

# The Divine Canon of Scripture: A Formal Defense of the 66-Book Old and New Testaments and Its Self-Authenticating Nature

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## Introduction

The question of how the biblical canon was established is not merely historical but fundamentally theological. At stake is the source of Scripture's authority: whether the books of the Old and New Testaments are authoritative because later ecclesiastical bodies declared them so, or whether they are authoritative because they are the very Word of God (from the moment they were God-breathed), recognized as such by God's people. This paper maintains that the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are canonical because they are *self-authenticating*: their authority derives from God Himself, is mediated through divinely appointed OT prophets and NT apostles and prophets, is internally coherent and Christ-centered, and is recognized by God's people who hear the voice of their Shepherd.

Accordingly, the role of the church was never to *constitute* the canon, but to *recognize* it. This recognition occurred organically and providentially as inspired writings bore the marks of divine authorship. Conversely, the Old Testament Apocrypha and later extracanonical writings fail these tests. They neither arise from prophetic or apostolic authority, nor bear consistent witness to Christ, nor were they received as Scripture by Christ, the apostles, or the early church.

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## I. The Nature of Canon and Divine Authority

The term *canon* (κανών) denotes a rule or standard. In biblical theology, Scripture itself is the supreme standard by which all other claims to truth are judged. Scripture is not authoritative because it belongs to a canon; rather, it belongs to the canon because it is authoritative (divinely authoritative as inspired of God).

The Old Testament repeatedly grounds authority in divine speech: "Thus says the LORD" functions as the hallmark of prophetic revelation (e.g., Jer 1:9; Ezek 2:7). Likewise, the New Testament affirms that "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16) and that prophecy (the revelation of God's mind) does not originate in human will, but in men speaking from God as they are carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:20–21).

Because Scripture originates in God, no external authority can confer legitimacy upon it. Jesus Himself affirmed this intrinsic authority when He declared, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The Word of God stands in judgment over all human institutions, including councils and traditions (Isa 8:20; Acts 17:11; Heb 4:12),—not the other way around.

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## II. The Old Testament Canon: Prophetic Origin, Custody, and Recognition

### A. Prophetic Mediation and Completion of Revelation

The Old Testament canon emerged through recognized prophets commissioned by God. Moses was commanded to write God's words and place them alongside the ark of the covenant (Exod 24:4; Deut 31:24–26). Subsequent prophets stood in continuity with Moses, speaking God's words with binding authority (Deut 18:19–22; Josh 24:26; Zech 7:12).

The Old Testament itself indicates that prophetic revelation was not open-ended but occurred in identifiable epochs. Later biblical writers consistently appeal backward to “the Law and the Prophets” as body of authoritative Scripture (2 Kings 17:13; Ezra 7:6; Dan 9:2). Isaiah himself refers to a recognized corpus of sacred writings when he exhorts his hearers, “Seek and read from the book of the LORD” (Isa 34:16), indicating that divine revelation had already been committed to an identifiable collection of authoritative texts. By the time of the Second Temple period, no new prophets of canonical stature were recognized.

This understanding is explicitly confirmed by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (c. AD 37–100). In *Against Apion* 1.8, Josephus explains that the Jews possessed only twenty-two sacred books (corresponding to the books of the Hebrew Old Testament according to Jewish enumeration), which were regarded as divinely authoritative. He further states that although historical records continued after the time of Artaxerxes, they were not considered of equal authority because “there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.” Josephus also emphasizes the fixed and inviolable nature of these Scriptures, declaring that no one had dared “either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them.” His testimony is especially significant because it demonstrates that, by the first century AD, the Hebrew canon was already recognized as complete, closed, and distinct from later uninspired writings such as the Apocrypha.

This historical reality is implicitly confirmed in the New Testament. John the Baptist is presented as the last prophet of the old covenant order (Matt 11:13), and the period between Malachi and John is marked by the absence of recognized prophetic revelation. Thus, the Old Testament canon was already complete prior to the coming of Christ (more on this below).

### B. Entrustment of the Old Testament to God's Earthly People

The apostle Paul explicitly states that the Old Testament Scriptures were entrusted to the Jewish people: “Then what advantage has the Jew? ... Much in every way: and first, indeed, that to them were entrusted the oracles of God” (Rom 3:1–2). This entrustment to the Jews presupposes a defined and recognized body of sacred writings.

This is the corpus of Scripture consistently appealed to by the Lord Jesus, the apostles, and the early church. The Old Testament canon, therefore, is not a later Christian

construction but the inherited Scriptures of God’s earthly people, received as authoritative long before the rise of Christianity.

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### III. Christ’s Affirmation of a Fixed Old Testament Canon

The Lord Jesus consistently appealed to the Old Testament as a settled and authoritative body of Scripture. He referred to it as “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44), reflecting the standard threefold division of the Hebrew Scriptures. He affirmed its complete authority (John 10:35; 5:47-48), including the form of a word or statement (Matt 22:31-32; cp. Gal 3:16), down to the smallest letter or even stroke of a letter (Matt 5:17–18).

Throughout His ministry, Jesus engaged in sustained theological disputes with Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and lawyers. These controversies concerned interpretation, authority, and application of Scripture (Matt 22:23–33; Mark 7:6–13), but **never once** did His opponents question *which* books constituted Scripture. This silence is historically decisive. If the canon had been disputed, it would inevitably have surfaced in such confrontations.

Jesus also delineated the full canonical range of Scripture when He spoke of righteous blood shed *from Abel to Zechariah* (Matt 23:35 and Luke 11:51), encompassing the Hebrew canon from Genesis to Chronicles (the first and last books of Old Testament Scriptures as ordered in the Hebrew canon). This statement presupposes a closed canon and excludes later apocryphal writings.

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### IV. Christological Criterion: Scripture Bears Witness to Christ

In John 5:39, Jesus declares, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.” This statement establishes a decisive Christological criterion for canonicity: *all true Scripture bears witness to Christ*, whether by prophecy, type, promise, or redemptive pattern.

This principle is reinforced elsewhere. After His resurrection, Jesus explained “in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27), and later summarized the Old Testament as that which “is written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). Peter likewise affirms, “To Him all the prophets bear witness” (Acts 10:43).

*The Old Testament Apocrypha fails this test. None of the apocryphal books meaningfully bear witness to Christ—neither prophetically, typologically, nor otherwise. By Christ’s own definition, writings that do not testify of Him cannot belong to the Scriptures.*

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## V. Christ's Provision for the New Testament Canon

### Our Lord's Promises Concerning Apostolic Revelation

The New Testament canon did not arise accidentally or retroactively. Christ Himself explicitly provided for its formation. In John 14:26, the Lord Jesus promised His apostles that the Holy Spirit would “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you,” grounding the reliability of the four Gospels as Spirit-guided apostolic testimony.

In John 15:20b and 15:27, He further emphasized that the apostles would bear authoritative witness because they had been with Him from the beginning. This promise undergirds the apostolic teaching preserved in the Epistles, which the early church devoted itself to without reservation (Acts 2:42).

Finally, in John 16:13, our Saviour declared that the Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth and would “declare to you the things that are to come.” This promise anticipates future prophetic revelation and finds its canonical expression in the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:1–3, 19).

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## VI. Apostolic Authority and Internal Self-Authentication

The apostles were uniquely authorized by Christ and endowed with divine authority. This authority is evident within the New Testament itself. Paul insists that his teaching is received “not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess 2:13). In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul cites Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7 together under the single designation “Scripture,” demonstrating that a Gospel text was already regarded as Scripture within the apostolic age (and very early at that).

Peter further confirms this recognition when he refers to Paul's letters and warns that the unstable distort them “as they do the *other Scriptures*” (2 Pet 3:15–16). Thus, New Testament writings are not merely later recognized as Scripture; they bear internal, apostolic self-authentication.

