CANON CROSSFIRE

Does the Protestant Bible Blow Up the Case for Christianity?



The Case for Christ

Lee Strobel

Evidence That Demands a Verdict

Josh McDowell

And Yet, Most Protestants Would Lose the Case!

Matthew Mark McWhorter, Esq.

Copyright © Matthew Mark McWhorter 2026. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be used, reprinted, reproduced, modified, or distributed in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the author, except for brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews. Notwithstanding the foregoing, permission is expressly granted to download, print, reproduce, and distribute this pamphlet in its entirety, provided that (1) the pamphlet is reproduced without alteration, addition, or deletion, and (2) no fee is charged to recipients for the pamphlet. Commercial printing services may be used to produce authorized copies.

The Case for Christ and *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* are referenced for purposes of criticism and commentary. Canon Crossfire is not affiliated with, sponsored by, or endorsed by Lee Strobel, Josh McDowell, or their publishers

The author can be reached at matthew@canoncrossfire.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: I am a retired corporate attorney who began researching the Case for Christianity as an atheist but ended as a Christian who accepts the Deuterocanon. All proceeds from the book, pamphlet, website, and other ***Canon Crossfire*** materials will be donated.

How to Defeat the Protestant Case for Christianity

✦ ✦ ✦

Those denying the historicity of Christ rely on the simple technique of being unfair: they insist on an unreasonable burden of proof for claims that Jesus existed, said something, or did something. If we use an honest burden of proof—the one applied by deniers themselves to their belief that a particular non-religious person existed, said something, or did something—it is clear that Christians would win the "Case for Christianity." In fact, some of the proof is so unfairly denied that the leading atheist scholar, Prof. Bart Ehrman, wrote a book (*Did Jesus Exist?*) to explain this to his own skeptical students.

Nevertheless, most Protestant Christians would go on to lose the Case for Christianity anyway, because a knowledgeable opponent could simply ask them whether certain books not included in the Protestant "Canon of Scripture" (essentially, the table of contents of the Bible) were also authentic teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. In order to deny that these books (included in the Catholic Canon and called the "Deuterocanon," although labeled "Apocrypha" by some Protestants) belong in the Old Testament, most Protestants engage in the same unfairness and double standards regarding historical evidence that deniers apply to the New Testament. Thus, if asked the right questions, the Protestant will refute the rules of evidence and the standard of proof that prove the New Testament.

This booklet is a starting point for an honest inquiry—and is designed to be shared with Protestants who care about the evidence. The book

Canon Crossfire and its website **www.CanonCrossfire.com** explain this concept in much more detail, and back it all up with comparison charts, databases, and links to the original source evidence. No one needs to trust a word of this; everyone can go and prove every detail for themselves.

And note that the question is whether Christianity is true given the Protestant claims: "Catholic" beliefs are completely irrelevant. In fact, the point can be made by anyone—the Orthodox, atheists, Jews, Hindus, or even those Protestants who accept the Deuterocanon (or at least accept what the evidence indicates about them).

Last but not least: the ***Canon Crossfire*** argument isn't really an argument, because both sides of the debate are actually the Protestant's. By bringing the Canon into the Case for Christianity, the opponent transforms the Protestant's "mere" hypocrisy about the Canon into a fatal flaw within their Case for Christianity itself. Indeed, one way of looking at the ***Canon Crossfire*** argument is that it is a Protestant case for the authenticity of the "Catholic" books.

The Case for Christianity

✦ ✦ ✦

To start, consider what Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* tells us about the books not included in the New Testament (i.e., New Testament "Apocrypha") and their status as canonical ("authentic and authoritative")[1]:

> *Geisler and Nix sum up the case against the canonical status of these books: "(1) None of them enjoyed any more than a temporary or local recognition. (2) Most of them never did have anything more than a semi-canonical status, being appended to various manuscripts or mentioned in tables of contents. (3) No major canon or church council included them as inspired books of the New Testament. (4) The limited acceptance enjoyed by most of these books is attributable to the fact that they attached themselves to references in canonical books...."*

Note that every single item relates to acceptance by the earliest Christians. And the standard for proving that acceptance is "more than a temporary or local recognition" and inclusion by a "major canon or church council"—i.e., consensus.

Or consider Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*[2]:

> *"...even though the fringes of the canon remained unsettled for a while, there was actually a high degree of unanimity concerning the greater part of the New Testament within the first two centuries. And this was true among very diverse congregations scattered over a wide area....*

[1] Part One (The Case for the Bible), Section 2 (How We Got the Bible), item 1D and 3D.
[2] Chapter 3, with Dr. Bruce Metzger.)

> *Those who discerned the limits of the canon had a clear and balanced perspective of the gospel of Christ."*

Note the focus on the first two centuries, and the earliest Christians, who it is claimed had a "clear and balanced perspective of the gospel of Christ." Note also the emphasis on a wide area and diverse congregations—evidence of consensus.

