

DO YOU BELIEVE?
A BOOK SERIES FROM RATIO CHRISTI
- BOOK 7 -

HAVE THE GOSPELS BEEN CHANGED?

BY JONATHAN MEYER

 RATIO
CHRISTI

FAITH & REASON are at odds in our culture. For many, faith has come to mean little more than wishful thinking and blind belief. Such a concept is completely foreign to the pages of Scripture and historical Christianity. As Edward Feser notes, “In short, reason tells us that there is a God and that he has revealed such-and-such a truth; faith is then a matter of believing what reason has shown God to have revealed. In that sense faith is not only not at odds with reason but is grounded in reason.”

WHAT IS RATIO CHRISTI?

Ratio Christi, Latin for the reason of Christ, wants to help reverse this trend of anti-intellectual Christianity. We organize apologetics clubs at colleges, universities, and even for high school groups in order to strengthen the faith of Christian students and faculty and challenge the rampant atheism and secularism on most campuses. Our mission is to fill the intellectual gap, to make Christianity something worth thinking about, both personally and in the public square.

RATIO CHRISTI IS HIRING APOLOGISTS.

Ratio Christi isn't just another apologetics organization. We use our theological training to share the Gospel on college and university campuses across the globe. We reach the people that nobody else can – and we need your help.

ratiochristi.org/join | info@ratiochrisi.org

NOTE: *Some of the content in this booklet may not necessarily represent the views of every person involved with, or the official position of, Ratio Christi. Ratio Christi's official statement of faith can be seen at ratiochristi.org/about/beliefs*

Whether one believes the effect has been good or bad, it cannot be denied Christianity has had a major impact on the Western world. At the center of it all is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of a Jewish carpenter, who became a traveling preacher and the leader of a movement which has sparked controversy, inspired art, and gained followers among both kings and peasants, sages and slaves, and whose influence led to the establishment of human rights, literacy, hospitals, universities, and science.¹ To this day people around the world call Him Lord and Savior, believing He is God who became a man walking the Earth for roughly 33 years, teaching and healing before He was crucified as a sacrifice for the wrongs people committed, and then rose again bodily three days later.

While some facts about Jesus can be established through other historical sources, like the Jewish historian Josephus and the Roman historian Tacitus, most of the information known about Him and his early followers comes from the New Testament. Through Jesus' teachings in the New Testament many institutions have been established, people have found their meaning, and ideas have been inspired. Yet, if the New Testament is unreliable, much of what we know about Jesus would be in question and many of the beliefs, benefits, and practices of Christianity would be hollow.

Skeptical questions about the origin, authorship, transmission, and collection of New Testament books are found in abundance on the internet and in the minds of some Christians. The booklet in your hands will attempt to answer some of the most common and fundamental questions people have about the origin of the Bible itself, including: who wrote it and when, who choose the books that would go in it, and how it was passed down through the centuries. And most of all, can I trust what I read to be accurate and truthful?

¹ For more on the influence of Christianity on Western culture, see: Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012). The author comments from a special place outside of Western culture.

WHO WROTE THE GOSPELS?

While the entire Bible is significant, this booklet primarily focuses on the New Testament, since it is the section pertaining to disputes about Christianity. Of the New Testament books, the first four, known as the Gospels, contain the most detailed historical and biographical information we have for Jesus. So, establishing the validity of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is imperative.

Investigating who wrote them will help establish their validity. After all, if they were written by someone who never knew Jesus personally, or did not get their information from someone who knew Jesus personally, then the information is suspect. Atheist Richard Dawkins has told us in his wildly popular book *The God Delusion*, “Nobody knows who the four evangelists were, but they almost certainly never met Jesus personally.”² Similarly, the well-known modern Biblical scholar and critic Bart Ehrman says roughly the same thing, “There were some books, such as the Gospels, that had been written anonymously, only later to be ascribed to certain authors who probably did not write them (apostles and friends of the apostles). Other books were written by authors who flat out claimed to be someone they weren’t.”³

So, who did write the Gospels? Of the traditional names linked to them, Matthew and John were disciples of Jesus directly. Mark is mentioned in the Book of Acts, but not much more is known about him from the Biblical text. And Luke was a medical doctor who accompanied Paul on some of his later missionary journeys.

