



The Bible: 66 books vs 73 and Why (the “Apocrypha” Explained)

Description

The Catholic bible has 73 books, the Protestant only 66. Why is that? Were those 7 books removed by the Protestants, or added by the Catholics? Most importantly, do they belong in the Bible?

We'll take a look at that today.

For starters, let's all get on the same page. The following list is the 7 books that the Catholics include that the Protestants do not.

1. Tobit
2. Judith
3. Wisdom (*also called the Wisdom of Solomon*)
4. Sirach (*also called Ecclesiasticus*)
5. Baruch
6. 1 Maccabees
7. 2 Maccabees

The Catholic Bible also contains additional passages in the books of Esther and Daniel. It's important to note that the Catholic and Protestant New Testaments are identical. They both contain the same 27 books.

Let's dive in and see why Catholics include them and Protestants exclude them.

Two quick notes first

#1 Apocrypha or Deuterocanonical?

As a fairly unimportant side-note, these 7 books are called by both names. Apocrypha means “hidden” and deuterocanonical mean “second canon”. While Deuterocanonical could be considered more

“correct”, they have been referred as both since the dawn of the church age. Several early church fathers (*and Catholic saints*) called them “apocryphal”.

I will use the terms interchangeably here.

#2 “Infallibly” part of the canon

The Catholic Church claims to be “*infallible in matters of faith and morals*”. Infallible means “*free from the possibility of being wrong*”. The Catholic Church officially and “infallibly” declared the disputed 7 books to part of the Bible. If the Catholic Church was indeed infallible, then there’s no point in further study because they can’t be wrong.

However, there’s good reason to believe they aren’t infallible. We look deeper into the question of the Catholic Church’s infallibility in [this article here](#).

Why do the Catholics use these 7 books?

The Catholic sources say there were two main “canons” for the Old Testament at the time of Christ. The first was the “Palestine canon” which is identical to the Protestant Old Testament. The second was the “Alexandrian canon” which was the Septuagint.

The Catholics say that the Bible that Christ and the Apostles used was the “Alexandrian Canon” or Septuagint. The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (*our Old Testament*) from Hebrew into Greek.

The Catholics say the Septuagint contains the 7 extra books that are the topic of this article.

This next quote is from The New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia published in 1907. It was given a Nihil Obstat by a Doctor of Sacred Theology, and an Imprimatur by an Archbishop. You can read the full text of the article [here](#).

The ancient Greek Old Testament known as the Septuagint was the vehicle which conveyed these additional Scriptures into the Catholic Church. The Septuagint version was the Bible of the Greek-speaking, or Hellenist, Jews, whose intellectual and literary center was Alexandria.

According to the Catholics, the Septuagint was the Bible that Christ used. The basic reasoning goes: “if it was good enough for Christ, it’s good enough for us”.

That's a reasonable argument if you believe Christ used the Septuagint. There is evidence on both sides of the debate, which we will examine later.

What is the Septuagint?

The Septuagint is a translation of the Hebrew Bible (*Our Old Testament*) into Greek. There is a legend surrounding its creation/translation and few people would take it literally. **However – as with many legends – there is probably a core of truth among its fantastical claims.**

The legend goes like this:

King Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt – who reigned from 283 BC to 246 BC – wanted a copy of the Hebrew Law (*The first 5 books of our Old Testament*) for the library at Alexandria. However, since Greek was the predominant language of the day, he wanted a Greek translation. Therefore Aristeas – one of his courtiers – composed a letter to the High Priest in Jerusalem. (*this is called [the Letter of Aristeas](#)*)

The letter arrived in at the temple in Jerusalem along with an envoy and lavish gifts. The High Priest then chooses 72 men (*six from each tribe*) to do the translating work. When the translators arrive back in Alexandria, they were greeted with 7 days of feasting. During the feast, Ptolemy II asked them many difficult questions and they answered wisely.

Then the translation began. According to the legend, each of the 72 translators (*6 from each tribe*) was put in a separate room to translate the Hebrew Law (*The first 5 books of our Old Testament*). They all finished the translation exactly 72 days later. When all of their translations were compared, they were found to be word-perfect identical to each other.

That was the Septuagint.

That's the legend, and I do think it's based on historical events.

It makes sense historically and I have no reason to doubt the broad strokes. Ptolemy probably wanted a Greek translation, he probably got the High Priest to send him translators, and they certainly translated it in Alexandria. We also have historical accounts by [Josephus](#) and a few other historians who largely agree with this legend.

I highly doubt the word-perfect portion of the legend, but the basic story is likely true. We can't be certain, but it's quite likely.

However, that only accounts for the first 5 books.

No one quite knows when the rest of the Old Testament was translated into the Septuagint. The most common dates mentioned are between 150 BC and 130 BC. I haven't seen anyone place the date any later than 130 BC, and 132 is a common date of completion.

Which Septuagint? Which Deuterocanonical books?