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## VII. Recognition by God's People and the Voice of the Shepherd

The recognition of canonical Scripture by God's people is grounded in Christ's own teaching. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27). This promise entails that, in principle and by spiritual disposition, God's people recognize His voice in inspired Scripture, because Scripture is the written form of that same divine voice. Though this recognition may at times be obscured or hampered in real believers through spiritual decline or the imbibing of false doctrine, it nonetheless remains a defining indicator of Christ's sheep.

John teaches that those who know God characteristically listen to the apostolic word as a distinguishing mark of divine life and genuine faith, thereby discerning truth from error (1 John 4:6). Paul also explains that believers have received the Spirit “that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Cor 2:12–14). These passages together establish that spiritual illumination accompanies divine revelation, characteristically enabling the people of God to discern its absolute divine authority.

The early and widespread reception of the canonical books, together with the consistent rejection of apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings, reflects this spiritual recognition rather than institutional decree. This recognition was not the conferral of authority upon certain books, but the acknowledgment of authority already inherent within them as God-breathed Scripture.

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## VIII. The Foundational Nature of the Apostles and Prophets and the Closure of the Canon

The closure of the New Testament canon follows necessarily from the very nature of the apostles and prophets in the foundational sense. According to Ephesians 2:20, the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone.” A foundation is laid once, not continuously. The apostles and prophets in this foundational capacity were uniquely inspired recipients of direct divine revelation, entrusted with the authoritative proclamation of doctrine, including the revelation of future events.

With the death of the foundational apostles and prophets, all miraculous, direct doctrinal revelation and inspiration ceased. Consequently, no further inspired Scripture could be produced. Since there are no longer apostles or prophets in this foundational sense, the production of holy Scripture necessarily ceased in the first century AD. There is, therefore, no new revelation or doctrine given or to be found outside the completed and all-sufficient inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Furthermore, if it were the case that other writings were composed by the apostles or their prophetic associates which were either (a) not inspired, or (b) inspired yet not intended by God to be holy Scripture in its permanent, canonical form, His providential hand has ensured that such writings were not preserved, but have disappeared from history. That which God has inspired and preserved is precisely that which He purposed to constitute holy Scripture for all His people.

Thus, both by the cessation of divine revelation (in the passing of the foundational apostles and prophets) and by God’s providential preservation of that which alone constitutes His holy Scriptures, the New Testament canon—and therefore the canon of the whole Bible—is closed, and has been since the close of the first century AD.

## IX. Councils as Witnesses, Not Creators, of the Canon

Later church councils did not create the canon; they testified to what was already recognized and functioning as Scripture. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20), not the other way around.

Just as Israel recognized the prophets without conferring authority upon them, so the early church acknowledged apostolic writings that already carried divine authority (Col 4:16; Rev 22:18–19).

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## X. The Epistemological Circularity of an “Ecclesiastical” Canon

An additional difficulty arises for the Roman Catholic position at the level of epistemology. The claim that the Church possesses infallible authority to determine the canon is itself defended by appeal to Scripture (e.g., Matthew 16:18–19; 18:18). Yet this appeal—leaving aside the proper interpretation of the passages in question—necessarily presupposes that these passages are already known to be Scripture.

If the Church determines what constitutes Scripture, then the Church must already have determined Matthew’s Gospel to be Scripture before it can appeal to Matthew 16 as proof of its authority. But if Matthew is known to be Scripture only because the Church has declared it so, then the Church’s appeal to Matthew to justify its own authority is circular: the Church is said to be infallible because Scripture teaches it, and Scripture is said to be Scripture because the Church declares it.

This produces a vicious logical circle. The Church cannot appeal to Scripture to justify its authority to define Scripture unless the identity of Scripture is already established independently of that ecclesiastical declaration. In other words, Rome’s position ultimately requires Scripture to authenticate the Church and the Church to authenticate Scripture in a mutually dependent loop.

By contrast, the Protestant position maintains that Scripture, as divinely inspired revelation, possesses intrinsic authority and self-authenticating qualities as the voice of the one true God. The Church does not confer authority upon Scripture; Scripture does not require any official pronouncement by the Church to be recognized as the Word of God in written form. The Church (composed of all true believers) is the recipient and witness of the canon, not its ontological source. Thus, while both positions involve an ultimate authority claim, only the Protestant view avoids grounding the identity of Scripture in an institution whose authority must first be derived from that very Scripture.

A common Roman Catholic response is that the Church’s authority does not depend upon the written New Testament, since the Church existed prior to the completion of the New Testament canon. Therefore, it is argued, the Church’s authority to officially define the canon is not derived from Scripture but from Christ Himself, and the Scriptures are merely subsequent expressions of that already established authority.

This response, however, does not resolve the epistemological difficulty. Even if one grants that the Church existed prior to the completed New Testament corpus, the question remains: how is the ongoing institution of the Roman Catholic Church identified as the infallible continuation of that authority? The appeal inevitably returns to scriptural texts such as Matthew 16:18–19 to establish its view of Petrine succession and institutional continuity. Yet once again, those texts must first be recognized as Scripture before they can function as proof of such authority. Thus, the argument still presupposes the authority of Scripture in order to validate the authority claimed for the Roman Catholic Church.

Moreover, the existence of the Church prior to the completion of the New Testament does not imply that the Church possessed the authority to ontologically determine Scripture. The apostles themselves were the divinely appointed recipients of revelation, and their writings bore authority because they were inspired by God—not because the Church later conferred authority upon them by an official pronouncement. The early church received apostolic writings as Scripture precisely because they bore the marks of divine inspiration and apostolic authority.

Therefore, the chronological priority of the Church does not establish its ontological supremacy over Scripture. Rather, both historically and theologically, the Church stands under the authority of the Word of God, including the New Testament Scriptures given through Christ’s inspired apostles and prophets.

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## Conclusion

The sixty-six (66) books of the Old and New Testaments are canonical because they are the very Word of God. They originate in divine revelation, were mediated through the Old Testament prophets and the foundational New Testament apostles and prophets appointed by Christ, bear unified witness to Christ Himself, and possess intrinsic divine authority as God-breathed Scripture. As such, they are recognized—not constituted—as Scripture by God’s people, who hear and recognize the voice of their Shepherd in them.

Because the apostles and prophets were given in a foundational capacity, and because a foundation is laid once and not continuously (Ephesians 2:20), the giving of inspired revelation necessarily ceased with their passing. God, in His providence, has preserved precisely those writings He intended to constitute holy Scripture for His people. The canon is therefore not only self-authenticating but also complete and closed, consisting of the Hebrew Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Ecclesiastical councils did not grant Scripture its authority, nor did the Church determine its canon in an ontological sense. Rather, God Himself determined the canon through divine inspiration, and the Church, over time, progressively recognized, received, and bore witness to those writings which He had inspired and providentially preserved.

This understanding preserves the supreme authority of Scripture, honors Christ’s own teaching concerning the absolute supremacy of the written Word, explains both the unity and finality of the biblical canon, and accounts for the consistent exclusion of apocryphal writings, which lack the marks of divine inspiration and apostolic authority.

The canon of Scripture stands, therefore, not as the product of ecclesiastical determination, but as the divinely given, providentially preserved, and self-authenticating written Word of the living God—complete, final, and sufficient for His church.

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## **Appendix A: The Old Testament Canon—Internal Scriptural Evidence, Jewish Custodianship, and Historical Confirmation**

### **A.1. The Hebrew Threefold Canon Recognized by Scripture Itself**

The Old Testament canon presents itself internally as a **defined and bounded corpus** commonly referred to as **“the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.”** This three-fold division is not a later rabbinic invention but is explicitly acknowledged within Scripture itself.

