

## Did the Catholic Church outlaw ownership of the Bible?

Not the actual Bible. It did prohibit the use of flawed translations such as:

1. Translations containing error.
  - a. Missing verses;
  - b. Poor translation;
  - c. Multiple typographical errors;
  - d. Altered or omitted verses to support heresy.
2. Those containing notes, commentary and prologues which taught heresy or flawed explanations.
  - a. The translation may have been fairly accurate, but the added comments by the publisher were often very flawed or intentionally misleading.
3. A Bible published by a heretical group.
  - a. These were slanted and altered to refute the Catholic Church.
4. Unauthorized versions of the Bible.
  - a. Published by people without adequate education, training or editing;
  - b. When an approved translation already existed in the local language.

There are noncontroversial reasons most people did not own or read the bible before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century:

1. Bibles were very expensive.
  - a. Parchment was very costly and Bibles often contained beautiful artwork, precious stones and gold.
    - i. Some were even chained to the pulpits of Churches to prevent theft.
2. Bibles were rare until the invention of the printing press.
  - a. Hand copying was a very meticulous process and therefore, slow.
3. For hundreds of years, many people were illiterate.
  - a. The Church printed the Bible in Latin because most who could read, read Latin and most who could not read Latin, could not read anything.

## Some claim that Protestants were persecuted or killed because they published or owned a Bible.

This is not true. Stories of executions, bans, Bible burning and other efforts to keep the Bible out of the hands of the common people are not as accurate as you have been led to believe. Two of the most common myths involve Jan Hus and William Tyndale:

- Jan Hus was executed by the Emperor of Germany for political reasons after the Church's Council of Constance convicted him of heresy but requested that he be spared from execution.
- William Tyndale was executed by those loyal to Henry VIII, who had already separated from the Catholic Church and started his own Church of England. Therefore, Tyndale's execution was at the hands of his fellow Protestants, not the Catholic Church.

No persecution of any reformer was carried out by the Catholic Church, or by Catholic bishops or priests acting on orders from the Church.

There were however, hundreds of Catholic martyrs who were imprisoned, tortured and brutally executed by Protestants. In England, Catholics were usually hung, drawn and quartered for refusing to denounce their allegiance to the Catholic Church.

For accurate accounts of religious persecution, read about Thomas More, John Fisher, Edmund Campion and many others who were imprisoned, tortured and executed by reformers. The list of over a hundred such victims includes women as well, such as Margaret Clitherow and Sister Elizabeth Barton. Sister Barton was hung without a trial and is the only woman to have had her head placed on a stake and displayed on London Bridge.

Start with this pamphlet, but don't stop here. Keep researching the information provided herein. Not all resources are reliable, but a few trustworthy sources are:

- **Where We Got The Bible** by Henry G. Graham
- **Why Catholic Bibles are Bigger** by Gary Michuta
- **The Bible, The Church and Authority** by Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J.
- **Catholic England: Faith, Religion, and Observance before the Reformation** published by Manchester University Press.
- [www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com)
- [www.catholicconvert.com](http://www.catholicconvert.com).

# How We Got The Bible:

Learn how Christians compiled the Bible you own today.



*Inspired and inerrant, the Word of God provides nourishment for the Christian life. But you may have wondered how we came to venerate the Word of God given to us in the Bible, when the Bible itself does not tell us which books actually belong in the Bible.*

Answers to questions... Clarifying information... Dispelling common myths.

You have a Bible today because the Catholic Church compiled the books, translated them, protected them from destruction and corruption and read them to the illiterate masses for hundreds of years. Today, the Catholic Church continues to hold to the authentic truth, including the original canon of the Bible the Catholic Church recognized over 1,600 years ago.

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## The early Christians did not have a Bible.

- Some New Testament writers began to write their books within a few decades after Christ's resurrection, but other New Testament books were not finished until approximately A.D. 100.
- There was no compiled and approved Bible in existence until about A.D. 400.
- Many Christian writings were written and circulated in the first several hundred years of Christianity that are not included in the Bible, some of which are considered helpful for learning and understanding Christianity.
- Many other writings such as the Gnostic writings and other heretical texts have long been rejected by Christians.
- The books that would eventually be included in the Bible:
  - Were originally written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic;
  - Some books had no spaces between words;
  - Contained no chapters or verses;
  - Were handwritten on papyrus and eventually parchment;
  - Were very rare due to the difficulty of hand copying the originals.
  - Were not read by most people because most people were illiterate, nor could they afford the high cost of a copy.
- Once officially compiled, the Bible has always contained 73 books, not 66.
- The original autographs have been lost for centuries, so all we have today are copies of those autographs, the most authentic of which is St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate from A.D. 400.

## Somebody had to decide which books belonged in the Bible.

That "somebody" is the Catholic Church. The motivating force was the need to designate which books were appropriate for use in the Mass. Here is how it all happened:

St. Athanasius was one of the first to list substantially all the books of the Bible in A.D. 367.

- Origen had listed the 27 New Testament books by A.D. 250, but had not listed the Old Testament books.

St. Athanasius' list included the 27 New Testament books and the 46 Old Testament books (the Septuagint), which included the Deuterocanonical books, ("Deutero"). Athanasius' list was almost identical to the 73 book canon used in the early Church. It was this 73 book canon which was ratified and approved by several Councils of the Catholic Church and several Catholic popes, such as:

- Council of Rome in A.D. 382
- Council of Hippo in A.D. 393
- Council of Carthage in A.D. 397 and 419
- Pope Innocent I in A.D. 405
- Council of Florence in 1442
- Council of Trent in 1546
- The Christian Church used the 73 book Catholic canon for over 1,000 years, before the Protestant revolution, including:
  - Augustine, Jerome, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus...
  - St. Jerome was originally hesitant to include the Deutero books, but St. Augustine convinced him to include them in the Latin Vulgate;

Some believe a Jewish Council called the Council of Jamnia excluded the Deutero books because they were not originally written in Hebrew. However, in 1947, archaeologists began discovering the Dead Sea scrolls which contained some of the Deutero books written in Hebrew, so that theory is no longer valid.

Many biblical scholars believe that when the New Testament refers to Scripture, 80% of the references are to the Septuagint.

## If someone says the Catholic Church added books to the Bible, during the reformation they are wrong?

That's right. The Catholic Church actually compiled the Bible used by all Christians until the 1500's. Instead of Catholics adding books, it was Martin Luther who actually removed books that had been accepted by all Christians for over 1,100 years.

## What changes did Martin Luther make?

Luther decided the 7 Deuterocanonical books, which some call the Apocryphal books, were not divinely inspired. He did the same with parts of Daniel and Esther. Luther also wanted to remove several books of the New Testament, especially James, but eventually agreed to keep all 27 books that the Catholic Church had originally included in the Bible 1,100 years earlier.

## Why did Luther make changes to the Bible?

Luther disagreed with the theology of some of the books he dismissed as well as some of the books he wanted to remove but eventually retained. Maccabees contains very clear evidence for the existence of Purgatory and James (which Luther called the epistle of straw) stresses the importance of works in addition to faith. Luther did not claim any divine inspiration for his decisions. He seems to have relied on his opinion and flawed historical reasons such as the Council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.

Most people accept the fact that Luther was not more intelligent, inspired or scholarly accomplished than all the Christians who preceded him in the 1,546 years of the Church up to the time he removed books from the Bible.

## Why is it so common to hear Protestants dispute the Catholic roots of the Bible?

Because to recognize the Catholic Church's obvious role in the development, protection and proliferation of the Bible is to accept the authority of the Catholic Church. Rare is the non-Catholic who will willingly acknowledge the authority of the Catholic Church.