



The Place of the Apocrypha

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Some Presuppositions

1. The God of the Old and New Testaments exist.
2. God wanted to communicate His will with mankind.
3. There is one, absolute truth. Anything that contradicts this one truth is a lie.
4. The Old Testament's production is not a result of the Hebrew community itself, but of the Holy Spirit through mankind. The Jews had to recognize what writings were from God, and what writings were not from God.
5. The New Testament's production is not a result of the Church itself, but of the Holy Spirit through mankind. Christians had to recognize what writings were from God, and what writings were not from God.

The Problem(s)

What is the Apocrypha?

What qualifies something to be 'in the canon'?

Does the Apocrypha belong in the canon?

How should the Apocrypha be treated?

When all is said and done...

The Apocrypha, though being widely influential among Jewish and Christian adherents in the First Century AD, has and should have a place **separate and apart** from the canon of inspired scripture.

What is the Apocrypha?

Not talking about the 66 traditionally accepted books

Not talking about the lost books (i.e. Book of Jashar)

Not talking about the Pseudepigrapha

Not talking about the NT Apocrypha

- These will be discussed later, but are not the main focus of our discussion.

What is the Apocrypha?

“Jewish” Writings.

Written during Intertestamental Period

Not universally recognized or accepted / “Hidden”

Books we are taking under consideration:

- 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch with Epistle of Jeremiah, Additions to Daniel, The Prayer of Manasses, 1 and 2 Maccabees

What is the Apocrypha?

All of the books possess different genres:

- Ex: Romances (Judith), Histories (Maccabees), Poems (Prayer of Manasses), Sayings (Ecclesiasticus)

Antiquated

Not referenced in any New Testament book

WHY ARE THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA NOT WIDELY ACCEPTED?

Canon Criteria

For a work to be part of Canon, must be put through a test.

- Decided? ✖
- Selected? ✖
- Revealed and Recognized? ✔

Nigosian's Three Stages

According to Nigosian (secular scholar), there are three stages of the recognition of Jewish scripture:

1. Authorship
2. Editorial Function
3. Selection

** The second and third stages are really one combined stage - The Truth Test (Deuteronomy 18:20-22)

Deuteronomy 18:20-22

“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the LORD has not spoken?’ - when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.” (ESV)

For a writing to be the Word of God...

1. Must correspond to the truth
2. Must be accurate to both the Past, Present, and Future
3. Must be consistent internally and externally

How do the books of the Apocrypha compare?

Tobit, Judith, Susanna, Esdras, and Bel and the Dragon - many questions as to whether or not they are tales or historically accurate. The Jews rejected these as

2 Esdras - Many internal inconsistencies. Sections done by numerous authors in different languages.

Additions to Esther - not attested in any of the oldest Hebrew manuscripts. Inconsistent with the rest of Esther. Pushes theology that was supposedly lacking in the Hebrew text.

Wisdom of Solomon - Solomon not the author, though the writer suggests he is. Does not correspond to the truth.

Inclusion in the Septuagint

Greek Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures

Includes the books of the Apocrypha as well as books of the Pseudepigrapha.

Jesus quoted from the Septuagint! (Mark 6:7-8)

If Jesus quoted from the Septuagint, then does mean that the Septuagint has the perfect canon list?

Intertestamental Period

Did it actually exist?

Was the LORD really silent for 400 years?

Amos 8:11-12

Amos 8:11-12

“Behold the days are coming,’ declares the Lord GOD, ‘when I will send a famine on the land - not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.’” (ESV)

Intertestamental Period

Period between the final prophecy of the Old Testament (Malachi), and the coming of the voice in the Wilderness and the Messiah (John the Baptist and the Christ). 400 BC - 0 AD

Letter of Jeremiah - 306 BC (Earliest book of Apocrypha)

2 Esdras - AD 95 (Latest book of the Apocrypha)

If God was silent, then how come these Books are included in the canon of scripture?

What about Jude's Handling of the Book of Enoch?

Quoted by Jude.

In the Septuagint.

Written between 300-100 BC

Not extant in its original language

THE BOOK OF ENOCH IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY REJECTED, WHEREAS,
JUDE IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED!