So we've only talked about the 7 books (*and expanded chapters of Daniel and Esther*) that the Catholic Church uses. However, they aren't the *only* deuterocanonical books. The full list of books regarded as a "second canon" is a **lot** longer.

- 1 Esdras (*not to be confused with the Book of Ezra, which is also sometimes called 1 Esdras or Esdras*)
- 2 Esdras (*not to be confused with Nehemiah, which is sometimes called 2 Esdras*)
- Tobit
- Judith
- Additional verses in Esther
- Wisdom
- [Sirach](#) (*also called Ecclesiasticus*)
- Baruch
- [Epistle of Jeremiah](#) (*the last chapter in Baruch in Catholic Bibles*)
- Song of the Three Children
- Story of Susanna
- Bel and the Dragon (*additions to Daniel*)
- Prayer of Manasseh
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees
- 3 Maccabees
- 4 Maccabees
- Psalm 151

The Catholic Church only recognizes 7 of these, but some denominations recognize more. (*some denominations have up to 84 books in their bible*). However, The three earliest Greek manuscripts don't contain those exact 7. They contain only some of the list. Notice the books below in red? Those books aren't considered canon by the Catholic Church OR Protestants.

1. **The [Codex Vaticanus](#)** (*early-mid 4th century*) is the oldest extant copy of the Greek Bible (*and Septuagint*) we have. It contains the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (*Sirach*), Judith, Tobit, Baruch, and the Letter to Jeremiah. However, it doesn't contain any of the Macabees.
2. **The [Codex Sinaiticus](#)** (*mid 4th century*) contains: Tobit, Judith, First Maccabees, **Fourth Maccabees**, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus (*sirach*). It doesn't contain 2nd Maccabees or Baruch.
3. **The [Codex Alexandrius](#)** (*early-mid 5th Century*) Contains: Tobit, Judith, First Maccabees, Second Maccabees, **Third Maccabees, Fourth Maccabees**, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (*Sirach*), and the **Psalms of Solomon**. It also doesn't contain Baruch.

So there's no help from the extant copies of the Bible to support those exact 7. This doesn't mean the Catholics are wrong about those exact 7, but it does mean there's very little manuscript support for those exact 7.

How the Jews view the Deuterocanonical books

The Jews traditionally never accepted them as scripture (*which I'll prove in a bit*). However, they were highly regarded books. It might be like a book written by C.S. Lewis, or any other popular Christian author. They were held in high esteem, just not considered scripture. (*which again, I'll prove lower down*)

Evidence the Deuterocanon should be in the Bible

Following are the strongest and most common reason Catholics cite that the Deuterocanon should be in the Bible.

Jesus and the Apostles quoted and/or alluded to the Deuterocanon

Yes they absolutely did...

...but they also quoted other books of the day that **no one** considers to be Canon. Wikipedia has a whole article about [Non-Cannon books referenced by the Bible](#). Like writers today, the Bible authors alluded to popular works of the day to make a point.

The Bible references a **LOT** of different non-canon works.

David Erwert said in his Book "A General Introduction to the Bible: From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations":

Nestle's Greek NT lists some **132 NT passages that appear to be verbal allusions to paracononical books**, but that that is the kind of thing we would expect. Writers living at a given period in history tend to reflect the current language of the day.

[Source](#)

Further, The New Testament writers also quote and reference a few **Pagan** books.

This is not evidence of anything by itself. It's merely to say that just because the Bible quotes another book, that doesn't make the other book inspired.

It's also worth noting that none of the references or allusions to the Deuterocanon are preceded by "As it is written" or a similar statement. Again, this isn't evidence of anything per say, but it doesn't mean you cannot use quotes by Jesus or the Apostles to prove the authority of the Deuterocanon.

“Jesus and the Apostles used the Septuagint and it includes the Deuterocanon, therefore they are scripture”

My father once told me to pay attention to the assumptions behind any statement. He said to answer the assumptions rather than the statement itself.

Sage words indeed, and they apply here.

The assumption is *not* that Jesus used the the Septuagint. (*though there is good evidence He didn't*) **The assumption is that because Jesus and the Apostles used the Septuagint, it MUST be inspired.**

Why?

Why do we assume that?

On what basis does that assumption rest? **It's dangerous to assume that a document is inerrant just because Jesus (*may have*) used it.** (*and further down, I'm going to make a strong case that Jesus didn't use the Septuagint*)

As we've just seen, Jesus and the Apostles quoted non-canon books all the time. They even referenced Pagan books in the New Testament. Just because Jesus and the Apostles (*may have*) used the Septuagint doesn't mean it's inspired.

What about the Apostles? Didn't they use the Septuagint?

They almost certainly did.

The original Apostles were not linguists by trade. Their primary concern seemed to be spreading the Gospel. Since most of the world was Greek at that time, they needed a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the new Christians. It would defy all logic and reason to think they would've made their own translation instead of using the one at hand: the Septuagint.

However, why does that mean they considered the Deuterocanon scripture?

Why?