> *"What the synods and councils did in the fifth century and following was to ratify what already had been accepted by high and low Christians alike.... You have to understand that the canon was not the result of a series of contests involving church politics.... When the pronouncement was made about the canon, it merely ratified what the general sensitivity of the church had already determined.... These documents didn't derive their authority from being selected; each one was authoritative before anyone gathered them together.... to say that the canon emerged only after councils and synods made these pronouncements would be like saying, Let's get several academies of musicians to make a pronouncement that the music of Bach and Beethoven is wonderful!"*

Note the importance of later synods and councils: they tell us not only the sentiment at the time they occurred, but also the sentiment of the time before then.

> *...some New Testament books, notably James, Hebrews, and Revelation, were more slowly accepted into the canon than others... "that just shows how careful the early church was," he replied. "They weren't 'gung ho'... This shows deliberation and careful analysis."*

Emphasis is placed on the care of the early church, its deliberation, its careful analysis, and so forth.

> *...generally there has never been any serious dispute about the authoritative nature of twenty of the New Testament's twenty-seven books... The remaining seven books, though questioned for a time by some early church leaders, "were finally and fully recognized by the church generally," according to Geisler and Nix. As for the "pseudepigrapha," the proliferation of gospels, epistles, and apocalypses in the first few centuries after Jesus... "virtually no orthodox Father, canon or council" considered them to be authoritative or deserving of inclusion in the New Testament.*

We see that the views of a few outliers are not the controlling factor; rather, it is recognition by the consensus of the early Christians generally.

On the New Testament, the proof relies on the earliest Christians—but as we will see, the Protestant argues against the earliest Christians on the Old Testament, and instead tries to prove that they were wrong, mistaken, lying, fraudulent, etc.

And thus, in a real Case for Christ, if the skeptic asks about the Deuterocanon, the Protestant himself will explain to the Judge why the consensus of the early Christians cannot be trusted—and thus will lose the Case.

For example, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* explains why most Protestants exclude the Deuterocanon from their Canon (and instead label them "apocrypha"):

> ***Why Not Canonical?*** *Unger... while granting that the Old Testament apocryphal books do have some value, cites four reasons for excluding them from the Hebrew canon: 1. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms. 2. They teach doctrines that are false and foster practices that are at variance with*

> *inspired Scripture. 3. They resort to literary types and display an artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture. 4. They lack the distinctive elements that give genuine Scripture its divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.*

Notice: not one of these four reasons has anything whatsoever to do with the earliest Christians and their acceptance of Deuterocanonical books. We see that the real Protestant belief is actually that the earliest Christians *were wrong* to accept them: the *earliest Christians*, not just modern Catholic and Orthodox Christians. Most Protestants characterize discussion of the Deuterocanon as if the opponent were modern Catholicism, but as we will now see, the evidence clearly shows that the Protestant view is opposed by the early Christians.

The Case Against the "Early Christian Consensus"

✦ ✦ ✦

McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* gives the game away when it provides a Protestant synopsis of the "Historical Testimony of Their Exclusion." Geisler and Nix give ten testimonies of antiquity that argue against recognition of the Apocrypha:

1. **Philo, Alexandrian Jewish philosopher (20 B.C.–A.D. 40), quoted the Old Testament prolifically, and even recognized the threefold classification, but he never quoted from the Apocrypha as inspired.**

   Philo was a Jew, not a Christian. This actually relates to "proof" that the early Christians were "mistaken," not that they rejected the "Apocrypha." Even if the Jews did, where is the evidence that the Christians did?

2. **Josephus (A.D. 30–100), Jewish historian, explicitly excludes the Apocrypha, numbering the books of the Old Testament as twenty-two. Neither does he quote the apocryphal books as Scripture.**

   Josephus was also a Jew, and was not even born yet when Christ was (allegedly) resurrected—he was writing long after the New Testament is usually alleged to have been written. In addition, this is at best an "allusion," since Josephus did not mention which books are in his twenty-two; in fact, it is not clearly an allusion to the later Jewish canon—Josephus also cited the long form of Esther, cited a lamentation from Jeremiah that does not seem to be

the Book of Lamentations as we have it, says that Ezekiel wrote two books not one, etc. Yet the allusion is itself cited as a "testimony"—bear that in mind as we move on to the next item.

3. Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha, although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament.

Again, this is really a claim that the beliefs and testimony of the earliest Christians (after the Apostles) were wrong. And thus, the claim is that the New Testament proves that the Christians who were cited as the proof of the New Testament were wrong when they gave similar proof to other books: as we will see, the early Christians said repeatedly that the "Apostles delivered" Deuterocanon to them.

But also note the two double standards: allowing "almost" to suffice for their personal canon, and the acceptance of "references" (allusions) as evidence for the status of Protestant books, while failing to even consider references as evidence for the status of "Apocrypha." There are hundreds of New Testament references to the Deuterocanon—according to Protestant scholars. If Protestant scholars see them as clear references, that is a strong indication that a Judge would as well.