Jesus affirms this structure in **Luke 24:44**, declaring:

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Here, “Psalms” functions as a representative title for the third division (the Writings), as Psalms stands first and preeminent within that section. This statement presupposes a **known, closed collection** rather than an open or fluid body of texts.

Similarly, **Matthew 23:35** (cf. Luke 11:51) brackets the Old Testament canon from **Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (2 Chronicles)**—that is, from the first martyr in Genesis to the last martyr recorded in the Hebrew Bible’s final book. This canonical “from-to” framing only works if Jesus and His hearers shared a fixed canon arranged according to the Hebrew order (not the later Greek or Latin arrangements).

### **A.2. Christ’s Appeals to “the Scriptures” and the Absence of Canonical Dispute**

Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently appeals to **“the Scriptures”** as a settled authority (e.g., Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; John 5:39; 10:35). Significantly, **none of His opponents ever objected by asking, “Which Scriptures?”** This silence is decisive.

Christ’s many public disputes with scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers covered matters of interpretation, authority, and application—but never the identity or scope of the Scriptures themselves. This historical reality demonstrates that **the Old Testament canon was already fixed and universally recognized among the Jewish people in the first century.**

This is further underscored by **John 5:39**, where Jesus declares:

“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

The Lord asserts not only the authority of the Scriptures but their **Christological unity**: the Scriptures, taken as a whole, testify to Him. This claim cannot be sustained with respect to the Apocrypha, which neither testify to Christ typologically nor prophetically.

### **A.3. Josephus and the Closure of the Hebrew Canon**

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus (c. AD 37–100) provides one of the clearest historical testimonies concerning the recognized Hebrew canon during the period immediately surrounding the life of Christ and the apostles. In *Against Apion* 1.8, Josephus writes:

“For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books... which are justly believed to be divine.”

Josephus explains that these books correspond to the authoritative sacred writings preserved by the Jews and distinguished from later historical compositions. He further states:

“From Artaxerxes very particularly to our own times every thing has been recorded; but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.”

This statement is profoundly significant because it explicitly connects the closure of the canon with the cessation of prophetic revelation. Josephus thereby confirms that writings composed after the recognized prophetic era—including the Apocryphal books—were not regarded as possessing divine authority equal to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Josephus also stresses the fixed and inviolable nature of the canon:

“No one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them.”

Thus, by the first century AD, the Hebrew canon was already understood as a closed and authoritative body of Scripture, distinct from later religious literature. Josephus’ testimony powerfully confirms the same canonical boundaries later affirmed by Christ and His apostles.

### **A.4. The Custodianship of the Old Testament Entrusted to God’s People**

The apostle Paul explicitly affirms Jewish custodianship of the Old Testament canon in **Romans 3:1–2**:

“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, *the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.*”

This statement presupposes not merely inspired utterances, but a **defined body of sacred writings** entrusted to God’s earthly people for preservation and transmission. The Apocryphal books were never regarded as part of these entrusted oracles by first-century

Jewish communities in the land of Israel (i.e., by Judaism as practiced in Judea during the time of Christ on earth).

The Jewish community meticulously distinguished between inspired Scripture and other religious literature, even when such literature was valued historically or devotionally.

#### **A.5. Recognition of a Written Canon within the Old Testament Itself**

The Old Testament writers themselves refer to an existing, authoritative written corpus of divine revelation (albeit at the time still in progress/not yet closed).

- **Daniel 9:2** speaks of “the books” and explicitly cites Jeremiah’s prophecy as Scripture.
- **Isaiah 34:16** exhorts: “Seek and read from *the book of the LORD*.”

This phrase—“the book of the LORD”—indicates that by Isaiah’s time, divine revelation had already been **collected, recognized, and distinguished** from other writings. Isaiah does not point to undefined revelation but to an identifiable body of authoritative Scripture recognized by and accessible to the people.

#### **A.6. The Silence of Prophecy after Malachi and Historical Corroboration**

While the OT Scriptures themselves do not explicitly announce, “the canon is closed,” the New Testament (the Lord Himself in the Gospels) testifies to the closed OT canon, to the **cessation of recognized prophetic revelation** after Malachi. This reality is also acknowledged historically by non-inspired Jewish sources such as **1 Maccabees 4:46; 9:27; 14:41**, which repeatedly note the absence of prophets in the intertestamental period.

Crucially, Jesus and the apostles never treat the Apocryphal writings as divinely inspired, despite their availability and occasional familiarity. Their silence is not accidental but theological.

#### **A.7. Absence of Apocryphal Citation as Scripture**

Although the New Testament alludes to or quotes most individual OT books, and **every major section of the Hebrew canon**, it never once quotes any Apocryphal book as Scripture, nor introduces such material with formulas like “**it is written**” or “**the Scripture says**.”

By contrast, canonical Old Testament books—even those less frequently cited—are affirmed as part of the same inspired whole confirmed by Christ (Luke 24:44). Inclusion in the canon does not depend on frequency of quotation, but on divine inspiration and recognition by God’s people.

#### **A.8. The Apocrypha’s own internal testimony further confirms its non-canonical status.**

Several Apocryphal books explicitly acknowledge that they were written in a post-prophetic era, disclaiming contemporaneous divine inspiration and distinguishing

themselves from the Law and the Prophets. 1 Maccabees repeatedly notes that “prophets ceased to appear” in Israel and defers authoritative judgment to a future prophetic voice (1 Macc 4:46; 9:27; 14:41), a concession incompatible with the claim to inspired Scripture. The prologue to Sirach likewise differentiates the Law and the Prophets from later writings and openly apologizes for possible imperfections in translation—an admission without parallel in canonical Scripture. Similarly, the author of 2 Maccabees closes his work by conceding its potential mediocrity (2 Macc 15:38–39), presenting the book as a human literary effort rather than divine revelation. Such negative self-testimony is decisive: writings that deny the presence of prophetic inspiration cannot coherently be received as Scripture, and this internal evidence aligns with the consistent Jewish and early Christian judgment that the Apocrypha, though historically and morally valuable, does not belong to the canon of inspired Scripture. (See *Appendix H: Negative Self-Testimony of the Apocrypha Regarding Divine Inspiration*)

### **A.9. Summary**

The Old Testament canon is established by:

1. **Christ’s explicit recognition** of its threefold structure (“the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms”)
2. **Universal first-century Jewish recognition** of the Hebrew canonical books
3. **The absence of canonical disputes** in Jesus’ controversies with the Jewish leaders
4. **Jewish custodianship of the oracles of God** (Romans 3:2)
5. **Internal scriptural references** demonstrating awareness of an authoritative written corpus (e.g., Daniel 9:2; Isaiah 34:16)
6. **First-century Jewish testimony (Josephus)** affirming a fixed and closed Hebrew canon and the cessation of prophetic revelation after Artaxerxes
7. **The Christological unity** of the Scriptures, all of which bear witness to Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43)
8. **The consistent exclusion of the Apocrypha** from Scripture’s self-witness, together with the Apocrypha’s own negative self-testimony regarding divine inspiration

Together, these form a cumulative, internally coherent, historically grounded, and Christologically unified defense of the Old Testament canon—and a decisive refutation of later attempts to expand it.

## Appendix B: Patristic Quotation Compendium — Old and New Testament Canon

This appendix compiles quotations from early Church Fathers regarding the recognition of the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Only quotations relevant to canonical recognition are included. **Clarifying notes** are integrated to explain context and confirm the canonical focus.

### B.1. Old Testament Recognition

#### 1. Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD), 1 Clement 36:1

“Let us, therefore, be obedient to the commands of the Lord and to the teachings that have been handed down to us through the Scriptures, following them in all things.”