The same argument from above applies here.

The Deuterocanon were considered good books, just not scripture. It would be like recommending a new convert read your favorite Christian book. The book might be great, you just wouldn't consider it scripture. It's not hard to imagine the Apostles doing the same thing. The alternative would have been to pay scribes to write new copies. At that time, that was both VERY costly and time-consuming.

Besides, the Deuterocanon were considered good books and worthy of reading... just not scripture.

Again, it's VERY dangerous to assume that a document is inerrant just because Jesus and the Apostles used it.

Jesus and the Apostles referenced non-canon books all the time (*132 times*) to make a point. Should we accept all those non-canon books those as scripture too?

“The Canon was officially closed by 382 AD, and it included the Deuterocanon.”

Catholics will often say that the canon of Scripture was decided early. They typically mention the three or four early Catholic councils that officially adopted the Deuterocanon. The three most commonly cited councils are:

- Council of Rome in 382
- Council of Hippo in 393
- Council of Carthage in 397

These three councils did indeed list the canon of the Bible. **However, none of these councils are on the official list of Catholic Ecumenical councils.** Please double check me on the [New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia article on Ecumenical councils](#). (*It has a Nihil Obstat by a Doctor of Sacred Theology, and an Imprimatur by an Archbishop from 1907*)

The councils of Rome, Hippo, and Carthage were ***not*** ecumenical councils, but “merely” *regional councils*. Their decisions were only binding within their sphere of influence; they weren't binding on the whole Catholic church. This should make sense because three different councils voted for the same canon within fifteen years. There would be no need for this if one of them was binding for the whole church.

Because they were regional councils and NOT ecumenical councils, the Catholic teaching of “*infallible in matters of faith and morals*” does NOT apply to them.

This fact is easily confirmed.

Those three councils did not “infallibly” define the canon of scripture for the whole Church. **Further, (as we will soon see) there was some disagreement among the early church fathers about which books belonged in the Old Testament.** (*Fortunately, there has never been any disagreement about the New Testament.*)

The first time the books of the Old Testament were formally defined by the Catholic Church in an ecumenical Council was at the [Council of Florence](#) in the mid 15th century. The list did include the Deuterocanon. You can read the [full text of the Council of Florence](#) here, but I've copy/pasted the relevant portion below.

It professes that one and the same God is the author of the old and the new Testament —

that is, the law and the prophets, and the gospel — since the saints of both testaments spoke under the inspiration of the same Spirit. It accepts and venerates their books, whose titles are as follows.

Five books of Moses, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four books of Kings, two of Paralipomenon (*Chronicles*), Esdras, (*Ezra*) Nehemiah, **Tobit**, **Judith**, Esther, Job, Psalms of David, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, **Wisdom**, **Ecclesiasticus**, Isaiah, Jeremiah, **Baruch**, Ezechiel, Daniel; the twelve minor prophets, namely Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; **two books of the Maccabees**; the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; fourteen letters of Paul, to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, to the Colossians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two letters of Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Jude; Acts of the Apostles; Apocalypse of John.

(Parenthetical statements and emphasis added.)

This exact same list was restated during the Council of Trent in the mid 16th century.

Again, the Deuterocanon weren't officially declared scripture by the Catholic Church until the mid 15th century.

Now, that doesn't mean they weren't considered scripture. It is possible (*and I think likely*) the Deuterocanon was considered scripture by the majority of the Catholic Church earlier. However, there was no "infallible" declaration of their being Scripture until the mid 15th century.

(Though again, this alone doesn't mean they aren't scripture.)

The Dead Sea Scrolls contain the Deuterocanon

Yes they do, but they also contain other significant non-canon books too. **In fact, a majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls are non-biblical texts.** Further, they do not contain any part of the book of Esther, which everyone agrees is canon.

Evidence the Deuterocanon Should Not be in the Bible

Here is the evidence from the other side. Catholics, I recommend you stop reading here.

The Septuagint was Created in Direct Violation of the Command of God

Again, the reason the Catholics include the Deuterocanonical books is because they are included in the Septuagint. However, the story of the Septuagint's creation involves violating the direct command of God Himself.

Let me explain.

Another name for the Septuagint is the "Alexandrian Canon". That's because it was translated in Alexandria Egypt. **All of the Catholic and Protestant sources agree that the Septuagint (or Alexandrian Canon) was written/translated in Alexandria.** Everyone believes it was written in Alexandria and no one disputes this point.

It's universally agreed upon.

(it's rare that everyone agrees, but they do on this point)

However, the problem with the "Alexandrian Canon" (*Septuagint*) is that it was created in Alexandria, which is in Egypt. God commanded Israel never to return to Egypt.

Deuteronomy 17:15-16 (RSV-Catholic Edition)

14 "When you come to the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and dwell in it, and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me';

15 you may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

16 Only he must not multiply horses for himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, '**You shall never return that way again.**'

And again.

