

“The Dead Sea Scrolls Reveal That No Disputed Books Were Accepted As Scripture”

Objection - “There is no evidence that the Jews at Qumran accepted any of the disputed books as Scripture.”

Answer: The discoveries at Qumran yielded little solid evidence on how this sect viewed the canon. Many writings and fragments of writings were discovered. For example, portions of all the Protocanon have been discovered with the exception of the Book of Esther. Fragments of Tobit and Sirach were also discovered. Lastly, there were also fragments of apocryphal writings such as the *Testimony of the Twelve Patriarchs* and a number of previously unknown writings. The mere presence of a book in Qumran does not necessarily mean that they were considered Scripture.

In terms of how the sect used these books, it appears that some sectarian documents may have been used in a Scriptural manner while some of the Protocanon are never quoted or even alluded to as Scripture.¹ The absence of some of the Deuterocanon (e.g. Judith, Baruch, Wisdom, 1 and 2 Maccabees) reveals little since the Book of Esther is absent as well. Qumran was certainly not a representative first century Judaism as a whole. The selection of the books discovered may simply reflect the partisan beliefs of the group.² There is no evidence of a closed or fixed canon at Qumran; in fact, a closed and fix canon is in some ways inconsistent with what is known about the sacred writings of the Qumran sectarians.³

© 2004 by Gary Michuta. All Rights Reserved. This is copyrighted material. No copying, distribution or reproduction (electronic or otherwise) is permitted without express permission from the copyright owner.

¹ See Swanson, 185-197 – e.g. Ruth, Song of Songs and possibly Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah.

² See Swanson, 199.

³ See Swanson, 208-209.