**Mark Driscoll and the Canon of Scripture**

http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2012/03/mark-driscoll-and-canon-of-scripture.html

Popular Protestant pastor Mark Driscoll (of [Mars Hill church](http://marshill.com/)) thinks we Catholics have too many Books in our Bibles. That's no surprise; almost all Protestants think this. But thankfully, Driscoll takes the time to explain *why* he thinks this, which makes it easy to show where and how he's wrong.

If you're not familiar, the Catholic Bible has seven more Books [Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch (including the Epistle of Jeremy, a.k.a., Baruch 6), 1 and 2 Maccabees], along with longer versions of Esther and Daniel, compared to the Protestant Bible. We call these Books the Deuterocanon; Protestants call them (and several other books) the Apocrypha. So the question is: are Catholic Bibles too big? Or are Protestant Bibles too small?

Now, I've [previously responded to](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2011/08/mark-driscoll-and-gerry-breshears.html) the claims Driscoll made, along with Gerry Breshears, in *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*. But today, I wanted to address the arguments he makes in another of his books, called [*On the Old Testament*](http://www.amazon.com/Testament-Book-Youll-Actually-Read/dp/143350135X), which has received high praise from folks like D. A. Carson and Professor Bruce A. Ware. So here's Driscoll's argument, from [pages 30-31 of the book](http://books.google.com/books?id=t5Syk_UlZkwC&lpg=PA31&dq=Mark%20Driscoll%20Catholic&pg=PA30#v=onepage&q&f=false), explaining why he rejects the Catholic Deuterocanon, along with my responses:

**I. Divine Silence?**

During **the four hundred years of silence** between the end of the Old Testament and the coming of Jesus, many other works were written, including books of history, fiction, practical living, and end-times speculation. These books are known as the *apocrypha*, which means “hidden” or “secret” because the religious leaders of that time preferred that the books not be widely read by the people.

First off, let's address this idea that there were “four hundred years of silence.” Scripture makes no reference to such an event. In fact, [Luke 2:36](http://biblia.com/bible/rsv/Luke%202.36) refers to the prophetess Anna, who is “very old” by the time of Christ's birth. That is, the clear impression is that God continued to send prophets up until the time of Christ. Jesus seems to confirm this in [Matthew 11:13](http://biblia.com/bible/rsv/Matthew%2011.13), when he refers to the prophets and the Law as culminating in John the Baptist.

So where does this idea of an end to Old Testament prophesy come from? Professor Albert Sunberg [points to the Jewish historian Josephus](http://department.monm.edu/classics/speel_festschrift/sundbergjr.htm), who, writing around 90 A.D. “limited the period of divine inspiration to the time from Moses to the time of Artaxerxes I” and was “the first witness to a twenty-two book canon and to a time-limited theory of inspiration.” From a Christian perspective, however, Josephus' argument doesn't hold water. *All* Christians, Catholics and Protestants, reject the idea that the period of divine inspiration ceased at the time of Artaxerxes I in the fifth century B.C. After all, this would be a reason to reject the entire New Testament, not just the Deuterocanon.

For what it's worth, his etymology of the word “apocrypha” is also [probably wrong](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01601a.htm). (Ironically, the word most likely refers to an event from the apocryphal Fourth Book of Esdras). More importantly, as we'll see, the religious leaders *embaced* the Books in question as Scripture; they didn't discouraged people to read them, as Driscoll claims.

**II. The Deuterocanon Was Never Considered Scripture?**

While these books were read by some of God’s people, they were treated like popular Christian books in our own day, such as those by C. S. Lewis; they were never accepted as Scripture, for many reasons.

Try telling that to St. Augustine of Hippo, who Driscoll [rightly describes as](http://pastormark.tv/2012/01/25/reflections-on-james-macdonald-td-jakes-and-the-trinity) “one of the greatest theologians in church history.” Back around the 410s, in his famous book *City of God*, St. [Augustine wrote this](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.v.v.viii.html) about the Old Testament canon:

Now the whole canon of Scripture on which we say this judgment is to be exercised, is contained in the following books:—Five books of Moses, that is, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; one book of Joshua the son of Nun; one of Judges; one short book called Ruth, which seems rather to belong to the beginning of Kings; next, four books of Kings, and two of Chronicles—these last not following one another, but running parallel, so to speak, and going over the same ground. The books now mentioned are history, which contains a connected narrative of the times, and follows the order of the events.