Mark and Luke bring up an interesting question. If they did not write the books by their name, and the Gospels are simply stories made up by someone else, then why did the authors choose those names? New Testament scholar Darrel Bock put it this way:

*What commends Mark as the author, if we are going to simply pick someone to enhance the reputation of a gospel when no one supposedly knows who the author is...? What is Mark's reputation? He failed to survive the first missionary journey and caused a split between Paul and Barnabas according to Acts. So how does randomly attaching his name to the book enhance that gospel's credibility?*⁴

What about Luke? Luke is only present in the last half of Acts and probably never

² Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, Johannesburg: Bantam Press, 2006) p. 96.

³ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)*, e-book (New York: HarperCollins e-books, 2009) p. 101-2.

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, “What Is Missing from a Key New Testament Introduction Text?,” Bible.org Blogs (blog), June 16, 2010, <http://blogs.bible.org/node/1088>.

met Jesus. So, how would using his name increase its credibility? The fact that these two names are attached to the Gospels suggest their names were attached for a reason other than boosting the Gospels' credibility.

As Ehrman mentioned in the quote above, he and other scholars today believe the Gospels were anonymous. One particular theory about their authorship claims they were written by someone in a community that stemmed from the original teachings of the disciples. Those who learned from someone who learned from Matthew wrote down what they knew, but no one knows who that author was. These documents circulated anonymously until a later editor added the title "According to Matthew."

First and foremost, a very important distinction must be made as to what is meant by anonymous. "Anonymous" is a technical term in the area of Biblical studies meaning the author did not name himself in the text.⁵ This is not what a normal person thinks when they hear the word "anonymous." It usually means no one knows who wrote it, or it was published without an author's name. Ehrman does not make this distinction clear, leading people to believe no one knows who wrote the Gospels.⁶ During that time period the author's name was usually added to the beginning or the end of a document, or on the outside of the rolled up scroll. Interestingly, every copy of the Gospels we have that still contains the usual locations of authors' names all have a name there.⁷ Additionally, the names attached to the Gospels are surprisingly uniform in both the name attached and the way the name is written, i.e. According to Matthew.⁸ If the Gospels had circulated anonymously in the sense that no one knew who wrote them, then one should expect to find multiple names associated with the same Gospel. This is not the case.⁹ Instead, the fact the Gospels are uniform in name and title suggests they had authors associated with them very early. The claim that the Gospels all circulated anonymously for decades before a name was attached is not only suspect, truly there is no reason to think the Gospels ever circulated anonymously.

One of the most potent evidences of authorship comes from those known as the church fathers who wrote in the first few centuries of Christianity. The church father Augustine, in discussing this same question of authorship with Faustus, wrote:

How do we know the authorship of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Varro, and other similar writers, but by the unbroken chain of evidence? ... How is the authorship ascertained in each case, except by the author's having brought his work into public notice as much as

5 See some of Paul's letters which say, "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, to..."

6 By this standard, Bart Ehrman's books are anonymous since the title pages of his books were almost certainly added by a later editor.

7 Michael Kruger, "10 Misconceptions about the NT Canon: #9: 'The Canonical Gospels Were Certainly Not Written by the Individuals Named in Their Titles,'" Canon Fodder, November 14, 2012, <https://www.michael-jkruger.com/10-misconceptions-about-the-nt-canon-9-the-canonical-gospels-were-certainly-not-written-by-the-individuals-named-in-their-titles/>.

8 Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Trinity International, 2000) p. 50.