Jeremiah 42:13-19 (RSV-Catholic Edition)

13 But if you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the Lord your God

14 and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,'

15 then hear the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah. **Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there,**

16 then the sword which you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow hard after you to Egypt; and there you shall die.

17 All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; they shall have no remnant or survivor from the evil which I will bring upon them.

18 “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more.

19 The Lord has said to you, O remnant of Judah, **‘Do not go to Egypt.’** Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day

(Emphasis mine, also note that Mary and Joseph fled with Jesus to Egypt on God’s command. God Himself could rescind/change his command, but nowhere in the scripture does he rescind this command for Israel.)

God specifically commanded Israel to stay out of Egypt, **but Alexandria is IN Egypt.**

If Jews translated the Septuagint in Egypt (*which everyone agrees on*), then they were directly disobeying the command of God by being in Egypt in the first place.

Would God/Jesus bless such disobedience? Would Jesus have used a document that was created by men who were in the middle of disobeying the explicit commands of The Father?

Consider how zealous the Pharisees were on even the tiniest portions of the Law. **Would the Pharisees have let the Septuagint be read in a synagogue since it was create by disobeying the explicit command of God?**

If there were two different Old Testament canons like the Catholic sources say, and one of them was created directly contrary to the commands of God, then there’s only one canon left...

Jesus Own Words Confirm his use of Hebrew

Matthew 5:18 (KJV, because most other translations butcher this verse attempting to indicate what Jesus was saying)

18 “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise

pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”

The words “Jot” and “tittle” are archaic, but it’s the meaning in the Greek that’s important. The word translated “Jot” is the Greek word “ἰότα” ([i?ta](#)) can refer to two things:

2503 *i?ta* (“jot” in the *KJV*) – “*y?d*, the smallest Hebrew (Aramaic) letter” (Souter). By analogy, the Hebrew letter *y?d* refers to the Greek letter, *i?ta* (the *smallest* letter in the Greek alphabet).

The word translated “Tittle” is the Greek word “κεραία” ([keraia](#)) and the Strong definition is:

κεραία (WH κεραία (see their Appendix, p. 151)), κεραία, ? (κεραία), a little horn; extremity, apex, point; used by the Greek grammarians of the accents and diacritical points. In [Matthew 5:18](#) ((where see Wetstein; cf. also Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, 1:537f)); [Luke 16:17](#) of the little lines, or projections, by which the **Hebrew** letters in other respects similar differ from each other, as cheth ? and he ?, daeth ? and resh ?, beth ? and kaph ? (A. V. tittle); the meaning is, ‘not even the minutest part of the law shall perish.’ ((Aeschylus, Thucydides, others.))

Got Questions has an excellent (*and very short*) [explanation of what “jot and Tittle” mean](#) (*opens in a new tab*) in this passage. It’s well worth reading and won’t take long so I highly suggest you read it. Regardless, the point is the Jesus here is referring to **Hebrew** marks, not Greek

Now, “iota” could refer to the Greek language, but Keraia certainly does not. It refers to Hebrew diacritic marks. Again, I would read the [Got Questions article](#) for the details.

How Highly the Jews/Rabbis Regard the (*Hebrew*) Scriptures

Christians view the scripture highly, but compared the the 1st century Jews we treat it like a newspaper. Further, if you understand how highly the Jewish people revered the scriptures, you’d see that them using a Greek translation is HIGHLY unlikely.

[This article](#) (*link opens in a new tab*) is an excellent and very quick read that will give you a great understanding of just how highly the Jews regarded scripture. Please go read it.

I’m serious, I’ll still be here when you get back.

I’ll wait.

...

...

...

You've read it it? Good, let's continue.

They wouldn't put that much work into copying the scriptures then not use them. The Jews – especially the Pharisees – took this care because the scriptures mattered. Why would they use a Greek translation when they were so careful to preserve the original language?

History, Specifically the Jewish Educational System of the Day

Okay, a little context first. When Israel was carried off into Babylonian captivity, they stood a real chance of losing their religious and cultural identity. Therefore, they created a system of learning to train their kids and “*stuff them with Torah like an ox.*”

The Jews in Jesus' day had three levels of education, which was most likely instituted by Ezra after the exile in order to teach the people the Scriptures again. The first level was called '**Bet Sefer**'. At the ages of six through twelve, the Jewish boys and girls would begin their education in the synagogue school, learning how to read and write. The textbook was the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and the **goal was to memorize the sacred text**. The Babylonian Talmud Baba Bathra 21a:6 says, “*Before the age of six do not accept pupils; from that age you can accept them, and stuff them with Torah like an ox.*” Incredible, isn't it! **Can you imagine having memorized the Torah by the age of twelve?!** This level is concluded with a Bar Mitzvah for the boy, to welcome him into the community as a full member. This was also the age from which they were allowed to read the Torah out loud in the synagogue during services.

The next level was the '**Bet Midrash**'. This was only for the best of the best. I would assume for those who indeed memorized the Torah. This level was from age thirteen to fifteen, where **they continued studying and memorizing the entire Tanach** (in other words, the complete Old Testament). Very few were selected for this pursuit.