There are other books which seem to follow no regular order, and are connected neither with the order of the preceding books nor with one another, such as Job, and **Tobias**, and Esther, and **Judith**, and **the two books of Maccabees**, and the two of Ezra, which last look more like a sequel to the continuous regular history which terminates with the books of Kings and Chronicles. Next are the Prophets, in which there is one book of the Psalms of David; and three books of Solomon, viz., Proverbs, Song of Songs, and **Ecclesiastes**. For two books, one called **Wisdom** and the other **Ecclesiasticus**, are ascribed to Solomon from a certain resemblance of style, but the most likely opinion is that they were written by Jesus the son of Sirach. **Still they are to be reckoned among the prophetical books, since they have attained recognition as being authoritative.**

The remainder are the books which are strictly called the Prophets: twelve separate books of the prophets which are connected with one another, and having never been disjoined, are reckoned as one book; the names of these prophets are as follows:—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; then there are the four greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel. **The authority of the Old Testament is contained within the limits of these forty-four books.**

St. Augustine leaves no question that all seven Books of the Catholic Deuterocanon are considered Scripture along with the rest of the Old Testament. And his testimony makes clear that they're not even marked off in a separate section, but carry the full “authority of the Old Testament.”

As I've shown in the past, [not a single Church Father ever used the 66-Book Protestant canon](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2009/10/protestantism-and-early-church-fathers.html). Driscoll may think that the early Christians were wrong to consider these Books canonical, but it's just indefensible to say that these Books “were never accepted as Scripture.” The evidence is unambiguous.

**III. Guilt by Association?**

First, many of the apocryphal books were also *pseudepigraphal*, meaning that they were written under a pen name so that the true identity of the author would be unknown. The pen names were often those of biblical people (e.g., Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Solomon), deceitfully leading readers to believe those books were written by these biblical men. It would be similar to me putting Billy Graham’s name on the book to sell more copies.

Driscoll is conflating the Deuterocanonical Books (**which Catholics consider inspired by the Holy Spirit**) with the [Pseudepigraphal books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudepigraph) (**which we don't**). So this isn't an argument against the Catholic canon *at all*. Rather, it exposes a problem I've [mentioned before](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2009/04/apocrypha-or-deuterocanon.html): Protestants lump the Deuterocanon in with the Pseudepigrapha, and argue against the whole thing (under the heading “Apocrypha”) by arguing against the Pseudepigrapha.

It's a dangerous and misleading argument. It would be like Catholics grouping the writings of Luther and Calvin in with the writings of Muhammad and Joseph Smith, Jr., and claiming that these writings should be rejected since “many of them claim to be post-Biblical revelations.” That claim, while perhaps technically true, would be wildly misleading, and unfair to Luther and Calvin.

**IV. No Scriptural Citation?**

Second, while the Old Testament is quoted roughly three hundred times in the New Testament, none of the apocryphal books are ever quoted in the New Testament or even alluded to, with the exception of a very debated section of Jude.

This isn't true, as I've [mentioned before](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2012/01/jim-crow-and-protestant-bible.html). There are [lots](http://www.scripturecatholic.com/deuterocanon.html) of [allusions](http://theblackcordelias.wordpress.com/2009/03/31/jesus-apostles-never-quoted-from-the-apocrypha/) to the Deuterocanonical Books throughout the New Testament. To take one example, James Swan, an anti-Catholic Calvinist writing for *Beggars All*, has admitted that it “seems highly probable” that [Hebrews 11:35-37](http://biblia.com/bible/rsv/Hebrews%2011.35-37) is a reference to 2 Maccabees 7. True, there are no unambiguous *direct quotations* of the Deuterocanon, but that's true of several Old Testament Books that Protestants accept, like Joshua, Judges, and Esther.