But also note that quotes are treated as conclusive evidence of what Jesus and the New Testament writers considered authoritative Scripture (Canon). Yet we will see that the thousands of times the early Christians quoted the Deuterocanon as authoritative Scripture will be ignored or handwaved away by claims that mere quotes do not prove that the early Christian really believed what he quoted as Scripture really was Scripture to

him. (E.g., in point 1 above, they noted the importance of even a single quote from a single Jew (Philo), but nowhere in this list do they even acknowledge the thousands of times that early Christians quoted from the "Apocrypha" as part of the Old Testament given them by the Apostles.)

4. The Jewish scholars of Jamnia (A.D. 90) did not recognize the Apocrypha.

Again they cite the Jews, and again rely on evidence coming after the writing of the New Testament (if the early dates for it are accepted)[3]. Note that Jewish scholarship does not conclude that Jews at the time of Christ rejected all of the "Apocrypha"; to the contrary, they acknowledge that their limited canon (the one copied by Protestants) came after Christ. In fact, one of the Deuterocanon (the Book of Sirach) was still accepted as canon by some Jews for a thousand years after Christ—as anyone can read for themselves in the Talmud.

5. No canon or council of the Christian church recognized the Apocrypha as inspired for nearly four centuries.

No council of the Christian church recognized the Protestant Canon as inspired for nearly four centuries either. The first councils ever held were held in the fourth century, period.

The claim also relates to a label ("the Apocrypha") and is clearly false when one looks at specific books within the label, at least one of which was named on every single canon list of the early

[3] The actual evidence about Jamnia is disputed, so much so that more recent Protestant scholarship seems to have abandoned these claims. But for present purposes, it simply does not matter.

Christians, either explicitly or implicitly. See the next two items for examples.

6. Many of the great Fathers of the early church spoke out against the Apocrypha—for example, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.

"Many" is not consensus. But also, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius all expressly accepted the Epistle of Jeremiah (which is different from the Book of Jeremiah): it is listed by name on all of their canon lists, as anyone can read for themselves.[4] In point of fact, the Protestant position on the Epistle of Jeremiah is that each and every one of the authorities they just cited was dead wrong and should be ignored, even when they spoke unanimously on the exact point for which they were cited.

Origen (who died in 253 A.D.) evidences the canonicity of "Apocrypha" centuries before the "nearly four centuries" criticism of item 5, above. In fact, per Wikipedia: "because Athanasius' canon is the closest canon of any of the Church Fathers to the one used by Protestant Churches today, many Protestants point to Athanasius as the Father of the Canon." Athanasius is the first to match the New Testament of modern Christians, and he was writing 334 years after Christ (367 A.D.)—and on the Old Testament, he also evidences the canonicity of "Apocrypha" (and the exclusion of Esther, a matter on which he will subsequently be outvoted by the canons and councils dismissed in item 5, above).

Obviously, everyone always condemns "apocrypha"! The issue is always what they define as "apocrypha"—and not a single early Christian ever agreed with the Protestant definition. This is why

[4] E.g., at www.bible-researcher.com/origen.html, www.bible-researcher.com/cyril.html, www.bible-researcher.com/athanasius.html.

McDowell and Geisler quote "three great Fathers of the early church" who all unanimously and expressly disagree with the Protestant Canon (a fact that McDowell and Geisler do not even mention).

7. Jerome (A.D. 340–420), the great scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha as part of the canon. Jerome said that the church reads them "for example of life and instruction of manners," but does not "apply them to establish any doctrine." He disputed with Augustine across the Mediterranean on this point. At first Jerome refused even to translate the apocryphal books into Latin, but later he made a hurried translation of a few of them. After his death and "over his dead body" the apocryphal books were brought into his Latin Vulgate directly from the Old Latin Version.

Jerome did not agree with the Protestant definition of "apocrypha" either. He expressly stated: "I repeat what the Jews say against the Story of Susanna... the man who makes this [rejecting it or removing it] a charge against me proves himself to be a fool and a slanderer; for I explained not what I thought but what they commonly say against us."[5] So said Jerome himself: Susanna was accepted by the Christians ("us") and was not among the books he rejected, and saying he did was slander to him.

In addition, Jerome was writing 382–420 A.D.—so yet again the Protestant is citing evidence "nearly four centuries" after Christ, while dismissing (in item 5 above) "canons or councils of the Christian church...nearly four centuries" after Christ.

However, because Jerome is the one single early Christian who comes closest to the Protestant Old Testament canon, he is always

[5] www.newadvent.org/fathers/27102.htm

brought up endlessly by Protestants—so we will come back to Jerome and the rest of these claims in a moment. But once again, note that (a) it is the Protestants who bring up someone who does not agree with them, as the closest thing they can find to support for their position; and (b) they do so in an attempt to show that even one single outlier overrides their own standard of proof of the New Testament: consensus.

8. Many Roman Catholic scholars through the Reformation period rejected the Apocrypha.

This has nothing to do with the early Christians (and changes the standard from consensus to "many").

9. Luther and the Reformers rejected the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

This has nothing to do with the early Christians.

10. Not until A.D. 1546, in a polemical action at the counter-Reformation Council of Trent (1545–63), did the apocryphal books receive full canonical status by the Roman Catholic Church.

