnesses to a tripartite division of Scripture do not consistently refer to the Writings section with the same terminology (Sundberg 209). But this objection only demonstrates that Jews did not have a common way to reference these books, not that the content of the Writings was not fixed.

9. One could argue that Jesus and the apostles could accept the canonicity of both Hebrew canon and the Roman Catholic Apocrypha because Jesus and the apostles could have considered the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as part of the NT Scriptures or as a collection separate from both the OT and the NT. However, the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, which were almost definitely written before lifetime of Jesus and were Jewish (not Christian) writings, would be very out of place in the NT. According to *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, many early Protestant Bibles placed the Roman Catholic Apocrypha as an appendix to the Protestant OT or the NT (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha* 5). Nevertheless, since the books of the Roman Catholic Apocrypha, just like the books in the Protestant OT, were most likely written by Jews before advent of Christianity, a separation of the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha from the books in the Protestant OT would be an arbitrary separation. Consequently, if the books in the Roman Catholic Apocrypha should be considered to be part of any canonical collection, they should be considered to be part of the Hebrew canon.

10. See Matthew 22:29, John 5:39, and Romans 1:2 for examples.

11. See Matthew 5:18 and John 10:35 for examples of Jesus' respect for the Jewish Scriptures.

12. See Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:24, and Acts 17:2 for examples.

13. See Matthew 7:12, Matthew 22:40, Luke 16:16, Acts 13:15, and Romans 3:21.

14. One might argue that the Jesus here referenced a different Zechariah than the one mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:21, since the Zechariah murdered in 2 Chronicles 24:21 was “the son of Jehoiada the priest” (2 Chron. 24:20) while the Zechariah whom Jesus mentioned was “the son of Barachiah” (Matt. 23:35). However, it is very unlikely that two people named Zechariah would have been murdered by the Jews between the sanctuary of the Temple and the altar within a similar timeframe. Besides this, according to Wilkins, there are numerous possible explanations for this discrepancy between the wordings in Matthew and 2 Chronicles (Wilkins 1872). As with other OT characters, Jehoiada may have had two different names, or Jehoiada may have been Zechariah’s grandfather (Barachiah being Zechariah’s actual father), since in some places throughout the OT sonship describes the relationship between a grandfather and grandson (Wilkins 1872). Finally, someone may have added the phrase “son of Barachiah” to Matthew 23:35 after the original composition of Matthew, since Codex Sinaiticus omits this phrase (Wilkins 1872). Whatever the reason for this discrepancy between Matthew 23:35 and 2 Chronicles 24:21, it is probable that Jesus referenced the end of the Hebrew canon in Matthew 23:35.

15. To compare similar teachings of Jesus and Sirach, compare Luke 12:33 and Matthew 6:19-21 with Sirach. 29:9-12; Matthew 6:7 with Sirach 7:14; and Luke 10:11-14 with Sirach 7:8-9. To compare similar teachings of James and Sirach, compare James 3:6 with Sirach 22:27; James 1:19 with Sirach 5:11; James 1:13-14 with Sirach 15:11-14; and James 1:2-4 with Sirach 2:1-6. To compare similar teachings of Paul and Wisdom, compare Romans 1:19-32 with Wisdom 13:1-9 and 14:22-27; Romans 9:21 with Wisdom 15:7; and Romans 9:19 with Wisdom 12:12.

16. See Didache 4:4, quoting Sirach 1:28; Didache 4:5, quoting Sirach 4:31; 1 Clement 3:4, quoting Wisdom 2:24; 1 Clement 27:5, quoting Wisdom 12:12; Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians 10:2, quoting Tobit 4:10 and 12:9; and the Epistle of Barnabas 6:7, quoting Wisdom 2:12 (Akin; Lightfoot 30, 43).

17. However, some scholars question the authenticity of the Council of Laodicea's Canon LX because of Canon LX's absence in a few early texts containing the Council of Laodicea's decisions (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils* 159-160).

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