

## **Re: Luther dropped books that didn't fit him, July 4 2011**

I was troubled to read a recent Letter to the Editor that felt that my article dealing with why Catholic Bibles have seven more books than most Protestant Bibles had a “condescending tone” towards Martin Luther, or that I was “bashing” him in anyway. Perhaps the brevity needed to deal with a lengthy topic in 800 words left that impression, but that certainly wasn't my intention.

To answer this reader's comments, first off, I think he misunderstood the point of my article.

For instance, he mentions that for several years, Martin Luther attempted to correct the abuse of indulgences by certain Catholic clergy of the time. This is true and I am not contesting that (but be very clear that this was **not** a case of the Church teaching error in doctrine in any way, but more simply, individual members within the Church erring in their application of Church teaching). But either way, my article was not commenting on whether Luther was justified in fighting against abuses in the Church or not. My point was that Martin Luther **erred seriously** when he later rejected the authority of the Church and the Canon (list of books) of Sacred Scripture that it had determined.

To work within the heart of the Church to correct abuses is admirable. To reject the Church and its authority, authority given to it by Jesus Himself, is another matter all together. The results of Luther's actions have been devastating to Christian unity, with well over 35,000 Protestant denominations in existence today as a consequence (read John 17:19-26 to get a sense of the unity that Jesus prayed for in His Church).

My reader also questioned why I then singled out the Jewish hierarchy of the time for persecuting the early Christian Church, when the same thing would later happen to the Jews at the hands of Christians.

Any form of unjust persecution is wrong -on either side. But again, my point was not to chastise the Jews of the first 2 centuries for their treatment of Christians, but to point out that they had absolutely rejected Jesus and His Church and that they no longer possessed the

authority to make any doctrinal decisions regarding the Christian Church. Because of this, their Canon was not authoritative for the Christian Church, and certainly should not have been adopted by Luther over the Old Testament Canon that had been decided centuries ago by the Apostles and the early Church. (Interestingly, history has now shown that several of the books in this Jewish Canon were either included or rejected in error, based on the criteria that the Jews **themselves** had set out at the time to guide the determination of their Canon).

The reader then notes that Pope Benedict “has taken a conciliatory approach and, allowing Catholic Anglicans to retain some of their important rites, has brought many back to Rome.” I assume he is suggesting that my article was not “conciliatory”, and perhaps not helpful in bringing others back to the Catholic Church.

I would have to gently disagree with this. For starters, it is critical that Catholics not only know the truth about their Faith, but be confirmed in the sense that the Church humbly and unequivocally got it right in matters of faith and morals. From this sense of conviction may come a new wave of evangelists that will go out to the world with a renewed sense of confidence in the Gospel that has been entrusted to the Church. It could change the world!

Additionally, I am hoping that some of our separated brothers and sisters might actually be convinced enough through a clear explanation of Catholic teaching to examine the Catholic Faith more closely - even if it might require rethinking positions on some core beliefs.

And finally, regarding my reader’s statement that Pope Benedict has allowed “Catholic Anglicans to retain some of their important rites” as they enter the Catholic Church. Yes, this has always been the way of the Church as it welcomes others into the fold –to take what they bring that is complimentary to the Faith and incorporate it into the Church: traditions, culture, rites.

But if by retaining some of “their important rites”, my reader is suggesting that the Church would compromise Her teaching in the area of doctrine, such as the true Canon of Scripture discussed in my original

article, this could never happen. Could we think for one moment that Jesus would want us to compromise the truths of His teaching to try and bring others into His Church? This would be contrary to His very nature! True Christian unity, the “perfect” unity that Jesus prayed for in His followers in John 17, can only come about through a complete embracing of the **fullness of the truth** by all, not in a compromise or watering down of it.

Interestingly, the “founder” of Anglicanism, Henry VIII himself, ordered stiff penalties for those who published Bibles that excluded the seven Books that Martin Luther would later remove.

Let me close with a quote from Cardinal Aloysius Ambrosia given at World Youth Day in Toronto. The cardinal proposed this: *“In our day-to-day life, in our words, in our most ordinary actions and our entire way of acting and reacting, we are asked to show God’s countenance to the world. We are asked to be ready to make our defense to anyone who demands from us an accounting for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). When occasions arise we ought to present, calmly and confidently, the faith we live by; we must refuse to feign the politically correct tolerance which imagines that all religions and convictions and values are equally valid. Through us, the world is to be drawn to Jesus and with Him to the Father.”* Perfect!

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