The final level was the '**Bet Talmud**', which was the longest in duration as it went from the age of 15 to 30. To participate, he must be invited by a Rabbi and, if selected, he would begin a process of grooming that would lead to the potential of becoming a Rabbi at age 30. Those who were chosen were referred to as Talmidim. They would literally follow in the dust of their rabbi – desiring to emulate him in all of his mannerisms. They would eat the same food in exactly the same way as their rabbi. They would go to sleep and awake the same way as their rabbi and, more importantly, they would learn to study Torah and understand God the exact same way as their rabbi.

[Source](#) (*emphasis added*)

This system started over 400 years before Christ, when the Greek language was far from a world standard. We know from the [Mishnah](#) (*the written record of oral tradition at Jesus' time and afterward*)

among other places that Jewish children were schooled this way.

Further, we know they were schooled in Hebrew.

This is a historical fact.

We are less sure how Jews in Alexandria were schooled, but we do know how Jews in Israel during Jesus day were schooled. Starting at age six, they were taught to read and write Hebrew so they could study the Torah (*The first five books of the Old Testament*).

Of course they would also be able to speak Greek because it was the trade language of the world in Jesus' day. Much like English today, Greek was the "trade language" of the ancient world. A good analogy might be made with Spanish in America. Many people who live in America came from Mexico and thus speak Spanish as a first language. However, once here they typically need English to speak to Americans, even though they still use Spanish among themselves.

Likewise, the Jews needed to know Greek to get along in the world of Business. However, – just like the Spanish speaking immigrants to America – they would likely use their native tongue when speaking among themselves. This goes double because of the high regard in which they held the scriptures.

Jewish children were schooled in Hebrew and studied the Hebrew scriptures. Again, this is well documented historical fact.

Why would Jesus use the Septuagint (Greek) when his audience had already memorized large portions of the Hebrew scriptures?

It just makes no sense. It defies all common sense, logic and reason. A little historical context adds a LOT of clarity (*much like with the [my article on Revelation](#)*)

The Deuterocanon Themselves Make it Impossible for Them to be Inspired

2 Timothy 3:16 says that all scripture is "God-Breathed". In order to be scripture, it must be inspired by God. Otherwise, it's just a human doing their best. However, Maccabees makes it clear there were no prophets.

1 Maccabees 9:27 Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been **since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.**

(See also 1 Maccabees 4:46, and 1 Maccabees 14:41)

Nearly all of the Deuterocanonical books were written during the "400 silent years". Between the writing of Malachi in about 430 BC and the appearance of the John the Baptist, there were no prophets in Israel. None. Not a single one. Maccabees testifies to this fact, and it's an accepted part of Bible history.

How can a book be inspired by God if He didn't do ANY inspiring during the time it was written?

In my opinion, this fact alone disqualifies at least 1 Maccabees from being inspired. Since we can reliably date nearly all of the deuterocanonical books to the 400 silent years, they are also disqualified from being “God breathed” because God didn't do any “breathing” (*inspiration*) during that period.

The Catholic Church accidentally recognized this in the Council of Florence. As we've already seen, the Council of Florence was the first time the Canon of Scripture was officially listed in an ecumenical council. Preceding the list of books is this statement:

It professes that one and the same God is the author of the old and the new Testament — that is, the law and the prophets, and the gospel — **since the saints of both testaments spoke under the inspiration of the same Spirit.**

How can a book be inspired by God, when the book itself claims that the Holy Spirit didn't inspire anyone during the time it was written?

That would make it impossible for at least 1 Maccabees to be “God Breathed” as 2 Timothy 3:16 says.

In Several Places, the Deuterocanon Contradicts Scripture

What atones for sins?

Sirach 3:3 (RSV-CE)

3 Whoever honors his father **atones for sins**

And again.

Sirach 3:30 (RSV-CE)

30 Water extinguishes a blazing fire: so **almsgiving atones for sin.**

The book Tobit says the same thing. It's worth noting that according to verse 6, it's an angel talking.

Tobit 12:8-9 (RSV-CE)

8 Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to treasure up gold.

9 For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who perform deeds of charity and of righteousness will have fullness of life;

However, Hebrews says:

Hebrews 9:22 (RSV-CE)

22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Who brought sin into the world?

Sirach 25:24 (RSV-CE)

24 From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die.

Sirach teaches quite plainly that sin entered the world through a woman (*Eve*). Eve was indeed the first to sin, but this verse goes farther to say that because of Eve's sin we all die because we "caught" sin through her. However, the New Testament teaches the exact opposite.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive

The Jews Never Accepted The Deuterocanon as Scripture

Some background first.