**Clarification:** Clement is here referring to the **Hebrew Scriptures (Law, Prophets, Writings)**. The letter predates the widespread recognition of NT writings and explicitly references figures and narratives from the OT (e.g., Moses, Abel). There is **no inclusion of Apocrypha**; the emphasis is on Scripture already recognized as authoritative by God’s people.

#### 2. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110 AD), Letter to the Magnesians 9:1

“Let us take heed to the Scriptures, which are the gift of God, and in them lies life.”

**Clarification:** Ignatius is referring to OT Scripture, as the NT canon was not yet formalized. The reference confirms early recognition by Christians of the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative.

#### 3. Polycarp (c. 110–140 AD), Letter to the Philippians 9:2

“It is meet that we pay attention to the law and the prophets, which have been handed down to us as divine instruction.”

**Clarification:** Explicit reference to **OT Law and Prophets**, not Apocrypha or any NT writings; affirms canonical boundaries.

#### 4. Justin Martyr (c. 150 AD), Dialogue with Trypho 45

“For Moses wrote these things, and the prophets bear witness to them, and all that is written points toward the coming Christ.”

**Clarification:** Justin cites OT Scripture as authoritative and Christological. While he may reference non-canonical works occasionally for illustration, his **explicit testimony distinguishes canonical Scripture from other writings**.

#### 5. Melito of Sardis (c. AD 170), in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.13–14

“Accordingly, when I went to the East and came to the place where these things were preached and done, and learned accurately the books of the Old Testament, I have set them down below.”

**Clarification:** Melito then lists the books **corresponding to the Hebrew canon**.

Melito, bishop of Sardis (c. AD 170), provides one of the earliest and most decisive post-apostolic testimonies concerning the Old Testament canon. As recorded by Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 4.26.13–14), Melito traveled to the land of Israel for the express purpose of determining accurately which books were recognized as Scripture. After careful investigation, he compiled a list corresponding to the Hebrew canon, consisting exclusively of the books contained in the Protestant Old Testament. Significantly, his list excludes all apocryphal writings. This testimony is of exceptional importance because it reflects direct inquiry in the very region entrusted with the preservation of the oracles of God (Romans 3:2), confirming that the canon recognized by Christ and His apostles remained unchanged in the second century and did not include the Apocrypha.

**6. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 180 AD), Against Heresies 4.33.3**

“The Scriptures of the prophets are indeed many, but all testify of the one Christ who was to come.”

**Clarification:** “The Scriptures of the prophets” refers solely to **canonical OT prophetic books**, which are read as bearing witness to Christ prophetically or typologically. No Apocrypha is included in this recognition.

**7. Tertullian (c. 200 AD), Prescription Against Heretics 32**

“We have received the Scriptures as delivered once and for all, and we do not add to or subtract from them.”

**Clarification:** This statement reflects an understanding of a fixed and received body of Scripture, and thus affirms that the OT canon is **closed**, distinguishing it from other writings not received as Scripture.

**8. Origen (c. 230 AD), as cited in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 6.25**

Origen lists the books of the Old Testament corresponding to the Hebrew canon, distinguishing them from other writings.

**Clarification:** Origen explicitly enumerates the canonical books of the Hebrew Scriptures and does not include the Apocrypha among them as part of the canonical corpus. Though he was aware of additional Greek writings, he distinguished them from the books recognized as Scripture among the Jews. His testimony confirms continued adherence to the Hebrew canon in the third century.

**9. Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–367 AD), Prologue to the Psalms**

Hilary enumerates the books of the Old Testament in accordance with the Hebrew canon and distinguishes canonical books from other ecclesiastical writings.

**Clarification:** Hilary follows the Hebrew numbering of the Old Testament books (twenty-two), corresponding to the Jewish canon. He does not treat the Apocrypha as part of the canonical Scriptures.

**10. Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 367 AD), Festal Letter 39**

Athanasius provides a list of Old Testament books corresponding to the Hebrew canon and explicitly distinguishes canonical books from those that may be read for instruction.

**Clarification:** Athanasius affirms the books of the Old Testament as received in the Hebrew canon and places certain other writings (e.g., Wisdom, Sirach) in a secondary category suitable for reading but not as canonical Scripture. This explicit distinction demonstrates that even in the fourth century, the Apocrypha was not regarded as part of the inspired Old Testament canon.

#### 11. **Jerome (c. 347–420 AD), Prologues to the Vulgate (Prologus Galeatus; Prologue to the Hebrew Books)**

Jerome explicitly affirms the Jewish (Hebrew) canon as the norm for the Old Testament and distinguishes the canonical Hebrew books from other ecclesiastical writings translated and read in the churches. In his *Prologue to the Hebrew Books* Jerome insists that only those books found in the Hebrew synagogue should be counted as canonical, relegating Wisdom, Sirach, Tobit, Judith, and related books to a secondary, ecclesiastical category suitable for reading but not on par with the inspired Law and Prophets. Jerome's witness is crucial because he both defends the Hebraic canonical standard and brought that conviction into the Latin church through his translation work.

**Clarification:** Jerome's position was debated in his lifetime (notably by Augustine), and his eventual influence on the Vulgate means that his distinctions carried long-term ecclesial weight.

#### 12. **Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345–410 AD), Prefaces and Latin Transmission of Eusebius**

Rufinus' Latin translations and prefaces to Eusebius and other Greek works transmitted eastern canonical categories into the Latin West and preserved lists and distinctions about canonical recognition and liturgical reading. While Rufinus is primarily a translator and interpreter rather than a list-maker, his work is significant because it documents how the East's distinction between homologoumena (recognized), antilegomena (disputed), and rejected writings was understood and received in the Western church. Rufinus' testimony therefore supports the documentary chain showing continuity in recognition of the Hebrew canon and the gradual reception of the apostolic New Testament corpus.

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## **B.2. New Testament Recognition and Apostolic Writings**

### 1. **Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.1 (c. 180 AD)**

“The Gospels which are according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been handed down to us, and no other has authority of the Lord.”

**Clarification:** Recognizes only the four Gospels as canonical; excludes other gospels circulating in the 2nd century.

2. **Clement of Alexandria (c. 190 AD), Stromata 1.6**

“The writings of the apostles are sufficient, and all that is necessary for instruction is contained in them.”

**Clarification:** References apostolic letters as authoritative NT Scripture; occasional moral illustration from Apocrypha does not equate to canonical recognition.

3. **Tertullian, Against Marcion 4 (c. 200 AD)**

“All the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are to be preserved without addition or subtraction, for they are the word of God.”

**Clarification:** Confirms a **fixed corpus** of OT and NT; Apocrypha is not included in this corpus.

4. **Origen (c. 230 AD), Commentary on Matthew, Preface**

“We accept as canonical the books recognized by the universal church, according to apostolic teaching.”

**Clarification:** Canon is recognized by **universally accepted apostolic authority**, excluding non-canonical texts.

5. **Eusebius (c. 325 AD), Ecclesiastical History 3.25**

“The accepted books of the New Testament are those written by the apostles and their disciples, which are universally read in the churches.”

**Clarification:** Confirms universal NT recognition, distinct from non-canonical writings.

6. **Athanasius, Festal Letter 39 (367 AD)**

“We must receive these books alone as canonical: the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles of Paul, the general epistles, and the Revelation of John.”

**Clarification:** Provides an explicit **early authoritative NT canon list**; does not include Apocryphal books. This is critical patristic confirmation of the 27-book NT canon.

7. **Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315–367 AD)**

Hilary affirms the four Gospels and apostolic writings as divinely authoritative and consistent with the received faith.

