

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The Apocrypha of the Catholic Bible

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After God spoke through His prophet Malachi, a period of 400 years elapses before He speaks again through his appointed messenger John the baptizer, fulfilling Malachi's prediction of the coming of Elijah. (Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6, Luke 1:13-17). During this *“intertestamental Period”* other books were being written exalting Biblical heroes, with fanciful stories not previously told in Scripture. When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into the Greek language, some of these books were included among the recognized books of Divine Scripture.

These additional books are called the *Apocrypha*, which literally means *“the hidden books.”* The Catholic Bible includes some of these writings from the Second Century B.C. as additions to already recognized books, such as Daniel (chapters 13-14). They add seven additional books: Tobit, Judith, I Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), and Baruch.

These additional books were not officially established by

the Catholic Church as canonical until the Council of Trent in April of 1546. It was not unanimous (24 Yea, 15, Ney, and 16 abstaining), but for the first time official. The Trent Canon pointed back to what had been accepted in the fourth century (Council of Hippo, A.D. 393; Council of Carthage, 397) as canonical.

One of the reasons for establishing a canon of Scripture was due to the pressure from “Protestants”, such as Martin Luther who questioned the Catholic teaching of his day. Examining the contents of the Apocrypha, one can see why the Catholic Church determined to formally recognize these “hidden” books as part of the Sacred Scripture.

2 Maccabees authorizes the practice of praying for the dead to be loosed from their sins. Recovering slain bodies with idols under them, Judas offers *“twelve thousand drachms of silver . . . to be offered for the sins of the dead”* (2 Maccabees 2:43). The text sums up the sacrifice by saying, *“It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the*

dead, that they may be loosed from sins” (2 Maccabees 2:46).

Such could not be part of Scripture for it clearly contradicts already established canonical books. No sacrifice of money, nor prayers were presented as a possibility or of “wholesome thought” for the plight of the rich man after he died (Luke 16:26-31). And no amount of money can ever redeem man from sin (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Book of Tobit authorizes the praying to angels. The Angel Raphael, claiming to be one of the seven who stand before the Lord, assures the one who *“didst pray with tears”* that he *“offered thy prayer to the Lord”* (Tobit 12:12-15). God's Word consistently teaches that we pray directly to God, never to men or angels (Matthew 6:9, Acts 7:59-60, Revelation 22:8-9).

Such distinctive Catholic doctrines as praying for the dead, giving alms to forgive sin among the dead, and praying to angels are found in the Apocrypha, not the Bible. Biblical truth does not contradict itself!