The Jews historically divided the Old Testament differently than Christians/Catholics do. For instance, they don't have a "1 Kings" and a "2 Kings", they just have "Kings". Modern Jews divide the Old Testament this way:

- **Torah or "the Teachings/Law" – 5 books**
 - (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*)
- **Nevi'im or "the Prophets" – 8 books**
 - **The Early Prophets** (*Nevi'im Rishonim*): Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings

- **The Later Prophets** (*Nevi'im Aharonim*): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and “The Twelve” (*all of the Minor Prophets were considered one book*)
- **Ketuvim or “the Writings” – 11 Books**
 - **The poetic books** (*Sifrei Emet*): Psalms, Proverbs, Job
 - **The Five Scrolls** (*Hamesh Megillot*): Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther
 - **Other Books**: Daniel, Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah (*they were considered one book*)

Those 24 books are equivalent to the 39 books in the Protestant Old Testament.

There is another division which existed in Jesus day and for many centuries afterward. The only difference was that Ruth was considered part of Judges and Lamentations was considered part of Jeremiah for a total of 22 books. This 22 book canon (*identical to the Protestant Old Testament*) was the Old Testament canon used by many of the early church fathers.

The 1st Century Jewish historian Josephus touches on which books belong in the Bible according to the Jews.

Josephus in Against Apion, Book 1, Paragraph 8

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but **only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine;**

...It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, **no one has ventured to add, or to remove, or to alter anything**, and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as decrees of God.

Therefore, the deuterocanonical books which are included in the Catholic Old Testament aren't part of the Old Testament according to the Jews of Jesus' day.

In another place Josephus (*who was a Jew*) says:

From Artaxerxes to our times a complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, **because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.**

It's important to note that Josephus says the "books that are justly believed in" only extended to the end of Artaxerxes reign. He also specifically states that "From Artaxerxes to our times" nothing had been written that was considered equal to the 22 books. Further, the stated reason is because there were no prophets (*a fact which Macabbees states quite plainly in several places.*)

God prophesied the "failure of the exact succession of the prophets" in Amos.

Amos 8:11-12

11 "Behold, **days are coming,**" declares the Lord GOD, "**When I will send a famine on the land,** Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather **for hearing the words of the LORD.**

12 "People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; **They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it.**

God did indeed stop speaking for several hundred years after the death of the last prophets (*Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*) Artaxerxes died in 424 BC. Malachi was the last book of the Protestant and Jewish Old Testament written. It was likely written around 430 BC according to the [Bible timeline on BibleHub.com](#). (*About eight years before Artaxerxes died.*)

Most of the deuterocanonical books – including Maccabees – were written between Artaxerxes and Christ. Josephus makes the same argument I made earlier in the article. **The Jews didn't consider anything written after Malachi inspired because there were no prophets at that time.** Therefore the Jews didn't consider them part of the accepted canon of the time.

Further, Josephus makes it clear that no one added to the 22 books the Jews considered canon. (*identical to the Protestant Old Testament.*)

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, **no one has ventured to add, or to remove, or to alter anything,** and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as decrees of God.

At least one very prominent Jewish Rabbi named [Akiva](#) (50 – 135 AD) said that the Deuterocanon "defiled the hands". While some Jews might have accepted the Deuterocanon (*notably the Jews in Egypt/Alexandria who had completely succumbed to the surrounding Greek culture*) There is no evidence that majority of Jews did. Further, the testimony of Rabbi Akiva and Josephus seems to indicate that the 22 book canon (*identical to the Protestant Old Testament*) was the accepted canon in Jesus time.

Why is this important?

Because of Romans.

Romans 3:1-2

- 1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?
- 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that **they were entrusted with the oracles of God**

Romans plainly states that the Jews were (*past tense*) the keepers of the “oracles of God”. AKA, the Scriptures. That changed with the New covenant, allowing more to be added. But up until Jesus died, the Jews were the ones God entrusted with His Scriptures.

That lends a LOT of weight to their opinion of the deuterocanonical books.

Further – as we’ve already seen – the Jews never considered the deuterocanonical books scripture.

How did the Jews arrive at their Canon?

I’m adding this section in September of 2020 I’ve just discovered new information. It turns out God Himself made the Canon of the Old Testament clear. The canon of the Hebrew “Bible” (called a “tanach”) was decided **before** the prophetic line ceased. This canon was decided by a “great council” called the “Anshei Knesset HaGedolah”.

“Anshei Knesset HaGedolah” – **Men of the Great Assembly; founded by Ezra** in approximately 520 B.C.E., this institution of Torah Sages led the Jewish People at the beginning of the Second Temple Era (ca. 520 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.). **It included Mordechai and the last of the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.**

Among the accomplishments of the “Anshei Knesset HaGedolah” were finalizing the contents of the “Tanach,” the 24-Book Hebrew Bible, instituting the “Shemoneh Esray” Prayer (recited at least three times daily, and ultimately to serve as a substitute for the Temple Sacrifices), and the enacting of many Laws to protect and bolster the observance of the Torah Commands.

[Source.](#)

The “Ezra” mentioned in the article is the same Ezra who wrote a book of the Bible. Likewise, Haggai,

Zechariah and Malachi were not only recognized prophets, but they also wrote the books of the Bible which bear their names.

