

Bibles provide variations of the 'Word'

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ble contain several books beyond the 46 found in Catholic Bibles. Some even include a 151st Psalm.

How did so many versions come about? Who decided which books would be included and which would not?

"It wasn't a real structured, logical process," observed Father Jerome Kodell, OSB, author of *The Catholic Bible Study Handbook*. He noted that church leaders selected books in which the "faith is authentically portrayed, and these books became the norm."

Few documents outlining the early selection process exist today, according to Father Donald Senior, CP, general editor of the *Catholic Study Bible* and president of Chicago's Catholic Theological Union. Thus, Father Senior noted, it has become difficult to determine why some books were accepted and others were omitted.

"It's not that there were a determining set of rules," he remarked.

Nevertheless, Father Senior suggested that some of the criteria used in selecting books were whether the books were associated in some way with one of the apostles, whether their content conformed with faith and practice at the time of selection, and how widely they were used.

The Old Testament books accepted by Christians were those widely circulated among the Jewish people during the first century, noted Father Alexander DiLella, OFM, professor of Scripture studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

These works were contained in what is known as the "Septuagint" a Greek translation of the Old Testament books created by 70 scholars in Alexandria. ("Septuagint" is Latin for 70.) The Jewish people did not establish a canon until after Roman forces destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., following an attempted revolt

by the Jewish people.

Even so, some early Christian leaders questioned including certain Old Testament books, Father DiLella. For example, when St. Jerome translated the books of the Old Testament into Latin for the Vulgate version — which became the standard version for the Catholic Church until the 20th century — he advocated including only the 39 books for which texts in Hebrew and Aramaic could be found. Nevertheless, he included all the books in light of church support for their inclusion.

Church leaders established the canon at the Council of Hippo (393 A.D.), and the two councils at Carthage (397 and 419). That canon was formally set at the Council of Trent (1546).

In the wake of the temple's destruction, meanwhile, Jewish leaders began to establish their own canon, Father Senior noted.

"They were reorganizing Judaism — determining what was orthodox," he said. The theological union's president noted that some of the decisions were made in response to the growth of Christianity and other movements Jewish leaders considered dissident.

As a result, Jewish leaders settled on a more limited canon of 39 books that were available in Hebrew and Aramaic. They excluded those texts available only in Greek.

This narrower view of the Old Testament became the basis of the Protestant canon, Father DiLella said.

More went into this decision than just a desire to follow the Jewish example, however, according to *Responses to 101 Questions about the Bible*, by Father Raymond Brown, SS.

"The issue was further complicated because Catholic theologians resorted to these (deuterocanonical) books for support for doctrines that the Reformers rejected," Father Brown wrote.

For example, Father Brown explained, the Protestant version of the Bible did not include the prayer of Judas Maccabeus and his men in 2 Maccabees 12:42-46.

In that passage, Judas Maccabeus and his men prayed that the sins of the deceased men might be blotted out in light of the resurrection of the dead. The prayer has been used to support the idea of purgatory — a teaching Protestants rejected.

The early Christians also disagreed about which books should be included in the New Testament, Father Kodell pointed out. John's Gospel, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation, for example, were all considered for exclusion, he said, but were ultimately included.

Further, church leaders eventually chose to drop certain books that once were part of the canon or accepted in a just few dioceses or cities, Father Kodell pointed out. Among these books were the two letters of Clement, the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas.

In his book, Father Brown observed that some books were excluded simply because they conveyed no new information.

"No recently discovered apocryphal gospel tells us a single biographical, historical fact about the life of Jesus that we have not known previously," Father Brown wrote.

A number of other books were rejected because they conflicted with accepted church teachings, or contained too many fantastic elements, Father Kodell noted.

Several of the rejected Gospels deal with Jesus' childhood, including tales of Jesus bringing clay figures to life and intentionally killing a boy who bumped against him.

Some non-canonical works nevertheless have left a mark on Christianity — or have presented material that has become part of Christian tradition.

For example, the names of Ss. Anne and Joachim, the parents of Mary, cannot be

found in any canonical work. These names are derived from the non-canonical Protoevangelium of James.

That book also notes that Joseph was an elderly widower with children — offering an explanation for mention of Jesus' siblings in the canonical works — and describes the presentation of Mary in the temple, an event the church celebrates on Nov. 21. These details cannot be found in any text of the canon.

These stories have not only become part of popular legend, Father Brown wrote, but they also indicate the way in which early Christians viewed Jesus.

What the apocryphal gospels do tell us is how Christians of the second century (and even later) thought about Jesus, how they filled in imaginatively details of his life where the canonical Gospels had left lacunae (gaps), and how they made him the spokesman of their own theology," Father Brown wrote.

Although apocryphal texts provided some insights into early Christian thinking, the Catholic canon adhered to the books contained in St. Jerome's translation, Father Kodell pointed out. Subsequent Catholic versions of the Bible were based on St. Jerome's Latin translation as well.

St. Jerome remained the dominant voice in Catholic biblical translation until 1943, when Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical, *Afflante Spiritu*. In the encyclical, the pope encouraged scholars to prepare new translations of the Bible from the original languages — not just from St. Jerome's version, Father Kodell said.

That declaration came even as scholars were unearthing a number of early texts of canonical and non-canonical books, the priest continued. One of the most important discoveries was the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in several sites in the Dead Sea area since 1947.