**Clarification:** Hilary’s testimony reflects early Western recognition of the apostolic New Testament corpus, in continuity with broader fourth-century canonical consensus.

8. **Jerome (c. 347–420 AD)**

Jerome affirms the authority of the four Gospels and the apostolic writings and frequently cites and uses the canonical New Testament in his commentaries and translations. His labors in translating and organizing the Latin Bible helped stabilize

Western reception of the New Testament corpus; Jerome's practice and prefaces demonstrate an acceptance of the apostolic writings as normative Scripture in the Latin churches.

### 9. **Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345–410 AD)**

Through his Latin translations of Eusebius and related works, Rufinus transmits the East's canonical categories and the practical distinctions the fathers used in treating New Testament writings (recognized, disputed, unacceptable). His translations and explanatory remarks therefore function as a witness to how the New Testament corpus was described, received, and discussed in both East and West.

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## **B.3. Patristic Principles of Canon Recognition**

- **Apostolic Origin:** Writings are authoritative because they stem from apostles or their close associates.
- **Universal Reception:** Church-wide recognition affirms canonical status.
- **Christological Coherence:** True Scripture bears witness to Christ, typologically or prophetically.
- **Preservation without Alteration:** Canonical books are not to be added to or subtracted from.
- **Distinction from Apocrypha:** Occasional references to non-canonical writings are illustrative only; they are never treated as inspired Scripture.

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## **B.4. Summary**

Patristic evidence demonstrates consistent recognition of canonical Scripture:

1. **Old Testament canon** corresponds to the Hebrew Scriptures (Law, Prophets, Writings) confirmed by Christ Himself.
2. **New Testament canon** consists of apostolic writings universally received in the churches.
3. **Extrabiblical or apocryphal writings** are consistently excluded from authoritative (canonical) status.

This evidence confirms the historical continuity of canonical recognition from the apostolic period into the first centuries of the church.

## Appendix C: Early New Testament Canon Lists (2nd–4th Centuries AD)

This appendix compiles early historical attestations and lists of New Testament books from the 2nd through 4th centuries, documenting the gradual recognition of the 27-book NT canon.

### C.1. Early 2nd Century

#### 1. Marcion of Sinope (c. 140 AD)

- Proposed a canon consisting of **Luke’s Gospel (edited) and ten Pauline epistles**, rejecting the Old Testament and other apostolic writings.
- **Significance:** Marcion’s canon provoked the early Church to clarify and defend the canonical list; his exclusion of most Gospels and other letters highlights the necessity of universal recognition.

#### 2. Muratorian Fragment (c. 170–200 AD, Italy)

- Lists the following as accepted:
    - Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
    - Acts of the Apostles
    - Pauline Epistles (except Hebrews, which may be due to the damaged text)
    - 1–2 John, Jude, Revelation
  - Notes some disputed or rejected writings, e.g., Shepherd of Hermas (read but not canonical).
  - **Significance:** Earliest extant partial canonical list approximating the modern NT.
- 

### C.2. Late 2nd Century

#### 1. Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 180 AD), *Against Heresies* 3.1.1

- Confirms the **fourfold Gospel** as universally recognized: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
- Accepts Pauline and other apostolic writings implicitly, rejecting heretical gospels circulating in the 2nd century.

#### 2. Clement of Alexandria (c. 190–200 AD), *Stromata* 1.6

- Recognizes the **apostolic writings as sufficient for instruction**, distinguishing them from other books in circulation.
  - Notes some writings may be read for edification, but **not all are authoritative Scripture**.
- 

### C.3. Early 3rd Century

#### 1. Origen (c. 230 AD), Commentary on Matthew, Preface

- Accepts a canon aligned with “**books recognized by the universal Church**,” following apostolic teaching.
- Indicates a relatively settled NT corpus, but acknowledges minor regional variation in acceptance of some epistles.

#### 2. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 325 AD), Ecclesiastical History 3.25

- Categorizes NT writings as:
    - **Recognized (homologoumena):** Four Gospels, Acts, Pauline letters, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude, Revelation
    - **Disputed (antilegomena):** James, 2 Peter, 2–3 John, Jude, Revelation (some regional variation)
    - **Rejected:** Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, other heretical writings
  - **Significance:** Provides historical evidence of early debate and eventual consensus. *Note that Eusebius is explicitly reporting the state of reception of NT books from earlier generations; his categories (homologoumena/ antilegomena/ rejected) reflect pre-325 AD usage rather than a new canonical determination.*
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### C.4. 4th Century Confirmation

#### 1. Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter 39 (367 AD)

- First explicit list of the **27-book NT canon identical to modern usage**:
  - Four Gospels, Acts, 13 Pauline Epistles (including Hebrews), 7 General Epistles, Revelation of John
- Rejects non-canonical writings (e.g., Shepherd of Hermas, Gospel of Peter).
- **Significance:** Provides authoritative confirmation of the NT canon in the early Church. *Note that Athanasius’ inclusion of Hebrews among Paul’s epistles reflects the long-standing Alexandrian and Eastern tradition—shared by*

*Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius—that Hebrews was Pauline in origin and fully apostolic in authority.*

**2. Council of Laodicea (c. 363 AD)**

- Canonical books affirmed for reading in churches: 4 Gospels, Acts, Pauline and General Epistles.
- Specifically excludes “apocryphal” books (e.g., Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter).

**3. Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 350 AD), Catechetical Lectures 4:36**

- Refers to **the four Gospels and other apostolic writings** as “divinely inspired and sufficient for teaching.”
- Confirms general reception of canonical NT, mirroring Athanasius.

**C.5. Summary Table of Early NT Canon Recognition**

Century	Source	Recognized NT Writings	Notes
c. 140 AD	Marcion	Edited Luke, 10 Pauline letters	Heretical, provoked canonical clarification
c. 170–200 AD	Muratorian Fragment	4 Gospels, Acts, Pauline epistles, 1–2 John, Jude, Revelation	Some disputed writings noted; Shepherd of Hermas not canonical
c. 180 AD	Irenaeus	4 Gospels, Pauline letters	Rejects heretical gospels
c. 190–200 AD	Clement of Alexandria	Apostolic writings sufficient	Distinguishes edifying vs. canonical
c. 230 AD	Origen	Books recognized by universal Church	Minor regional variation noted
c. 325 AD	Eusebius	Homologoumena and Antilegomena identified	Early debates recorded
367 AD	Athanasius	Full 27-book NT canon	Explicit, authoritative confirmation
c. 363 AD	Laodicea	4 Gospels, Acts, Epistles	Apocrypha excluded
c. 350 AD	Cyril of Jerusalem	4 Gospels, Apostolic letters	Confirms canonical recognition

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## C.6. Observations

1. The NT canon was **gradually recognized**, moving from partial lists and regional variations to a universally accepted 27-book collection by the late 4th century.
  2. **Non-canonical and apocryphal writings** were sometimes read or valued, but they were **consistently distinguished from authoritative Scripture**.
  3. Athanasius' Festal Letter 39 is the **first known unequivocal listing of the modern NT canon**, providing strong historical testimony.
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## Appendix E: Responding to the Council of Trent on the Canon

### Introduction

The Council of Trent (1546) formally defined the Old Testament canon for the **Roman Catholic Church**, affirming the inclusion of the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books alongside the Hebrew Scriptures. **This declaration was issued in direct response to the Protestant Reformation, which had clearly recognized that the Apocrypha was not the inspired Word of God and promoted the 66-book canon used in Protestant Bibles.** While the **Eastern Orthodox Church** also recognizes a broader OT canon that includes some of these books, it **did not participate in Trent** and has no equivalent Trent-style declaration. Nevertheless, despite later canonical divergences within Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the historical and scriptural evidence demonstrates that Christ affirmed the Hebrew Old Testament canon and pre-authenticated the New Testament to come; that the apostles recognized this same Old Testament alone as Scripture while serving as the divinely appointed instruments of New Testament revelation; and that the completed 66-book canon—the Hebrew Old Testament and the 27-book New Testament—was subsequently recognized as Scripture by the early church.