These are heavyweight Biblical names and recognized prophets.

The authors of four Biblical books – three of which were prophets – attended the council that decided once and for all the Hebrew “Bible” (Tanach). **God Himself weighed in through His prophets.** After these prophets died, God stopped speaking as Amos predicted. God made it clear which books were to be included, then He stopped inspiring thing. (*as Maccabees makes quite clear.*)

If all scripture is “God-breathed” as 2 Timothy 3:16 says, then the deuterocanonical books couldn’t be inspired by God because God stopped inspiring until the New Testament (*starting with John the Baptizer*).

Many prominent Early Church Fathers (and at least one Pope) didn’t accept them

I want to be 100% clear, I am NOT saying the Church rejected the Deuterocanonical books in the early centuries. I am merely saying the canon of the Old Testament was very much a matter of debate. Looking at the quotes below from so many respected early church fathers should at least secure that fact.

(Saint) Melito of Sardis – who died in 180 AD – said the following in a letter he wrote to Onesimus

Melito to his brother Onesimus, greeting:–

As you have often, prompted by your regard for the word of God, expressed a wish to have some extracts made from the Law and the Prophets concerning the Saviour, and concerning our faith in general, and have desired, moreover, to obtain an accurate account of the Ancient Books, as regards their number and their arrangement,...

...Their names are as follows: The five books of Moses–Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, the two of Chronicles, the book of the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, also called the Book of Wisdom. Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Job, the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, of the twelve contained in a single book. Daniel, Ezekiel, Esdras (Ezra/Nehemiah), from these I have made my extracts, dividing them into six books.

Origen also said there were 22 books in the old Testament.

One must not be ignorant, **that there are twenty-two books of the covenant**, as the Hebrews reckon them; which is the number of letters in their alphabet.

Hilary of Poitiers (360 A.D.),

“The Law of the Old Testament is considered as divided into twenty-two books, so as to correspond to the number of letters.” (Tractate on Psalms, prologue 15)

Saint Athanasius of Alexandria (also called *Athanasius the great*, died 373 AD) also said there were 22 books in the Old Testament Canon in his 39th Festal Letter. (*this list includes Baruch, but none of the other deuterocanonical books*)

There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews; their respective order and names being as follows. The first is Genesis, then Exodus, next Leviticus, after that Numbers, and then Deuteronomy. Following these there is Joshua, the son of Nun, then Judges, then Ruth. And again, after these four books of Kings, the first and second being reckoned as one book, and so likewise the third and fourth as one book. And again, the first and second of the Chronicles are reckoned as one book. Again Ezra, the first and second are similarly one book. After these there is the book of Psalms, then the Proverbs, next Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. Job follows, then the Prophets, the twelve being reckoned as one book. Then Isaiah, one book, then Jeremiah with Baruch, Lamentations, and the epistle, one book; afterwards, Ezekiel and Daniel, each one book. Thus far constitutes the Old Testament.

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (313 – 386 AD) stressed (*in Catechetical Lecture 4.35*) that ONLY the 22 books of the Old Testament should be read, and that Christians should “have nothing to do with the apocryphal writings”. (*So there is precedent for Protestants called them the Apocrypha.*)

Of these read the two and twenty books, but have nothing to do with the apocryphal writings. Study earnestly these only which we read openly in the Church. Far wiser and more pious than yourself were the Apostles, and the bishops of old time, the presidents of the Church who handed down these books. Being therefore a child of the Church, trench thou not upon its statutes.

Interesting that Saint Cyril said the Apostles and “bishops of old time” didn’t accept the

deuterocanonical books. **He also says that only the 22 books were “read openly in the Church”, which would indicate the deuterocanonical books weren’t.**

Jerome said there are only 22 books in the Old Testament, though he allows for the modern Jewish 24 book division too. The following is a quote from a letter that Jerome wrote to Paula and Eustochium in 394 AD. (source)

And so twenty-two books make up the old law; that is, five of Moses, eight of prophets, nine of hagiographa. Though some ascribe Ruth and Cinoth [Lamentations] to the hagiographa, and count these books in their computed number; thus there would be twenty-four books of ancient law.

So, there you go. Jerome says the Old Testament is identical to the Protestant Old Testament. Jerome also said:

“As then **the church reads Judith, Tobit, and the books of Maccabees, but does not admit them among the canonical Scriptures**, so let it read these two volumes for the edification of the people, not to give authority to doctrines of the church.”

(Jerome, Preface to the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs)

Jerome uses almost the exact same wording again in Op Hieron.

“As therefore, the Church reads the books of Judith and Tobias and of the Maccbbees, **but does not receive them in the canonical scriptures**, so also she may read these writings two writings for the edification of the people, not to establish the authority of ecclesiastical doctrines.”

I want to point out that Jerome was the man entrusted with translating the original Latin Vulgate... And he didn’t believe the deuterocanonical books were scripture.