This has nothing to do with the early Christians. Notice also that Catholic actions are prejudged as "polemical," but not those of Luther, the Reformers, the Jews, etc.

So we see that even the essay entitled "Historical Testimony of Their Exclusion" does not show that there was a consensus in favor of the limited Protestant Canon and against the Deuterocanon. In fact, its selection of ten items of no real relevance still gives us clear indications that the evidence from the early Christians is universally in favor of the acceptance of at least some of the Deuterocanon.

But, again, that is not the ***Canon Crossfire*** point—instead, consider all this in light of the Case for Christianity. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* itself (a) attacks the value of canons and councils (item 5), (b) cites a few fathers as if that matters more than consensus (item 6), (c) extensively discusses one single father (Jerome, in item 7) as if only unanimity can show us what was authentically Apostolic, and (d) otherwise tries to use Jewish and later Christian opinions to prove that the consensus view—in fact, in some cases, the unanimous view—of early Christians led to the wrong result. A skeptic only has to ask about the Deuterocanon to then have the Protestant explain why the consensus of the early Christians cannot be trusted and should not be the standard of proof.

The Overwhelming Evidence of Consensus

✦ ✦ ✦

Until recently, it would have been hard to track down all the writings of the early Christians on exactly this point. But now, the resources are available online, including the Biblia Patristica (Biblindex) database of references from the earliest Christians, online translations of many of the earliest Christian documents, etc.

Canon Crossfire uses all those resources to try to find everything the earliest Christians had to say about the Deuterocanon, and assemble it for others to read. At **www.CanonCrossfire.com,** it is available as (1) a website for anyone wishing to read about it, (2) a book for those who want to read it all themselves, and (3) a database for those who want to conduct their own research.

A few examples of what the evidence demonstrates:

- **Susanna** was accepted by every single Christian through at least 450 A.D. Not one single early Christian can be shown to have rejected it. Church sermons and entire Scriptural commentaries on it survive.[6]
- **The Book of Baruch** was accepted by everyone before 450 A.D., except arguably Jerome—who never actually says he rejected it.[7] Irenaeus—the crucial earliest Christian (177 A.D.) to testify that we receive four Gospels, and who was taught Christianity by Polycarp, who himself was taught by the Apostle/Evangelist John—testified that it was "the book of the commandments of God, and of the law which endureth for ever. All they that hold it fast (are appointed) to life: but such as leave it shall die.... This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth... which the prophets proclaimed, and Christ established, and the apostles delivered, and the Church in all the world hands on to her children. This must we keep with all certainty..." The early Christians expressly preached Baruch as Prophecy, Scripture, the Word of God, etc., fulfilled by Jesus Christ and as a reason—frankly, not infrequently as *the* reason—to believe in Christ. We can have confidence that Jesus Christ is truly Divine because His coming was foretold. Who foretold His coming? According to Irenaeus and the early Church, it was Baruch. When the early Church claimed that God fulfilled the prophecies and became man, they cited Baruch. In the entire history of the early Church, Isaiah 9:6 ("For unto us a child is born... The mighty God")—the verse that David Limbaugh's *The Emmaus Code* (p. 286) says is an "explicit" prophecy that "God

[6] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/how-susanna-can-defeat-the-case-for-christianity/ and https://read.canoncrossfire.com/susanna/.
[7] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/how-baruch-can-defeat-the-case-for-christianity/ and https://read.canoncrossfire.com/baruch/.

would literally be born in human flesh and live with us," and among the verses of Isaiah Chapter 9 that McDowell calls "some of the richest Messianic prophecies in the Bible"—was cited only 58 times. Baruch 3:36–38 was cited 158 times (per the same data set).[8]

- **The word "Wisdom"** appears on every Christian canon list until 350 A.D. All but one of those mentions are clear references to the Book of Wisdom; the other (Melito's, which might not be a Christian list) is just the title "Wisdom," which only might be a reference to it—but that the others expressly state "the Book of Wisdom" is key evidence as to what Melito really meant by the word. The early Christians wrote about the Book of Wisdom 1,798 times, which (per verse) was at a rate almost identical to Job, also an Old Testament "Poetic" Book. More than 500 such mentions came in books where the early Christian specifically stated that the Book of Wisdom was Holy Scripture, the Word of God, Divinely-inspired, Prophecy, etc.; whereas 13 of 39 books (one-third) of the Protestant canon do not seem to have been even vaguely alluded to 500 times in the first 450 years, let alone quoted as authentic Old Testament Scripture.[9]

In fact, the earliest Christians cited the Deuterocanon many thousands of times.[10] Not all citations are indications of authoritative Scripture, of course, but thousands were. The indication of authority arises from the words of the Christian who wrote the sentence saying it was authoritative, which anyone can see by reading the actual evidence. As one example, consider Origen ("the main source of information on the

[8] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/irenaeus-testifies-that-baruch-was-apostolic-preaching/.
[9] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/the-wisdom-of-solomon/.
[10] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/citation-evidence/, which includes a database of the evidence, searchable by date, father, citing book, cited book, verse, use made of the cite, designation as Scripture, etc.

use of the texts that were later officially canonized as the New Testament.... [He] is not the originator of the idea of biblical canon, but he certainly gives the philosophical and literary–interpretative underpinnings for the whole notion"). Origen wrote a ten-page essay explaining in detail to a fellow Christian why Susanna was authentic Christian Scripture even though the Jews (those who "scornfully laugh at Gentile believers for their ignorance of the true reading as they have them," in the words of Origen) no longer accepted it as such: because (Origen says) the Christians had the true Scripture, not the Jews.

