

canon because the *Book of Sirach* clearly teaches that man has free will (Sir. 15:11-20), which Luther denied, and prayer for the dead (2 Macc. 12:46), which clearly proves that there must be a state of existence after death other than heaven or hell. If a soul is in heaven, prayer is no longer necessary, and if a soul has been damned, prayer will not do any good. The doctrines of free will and purgatory went directly against Luther's teaching. As he could not remove these books from the canon, he simply rejected the Septuagint canon and replaced it with the Palestinian canon, put together by Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Now, as Christians, Are we not obligated to use the Bible approved by Jesus and the Apostles?"

"Obviously, I would have to answer yes to the question." answered George.

"Well," I said, "the King James Version contains the Palestinian canon. You have been using a canon of scripture that has 7 books missing. Not only that, by holding to the 'Bible alone' theory, you reject the oral teachings of Jesus and the Apostles that had been written down by those that heard them teach.

"In order to understand Catholic belief, it is necessary to examine the three basic foundations for these teachings. First, Sacred Scripture; second, Sacred Tradition; and third, the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Imagine you have before you an intricate picture puzzle of thousands of pieces. Further, imagine this puzzle represents the sum of God's revelation. Everything we received from God through Jesus and the Apostles is contained within the framework of this picture. For Catholics, the puzzle is made up of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, which comprises God's complete public revelation. We have all the puzzle pieces visible before us. Because non-Catholic Christians reject Sacred Tradition and recognize a collection of Sacred

Scripture with seven plus books removed, it is impossible for them to visualize the complete picture. In the United States alone there are tens of thousands of denominations, each trying to convince their members or potential converts they have the one and only truth. They have only part of the truth, and ministers ask congregations to trust in their personal interpretation of Sacred Scripture to fill in the gaps of the puzzle.

"I can't tell you the number of Protestant ministers, who when pushed to answer, admitted to me that they really had no assurance that they were teaching correctly. All they could do was pray about it and ask the advice of other ministers who were in the same predicament.

"In other words, getting back to the puzzle analogy, they were asking their congregations to place their personal salvation in the hands of a person who is only guessing at what the complete picture looks like."

"The magisterium is the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and provides the necessary instructions for the completion of the puzzle."

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Pamphlet 288

Why is there a difference between the Catholic and Protestant versions of the Old Testament Canon?

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Not too long ago I found myself in a discussion with a man named George, who has been teaching Scripture for many years under the auspices of Calvary Chapel Church.

George mentioned that he used the King James Version of the Bible, and said, "I know there are errors in the KJV, but it seems to me to be the best available translation. What do you think?"

I answered, "I believe the best translation is the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition."

"Well," George responded, "I might expect you to recommend a Catholic Bible, But Catholic Bibles contain the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, which were added by the Catholic Church to support your own peculiar beliefs."

"Nothing could be further from the truth", I said. "Let me explain what I mean. There is a difference between the Catholic and Protestant versions of the Old Testament, but it is not because Catholics added books to the Bible.

If I placed two different Bibles before you and said that one was used by Jesus and the Apostles, and the other was put together by Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah, which would you use?"

The look of George's face told me that he thought that I was asking him a trick question, which would bait him into some sort of trap. I

said, "This is an honest question, which would you choose?"

"Of course, I would prefer the one used by our Lord." George said, "but your going to have to explain this difference to me."

"I'll be happy to", said I. "The Bible, or Old Testament used by Jesus, his Apostles and all Christians up until the Protestant Reformation, was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The translation had been completed about 250 years before the Incarnation of Jesus. Both Protestant and Catholic scholars recognize that the Septuagint was the accepted Bible during the time of Jesus as there are approximately 300 quotations in the New Testament from the Septuagint. As a matter of fact, Matthew quoted from it approximately 130 times in his Gospel alone. This Bible contained all the books in the present day Catholic canon of the Old Testament.

"Well", said George, "If the Bible used by Jesus contained 46 books, as you say, how come the KJV has only 39 books?"

"That's a great question" I said, "and it deserves a complete answer. Please bear with me as I explain. Obviously, I don't have the time to go into all the details, but I will be happy to provide more complete information later.

"During His ministry, Jesus predicted that the Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. Approximately a generation later (40 years) it was destroyed by the Romans in what Josephus, a noted Jewish historian, labeled 'The Jewish War.' At that time, all the Levitical priests were killed, which effectively ended the animal sacrifices. Now, from a Christian perspective, we would say that Jesus gave the Jews a generation in which to accept His personal atoning sacrifice and the new covenant before he allowed the Temple to be destroyed.

"An interesting aside to all this is that each year on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of

Atonement, two lambs would be slaughtered by the priests in atonement for the sins of the priests and all Jews. Each year the priests would tie a scarlet ribbon around the necks of the lambs, which would turn white before the sacrifice was to be performed. The Jews took this as an indication that the sacrifice was acceptable to God. They would also tie a scarlet ribbon through the handles of the Temple doors, which took twenty men to open or close. The year that Jesus died, the ribbons did not turn white and the Temple doors opened by themselves in the middle of the night. The High Priests viewed this as an indication that God was somehow displeased and would reject their sacrifices and allow the Temple to be destroyed.

"After the Jewish war, the Rabbis were the only authority left in Judaism and for many years the Romans had a price on their heads. In the year 90 AD, the remnants of Jewish authority met in Javnah (Greek Jamnia) about 12 miles south of present day Tel Aviv. By this time, Christianity was growing, in spite of the Roman persecutions, and the Jews resented the Christians for using the Septuagint Scriptures to show that Jesus was the prophesized Messiah. They decided that they would assemble a biblical canon, which eventually became known as the Palestinian canon, and which Jews recognize and use to this day. The criteria they used was four-fold, 1, the books had to have been written in Palestine. 2, the books had to have been written in the Hebrew language. 3, the books had to conform to the spirit of the Torah, the first 5 books of the Old Testament. And 4, The Jews rejected any book that had been written since the time of Ezra the Prophet. They believed that God had stopped speaking to them when they killed Ezra. These criteria eliminated 7 books from the Septuagint canon. So, since the end of the first century, Jews have used a Bible of 39 books.

"Leaders in the Catholic Church compiled the New Testament canon at the end of the fourth century. During the councils of Hippo and Carthage, Catholic bishops decided that only 27 of the hundreds of books floating around at the time were divinely inspired. The criteria they used were straightforward. Was the book written by an Apostle and secondly, did the writing conform to Sacred Tradition, which is the oral teaching of the Apostles.

"As a way of illustration of Sacred Tradition, I asked George, which of the four Gospels had been written by Apostles."

He responded by saying, "What do you mean, weren't they all written by Apostles?"

"No," I answered, "Mark and Luke, never met Jesus, and so certainly couldn't have heard Him teach."

"Then how did those books get into the New Testament," asked George.

"Another good question," I responded. "You see Mark was the secretary, traveling companion, and interpreter for Peter. Peter, spoke only Aramaic, so whenever he preached in Greek speaking lands, Mark interpreted. Luke traveled with Paul. We have written historical evidence that the Christian community asked Mark and Luke to write down the teachings of Peter and Paul. This is a very good example of what the Catholic Church means when she speaks of Sacred Tradition.

"Let's get back to our discussion on the Bible canon." I said, "All Christians used the Septuagint canon of the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Catholic Church until Martin Luther broke away from the Catholic Church in 1517. Luther rejected the Septuagint