SEEING HOW JUDE HANDLED AN EARLY WRITING, CAN WE KNOW
HOW TO ALSO PROPERLY HANDLE THE APOCRYPHA??

How should we handle the Apocrypha?

1. Should be separate and apart from inspired canon
2. “Contextualization Tools”
3. As resources, not scriptures
4. With much caution

DISCUSSION



Concerning Intertestamental Period



Concerning Intertestamental Period

Was God actually silent?

- The hand of God may have been present to set the stage for Christ, but words of God did not come out of prophets' mouths.
- Consider Maccabean revolt.
- Amos 8:11-12
 - Could not have been a reference to God not dwelling with the Northern Kingdom.
 - Applies to both Northern and Southern Kingdoms - it is universal.

Canonicity

How do we recognize the Word of God?

Recall Nigosian's Three Stages:

- Authorship
- Editorial Function
- Selection

John 17:17 "Thy Word is Truth"

By what standard are we supposed to compare the Apocrypha to? How do we know if the standard is truth?

- Acceptance by Early Church Fathers.
- Acceptance by Jews.
- Does it fit our understanding of God?
- Does it make sense?
- Can we draw anything from it besides theology?

Chart of the Accepted Books of the OT

	Protestant	Catholic	Orthodox	Other Christians
39 Books of Old Testament				
Tobit				
Judith				
Esther additions				
Wisdom of Solomon				
Sirach				
Baruch				
Letter of Jeremiah				
Prayer of Azariah & Song of Three Jews				
Susanna				
Bel and the Dragon				
1 Maccabees				
2 Maccabees				
1 Esdras				
Prayer of Manasseh				
Psalms 151				
3 Maccabees				
2 Esdras				
4 Maccabees				

Chart by Stephen Miller in *The Complete Guide to the Bible*

Josephus on the OT Canon

“We have but twenty-two [books] containing the history of all time, books that are justly believed in; and of these, five are the books of Moses, which comprise the law and earliest traditions from the creation of mankind down to his death. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, the successor of Xerxes, the prophets who succeeded Moses wrote the history of the events that occurred in their own time, in thirteen books. The remaining four documents comprise hymns to God and practical precepts to men”

(William Whiston, trans., Flavius Josephus against Apion, Vol. I, in *Josephus, Complete Works*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960, p. 8).

Chart of the Accepted Books of the NT



Chart by Stephen Miller in *The Complete Guide to the Bible*

Did Jews have Open or Closed Canon?

During the time of Christ, the Jews had a closed canon.

- Why else would the Jews have been so hesitant to accept Jesus' message?
- The Jews accepted the Tanakh, and nothing more.

If the Jews had a closed canon, then why do we accept Jesus' message as canon?

- Jesus claimed to be the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets! (Matthew 5:17)

