

# On Driscoll, it's a straight red 19

Many others have been covering the [Mark Driscoll plagiarism story well](#), though I have a few observations that come from my experience as a college professor where I sometimes deal with this, and where, unlike with Mr. Driscoll so far, people actually suffer consequences for what they do.

The paraphrasing of other people's ideas and outlines is just as much plagiarism as word-for-word copying, so I agree with the people who are claiming those are indeed violations of others' intellectual property. What caught my eye was the three-paragraph lift in his book on Peter.

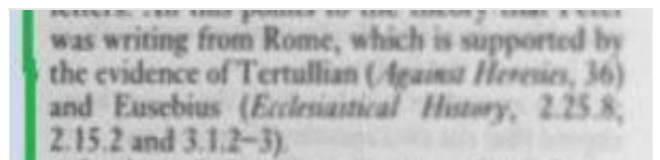
## It's Not Only Plagiarism

The three paragraphs [documented by Janet Mefferd](#) are clearly plagiarism. The footnotes in Driscoll's work also make it *fabrication*. At my school, we define fabrication as follows (emphasis added):

Fabrication is the intentional use of invented information or the **falsification of research** or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples:

1. Citation of information **not taken from the source indicated**.
2. **Listing sources in a bibliography not used** in the academic exercise, unless directed by the instructor to list references consulted even if not cited.
3. **Inventing data or source information** for research or other academic exercise.

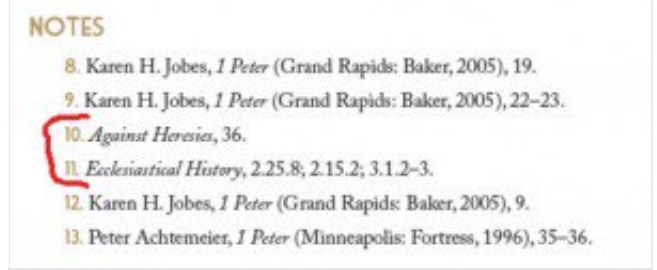
Not only did Driscoll copy the words, he manipulated the citations in the source material to make it appear as though he had done the research himself. By so doing, it shows that he understands the value of citations and research, but decided to deceive the reader into believing that he had done that work himself. Think about the effort it took to reformat those in-text citations and



The in-text citations in the work Driscoll copied from

add them to his book as footnotes. Why not also footnote the original book? He did know how to use them.

In soccer, a player can get a yellow card from a referee to warn for rough play or a bad tackle. Two yellows and the player is ejected from the game. A particularly egregious foul can be awarded a *straight red*. No warning. No doubts. Expelled.



The relocated and reformatted citations in Driscoll's book

With the manipulation of the footnotes, Driscoll has compounded his deception, and worked even harder to mask it. No yellow here. No warning. This is an easy call: Straight Red.

## It's Not Just an Ethical Problem

What Mr. Driscoll has done here is more than just hypocritical and dishonest. It's illegal. He has violated the copyright of multiple authors who might be able to claim that his behavior has and will damage them commercially. If Driscoll gets the credit for teaching his pithy observations on relationships and forgiveness, he might deprive [the ideas' creators and copyright holders](#) of book sales and other related rights like conference speaking. Considering the legal jeopardy that Driscoll may have exposed them to, it was a little surprising how quickly his publishers circled the wagons and directed their ire at Janet Mefferd, who had brought the problem to light. At least temporarily suspending the sales of the books while they negotiated rights settlements with the copyright holders might have been a prudent move.

## Where Were the Editors?

In an age of bloggers and self publishers, the traditional media has reassured us that they add value to news and information by submitting it to a rigorous system of checkers. You can't trust what you read from a single blogger or self-publisher, they tell us, because he or she has no editor. A traditional book publisher convinces us to pay more for their imprint because they have done the quality control for us. We assume that a book published by a reputable publisher has been vetted. So, where were the vetters

for Driscoll's books? Considering the risk to their business that comes from copyright violations entailed in plagiarism, they ought to have had a self-interested motive to carefully examine his work.

[As I wrote about a few weeks ago](#), I was surprised at how many slap-your-forehead factual errors and apparent fabrications made it into Clayton King's *Dying to Live* book. A moderately caffeinated copy editor should have caught and deleted two or three chapters from that book just by reading it to the end. I have to assume that nobody actually did.

If traditional publishers don't aggressively defend the standards of the work they put out under their name, they ought not be surprised when readers abandon them and turn to independent voices and digital publishers. If there are no editors to improve a Driscoll or King book, why pay more for them?

### **Can He Survive a Routine Freshman Examination?**

Driscoll's publishers say they're investigating the claims of plagiarism. Perhaps they are, but it's a notoriously difficult task to identify material that has been lifted from other works. There's one way the publishers could resolve this in an afternoon and prove to all of us that Driscoll is innocent: submit his work to the same scrutiny that college students all over the country have to withstand when they submit their assignments for grading.

By using online plagiarism-detection services like [TurnItIn](#) or [SafeAssign](#), the publishers could feed an entire Driscoll manuscript into the service and get a report on the extent of copying with links to the original sources in a matter of hours.

My students aren't afraid of it. Is Pastor Driscoll?