> *The Jewish leaders "pretended to the Jews... deceived the wives of their countrymen.... hid from the knowledge of the people... took away from the people every passage... concealed and removed from the Scriptures..."*

Read it for yourself, and see why Origen and all the earliest Christians (including Jerome) accepted Susanna, and did so knowing full well that the Jews did not.[11]

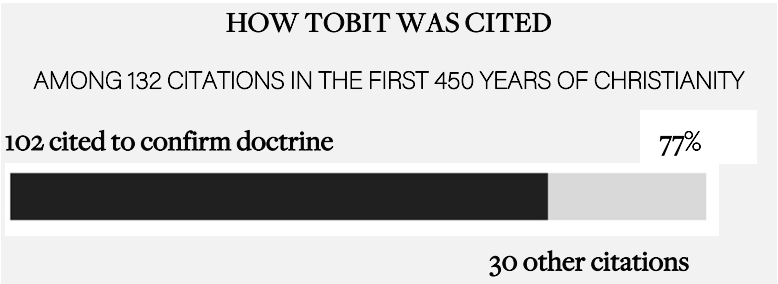
One can also compare all the evidence for 2 Maccabees (Deuterocanon) and see that it dwarfs the evidence for 1 Chronicles (Old Testament Canon), or see that Baruch (Deuterocanon) is better attested than a New Testament book like 2 Peter. ***Canon Crossfire*** assembles all these into simple comparison charts.[12]

In addition, one can see all the times the Deuterocanon are cited to confirm or establish doctrine. For example, 2 Maccabees was cited as the proof that God made all things from nothing, and Deuterocanon

[11] An English translation is available at www.newadvent.org/fathers/0414.htm.
[12] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/2-maccabees/ and https://read.canoncrossfire.com/irenaeus-testifies-that-baruch-was-apostolic-preaching/#:~:text=Comparing%20the%20Evidence

were argued over as authoritative Scripture in debates with heretics—a clear indication of their use to prove doctrines.

And yet, above we saw the claim that "Jerome... said that the church reads them 'for example of life and instruction of manners,' but does not 'apply them to establish any doctrine.'" That is true: Jerome did say that (although it is better translated as "to confirm," not "to establish")—but there is no corroborating evidence showing that anyone actually did treat them that way. For example, a survey trying to find and read all the citations to Tobit in the first 450 years of Christianity found that 102 of 132 citations were specifically made to confirm doctrine—usually, people cite Scripture in order to confirm doctrine.[13] (In addition, neither Jerome nor any other early Christian ever lists Baruch as part of that "not to confirm doctrine" classification, until the Reformation—1,500 years after Christ.)



Moreover, the quote from McDowell/Geisler above continued with: "He disputed with Augustine across the Mediterranean on this point. At first Jerome refused even to translate the apocryphal books into Latin, but later he made a hurried translation of a few of them. After his death and 'over his dead body' the apocryphal books were brought into his Latin Vulgate directly from the Old Latin Version." Actually, the

[13] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/tobit/

evidence shows that Jerome disputed with everyone on this point. In fact, what they describe is Jerome's opposition to the consensus. His sponsors forced him to make those translations, precisely because they disagreed with him. Councils were immediately held—the very same councils praised in *The Case for Christ* for "ratify[ing] what already had been accepted by high and low Christians alike"—and they all rejected Jerome's views. Hundreds of Bishops (with as many as 800 parishes/priests in their diocese) voted against the view of Jerome (one single priest). One can read Jerome's own words, and listen to him complain about how no one agrees with him; in fact, one can read multiple contemporaneous fathers—one a Jewish Christian, Epiphanius—testify that some Jews at the time of Jerome accepted Baruch, let alone the Christians. Etc., etc., etc.[14]

And yet, over and over, the standard of consensus—the standard the Protestant insists be applied in order to authenticate the New Testament—is forgotten, as Jerome is brought out as the one counterexample to the manifest consensus of "high and low Christians alike" accepting books of the Deuterocanon.