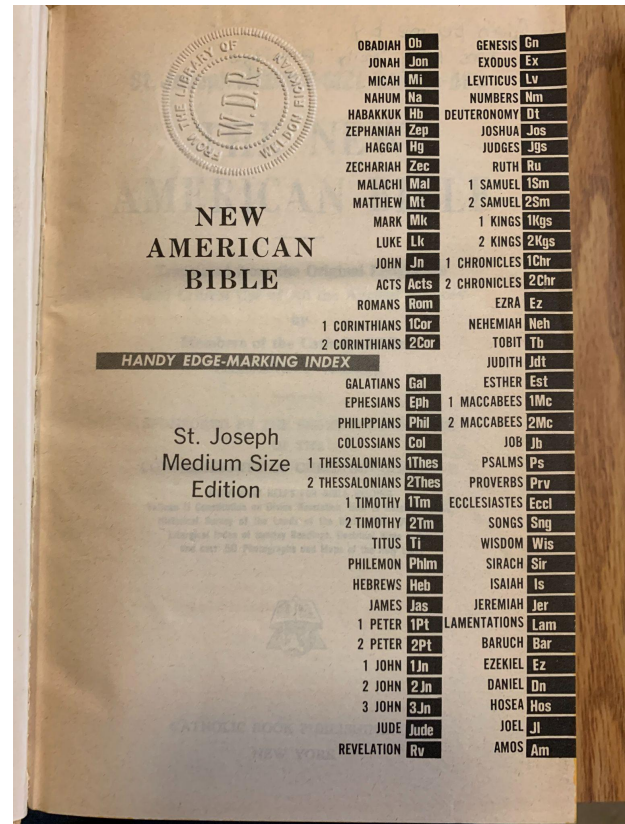
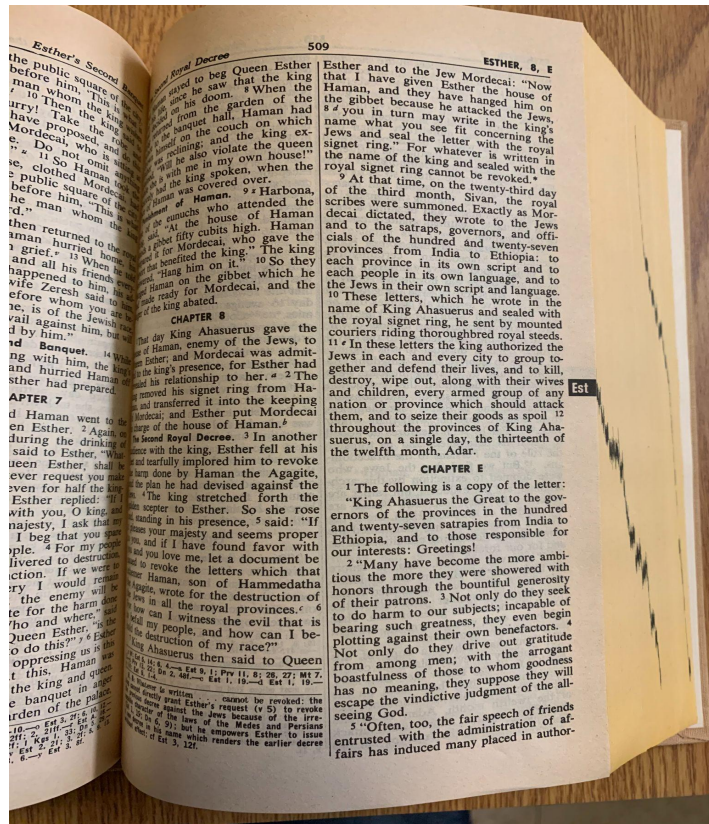


What do I mean by Separate and Apart?



Not This:

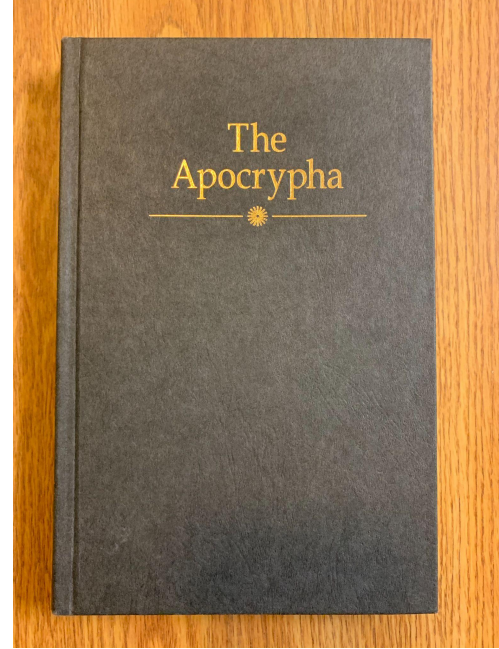
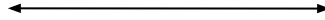
Images taken from NAB with Apocrypha



But This:



Distance



Dangers of Keeping the Apocrypha in Canon

- Clergy may know how distinguish between Apocrypha and Inspired truth, but less learned individuals won't know the difference.
- The Canon is a collection of sacred texts. Is the Apocrypha sacred?
- What incorrect histories, theologies, and soteriologies are we adding to Canon?



As Contextualization Tools and Resources?