9 Kruger, "10 Misconceptions about the NT Canon."

*possible in his own lifetime, and, by the transmission of the information from one to another in continuous order, the belief becoming more certain as it becomes more general, up to our own day; so that, when we are questioned as to the authorship of any book, we have no difficulty in answering?*¹⁰

Essentially, these church fathers, who were much closer to the facts than modern historians, testify to the authorship of the books of the New Testament, and especially of the Gospels. The unanimous testimony of the early church is that Mark wrote down what he heard Peter preach, so that Peter is the source for the material in Mark's Gospel. Luke was the close companion of Paul and wrote the Gospel with his name attached. Matthew wrote a Gospel himself (some add that it was in the Hebrew dialect), and so did John, at the urging of his friends. The following are a very small sampling of what some early church fathers said.

In Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (written in the early 300s) he describes what Clement of Alexandria wrote around the year 180:

*The Gospels containing the genealogies [Matthew and Luke], he says, were written first. The Gospel according to Mark had this occasion. As Peter had preached the Word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this, he neither directly forbade nor encouraged it. But, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.*¹¹

Around the same time Irenaeus wrote:

*Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.*¹²

Finally, the church father Papias, as quoted in Eusebius, made similar observations.

¹⁰ Augustine, "CHURCH FATHERS: Contra Faustum, Book XXXIII," See sec. 6, accessed March 2, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140633.htm>.

¹¹Eusebius, "CHURCH FATHERS: Church History, Book VI," Ch. 14:6-7, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250106.htm>.

¹² Irenaeus of Lyons, "Book 3," in Against Heresies, trans. Roberts and Donaldson, sec. 1, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/irenaeus-book3.html>.

Papias was alive at the time the disciple John was still alive and indicated he actually heard John speak.

“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord’s discourses. So that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them; for he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” But concerning Matthew he writes as follows: “So then Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and every one interpreted them as he was able.”¹³

Note that these authors were spread out around the Roman Empire: Papias in Turkey, Clement in Egypt, and Irenaeus in modern day France. The fact so much agreement exists among distant people so soon after authorship is evidence of the consistent acceptance of the same books throughout Christendom.

Finally, in addition to discussing the New Testament authors, the early Christian writers also quoted the Bible frequently. In fact, all but a small portion of the verses in the New Testament show up in the early Christian writings.¹⁴ This shows the early Christian writers believed in the authority and trustworthiness of the text, and hence believed the Gospels were a reliable source of information on the life and sayings of Jesus.

Now, some may object saying the early Christian writers often did not name the author they were quoting, leading some to conclude the church fathers did not know who the authors were. On the contrary, this could also be evidence the authors and material were so familiar to the intended reader that no author needed to be mentioned. Everyone just knew who the authors were. They quoted the Old Testament the same way, and there was little dispute in their minds about who wrote those texts.

The attestation for the authorship of the Gospels is early, widespread, and uniform. All the evidence points to the authors of the first four books being Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, *and no other tradition of authorship exists.*

13 Eusebius, “CHURCH FATHERS: Church History, Book III,” sec. 15-16, accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250103.htm>.

14 For more details see J. Warner Wallace, “Can We Construct The Entire New Testament From the Writings of the Church Fathers?,” *Cold Case Christianity* (blog), June 13, 2016, <http://coldcasechristianity.com/2016/can-we-construct-the-entire-new-testament-from-the-writings-of-the-church-fathers/>.

WHEN WERE THE GOSPELS WRITTEN?

Some circles of scholarship believe the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were written after 70 AD. Two primary reasons for this are: A long tradition of scholarship going back to Germany in the 1800s essentially tries to explain everything within the Bible in natural terms. Secondly, these same scholars reject miracles as legendary.

Their assumption of natural causes is a problem when trying to explain how Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, and Luke 21:5-6), which took place in 70 AD. There are only two options: Either Jesus somehow knew the future, or the Gospels were written after 70 AD and the writers put this prophecy in the mouth of Jesus. Since naturalists rule out the possibility of knowing the future, they conclude the Gospels were written after 70 AD. The Gospels also contain supernatural events. Since naturalism presupposes miracles do not occur, these stories must have morphed into legend by the time they were written down, and legendary development takes time. The common thread between these two is they have to date the Gospels later to explain the supernatural events naturally. But what happens if we examine the evidence without an anti-supernatural bias?