Changing Subjects

[14] Discussed at https://read.canoncrossfire.com/epiphanius-canon-lists/. Also, always consider the Jewish scholarship as well. E.g., they tell us that in the Talmud the story of the woman with seven sons in 2 Maccabees 7 underwent a "chronological shift" (i.e., was plagiarized) as a different story about a different woman, as Christians had co-opted 2 Maccabees and the original woman and her sons as Christian heroes. The Rabbis who wrote the Talmud that plagiarized the story also first delineated the modern Jewish canon, which does not include the book (2 Maccabees) that (a) Christians had co-opted and (b) from which the Rabbis had extracted the story—the exact story which Jesus alludes to in Matthew 18:8-9, and which the Epistle to the Hebrews (the Jews) references in 11:35, using Greek words never used in the Bible except in these two places. Read more at https://read.canoncrossfire.com/matthew-183-9-to-2-maccabees-7/.

✦ ✦ ✦

A common tactic of anyone losing an argument is to change the subject. Perhaps this explains McDowell's claims that later Catholics were wrong to accept the Deuterocanon, which is irrelevant to Protestant attempts to prove Christianity true.

But there are obvious issues with McDowell's claims, and it is always tempting to argue them. Recall that his list of reasons "Why Not Canonical?" asserts: 1. historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms; 2. doctrines that are false and foster practices that are at variance with inspired Scripture; 3. literary types and artificiality of subject matter and styling out of keeping with inspired Scripture; 4. lack of the distinctive elements that give genuine Scripture its divine character, such as prophetic power and poetic and religious feeling.

Items 2, 3, and 4 are opinions (which a large majority of Christians—the Catholics and Orthodox—do not agree with), are circular, and beg the question of whether anything at all is genuine inspired Scripture.

Item 1 is both an opinion and an example of unfairness. Consider *When Critics Ask* (co-written by Geisler) and its defense of Jonah 3:3: "There have been several proposals to explain" why Jonah says Nineveh took three days to pass through (i.e., was 50–70 miles across). One is that it meant the time needed to walk around it, the other that it meant the time required to visit all the neighborhoods within it. Neither explanation is what the passage actually says; the explanations contradict each other; and neither can ever be proven to be what the author truly meant. A third answer—that it is simply an error—is also always possible. But Geisler et al. accept any possible positive explanation as sufficient, and require their opponents to disprove all possible explanations (even those that contradict each other).

Naturally, Catholics and the Orthodox have similar explanations for all the alleged "errors" of the Deuterocanon; in fact, they are the same explanations used by Protestants to defend alleged "historical and geographical inaccuracies and anachronisms" found in the Protestant Canon—as anyone can see for themselves by reading the explanations. This unfairness is part of the Canon debate, of course.

But none of that matters here, because the ***Canon Crossfire*** point is much bigger than a debate over the Canon: if we assume that the Protestant is correct, what does that prove in the Case for Christianity? It proves that acceptance by the earliest Christians is *not* proof of authenticity. In his proof of the New Testament, Strobel told us "how careful the early church was," how they "showed deliberation and careful analysis," had a "clear and balanced perspective of the gospel of Christ," etc. But the evidence proves that they (a) accepted books that (the Protestant claims) contain historical errors and doctrines that were not preached by Christ and the Apostles, etc., and (b) lied when they claimed that the Apostles delivered those books to them as authentic and authoritative Scripture.

The Protestant claim becomes the skeptical opponent's proof that the early Christians did not pass down only the truth. According to the Protestant, they got that exact matter (the true teachings of the Apostles) wrong on the Deuterocanon. Someone introduced these fakes into Christianity, and despite all the claims about how careful and trustworthy the early Christians were, a consensus still formed that wrongly claimed the fakes had been passed down by the true Apostles.[15]

[15] Similarly with certain claims about "Hebraica Veritas" – some of the Deuterocanon were not written in Hebrew. But that has nothing at all to do with the early Christian consensus: the evidence shows that they accepted Greek Books without any distinction, in fact they expressly state that Greek books were more inspired than Hebrew (they claim Greek translators were

Divinely inspired to correct errors and fill in missing gaps from the Hebrew, etc.). If a Protestant claims that "Hebraica Veritas" means that only Hebrew books were passed down as authentic inspired Scripture, then once again the early Christian consensus is admitted to be dead wrong about what the truth is, what the Apostles taught, what Books were passed down from the Apostles, etc.

Confusing the Issue

✦ ✦ ✦

Confusing the issue is another common problem. For example, some attempt to dismiss council votes as "non-binding." But council votes are massive evidence of what early Christians believed—which is exactly why Protestants rely on them as proof of the New Testament.

Or consider McDowell's claim that "Jesus and the New Testament writers never once quote the Apocrypha, although there are hundreds of quotes and references to almost all of the canonical books of the Old Testament." That a Protestant has decided "not to believe X without a quote saying X" is irrelevant—McDowell himself cites references (allusions) as evidence for the Protestant Canon. References are evidence. That they are not quotes does not disqualify them as evidence.

And the New Testament authors reference the Deuterocanon hundreds of times—Protestant scholars find them "obvious" references, a strong indication that a Judge would as well. In fact, there are actually very few quotes of the Protestant Canon either—most ancient "quotes" are not quotes as we think of them (they are summaries and paraphrases, and fewer still name the book they come from)—but people apply the label "quote" to what they like and "allusion" to what they don't.

It is of course true that Paul references Greek poetry as well, but no one is claiming that Paul made an equally simple reference to the Book of Sirach—that is a straw man. The actual claim is that in 10 of his 13 Epistles Paul referenced a Book that (a) expressly declares itself to be Divinely inspired, (b) was "canonical for some Rabbis" according to the

Jewish Study Bible,[16] (c) was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Cairo Genizah, Masada, etc., and (d) is quoted in the Talmud as Scripture. Why did he do that, and why so many times?

Nor is Paul all there is to consider: Sirach was incorporated into the Gospel of Matthew (which Protestant scholars call the "Gospel to the Jews"), and into the Our Father, the Lord's Prayer given to us by God Himself. While God is referenced as a Father elsewhere, Sirach was the first to address prayer to God the Father: "O Lord, Father and God of my life..." (Sirach 23:14). So God Himself varies from all "canonical" tradition by doing something first done in the Book of Sirach. In addition, Sirach 28:2 ("Forgive the wrong of your neighbor, and then your sins will be forgiven when you pray") is an entire concept (linking your forgiveness by God to you forgiving others) that does not appear in the Protestant Old Testament. In fact, immediately after giving us the words to pray as part of the Our Father, we have Jesus "doubling down" on the concept He is taking from Sirach, by repeating it in Matthew 6:14–15. Luke merely notes it once and moves on—it is only in the Gospel to the Jews that Jesus stresses and repeats the teaching first taught in Sirach.

And neither Jesus nor any of His Divinely-inspired evangelists show any concern that evoking such concepts from a book that claims to be Scripture (and was "canonical for some Rabbis" and remained so for a thousand years after Christ—according to Jewish scholarship on the Jewish Canon) would lead anyone to "wrongly" accept it as authentic

[16] "The best of Jewish biblical scholarship available today [from a] committee of highly-respected biblical scholars and rabbis from the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism movements..." Jewish scholarship contradicts Protestant claims that the Jewish canon was only 22 books at the time of Christ.

Scripture. In comparison, in John 4:22 Jesus does tell the Samaritan her Scriptures are wrong ("Ye worship ye know not what").[17]

All the hundreds of references are evidence of what Jesus and the Apostles taught, and claiming otherwise is not being honest. That they are not "quotes" is no reason not to consider them and what they indicate. Instead, we should read what Protestant scholars claim Jesus and the Apostles were saying with these references, and then ask ourselves some basic questions, such as:

- What reason is there for the Book of Wisdom (which says it is Scripture) to be referenced more than any comparable canonical Book (per the 1611 KJV and other Protestant scholarship)—by Evangelists who allegedly did not see it as Divinely inspired?[18]
- Why would Divinely inspired Evangelists incorporate wording from "Apocrypha" (many of which claim to be Scripture) into hymns and creeds (from before there even was a New Testament), when canonical Scripture could have been incorporated instead?[19]
- Why would Jesus allude to "Apocrypha" that claim to be Divinely inspired Scripture to prove His divinity if they were not authentic and not considered such by His audience?[20]
- Who read the "Apocrypha" to illiterate Jews (97% of the population) so that they would know all the things it is claimed

[17] Nor are these the only possible references to Sirach to consider – Matthew makes many more, Jesus is quoted as making many more, and in fact nearly every Book of the New Testament makes many more. The Epistle of James makes 29: one allusion to Sirach for every 3.7 verses. See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/sirach-ecclesiasticus/.

[18] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/statistical-analysis-old-testament-comparison/.

[19] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/hebrews-13/, https://read.canoncrossfire.com/matthew-1125-30-to-sirach-51/, etc.

[20] See, e.g., https://read.canoncrossfire.com/matthew-1119-30-to-wisdom-910-etc/.

they knew—and where, and why, if they were not read as Scripture during religious services?[21]

- Why would the Gospel to the Jews be far more focused on "Apocrypha" than the other Gospels, as acknowledged by the 1611 KJV and other Protestant scholarship?[22] Why is the Epistle with the greatest focus on "Apocrypha" either Hebrews (Wisdom), the Epistle of James (Sirach), or the Epistle of Jude (1 Enoch)?[23] Collectively, those are the two books (Matthew and Hebrews) most devoted to Jewish thoughts and concerns, plus the two books written by possible family members of Jesus ("Brothers of the Lord"—James and Jude). Of the 27 Books of the New Testament, why would those four books be the ones most focused on "Apocrypha" (that claim to be Scripture, but allegedly are not)?