The Dead Sea Scrolls contain an almost complete set of the books of the Old Testament, many written in Hebrew and Aramaic. These texts, Father Senior noted, are often several centuries older than previously available texts and have enabled biblical scholars to produce more accurate translations.

Translators must concern themselves not only with literal accuracy, Father Senior added, but with the spirit of the work as well.

"It's a balance between trying to get the meaning of the text, and trying to translate (the Bible) into a cultural context," Father Senior observed. The variations among the translations, he continued, depend in part on what "the purpose of the translation is and the audience it is aimed for."

Such versions as the Jerusalem Bible paraphrase sections of the text to make it more understandable for modern readers, Father Senior noted. Others, such as the Revised Standard and the New American, are more literal in their translations.

And even after nearly two millennia, the Bible still is undergoing revision.

"Bibles need to be revised to make them more amenable to today's understanding," Father DiLella observed.

In addition, the Catholic Church no longer limits Catholics to reading only Catholic translations. Imposed at the Council of Trent, the former restriction aimed at countering Protestant versions of the Bible designed to refute Catholic teachings.

Today's Catholics can read any version of the Bible, although they are advised to read such "better" translations as the New American or the Revised Standard, Father Senior said.

In fact, Father DiLella recommended reading several different versions.

"The general rule is buy as many translations as you can afford and read them and compare them," Father DiLella declared. Such diverse reading will "help you understand the Bible better," he concluded.

Obituaries

Service will recall life of Blackfriars' co-founder

ROCHESTER — A memorial service for Wilford H. Scott, who attended Holy Redeemer School and directed plays at Aquinas Institute and Our Lady of Mercy High School, is scheduled for 5 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 29. The service will take place at the Strasenburgh Planetarium, 657 East Ave.

Mr. Scott died of heart failure June 7, 1991, at the Rochester General Hospital. He was 70.

Entitled "Remembering Scotty," the memorial service will consist of readings as well as stories about Mr. Scott's life told by his former colleagues and friends, according to Carl Zollo, a parishioner of Holy Ghost Church. Mr. Scott and Zollo founded the Blackfriars Theatre Inc. Blackfriars is an amateur theater troupe in

Participants in the service will also stage excerpts from several plays Scott directed over the years, Zollo said.

"He always liked the planetarium," Zollo said of Mr. Scott. "He always liked the magic of it. I think if all of his friends are (at the service) he would have liked it."

Long involved in area theater, Mr. Scott got his first taste of the thespian life as a teenager directing stage productions at Holy Redeemer Parish on Hudson Avenue in the late 1930s. He also directed shows for the Holy Name Society at Aquinas Institute and Our Lady of Mercy High School in the 1930s and '40s, according to Zollo.

Blackfriars staged its first play, *The Nun with Red Shoes*, in 1951. Over the next 29 years, Mr. Scott directed about 75 plays for the troupe. Known in its early years as "Catholic Theater of Rochester," the

group originally drew most of its members from the Catholic church. At times the group has boasted the membership of several religious and clergy, Zollo said.

But the troupe changed its name to Blackfriars in the early 1960s because many theater patrons thought the Catholic Theater only performed religious plays. The name "Blackfriars" was itself based on the name of a troupe for which William Shakespeare wrote, Zollo said.

In addition to helping found Blackfriars, Mr. Scott also played a part in the creation of the Pittsford Summer Theater in 1941. He also performed with such other groups as the Jewish Community Center.

Zollo noted that the Sept. 29 service is open to the public.

— Rob Cullivan

Father Frederic J. Kelly, SJ; taught at McQuaid

Father Frederic J. Kelly, SJ, a graduate of the Aquinas Institute and a former teacher at McQuaid Jesuit High School, died of a heart attack in Honolulu, Hawaii on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 1991. He was 69 years old.

A theology professor at Canisius College, near Buffalo, Father Kelly was returning from a summer assignment in the Diocese of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, a New Zealand dependency in Polynesia.

Born in Albany on June 23, 1922, Father Kelly was the son of the late John and Loretto (Kean) Kelly.

After graduating from the Aquinas Institute in 1940, Father Kelly attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy before

transferring to Canisius College.

In 1942, he entered the Jesuit novitiate of St. Andrew-on-Hudson in Poughkeepsie. He made his first vows as a Jesuit in 1944. Father Kelly received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Sacred Heart College in the Philippines.

From 1949-51, Father Kelly taught at Jesuit high schools and colleges in Cagayan and Davao in the Philippines. After he returned to the United States for four years of theological study at Woodstock College in Maryland, he was ordained a priest in New York City in 1955.

In addition to serving as a religion and math teacher at McQuaid Jesuit High School from 1958-60, Father Kelly also served as a guidance counselor at the all-

boys' school in Brighton.

He had been teaching theology at Canisius College since 1964.

A Mass of Christ the High Priest was celebrated on Sept. 3 at St. Michael's Church in Buffalo. A memorial Mass will be held in Rochester at a later date. Burial will be at the Shrine of the North America Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y.

Father Kelly is survived by a sister, Mrs. Frank (Mary) Landry, of Rochester; and two brothers, Donald R., of Rochester, and Robert C., of Hot Springs Village, Ark.

Memorial donations can be made to Canisius College Loyola Scholarship Fund, 2001 Main St., Buffalo, N.Y. 14208 (attention: Mary Eberl).