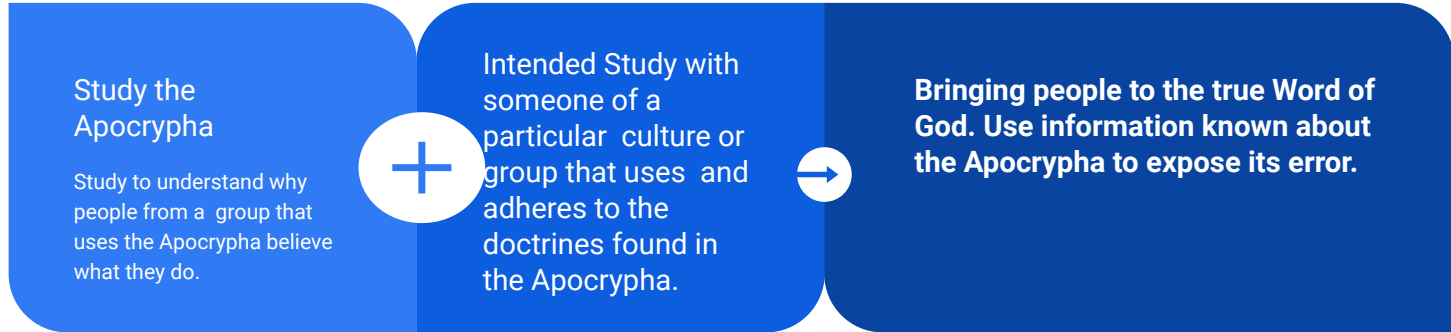
Contextualization

“To place something (such as a word or activity) in a context.”

- When Jude uses Enoch, he is using contextualization to appeal to an audience within a certain context.
- When Paul quotes a poet, he is using contextualization to appeal to the Athenians (Acts 17:28).
- When Jesus quotes from the Septuagint, he is contextualization to appeal to the audience in a world dominated by Greco-Roman culture.

Contextualization

If we are to use the Apocrypha as a tool to contextualize the Gospel, then we should consider the following models:



As a Resource

- The Apocrypha can help us to understand the Palestinian world during the time of Christ and the first-century Church.
 - Consider Maccabees (some of it is historically accurate!)
- The Apocrypha gives us a glimpse into the minds of the Jews during the Intertestamental period.
- The Apocrypha (specifically writings of the Sayings genre) can serve as a commentary to the canonical wisdom literature.



Further Problems With Certain Books



Great Resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxjH7CfhSX8>

** Video by World Video Bible School

- Points out the errors internally and externally of each book of the Old Testament Apocrypha.

Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha by R. H. Charles

- Notes manuscript errors as well as internal contradictions.

Tobit

Condonates the use of magic. (Tobit 6:4-8)

Giving alms results in salvation. (Tobit 4:1, 12:9)

Not historically attested or proven.

Judith

Claims Nebuchadnezzar to be the king of the Assyrians, when he was actually king of the Babylonians. (Judith 1:1,5)

The fictional nature "is evident from its blending of history and fiction, beginning in the very first verse, and is too prevalent thereafter to be considered as the result of mere historical mistakes."

- Michael D. Coogan, ed. (2010). *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (4th ed.). Oxford Univ. Press. pp. 31–36.

2 Maccabees

2 Maccabees 12:38-45

This passage is used as justification for indulgences and buying people out of purgatory.

Ecclesiasticus

Internal errors and contradictions are lacking. (not really a problem)

A serious case could be made for its inclusion into the Jewish canon if it weren't for its late authorship (around 200 - 175 BC). The Jews had quite possibly accepted it canonical in the Council of Jamnia.



Summaries of the Books of the Apocrypha



Judith

A narrative romance concerning Judith who seduces a military commander in an Assyrian camp. She kills the commander and cuts off his head.

The book was likely composed in Hebrew between 150-125 BCE.

Tobit

The story of a Jewish man (Tobit) who was deported to Nineveh. He gives Jews executed under Assyrian persecution a proper burial. Also contained in the story is a narrative of Tobit performing an exorcism. The story takes place in 8th Century BC.

Likely written between 200-170 BC (Nigosian).

1-2 Maccabees

Judas Maccabeus, a Jewish priest, leads a revolt and rebellion against the Greek Seleucid Empire and King Antiochus.

1 Maccabees - Details the independence of the Jewish people.

2 Maccabees - More details given on God's providence and how the Jewish people won victory.

**The writings are almost certainly written by a more Orthodox Jew, as opposed to a Hellenistic Jew.

3-4 Maccabees

Contents do not deal with Maccabean revolts.

3 Maccabees deals with God protecting Jews from King Ptolemy IV of Egypt who wanted to trample them. Manuscripts are extant in three languages - Greek, Syriac, and Armenian. Written between 200 BC - 100 AD.

4 Maccabees describes events that take place just before the Jewish revolt against Syria that was described in 1 Maccabees (Miller). The work is a call to remain obedient to the faith. Manuscripts exist in Greek and Syriac.

1-2 Esdras

To Roman Catholics, this work is considered an appendix and is placed after the New Testament. 1 Esdras is very much connected with Ezra and Nehemiah, lot's of overlap between the histories of both. However, the Persian kings are listed in the wrong order (in 1 Esdras). 2 Esdras is Apocalyptic in nature. Visions of the prophet Ezra concerning the End-Times.

Another major problem concerns origin. Does 1-2 Esdras predate Ezra and Nehemiah, or does Ezra and Nehemiah predate 1-2 Esdras? The origin of 2 Esdras is almost entirely unknown due to the disunity of the work.

Additions to Esther

There are six additions to the Book of Esther. The organization and reintegration of the additions vary.

- Mordecai's dream, discovery of coup plot.
- Edict of Artaxerxes approving the genocide of Jews.
- Prayers of Esther and Mordecai.
- Esther's presence before the king.
- Mordecai's edict made to counter earlier edict.
- Interpretation of Mordecai's dream.

Ecclesiasticus

Supposedly written by Sirach. He recalls the wisdom handed down to him by his grandfather, Jeshua (Joshua), who studied the law and the prophets thoroughly. The book reads as almost a sort of Proverbs, or general statements. Since no reference to Sirach is in scripture, the writings relies solely on internal evidence.

** This was actually the hardest book to examine, and its canonicity can be regarded as questionable in my opinion since the general proverbial statements within could have been used as a guide for Jews. However, it was not listed among the 22 accepted books of Josephus and no reference is made in scripture to the author.

Baruch (with Epistle of Jeremiah)

Often, these two works appear together. Baruch has 5 chapters and is supposedly written by Baruch, a disciple of Jeremiah (see also Jeremiah 32:12; 36:4; 43:3; 45:1). The book consists of many OT passages that were re-phrased from the writings of Job, Daniel, Psalms, and the latter half of Isaiah (see Baruch 1:15-2:19 and Daniel 9:4-19). Original language is unknown - likely a combination of Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

The Letter of Jeremiah is a rebuke against idols, repetitive in nature, no logical order.

According to Nigosian, the book's composition was around 200-60 BC

According to Edgar J. Goodspeed, the book's composition was around 200-100 BC.

Prayer of Azariah / Song of the Three Holy Children

Additions to the book of Daniel. Supposedly the prayer of Azariah is what was uttered when the three friends of Daniel were thrown into the fiery furnace. The Song of the Three Holy Children was supposedly song of praise to God following their deliverance from the fiery furnace.

This prayer and the songs were not accepted by the Jews as canonical.

History of Susanna

An addition to the Book of Daniel that is very well written but not historically accounted for. Very different from other stories "in Daniel." Susanna is accused of adultery by two elders and is put on trial, though she insists she is innocent. She is found guilty. However, Daniel takes her side and cross-examines the elders and religious leaders. Exposes their false accusations. Susanna is acquitted and the elders are executed in accordance with what is written in Deuteronomy 19:18-21.

Bel and the Dragon

An addition to the Book of Daniel. Contains two tales that are not historically accounted for or attested:

1. Daniel exposes the fraud of idolatrous priests of Bel that claim the god had been eating the food, when in fact it was the priests who were doing so secretly. As a result, the King destroys the statue of Bel.
2. Daniel refuses to worship a dragon, offers to destroy it in order to expose its uselessness. Destroys the dragon with fat mixed with pitch and hair. As a result, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den where he survives miraculously over six days. On the seventh day, Daniel comes out and his enemies are thrown in.