**V. Did the Catholic Bible Exist Before the Reformation?**

Third, both Jews and **Christians rejected any of the apocryphal books as divinely inspired sacred Scripture until the Catholic Council of Trent in 1546**. At that time, the Catholic Church was facing a growing protest movement (now known as Protestantism) that denounced some of the church’s teaching as unbiblical. Among the chief critics was the Catholic monk Martin Luther, who pointed out that praying to saints, paying indulgences to the church, and purgatory were not found in the Bible. In an effort to defend themselves, the Catholic Church voted to insert new books into the Bible, more than a millennium after the Old Testament canon had been closed and the apocryphal books had been rejected as Scripture. Why? Because it found some support for its unbiblical doctrines in the apocrypha and, rather than changing its doctrines, it instead chose to change its Bible.

Again, this is completely, wildly wrong. Let's look at [the actual evidence](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xv.iv.iv.xxv.html?highlight=judith#highlight). Here's what the Third Council of Carthage, in 397 A.D. [wrote](http://www.bible-researcher.com/carthage.html):

It was also determined that besides the Canonical Scriptures nothing be read in the Church under the title of divine Scriptures. The Canonical Scriptures are these: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua the son of Nun, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings [First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings], two books of Paraleipomena [First and Second Chronicles], Job, the Psalter, five books of Solomon, [Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, **Wisdom of Solomon**, and **Ecclesiasticus**] the books of the twelve prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel, **Tobit**, **Judith**, Esther, two books of Esdras [Ezra and Nehemiah], **two books of the Maccabees**.

That's **the Catholic Old Testament**. And Driscoll can hardly claim ignorance here, since he cites to the Third Council of Carthage in his book *Doctrine* (more on that [here](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2011/08/mark-driscoll-and-gerry-breshears.html)).

In addition to the Third Council of Carthage, how about the [*Decretum Gelasianum*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decretum_Gelasianum), the canonical list (likely dating from the fifth century) [calling the Deuterocanonical Books “Scripture”](http://www.tertullian.org/decretum_eng.htm), and distinguishing them from the Apocrypha? Or the Synod of Hippo, in 391, which the Third Council of Carthage cited to in support of its Scriptural canon? Or [Canon LXXXV](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.xvii.iv.html?highlight=judith#highlight) of the Apostolic Canons, which the Eastern Orthodox consider inspired? Or the [Cheltenham List](http://www.bible-researcher.com/cheltenham.html) (c. 360)? Or what about Session 11 of the [Ecumenical Council of Florence](http://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/florence.htm#5) in 1442? For that matter, what about [the Latin Vulgate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate), the Bible used by almost all Western Christians from the fourth century forward?

Or if diving into all that history seems too daunting, perhaps a little common sense will suffice. The Coptic, Oriental, and Eastern Orthodox all split off from the Catholic Church centuries prior to the Reformation, yet all of them include the Deuterocanon in their Bibles (along with a few other books we Catholics reject). Were that part of the anti-Protestant conspiracy to add Books to their Bibles, too? Or might this whole theory be just a bit... implausible?

So yes, the Catholic Bible definitely existed before the Reformation. [**What about the Protestant Bible?**](http://catholicdefense.blogspot.com/2009/10/protestantism-and-early-church-fathers.html)Not so much.

**Conclusion**

All of Driscoll's claims about why we should reject the Catholic canon of Scripture are wrong. And not wrong in the sense that I disagree with his reasoning or belief. Wrong in the sense that he makes factual claims that are objectively false. This isn't like debating whether or not James K. Polk was the greatest president. This is like denying that James K. Polk ever *was* the president.

So let's get to brass tacks: the early Church treated the Deuterocanon as if it was inspired by God. The Church, in various Councils, including Ecumenical Councils, unambiguously established the Catholic canon. None of the early Christians used the Protestant Bible. It was Martin Luther who removed the Deuterocanon from the Bible, and he also [spoke against the canonicity of parts of the New Testament:](http://www.internetmonk.com/archive/a-bible-youd-never-find) Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation.