

“Philo of Alexandria Never Quoted the Deuterocanon”

Objection #1 – “Philo makes extensive use of the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint and we would expect that the Deuterocanon, if they were included in that translation, would be used by him as well. In spite of the fact that Philo’s writings contain a large quotes and allusions from Sacred Scripture, he never once quotes from the Deuterocanon. Clearly, this silence indicates that he did not consider the Deuterocanon to be inspired even though they were part of the Septuagint. If this Jewish theologian from Alexandria didn’t recognize the Deuterocanon, certainly the Jews in Palestine would not either.”

Answer: Here, once again, we have an argument from silence. Since the disputed books were not quoted, it is reasoned, they must have been rejected. Could it be that Philo never found an opportunity to use them? Our objector attempts to make this suggestion implausible by noting that Philo made *extensive* use of the Old Testament implying that their omission must have been on purpose. Although it is true that Philo’s works contain a large *number* of quotations from the Old Testament, the number of *books* that he quotes from is relatively small. In fact, Philo fails to produce a single quote from the books of Ezekiel, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Daniel, Esther and perhaps also Chronicles. Yet, Philo must have been familiar with these texts since they (like the disputed books) would have been included in the Septuagint.¹

It is true that Philo’s work does contain a large number of quotes. Some place the count at around 2050 quotations. However, a closer study as to *where* Philo derives his quotations is quite illuminating. Out of the two thousand and fifty some odd quotes from the Old Testament, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is quoted 2000 times, leaving only about 50 quotes that are drawn from the rest of the Scripture!² For Philo, the Torah was the sum and summit of God’s revelation and all other sacred books were only commentary. Given this dependence upon the Torah, it would be perfectly reasonable to expect that both the “fringe” and the Deuterocanon were not likely to be used. Therefore, the argument based on Philo’s silence proves nothing.

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¹ Ryle comments in this regard: “Considering the strange treatment accorded to the Books of Daniel and Esther in the LXX version, it is more than probable that Philo, like other Jews in Alexandria, had not learned to attach to them the value of Canonical Scripture. The doubts, too, which were elsewhere felt respecting Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Esther, may very reasonably incline us to suppose that Philo’s silence respecting them was not altogether accidental. The possibility of Ruth is to be included with Judges, and Lamentations with Jeremiah, may fairly be taken into account.” Ryle, 160

² McDonald, 40 – Both the Prophets and the Writings make up only 2.439% of Philo’s quotations.