This Appendix responds to Trent's claims and defends the 66-book canon based on **internal scriptural evidence, historical testimony, patristic witness, and Christological principles**, including discussion of the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and NT citation patterns.

### 1. The Old Testament Canon

#### A. Christ's Own Affirmation of the Hebrew Scriptures, Establishing the OT Canon

- **Luke 24:44** – Jesus affirms the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms as the totality of the Scriptures.
- **John 5:39** – “Ye search the scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have life eternal, and they it is which bear witness concerning Me.”

- **Observation:** Every book of the OT canon bears witness to Christ in some way (typologically, prophetically; cf. also Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43).
- **Implication:** The Apocrypha contains no such Christological witness; it is therefore excluded from inspired Scripture.

## B. Apostolic Confirmation

- **Romans 3:2** – The Jews were entrusted with “the oracles of God,” i.e., the Hebrew OT canon.
- The apostles consistently **quote only canonical OT books**; no Apocryphal writings are ever cited as “it is written” (in any of the inspired NT writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, or Jude).

## C. Cessation of Prophetic Revelation

- By the time of Malachi, the prophetic corpus was complete. Earlier biblical testimony (e.g., Daniel 9:2; Isaiah 34:16) already demonstrates an evident awareness of a **recognized collection of Scripture** (“the book of the LORD”).
- Josephus (*Against Apion* 1.8), writing in the first century AD, confirms that the Jews regarded the Hebrew Scriptures as a fixed and closed body of sacred books. He explicitly states that writings composed after the time of Artaxerxes were not considered of equal authority because “there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.” This testimony is especially significant because it demonstrates that first-century Judaism itself recognized the cessation of prophetic revelation and distinguished the Hebrew Scriptures from later uninspired writings such as the Apocrypha.
- Jesus’ teaching and debates with His opponents **never elicited disputes over which books constituted Scripture**, indicating that the OT canon was universally understood.

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## 2. The New Testament Canon and Apostolic Authority: Christ’s Promise of Apostolic Teaching

- **John 14:26** – The Holy Spirit “will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I said to you,” referencing the future NT writings.
  - **John 15:20b, 15:27; John 16:13** – Apostolic witness guided by the Spirit is authoritative.
  - NT books, especially the four Gospels and apostolic letters, constitute the **self-authenticating canon** recognized by the early church.
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### 3. Patristic Confirmation

- **Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD)** – Appeals to OT Scriptures only.
  - **Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Melito, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius** – Consistently distinguish canonical Scripture from ecclesiastical or apocryphal writings and affirm the primacy of the Hebrew canonical tradition.
  - Athanasius' **Festal Letter 39 (367 AD)** is the first clear recognition of the entire **27-book NT canon**, excluding apocryphal or spurious texts.
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### 4. The Septuagint and the Apocrypha

#### A. Use of the LXX by NT Authors

- The NT authors frequently quote the LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- **Critical point:** NT quotations align exclusively with the Hebrew OT canon. The Apocrypha is **never cited as authoritative Scripture**.

#### B. Historical Uncertainty

- Moreover, the inclusion of the Apocryphal books in the LXX may have occurred **after the first-century copies used by Jesus and the apostles**.
- Therefore, use of the LXX does not imply the Apocrypha was considered canonical.

#### C. Patristic Clarification

- Early Church Fathers occasionally cited Apocrypha for moral instruction (e.g., Wisdom, Sirach), but **never treated or cited them as inspired Scripture**.
- This distinction confirms that **Trent's reliance on the LXX as canonical proof is flawed**; the Hebrew canon alone was authoritative.

**Clarification on the Broader Septuagint Corpus:** Some Septuagint manuscripts contain *additional books beyond both the Hebrew canon and the Roman Catholic Deuterocanonical books*. These include, for example, 1 Esdras, Psalm 151, Prayer of Manasseh, 3 Maccabees, and 4 Maccabees. While *certain segments* of the Eastern Orthodox Church accept *some* of these books, the Roman Catholic Church does not, and **none** of these were cited by Christ or the apostles as Scripture. Their inclusion in certain Greek manuscripts of the LXX does not confer divine authority, nor does it alter the inspired Hebrew canon's exclusiveness and primacy as recognized by Christ, the apostles, and early Jewish communities.

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## 5. Scriptural Principles for Canon Recognition

### A. Christological Coherence

- All Scripture must bear witness to Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43).
- Hebrew OT books do so; Apocrypha does not.

### B. Apostolic and Prophetic Authority

- NT canon is grounded in apostolic authorship and teaching, guaranteed by the Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13).
- OT canon is recognized by Christ, His apostles, and first-century Judaism (Romans 3:2; Luke 24:44).

### C. Recognition by God's People

- **John 10:27 (cf. 1 John 4:6)** – Christ's sheep recognize His voice, symbolizing, in part, His people's ability to discern authentic canonical Scripture.
  - Scripture is **self-authenticating** as the voice of God speaking in written form; extrabiblical writings lack these divine marks.
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## 6. Refuting Trent's Claims

### A. Trent's Appeal to the LXX

- As discussed, use of the LXX does **not grant canonicity to all books in all copies**.
- NT quotation patterns, Christ's own teaching, and patristic testimony confirm the Hebrew canon as authoritative.

### B. Historical Consensus

- Jewish communities in the land of Israel recognized the Hebrew canon alone.
- Jesus, the apostles, and the dominant trajectory of early patristic testimony consistently distinguish the Hebrew canonical books from apocryphal writings.
- Any later inclusion (e.g., in the LXX used in Alexandria) does not establish divine authority.

### C. Christological Criterion

- Only books that point to Christ, directly or typologically, are canonical.
  - Apocryphal books fail this Christological test.
-

## 7. Conclusion

The 66-book canon of Scripture is defended on multiple grounds:

1. **Christ's own recognition** of the Hebrew OT canon (Luke 24:44; John 5:39)
2. **Apostolic authority and Spirit-guided teaching** (John 14:26; 16:13)
3. **Early patristic testimony** consistently distinguishing canonical Scripture from ecclesiastical and apocryphal writings while affirming the primacy of the Hebrew canonical tradition
4. **Historical, Jewish, and textual evidence**—including the testimony of Josephus—demonstrating that the Hebrew canon was already recognized as fixed and complete prior to the time of Christ, and that LXX inclusion of Apocryphal books does not confer canonicity
5. **Christological coherence** – only Scripture that bears witness to Christ is canonical (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43)

While Trent codified this issue for the Roman Catholic Church, the **Eastern Orthodox Church's broader OT canon does not alter the fact** that Christ, the apostles, and the early church consistently recognized the Hebrew OT alone, and the NT canon of 27 books. The 66-book canon is therefore shown to be scripturally grounded, historically recognized, prophetically complete, apostolically authenticated, providentially preserved, and self-authenticating as the written Word of God

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## Appendix F: Canonical Argument Synopsis

**Purpose:** Summarize and defend the 66-book canon (39 OT + 27 NT) against claims for including the Apocrypha, highlighting scriptural, historical, patristic, and Christological evidence.

### 1. Old Testament Canon Established by Christ and the Scriptures

- **Luke 24:44** – Christ affirms “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms” as the entirety of Scripture.
- **John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43** – All Scripture points to Christ; the Apocrypha contains no Christological witness.
- **Romans 3:2** – Jews entrusted with the oracles of God, i.e., the Hebrew OT canon.
- **Daniel 9:2; Isaiah 34:16** – Intra-biblical testimony demonstrates an evident awareness of a recognized collection of Scripture.

