

Q: Why do Catholic Bibles have 7 more books than Protestant Bibles? Did the Catholic Church add 7 books?

An excellent question, and one that frequently gets asked. It is true. While the New Testament is the same for all Christians, the Catholic Old Testament contains 46 books, while the Protestant Old Testament contains only 39. The seven additional books included in the Catholic O.T. are 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Wisdom, and Baruch, along with additional passages in Daniel and Esther. These 7 books are referred to as the Deuterocanon by Catholics, and the Apochrypha by Protestants.

So who is right? Which was the Old Testament used by the Apostles and the early Church?

First off, what does the Catholic Church have to say about all this [see my earlier article on *Sola Scriptura*]? The Church teaches that it was the Catholic Church that discerned the Books of the Bible through Sacred Tradition, and that Sacred Tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God. It also claims that the task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church [i.e. to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him) (CCC 81, 82, 85, 95, 120).

Secondly, let us consider some difficulties. There is no divinely inspired table of contents in the Bible telling us what properly belongs in it. From the Bible alone, we cannot possibly know what actually belongs in it! This is one of the most serious, irrefutable blows to the Protestant doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, the belief that the Bible alone is the sole rule for a Christian's faith, and that the Church has essentially no authority.

Additionally, many assume that the Bible arrived in its completed form early in the Church's history with little or no controversy, but this is far from the truth. There were many texts and lists of books that were being proposed by various theologians as inspired and rightfully belonging in the Bible. In the end, it was a series of councils of the Catholic Church guided by the Holy Spirit, similar to the Council of Jerusalem we see in Acts 15, that discerned the canon or list of books of the Bible.

This all took place towards the end of the 4th century, and in the space of 40 years, the Canon of the Bible would be declared and re-declared some 5 times, each time ratifying the exact same list of New and Old Testament books that we have in the Catholic Bible today (see the Catholic Catechism, particularly sections 81, 82, 85, 95 and 120).

The first affirmation of the Canon of Scripture would take place at the Council of Rome in 382 A.D. under Pope Damasus. This canon was then reaffirmed at the councils of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.), then again in a letter from Pope Innocent I to Exuperius, the Bishop of Toulouse (405 A.D.), and yet again at the second Council of Carthage in 419 A.D. And if that weren't enough, this same canon was ratified again by the later Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (787) and Florence (1438-1445), and then received formal canonical definition at the Council of Trent in 1546.

This is all simply a matter of unarguable history, and is something that even Martin Luther himself acknowledged: "*We concede—as we must—that so much of what they [the Catholic Church] say is true: that the papacy has God's word and the office of the apostles, and that we have received Holy Scriptures, baptism, the sacrament, and the pulpit from them. What would we know of these if it were not for them?*"

It is also a matter of fact that every single Christian Bible up until the 1500's contained the exact same books we have in the Catholic Bible today.

So where did the disagreement come from? In the midst of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther decided to remove 7 books of the Old Testament! It sounds unbelievable but that's what he did (and he **tried** to remove several books of the New Testament as well). So why did he remove these 7 books? In some cases, their theology didn't square with his and he wanted them out, particularly 2 Maccabees which taught prayers for the dead and the doctrine of Purgatory. So he rejected the Old Testament Canon of the Christian Church, determined some 1100 years earlier, and adopted the Jewish/Hebrew Old Testament Canon of his time instead (which had, conveniently for him,

left some of the books he disliked out), which is what most Protestant Bibles contain today.

In a certain sense, this may sound somewhat reasonable. After all, the Old Testament had its origins with the Jews, so shouldn't they know best what should be in it? Maybe not.

You see, the Jews had no fixed canon at the time of Jesus. There is no Jewish document of the pre-Christian era that gives a Jewish Old Testament canon. Ezra (424 B.C.), was suggested as the closer of the Old Testament canon, but he gave no list of books. The Sadducees and the high priesthood of Jesus' time only accepted the five books of the Pentateuch [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy]. The Jewish historians of the Apostles' time, Josephus and Philo, both list different numbers of Old Testament books [Josephus 22 books, and Philo only 18] but neither of them list those books. And either way, this is far shy of the 39 books of even the Protestant Bible.

Their finalized canon wouldn't come until sometime after 300 A.D, and perhaps well after that. Now as a Christian, why would you look to any authoritative decision from the Jewish Church at this point in time – a church that had rejected and crucified Jesus, had heavily persecuted the early Christian church and even martyred many of its followers? Their temple had been destroyed, their high priesthood lost, and they were no longer the authoritative Church of the New Testament, but had been fulfilled and essentially “replaced” by the Church of the Apostles, the Christian Church. And in fact, anti-Christian theology had greatly determined their final canon, and they had explicitly rejected the Gospels and all Christian writings for inclusion in their own Canon! But despite all this, this was the Canon that Martin Luther adopted.

But the proverbial nail in the coffin is this. Did the Apostles and the early Church have an Old Testament Canon already in place at the time of the writing of the New Testament? Yes! How do we know? As the New Testament was written, the God-inspired authors regularly quoted from the Old Testament. Of the over 350 direct quotes that come from the Old Testament, well over 300 of them, an overwhelming 85 to 90%, come from the Septuagint. This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Old Testament that originated in Alexandria, Egypt around 250 BC.

This unquestionably was the primary Old Testament that was used by the Apostles and the Early Church –and **it also contains the exact same books of the Catholic Old Testament that we have today** and have had for the past 1600 years, **including** the seven books of the Deuterocanon!!! End of argument!

Do you want to use the Old Testament of the Apostles? You'll need a Catholic Bible!

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