

## Comments and Reviews of the Debate between Gary Michuta and James White

### Review No. 1: Steve Ray's Comments

Last week my wife and I took a short vacation and flew to NY to watch the debate between Michuta and White. Gary has been a good friend for a long time and we wanted to give him some moral support. White has jostled in probably hundreds of debates in his lifetime and this was Gary's first. Gary did a remarkable job for a first time, especially under the pressure of the situation and with an audience. He was very well prepared. I think White would agree.

(Gary has a webpage set up on my site called The Great Debate 2004 (<http://www.catholicconvert.com/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=89>). I will be posting his background material, reviews and other material over the next few days and weeks.)

I don't have time to write a full review of the debate and will wait for the promised reviews from David Palm and Gary Michuta. However, I will say that in some ways the two debaters talked past each other in that White was dealing primarily with "canon" and Gary with "inspiration". In other words, Gary did a good job establishing that the deuterocanonical books have historically been considered inspired though not always considered canonical. James was "proving" that they were not always considered canonical and were therefore not inspired. I wish the difference had been more carefully explained and defined. Also, White seemed ready to refute the authority issue -- that Catholics accept the canon because of an authoritative declaration from Rome -- but Gary never brought up the issue, basing his argument not on the authority issue but on the historical. Gary's was a relatively new approach in modern times and I suspect he will develop it further in his upcoming book.

Gary did an excellent job, especially considering the fact that he had the burden of proving the affirmative -- the inspiration/canonicity of the deuterocanonicals -- whereas all the opponent had to do was to present real or perceived objections. It is always harder to affirm and prove something than it is to raise questions and cast doubts. This is not to say that White did not make good points -- he did, but the one taking the affirmative position certainly has the uphill job from the get-go; the man taking the negative has the easier job. I have noticed that Catholics usually make what I consider the mistake of accepting the task of promoting the affirmative and letting the Protestant take the much easier job of taking "pot shots" so to speak.

In a debate, tactics are almost as important as content. One must know how to ask questions, how to relate to the audience, how to close with a "bang", etc. Though Gary did a great job for the first time, I think he also learned a good bit about debating which will hold him in good stead for future debates -- should he decide to do so. The debate was very calm, not antagonistic and heated as some I have heard on tape. Gary is naturally low key and calm and White seemed to followed suit. There were great moments and others less than great but overall Gary is to be commended for a courageous and effective first debate and everyone there would certainly acknowledged

his excellent preparation and knowledgeable use of the material. The debate will serve him well as his manuscript on the topic is published in a book.

Will I debate in the future? I have to admit that during the debate I kept saying, “Boy, that would be fun!” but I also have to say that I find these debates rather unproductive and I have never liked the format. Also, I could not justify the amount of time it would take to prepare. I will be 50 this year and need to allocate my final years carefully 😊 I would rather spend my time on something substantial like a good book, a video series, or my family. But I am feisty by nature and can't stop thinking it would be very fun.

By the way, White and I met for the first time (along with David Palm) and he was a real gentleman. We chatted amicably. I liked him as I suspected I would. I would still like to have lunch with him someday when I am in Phoenix -- I think we would have a lot in common and get along just fine. Hopefully he will someday remove his anathema on me and accept a lunch invitation.