

Canon of the Bible (Supplement)

- In Jesus' time, the Samaritans and Sadducees accepted the law but rejected the prophets and writings. The Pharisees accepted all three. Other Jews used a Greek version (the Septuagint) that included the seven disputed books, known as the deuterocanonals. Still other Jews used a version of the canon that is reflected in the Septuagint and included versions of the seven books in question in their original Hebrew or Aramaic.
- The meeting of the Jews in Javneh (~80 AD) still did not settle the Pharisee canon, since not all Jews agreed with or even knew about the decision. Rabbis continued to debate it into the second and third centuries. Even today, the Ethiopian Jews use the same Old Testament as Catholics.
- Martin Luther included the deuterocanonical books in his first German translation, published before the Council of Trent (1546). They can also be found in the first King James Version (1611) and in the Guttenberg Bible (a century before Trent). In fact, these books were included in almost every Bible until the Edinburgh Committee of the British Foreign Bible Society excised them in 1825.
- In 1519, Luther had a debate against Johannes Eck on the topic of purgatory. Luther undermined Eck's proof text of 2 Maccabees 12 by devaluing the deuterocanonals as a whole. He argued that the NT authors had never quoted from the seven books, so they were in a different class than the rest of the Bible. (Following his reasoning, we'd have to throw out the 8 other OT books that are also not quoted!)
- NT makes numerous allusions to the deuterocanonals. For one strong example, examine Hebrew 11:35: "Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release that they might rise again to a better life." Nowhere in the Protestant OT can this story be found. One must look to a Catholic Bible to read the story in 2 Maccabees 7.
- Jerome appears to have rejected most of the deuterocanonical parts of Scripture. But he did accept portions and included all seven books in his Latin translation of Scripture, known as the Vulgate. Ultimately, he recognized that the Church alone had the authority to determine the canon.

Reading

Counting the Canon (*This Rock, June 1998*)