

Has the New Testament Been Tampered With?

There are some who claim that the New Testament Scriptures were written so long ago and copied so many times that they cannot possibly have retained their original meaning. They would have us believe the New Testament has been tampered with. However, Jesus promised: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:35). His promise is borne out by the weight of the evidence.

1. The King James Version. In 1604 King James I of England authorized the making of a new translation of the Bible into English. This new version was completed in 1611. The King James Version has been widely used for nearly 400 years. Interestingly, nothing that would substantially change our faith or any command of God has been changed in the many revisions that the King James Version has undergone. Therefore, we can be sure that the New Testament can be, and has been, preserved for the last 400 years.

2. The Latin Vulgate. A translation of the Bible from Greek to Latin was made around A.D. 150 and came to be known as the "Old Latin" version of the Scriptures. In A.D. 382 the scholar Jerome was commissioned to revise the Old Latin version. He undertook the task and completed his work around A.D. 400. His revision is known as the Latin Vulgate, which means, "common Latin". The Latin Vulgate was widely used from the 5th to the 15th century and is still used today. The Latin Vulgate can be used to prove that the New Testament can be, and has been, preserved substantially unchanged for 1600 years.

3. The surviving manuscripts. When the New Testament was first written, early Christians made many hand-written copies in the original Greek language in which it was written. These copies are known as "manuscripts". Of the approximately 5,000 known manuscripts of the New Testament in existence, few contain the entire New Testament and some are only fragments. Among the most complete are the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian manuscripts, which were written during the middle of the 4th and 5th centuries. These early copies of the Scriptures had not yet been discovered when the King James Version was made, however, a comparison shows no substantial differences between these manuscripts and the text of the King James Version! This proves beyond all question that the New Testament has been successfully preserved for at least the past 1650 years.

4. The early Christian writers. These men, also known as the "apostolic fathers", lived and wrote near the end of the first century and the beginning of the second century A.D. Their writings are filled with quotations from the New Testament. We will consider the writings of only three of these men, Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp. The writings of these three men survive from a period beginning between A.D. 96-110. In their writings we find quotations and references from 25 of the 27 books of the New Testament. The Scripture quotations of these and other early Christian writers are so extensive that the entire New Testament could be effectively reconstructed from their writings. These writers take us back to the time when the New Testament was first written, and their writings prove that the New Testament they had is the same as the New Testament we have today. There is no substantial difference.

Conclusion

The New Testament has not been tampered with. In light of the available evidence, the message as we have it today is the same as when it was first delivered.

- by David Dann

Concerning the Evidence for the New Testament . . .

F. F. Bruce writes that there are about 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, whole or in part, in existence and these constitute the most abundant manuscript evidence of any ancient book. He writes, "The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of classical authors (e.g., Julius Caesar's 'Gallic Wars,' Titus Livy's 'The History of Rome,' and Tacitus' 'Histories'), the authenticity of which no one dreams of questioning"

- F. F. Bruce

The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?

Concerning the Accuracy of the Bible...

"In speaking of these supposed inaccuracies (of the Bible) we are of course referring to the original autographs and not to translations. Considerations of the subject of inspiration must be based upon the originals as now represented in the ascertained texts, always bearing in mind that extant manuscripts are copies of copies of the originals. . . . Though the autographs themselves do not exist, the evidence goes to show that the resultant text arrived at by the collation of the best manuscripts practically represents the originals.

"The importance of most of the variations in the manuscript readings has been greatly exaggerated. Westcott and Hort tell us that the "proportion of words virtually accepted on all hands as raised above doubt is very great, not less, on a rough computation, than seven-eighths of the whole. As to the remaining eighth, the variations here are formed in great part by changes of order and other comparative trivialities." These writers further tell us that "the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation...can hardly form more than a thousandth part of the entire text." There is no doctrine in Scripture which would be affected if all the disputed words, or those about which there is any doubt, were omitted."

- W.E. Vine,
in 'The Divine Inspiration of the Bible'

Amazing Design!

Birds and bats, bees and butterflies – these are but a few of earth's creatures that possess extraordinary navigational skills. How does a bird know the proper route to follow on its migrations north and south? How can a bee find its way back to the hive --- and then return again with other helpers to the nectar-rich flower patch just discovered? Such accomplishments have long puzzled the scientists that study such things.

An article in *National Geographic* describes research that has been undertaken to discover the answer to these mysteries. The conclusions are amazing. Birds, for instance, have been shown to "use the sun as a compass together with an internal clock that compensates for the sun's changing position in the sky". And then there are the honeybees which "employ special cells in their compound eyes to recognize patterns of polarized light which enables them to determine the location of the sun, even if it is obscured by clouds". Desert ants, we are told, can tell distances by counting steps from one location to another. Spawning salmon travel thousands of miles to return to the very section of river where they were born. Scientists agree that they "locate home streams by smell...imprinting on the odors from soil and vegetation". Other fish navigate in murky water by generating an electric field and then sensing their "environment through fluctuations in the electric current". Some insects are known to determine direction and location by sensing "magnetic fields through specialized photo-receptors in their eyes".

All of this staggers the imagination. The complexities of nature are incredible. But even more amazing is the fact that there are so many people who believe that this all came about by random chance as living creatures evolved from lower life forms. How can it be so? Who can believe it? Faith in a living, all-powerful God is a much more reasonable explanation. Think about it!

- by Greg Gwin