

CATHOLIC

Q & A

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Where did we get the Bible?

We as Christians, when we refer to the Bible, speak of the Old Testament (Jewish Scriptures) and the New Testament (Christian Scriptures) as God's Revelation in written form. The Bible was written over a 1,500-year period by many different authors. It is believed that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament known as the Pentateuch. Moses lived in the 13th -12th century B.C. The last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, was written in the late first century A.D. However, the Bible as we know it today did not exist in its printed form until the 15th century when the printing press was first invented. So for over 1,400 years after Christ walked this earth, the Bible did not exist in the mass quantities that we have today.

The Old Testament was written in the Jewish language, namely Hebrew, for Jews. The Jews as a people became dispersed outside of Palestine because of various invasions and conquests. Several hundred years before Christ, the Greek empire had extended its influence over the region and there was a movement to translate the Jewish Scriptures into Greek. The translation of the Old Testament into Greek was known as the Septuagint. History records that 72 Israelites, six from each tribe were commissioned to complete the translation. It is from this version that Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers quote when referring to the Old Testament.

The New Testament has its origin rooted in the life, passion, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord commanded the Apostles to "Go ye and teach all nations" and "Preach the gospel to every creature". This is what the apostles did and only five out of twelve wrote down anything at all that has been preserved for us and of that not a line was penned till at least ten years after the death of Christ. St. Luke, one of the Gospel

writers was a Gentile and received his faith through hearing it preached. So we readily see the existence of the Christian Church and the Christian Faith before the Bible was even put to paper.

Several hundred years after our Lord's ascension into heaven, there were many books circulating in the Christian faith community that were considered to be inspired and apostolic. Among these were the Epistle of Barnabas, the Gospel According to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James and St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Which of these books are inspired and worthy of inclusion in the Bible? To settle the matter, the Church came to a decision at the Council of Rome in 382 A.D. and declared what New Testament books were the exact collection of Sacred Scripture and reaffirmed the Septuagint as the Old Testament. These books all exist today in the modern Catholic Bible. For 1,200 years this was the canon of Scripture that all Christians used, then in the 16th century the Protestant Reformers removed a large section of the Old Testament that was not compatible with their theology. They charged that these writings were not inspired and branded them "Apocrypha".

In the 5th century, the Western Roman Empire began to collapse with the onslaught of the Germanic invasions from the North, which brought about the erosion of classical civilization. In this time in history, we see the advent of the Monastery, which became the center of learning in those times. The monks were the most learned men of those days and were by profession scholars who copied and transcribed the Sacred Scriptures. The Bible, in the Middle Ages was multiplied and preserved by the monks.

Historical facts show that the Bible (New Testament) owes its existence and preservation to the Church. One of the early Church Fathers, St. Ignatius of Antioch, who studied at the foot of St.

John the Apostle, wrote in his letters written around 107 AD about the early Church. He talked about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and that the early Church was “Catholic”. He also wrote that the true Church is where the bishop is present and therefore the Church is hierarchical and apostolic.

Cardinal John Henry Newman, the great 19th Century Anglican convert to Catholicism summed it up by saying “ To be deep in the study of history is to cease to be Protestant.”

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