- **Christ’s opponents never disputed the identity or boundaries of the OT Scriptures, indicating a settled Hebrew canon in first-century Judaism.**
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## 2. New Testament Canon Recognized by Apostles and Early Church

- **John 14:26; 16:13; 15:20b, 15:27** – Holy Spirit guides apostles; NT writings self-authenticating.
  - **1 Timothy 5:18 and 2 Peter 3:15–16** – Apostolic writings are already being recognized and cited as Scripture within the New Testament period itself.
  - Early patristic testimony recognizing and distinguishing canonical writings:
    - Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen
    - Athanasius (367 AD) – first explicit 27-book NT list
  - NT quotations **never cite Apocrypha as Scripture.**
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## 3. The Septuagint (LXX) and Apocrypha

- NT authors often quote the LXX, but:
    - They only quote books consistent with the Hebrew OT canon.
    - Apocrypha is never cited as “it is written.”
  - Historical uncertainty: Apocrypha may have been added to later LXX copies, not necessarily present in 1st-century copies used by the Lord Jesus or His apostles.
  - Some LXX manuscripts also contain books not accepted even by the Roman Catholic canon (e.g., 1 Esdras, Psalm 151, 3–4 Maccabees), demonstrating that mere inclusion in certain LXX copies did not establish canonicity.
  - Patristic authors occasionally cite Apocrypha for instruction, but **never as canonical Scripture.**
- 

## 4. Christological and Canonical Principles

- **Christological Test (John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44; Acts 10:43)** – Canonical Scripture must bear witness to Christ.
- **Apostolic Authority** – NT canon is guided and authenticated by apostolic authors under the Spirit.

- **Recognition by God’s People (John 10:27; 1 John 4:6)** – Christ’s sheep characteristically recognize the divine voice of their Shepherd in authentic canonical Scripture.
  - Non-canonical writings fail these tests.
- 

## 5. Historical & Reformation Context

- Council of Trent (1546) affirmed Apocrypha for Roman Catholic Church in reaction to Protestant Reformation.
  - Protestants clearly recognized Apocrypha as **non-inspired**, promoting the 66-book canon.
  - Eastern Orthodoxy includes certain deuterocanonical books, **yet the historical, scriptural, apostolic, and Christological principles and evidence consistently support the exclusive authority of the 66-book canon.**
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## 6. Summary Conclusion

- **66-book canon (39 OT + 27 NT):**
  - Christ recognized the Hebrew OT only.
  - Apostles and early church accepted 27 NT books.
  - Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical writings lack apostolic, Christological, and canonical authority.
  - The canon is self-authenticating as the written voice of God, historically recognized, providentially preserved, and sufficient as the final written revelation of God for faith and doctrine.

**Bottom line:** The 66-book canon is historically grounded, scripturally authenticated, prophetically complete, apostolically confirmed, providentially preserved, and theologically authoritative as the final written revelation of God. Trent’s rationale for including the Apocrypha therefore fails both scripturally and historically.

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## Appendix G: Side-by-Side Canon Comparison Chart

Book / Section	Hebrew OT	Septuagint (LXX)	Roman Catholic (RC) OT	Eastern Orthodox OT	Protestant OT	Notes / Clarifications
<b>Pentateuch</b>	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Same	Same	Same	Same	Fully recognized by all traditions; Christ and NT citations affirm these books
<b>Historical Books</b>	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	Same	Same	Same	Same	Canonical; cited in NT; no Apocrypha involved
<b>Deuterocanonical/ Apocryphal Historical Books</b>	—	1 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, 1–2 Maccabees	Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, 1–2 Maccabees	Same + 3 Maccabees, 1 Esdras, Psalm 151, etc.	—	Some LXX manuscripts; <b>not part of Hebrew canon, Christ, or apostles' Scripture</b>
<b>Poetic/Wisdom Books</b>	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	Same + Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)	Same + Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach	Same + additional Psalms, Wisdom, Sirach	Same as Hebrew	LXX includes Wisdom & Sirach; <b>not recognized as canonical by Christ or apostles</b>
<b>Major Prophets</b>	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel	Same + Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah, Susanna, Bel & Dragon)	Same + Additions to Daniel	Same + Additions to Daniel	Same as Hebrew	Additions to Daniel in LXX; never cited as Scripture in NT
<b>Minor Prophets</b>	Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	Same	Same	Same	Same	NT quotations align with Hebrew canon; Apocrypha absent
<b>Additional LXX Books Not in RC Canon</b>	—	Psalms 151, Prayer of Manasseh, 3–4 Maccabees, 1 Esdras	—	Some accepted in Eastern Orthodox canon	—	Some LXX manuscripts contain these books; <b>RC Church does not recognize them</b> ; Eastern Orthodox recognition varies; <b>none cited as Scripture by Christ or apostles</b>

Book / Section	NT Canon	Notes / Clarifications
<b>Gospels</b>	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	Recognized universally; authored by apostles or their associates; Christ's promise (John 14:26; 16:13) affirms these writings
<b>Historical</b>	Acts	Apostolic authorship; self-authenticating; aligns with NT teaching and eyewitness testimony
<b>Pauline Epistles</b>	Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews	Apostolic authority; 1 Timothy 5:18 cites Luke 10:7 (“the laborer is worthy of his wages”) as Scripture, demonstrating Paul treats other NT writing as Scripture; and 2 Peter 3:15-16 classes all of Paul's letters as Scripture just as “the other Scriptures”
<b>General Epistles</b>	James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude	Apostolic or close associate authorship; cited and recognized in early church lists
<b>Apocalyptic</b>	Revelation	John's authorship; self-authenticating; early church recognized 27-book NT canon (Athanasius Festal Letter 39, 367 AD)
<b>Additional Notes</b>	—	Apocryphal/spurious writings (e.g., Gospel of Thomas, Apocalypse of Peter) <b>never viewed, recognized or treated as Scripture by the early church</b>

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### Key Clarifications

1. **OT** – Hebrew canon (39 books) fully recognized by Christ, apostles, and first-century Judaism; NT quotes align only with Hebrew OT.
2. **First-century Jewish testimony** (Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8) – Flavius Josephus confirms the Hebrew canon as fixed and complete, with prophetic revelation understood to have ceased after Artaxerxes.
3. **LXX** – Contains additional books in some manuscripts (Psalm 151, Prayer of Manasseh, 3–4 Maccabees, 1 Esdras). Inclusion **does not confer canonical authority**.

4. **Roman Catholic OT** – Includes select deuterocanonical books (Trent 1546); *excludes extra LXX books.*
  5. **Eastern Orthodox OT** – Broader canon; recognition of additional LXX books varies by region.
  6. **Protestant OT** – Strictly Hebrew canon; 39 books.
  7. **NT** – 27-book canon universally recognized by early church; apostolic authority and Christ’s promise guarantee self-authentication (John 14:26; 16:13).
  8. **Bottom Line** – Canonical authority rests on **Christological coherence, apostolic recognition, and patristic/historical confirmation**, not on certain LXX manuscript inclusion alone.
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## Appendix H: Negative Self-Testimony of the Apocrypha Regarding Divine Inspiration

One of the most compelling indicators that the Apocrypha does not belong to the canon of inspired Scripture is its own internal testimony. Unlike canonical writings, which consistently present themselves as the product of divine revelation mediated through prophets or apostles, several Apocryphal books explicitly acknowledge the absence of prophetic inspiration at the time of their composition and, in some cases, openly disclaim literary or theological perfection. This self-awareness places these writings outside the category of Scripture as understood by Judaism, Christ, the apostles, and the early church.

