

# The Early Church Fathers on The Catholic Bible

Catholic Bibles have an Old Testament that is longer than the one found in Protestant Bibles. The extra material consists of seven additional books as well as some additions to the books of Esther, Jeremiah and Daniel. Catholics refer to these books and passages as Deuterocanonical which means that they are a part of the canon of Scripture. Protestants refer to them as Apocryphal which basically means they don't place them on the same level as Scripture. Catholics accept them because they are part of the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the version of the Old Testament that was used by Jesus, the Apostles, and the Early Christians. The extra books are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon), Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, 1 Maccabees, and 2 Maccabees.

## Clement of Rome

By the word of his might [God] established all things, and by his word he can overthrow them. "Who shall say to him, 'What have you done?' or who shall resist the power of his strength?" [Wisdom 12:12] (*Letter to the Corinthians* 27:5 [A.D. 95]).

## Tertullian

For they remembered also the words of Jeremias writing to those over whom that captivity was impending: "And now you shall see borne upon (men's) shoulders the gods of the Babylonians, of gold and silver and wood, causing fear to the Gentiles. Beware, therefore, that you also do not be altogether like the foreigners and be seized with fear while you behold crowds worshipping those gods before and behind, but say in your mind, our duty is to worship You, O Lord" [Baruch 6:3-5] (*Scorpions Antidote* 8 [A.D. 211]).

## Hippolytus

But they make use also of other testimonies, and say, thus it is written: "This is our God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of Him. He hath found out all the way of knowledge, and hath given it unto Jacob His servant (son), and to Israel His beloved. Afterward did He show Himself upon earth and conversed with men." [Baruch 3:36-38] (*Against Noetus* 2 [A.D. 205]).

## Irenaeus of Lyon

And Jeremiah the prophet has pointed out, that as many believers as God has prepared for this purpose, to multiply those left upon earth, should both be under the rule of the saints to minister to this Jerusalem, and that [His] kingdom shall be in it, saying: [quotes Baruch 4:26 et seq.] "Look around Jerusalem towards the east, and behold the joy which comes to you from God Himself... For God shall go before with joy in the light of His splendor, with the pity and righteousness which proceeds from Him" [Baruch 4:36-5:9] (*Against Heresies* 5:35:1 [A.D. 189]).

## Clement of Alexandria

"A fool raises his voice in laughter," says the Scripture; "but a clever man smiles almost imperceptibly" (Sirach 21:20). The clever man in this case he calls wise, inasmuch as he is differently affected from the fool. But, on the other hand, one needs not be gloomy, only grave. For I certainly prefer a man to smile who has a stern countenance than the reverse; for so his laughter will be less apt to become the object of ridicule (*The Instructor of Children* 2:5 [A.D. 191]).

Those, then, will not escape the curse of yoking an ass with an ox, who, judging certain things not to suit them, command others to do them, or the reverse. This Scripture has briefly showed, when it says, "What you hate you shall not do to another" [Tobit 4:15] (*Stromata* 2:23 [A.D. 202]).

## Origen

But that we may believe on the authority of holy Scripture that such is the case, hear how in the book of Maccabees, where the mother of seven martyrs exhorts her son to endure torture, this truth is confirmed; for she says, "I ask of thee, my son, to look at the heaven and the earth, and at all things which are in them, and beholding

these, to know that God made all these things when they did not exist" [2 Maccabees 7:28] (*On First Principles* 2:1:5 [A.D. 225]).

### **Cyprian of Carthage**

And again, where the sacred Scripture speaks of the tortures which consecrate God's martyrs, and sanctify them in the very trial of suffering: "And if they have suffered torments in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality; and having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them, and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace has He tried them, and received them as a sacrifice of a burnt-offering, and in due time regard shall be had unto them. The righteous shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the stubble. They shall judge the nations, and have dominion over the people; and their Lord shall reign forever" [Wisdom 3:4-8] (Letter 80:2 [A.D. 250]).

Holy Scripture meets and warns us, saying: "And fear not the words of a sinful man, for his glory shall be dung and worms. Today he is lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found, because he is turned into his earth, and his thought shall perish" [1 Maccabees 2:62-63] (Letter 54:3 [A.D. 251-253]).

### **Methodius**

And that you may not take refuge behind a safe wall, bringing forward the Scripture which says, "As for the children of the adulterers, they shall not come to their perfection" (Wisdom 3:16). He will answer you easily, that we often see those who are unlawfully begotten coming to perfection like ripe fruit (*The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 2:3 [circa A.D. 311]).

### **Athanasius**

But of these and such like inventions of idolatrous madness, Scripture taught us beforehand long ago, when it said: "The devising of idols was the beginning of fornication, and the invention of them, the corruption of life... for men serving either calamity or tyranny, did ascribe unto stones and stocks the incommunicable Name" [Wisdom 14:13] (*Against the Heathen* 1:11:1 [A.D. 326]).

### **Hilary of Poitiers**

For all things, as the Prophet says, were made out of nothing [2 Macc. 7:28] it was no transformation of existing things, but the creation into a perfect form of the non-existent (*On the Trinity* 4:16 [A.D. 356-360]).

As you have listened already to Moses and Isaiah, so listen now to Jeremiah inculcating the same truth as they: "This is our God, and there shall be none other likened unto Him, Who has found out all the way of knowledge, and has given it unto Jacob His servant and to Israel His beloved. Afterward did He show Himself upon earth and dwelt among men" [Baruch 3:36-38] (ibid 4:42).

### **Ambrose of Milan**

Justly, then, is he wise who has received of the Lord to know when he ought to speak. Wherefore the Scripture says well: "A wise man will keep silence until there is opportunity" [Sirach 20:76] (*On the Duties of the Clergy* 1:2:5 [A.D. 391]).

We have spoken of its beauty, and proved it by the witness of Scripture. It remains to show on the authority of Scripture that there can be no fellowship between it and vice, but that it has an inseparable union with the rest of the virtues. "It has a spirit sagacious, undefiled, sure, holy, loving what is good, quick, that never forbids a kindness, kind, steadfast, free from care, having all power, overseeing all things." And again: "She teacheth temperance and justice and virtue" [Wisdom 7:22-24] (ibid 2:13:65).

### **John Cassian**

Wherefore, as Scripture says, "when you go forth to serve the Lord stand in the fear of the Lord, and prepare your mind" [Sirach 2:1] (*The Institutes* 4:37 [A.D. 425-430]).