The Prayer of Manasses

A prayer, only 15 verses in length, offered by King Manasses after he has been taken into captivity. Manasses was an evil king who offered a prayer of repentance. This prayer is referenced in 2 Chronicles 33:13,18. It is recognized as Deuterocanonical by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Problems with Manasses:

- Most probable that the work was originally written in Greek, implying that it was likely a Diaspora or Hellenistic Jew who wrote it.
- Very late date, likely composed in Second Century AD (R.H. Charles)

Psalm 151

A supposed Psalm written by David after he had killed Goliath. Recognized as Canonical and Deuterocanonical by the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches.

Nothing Theologically or Historically Inconsistent. The Jews, however, did not recognize it as canonical.

Content of Psalm 151

I was small among my brothers,
and the youngest in my father's house;
I tended my father's sheep.
My hands made a harp;
my fingers fashioned a lyre.
And who will tell my Lord?
The Lord Himself; it is He who hears.
It was He who sent His messenger
and took me from my father's sheep,
and anointed me with His anointing oil.

My brothers were handsome and tall,
but the LORD was not pleased with them.
I went out to meet the Philistine,
and he cursed me by his idols.
But I drew his own sword;
I beheaded him, and took away disgrace from the
people of Israel.



Does the Communication Between GOD and
Man Have to be Inerrant?



Inerrancy

It depends on what a religion claims about itself.

- For Christians, the Old Testament and New Testament both make claims to inerrancy and God's perfect ways.
 - Proverbs 30:5-6 [Every word of God proves true]
 - 1 Corinthians 14:33 [God is not the author of confusion]
- Since the Jewish and Christian scriptures claim inerrancy, then works contained within MUST be free of all error.



When and how do we use caution?



Exercising Caution

The Catholic Church, Anglican Church, and Orthodox are primes examples of NOT exercising caution.

Consider the Anglican prologue to the NT Apocrypha

"As a literary curiosity, the work has attracted much notice; as throwing a light upon the arts of design and engraving, it has already been useful to the painter, and the collector of pictures and prints; and, as relating to theology, it has induced various speculations and inquiry."

Exercising Caution

Later in the same prologue...

"When general councils be gathered together, forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the spirit and will of God they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God; wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of the Holy Scriptures."

Exercising Caution

- Not only the Anglicans, but the Catholics and Orthodox have allowed these false writings to influence Church practice and doctrine.
- For example:

Protevangelion —————> Mariology

2 Maccabees —————> Intercession for the Saints and Prayers for the Dead

Exercising Caution

If the non-canonical writings are used in such a way that our understandings of Theology, Eschatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Demonology, Creationism, and etc contradict or add to what canonical writings have to say, then we have NOT exercised caution.

We are not to give heed to what is false! (1 Timothy 1:3-4)



The Council of Jamnia



What is it?

Many who claim that the Apocrypha does not belong in the Jewish canon use the Council of Jamnia as sufficient evidence of the Jews closing their canon by the end of the first century A.D.

The first mention of there possibly being a Jewish council to discuss the closing of the Old Testament canon didn't come about until 1871 by Heinrich Graetz.

This theory has been largely discredited.

DID IT EXIST?

According to Catholics, No.

<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-council-that-wasnt>

According to Secular scholars, No.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24360011.pdf?ab_segments=0%252FSYC-5882%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3Ae7130deab5294f50eac3186f18699131

That being said...

The fact that the Jews did not need a council to determine or decide scripture just further shows that the books of the Old Testament prove themselves to be the Word of God!

"We have but twenty-two [books] containing the history of all time, books that are justly believed in..."

- Flavius Josephus

The Book of Enoch

The Book of Enoch

- Numerous linguistic errors (R.H. Charles)
- Quoted by Jude. The passage Jude quotes is 1 Enoch 1:9. Almost certainly a Midrash (commentary) on Deuteronomy 33:2 (Barker).