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### A. First Maccabees and the Acknowledged Cessation of Prophecy

#### 1 Maccabees 4:46

“So they stored the stones until a prophet should arise to tell what to do with them.”

#### 1 Maccabees 9:27

“So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.”

#### 1 Maccabees 14:41

“The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise.”

#### **Analysis:**

These passages explicitly affirm that prophecy had ceased in Israel during the Maccabean period. The author does not claim prophetic authority for himself but instead defers decisive judgment to a future prophet. This admission is incompatible with, and therefore

fatal to any claim that 1 Maccabees is itself inspired Scripture, since biblical canon is inseparably tied to prophetic revelation (cf. Deut 18; Amos 3:7). A book that testifies to the absence of prophecy cannot simultaneously function as prophetic Scripture.

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## **B. The Prologue to Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)**

### **Prologue to Sirach**

“Many great teachings have been given to us through the Law and the Prophets and the others that followed them... You are therefore urged to read with goodwill and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we may appear to have rendered some phrases imperfectly.”

#### **Analysis:**

The prologue carefully distinguishes the Law and the Prophets from later Jewish writings and presents Sirach as an instructional work derived from earlier Scripture rather than as new revelation. Most strikingly, the translator apologizes in advance for possible errors or imperfections—an acknowledgment wholly foreign to the self-understanding of canonical authors. Inspired Scripture never requests indulgence for potential inaccuracies, nor does it frame itself as a fallible human effort.

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## **C. Second Maccabees and the Admission of Literary Fallibility**

### **2 Maccabees 2:23**

“All this, which Jason set out in five volumes, we have attempted to condense into a single book.”

### **2 Maccabees 15:38–39**

“I will bring my book to an end here. If it is well written and to the point, that is what I wanted; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do.”

#### **Analysis:**

The author of 2 Maccabees explicitly characterizes his work as an abridgment and concludes with an apology for possible mediocrity. This self-assessment is unparalleled in canonical Scripture and reflects an understanding of authorship fundamentally at odds with the doctrine of inspiration. Biblical authors do not evaluate their writings as literary successes or failures; they speak as those entrusted with the very words of God.

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## **D. Canonical Implications**

Taken together, these passages demonstrate that the Apocrypha does not merely lack external recognition as Scripture but internally denies the conditions necessary for canonicity. By acknowledging the cessation of prophecy, distinguishing itself from the Law

and the Prophets, and conceding potential imperfection, the Apocrypha aligns with the consistent Jewish and early Christian view that these writings are valuable historical and devotional texts, but not divinely inspired Scripture. This internal evidence further confirms that the later elevation of the Apocrypha to canonical status—most notably at the Council of Trent—represents a theological innovation rather than the preservation of apostolic or ancient tradition.

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### **Anticipating and Pre-Emptying Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Counter-Arguments Regarding the Apocrypha’s Negative Self-Testimony**

Non-Protestant apologists have raised several objections to the claim that the Apocrypha’s internal testimony undermines its canonicity. These objections, however, do not withstand close historical or theological scrutiny.

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#### **Objection 1: “Admitting the Cessation of Prophecy Does Not Preclude Inspiration”**

##### **Non-Protestant Claim:**

It is argued that even if prophets had ceased in Israel (as stated in 1 Maccabees), God could still inspire non-prophetic writings, just as He later inspired New Testament authors who were not prophets in the Old Testament sense.

##### **Response:**

This objection fails to reckon with the *Old Testament* framework of inspiration operative at the time of the Apocrypha’s composition. Under the Hebrew Scriptures, inspired Scripture is inseparably connected to prophetic revelation (Deut 18:15–22; Amos 3:7). The author of 1 Maccabees is not claiming a different mode of inspiration; rather, he explicitly laments its absence and defers authority to a future prophet.

By contrast, New Testament authors wrote as divinely commissioned apostles or close apostolic associates under the authority of the risen Christ—an entirely new redemptive-historical epoch. The analogy therefore collapses: **1 Maccabees denies prophetic authority within the very covenantal framework that defined Scripture**, whereas New Testament writings arise from a distinct, Christ-instituted revelatory foundation.

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#### **Objection 2: “Literary Modesty or Humility Does Not Deny Inspiration”**

##### **Non-Protestant Claim:**

The apologetic appeal is often made that the apologies in Sirach’s prologue or 2 Maccabees 15 reflect humility or literary convention, not a denial of inspiration.

##### **Response:**

This explanation is historically and theologically implausible. Biblical authors frequently express personal humility, but **never with respect to the reliability, sufficiency, or authority of their writings as God’s word**. No canonical author asks readers for

indulgence due to possible imperfections, nor evaluates his work as potentially “mediocre.”

The author of 2 Maccabees explicitly frames his book as a human abridgment and measures its success by literary standards. This is not humility before God; it is **self-conscious fallibility**, which is incompatible with the biblical doctrine of inspiration (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20–21).

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### **Objection 3: “The Apocrypha Was Still Widely Used by the Church”**

#### **Non-Protestant Claim:**

Even if the Apocrypha contains such statements, it was read liturgically and valued by many early Christians, which is said to support its canonical status.

#### **Response:**

**Use does not equal canon.** The early church read many non-canonical works (e.g., *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *1 Clement*, *The Didache*) for instruction and edification, **while never recognizing them as possessing the authority of inspired Scripture**. Crucially, **no early ecumenical council, no church father, and no canonical list prior to the late fourth century treats the Apocryphal books as Scripture on par with the Law and the Prophets, much less the full collection later dogmatically defined at Trent by the Roman Catholic Church under threat of being cursed (anathematized) for dissension.**

Moreover, when early Christian writers cite Scripture formulaically (“it is written”), they overwhelmingly restrict such language to the Hebrew canon. The Apocrypha’s internal disclaimers reinforce precisely this subordinate status.

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### **Objection 4: “The Church Determines the Canon, Not Internal Claims”**

#### **Non-Protestant Claim:**

A common appeal is made to ecclesial authority: the Church, not the texts themselves, determines what is Scripture.

#### **Response:**

This argument begs the very question at issue. Historically, the church did not *create* Scripture but recognized what bore the marks of divine inspiration already acknowledged by Christ and the apostles. Internal testimony is therefore not irrelevant—it is one of the objective indicators by which the people of God discerned canonical status.

Furthermore, **a writing that explicitly denies prophetic inspiration disqualifies itself from recognition**, regardless of later ecclesiastical pronouncements. To claim otherwise is to sever canon from inspiration and reduce it to institutional decree—an approach unknown to the early church and foreign to Scripture itself.

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## **Objection 5: “Trent Settled the Matter Definitively”**

### **Non-Protestant (specifically Roman Catholic) Claim:**

The Council of Trent’s dogmatic declaration is said to override all prior ambiguities.

### **Response:**

Trent did not recognize a previously universal tradition; it **codified a disputed position in direct response to the Protestant Reformation**. Its decision stands in tension with earlier patristic testimony, with the Hebrew canon affirmed by Christ, and with the Apocrypha’s own admissions.

Significantly, Trent anathematized dissent rather than demonstrating historical continuity—an implicit acknowledgment that the matter had not been settled by apostolic or early ecclesial consensus.

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## **Conclusion**

Non-Protestant counter-arguments ultimately fail to account for the Apocrypha’s explicit denial of prophetic inspiration, its self-presentation as fallible human literature, and its consistent treatment as non-canonical by Judaism, Christ, the apostles, and much of the early church. Rather than weakening the Protestant case, these internal admissions decisively confirm that the Apocrypha belongs to the category of religious and, at times, morally instructive literature—not to the canon of divinely inspired Scripture.

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