There is some evidence that Jerome changed his mind later in life. However, the fact that he HAD to change his mind means that the canon of scripture certainly wasn’t fixed in the minds of the church in Jerome’s time.

Rufinus of Aquileia (*died 410 AD*) in his Commentary on the Apostle's Creed, lists the books of the Old Testament. His list in #37 is identical to the Protestant Old Testament.

Of the Old Testament, therefore, first of all there have been handed down five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Then Jesus Nave, (Joshua the son of Nun), The Book of Judges together with Ruth; then four books of Kings (Reigns), which the Hebrews reckon two; the Book of Omissions, which is entitled the Book of Days (Chronicles), and two books of Ezra (Ezra and Nehemiah), which the Hebrews reckon one, and Esther; of the Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; moreover of the twelve (minor) Prophets, one book; Job also and the Psalms of David, each one book. Solomon gave three books to the Churches, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles (song of songs). These comprise the books of the Old Testament.

And #38 says:

But it should be known that there are also other books which our fathers call **not "Canonical"** but "Ecclesiastical:" that is to say, *Wisdom*, called the Wisdom of Solomon, and another Wisdom, called the *Wisdom of the Son of Syrach*, which last-mentioned the Latins called by the general title Ecclesiasticus, designating not the author of the book, but the character of the writing. To the same class belong the *Book of Tobit*, and the *Book of Judith*, and the *Books of the Maccabees*.

Pope Gregory the Great also state that at least 1 Maccabees was not canonical. in "The Moral Teaching" he writes:

With reference to which particular **we are not acting irregularly, if from the books, though not Canonical**, yet brought out for the edification of the Church, **we bring forward testimony** . Thus Eleazar in the battle smote and brought down an elephant, but fell under the very beast that he killed.

Gregaroy's allusion is to 1 Maccabees 6:46

1 Maccabees 6:46 (*RSV-CE*)

46 He got under the elephant, stabbed it from beneath, and killed it; but it fell to the ground upon him and there he died.

I would also like to point out this this quote is from a **POPE** from the **7th Century**. That certainly doesn't make it infallible, but it does certainly cast doubt as to what the accepted canon of the day was.

There are many more citations I could list, but someone else already did the work for me. I borrowed the following list from [Here](#).

- Synopsis of Sacred Scripture (c. 500 A.D.), “**The canonical books of the Old Testament are twenty-two**, equal in number to the Hebrew letters; for they have so many original letters.”
- Isidore of Seville (600 A.D.) said **the Old Testament was settled by Ezra the priest into twenty-two books** “that the books in the Law might correspond in number with the letters.” (Liber de Officiis)
- Leontius (610 A.D.), “**Of the Old Testament there are twenty-two books.**” (De Sectis)
- John of Damascus (730 A.D.): “Observe further that **there are two and twenty books of the Old Testament**, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet.” (An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 4.17)
- Nicephorus (9th century A.D.), “**There are two and twenty books of the Old Testament.**” (Stoichiometry)
- Jesudad, Bishop of Hadad, Syria (852 A.D.) recognized a canon of twenty-two books. (John E. Steinmueller, A Companion to Scripture Studies, vol.1, p.80)
- [Hrabanus](#) (9th century A.D.) said the Old Testament was formed by Ezra into twenty-two books “**that there might be as many books in the Law as there are letters.**” (Whitaker, Disputation)
- [Peter of Cluny](#) (Better know as Peter the Venerable and also know as Blessed Peter of Montboissier) (1150 A.D.): Twenty-two books. (Edward Reuss, Canon of the Holy Scriptures, p.257)
- [Hugh of St. Victor](#) (12th Century): “As there are twenty-two alphabetic letters, by means of which we write in Hebrew, and speak what we have to say, so twenty-two books are reckoned, by means of which ... the yet tender infancy of our man is instructed, while it yet hath need of milk.” (Didascalicae Eruditionis, 4.80)

So, at least until the 12th century, there wasn't complete agreement as to which books belonged in the Old Testament. That's not surprising because the first time the Old Testament canon was officially recorded was the Council of Florence in 15th century.

Conclusion

There have been many great books written by Christians on our Faith. I think the Deuterocanonical books could be counted among them, I just don't think they are scripture.

Honestly, the strongest evidence of this comes from Maccabees. Maccabees is very clear that there were no prophets in those days. **How can a book be inspired by God when the book itself claims that the Holy Spirit didn't inspire anyone during the time it was written?**

The Jews (*who were the "entrusted with the oracles of God"*) didn't accept them as scripture for the same reason. Beyond that, the Septuagint was created in direct violation of the command of God. Further, many of the early church fathers didn't accept them (*including a Pope in the 7th century*)

Based on the evidence, I don't consider them to be inspired by God. Good books, possibly. Inerrant and part of the divinely inspired Scriptures, no.

(Note: You may also be interested in this article on this website: [Is the Catholic Church Infallible? No, and Here's Proof](#))