- Consider why the evidence seems linked to other evidence. E.g., within seven verses, we have two references to Judith in the Gospel written by Luke, a disciple of Paul. Per Acts, both of them may have worked in Corinth together. Paul himself makes two references to Judith in his own Epistle to the Corinthians. And Clement of Rome, who may also have worked with Paul, cites the Blessed Judith by name in his Epistle to the Corinthians. All this evidence is tied to one place (Corinth), one time (before the fall of Jerusalem, during the writing of the New Testament, and a

[21] See the literacy discussion at https://read.canoncrossfire.com/matthew-1522-to-wisdom-720/.
[22] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/statistical-analysis-of-the-gospel-to-the-jews/.
[23] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/hebrews-an-epistle-to-those-who-accept-apocrypha/, https://read.canoncrossfire.com/sirach-ecclesiasticus/, and https://read.canoncrossfire.com/sidebar-8-1-enoch/, respectively. Also consider that Mary's allusions to the Jewish heroine Judith in her Magnificat are another example of how Jesus' family may have known Greek and accepted "Apocrypha." See the discussion at https://read.canoncrossfire.com/judith/, https://read.canoncrossfire.com/matthew-1522-to-wisdom-720/, etc.

generation before Josephus), and one group of Evangelists and other disciples.[24]

- Why do Evangelists devote so much attention to long thematic allusions to books that were not seen as Divinely-inspired Scripture? E.g., John devotes two entire chapters (John 9–10, 10% of his Gospel) to a long, complicated allusion to 1 Maccabees, which commands (in verse 4:59) the celebration of Hanukkah. The allusion is clear: in fact, John 10:22 mentions Hanukkah (never mentioned in the Protestant Canon) by one of its names ("the feast of the dedication" of the Temple). Jesus attended the celebration of Hanukkah and, along the way to it, healed the man born blind. In doing so, He preached, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5): Hanukkah, of course, is the Festival of Lights, where the Jews light the Menorah candles, etc. Understanding the background from 1 Maccabees is essential to understanding the events of the Gospel, its many allusions to light and sight and blindness in Chapters 9 and 10, and how John presents Jesus as the true fulfillment of Hanukkah.[25]

  > **Formerly Blind Man:** ...one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see... Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing...
  >
  > **Jesus:** I am the light of the world... I am come into this world, that they which see not might see...

In addition, Antiochus "Epiphanes," who befouled the Temple (whose later restoration is the foundation of Hanukkah), claimed that he was

[24] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/judith/.
[25] See https://read.canoncrossfire.com/john-1022-to-1-maccabees-and-2-maccabees/ and https://read.canoncrossfire.com/1-maccabees/.

"God Manifest" (the meaning of the term) on Earth. John writes: "Jesus walked in the temple... Then came the Jews... If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly... I and my Father are one... the Jews took up stones again to stone him." The moment Jesus declares Himself to be the true Epiphany, the stones came out, because the Jews "were blind" and did not recognize the true God truly Manifest in the midst of the celebration of the rededication of the very Temple He was standing in.

The hundreds of references (with many of them deep and meaningful) reinforce the claim of the early Christians to have received these books from the Apostles. It is the Protestant who denies this early Christian claim, and must explain away the evidence: that evidence includes both (a) a host of Protestant Bible scholars testifying to the obviousness of these references, and (b) the testimony of Jesus and the evangelists, who preached "the truth" by repeatedly using books that the Protestant claims (contrary to the testimony of both Jewish experts on the Jewish Canon and early Christians regarding their own Canon) were never authoritative Scripture to Jesus and His Jewish audience, or to the Apostles and their early Christian audience.

And never to be forgotten: the issue here is whether Christianity is true. The evidence in a real Case for Christianity would include hundreds of New Testament references to books that also claim to be Divinely inspired but were (according to the Protestant) frauds filled with errors; plus thousands of confused and false testimonies of the early Christians claiming that such fraudulent and erroneous books were delivered to them by the Apostles as authentic and authoritative Scripture. With that as the evidence, the Protestant has to persuade a neutral non-Christian Judge to trust the early Christians, and rule that the New Testament is proof of the truth of Christianity and an actual Resurrection—rather than simply a result of fraud, mistake, delusion, or confusion.

Read All the Evidence

✦ ✦ ✦

This booklet is just the beginning. Read all the evidence, decide for yourself what the consensus of the early Christians was, and determine whether to follow the evidence to the truth. After all, Lee Strobel's *Case for Christ* itself is a reminder that you should always be:

Judging for Yourself: *Maybe you too have been basing your spiritual outlook on the evidence you've observed around you or gleaned long ago from books, college professors, family members, or friends. But is your conclusion really the best possible explanation for the evidence? If you were to dig deeper—to confront your preconceptions and seek out proof systematically—what would you find?*

CANON CROSSFIRE

Protestant Claims About the Catholic Deuterocanon Would Defeat the Case for Christianity!

This booklet demonstrates the ***Canon Crossfire*** concept: how a skeptic would bring the canon debate into the Case for Christianity—with rules of evidence, standards of proof, and a judge to determine the winner.

The complete ***Canon Crossfire*** book and the full supporting research are available in their entirety **FOR FREE** at **www.canoncrossfire.com.**

Praise for Canon Crossfire

Every book review is still 5 stars a year after launch.

Amazon #1 Best Seller on Black Friday 2025.

Seen by millions on Protestant televangelist platforms (NRB TV, HIS Glory TV, The Gospel Truth Network, etc.).

For the full case, just scan the QR code to go to www.canoncrossfire.com—where you will find the book, the research, and much more.

SCAN ME