We do not know the exact writing date of the books of the New Testament, but we can put together plausible date ranges. Let us start with the Gospel of Luke. It is generally agreed the author who wrote Luke also wrote Acts and the end of Acts leaves us hanging. Peter and Paul, who are the primary subjects of Acts, both died in the mid-60s under the persecution which Emperor Nero inflicted on the Christians, but that is not recorded in Acts. If those details were available to the author it seems likely he would have included them, but it does not require him to have done so. Similarly, we never learn the outcome of Paul's trial before Caesar, the main reason the events in the last few chapters of the book are taking place. Given this, the book of Acts was likely finished somewhere in the early 60's before Peter and Paul's deaths.

The beginnings of both Luke and Acts have a dedication to Theophilus, and Acts specifically mentions this is now the second book the author has written to him. We can then conclude Luke was written before Acts, probably sometime in the late 50's, maybe around 58 or 59 while Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea.¹⁵ Luke had traveled with and followed Paul, and since Paul was stuck in jail, this would have given Luke the prime opportunity to interview eyewitnesses and gather information for his Gospel.

The other Gospels are a little more difficult to nail down as specifically. There are

¹⁵ "Apostle Paul's Timeline," Blue Letter Bible, accessed March 16, 2018, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/paul/timeline.cfm>.

several different ideas about the dating of Matthew and Mark, and the dating depends on the order the books were believed to have been written, and on the testimony of some early church fathers.¹⁶

As seen in the quote from Irenaeus, he mentioned Matthew was written while Peter and Paul were in Rome, and Mark gave his Gospel after “their departure.”¹⁷ Peter spent a large portion of his ministry in Rome, and probably remained there until his death in the mid 60’s. Paul came to Rome to stand trial before Caesar around the year 60, and also died in Rome in the mid 60’s. If we trust Irenaeus, this places the writing of Matthew between 60 and about 65, and would place the writing of Mark after about 65 or so. That Mark was the third Gospel to be written is by no means the consensus view among scholars today, but we can’t reject the possibility if we are to believe Irenaeus and other church fathers. The common idea in scholarship today is that Mark wrote his Gospel first.¹⁸ Whatever the date, most of those who are open to the possibility Jesus did in fact predict the fall of Jerusalem will place the writing of Matthew, Mark, and Luke before 70 AD, since it would seem an odd thing to record such a prophecy and neglect to mention it had been fulfilled so accurately.¹⁹

Acceptable dates for the Gospels among many scholars today are Mark was probably written somewhere in the early 50’s, Luke in the late 50’s, Matthew in the late 50’s or early 60’s, and John in the late 80’s or early 90’s (though some would date John before 70 AD because John also neglects to mention the fall of Jerusalem). Even if the Gospels had all been written in the 70’s or 80’s, this is still within the lifetime of those who witnessed the events. If the Gospels were written then and embellished with legendary stories, those who actually witnessed the events could have contradicted what was written and the spread of the Gospels would have been greatly impeded. Historically, it is known the message spread fast, so it is unlikely such embellishments took place.

The fact witnesses are still around at the time is one reason why earlier documents are usually more reliable than older ones. The less time that passes between the events and when they were written down, the more accurate the documents are likely to be. All four of the Gospels were written by people who were either eyewitnesses of the events (Matthew and John) or close companions of eyewitnesses (Mark with Peter, and Luke with Paul, and in addition, Luke seems to have investigated things carefully, which is probably safe to assume means he interviewed eyewitnesses). The Gospels were also written within a short span of time of the events of Jesus’ ministry, about 20 to 50 years. This may seem like a long time in our day where we learn about events only hours or minutes after they happen, but as far as ancient historians are concerned, 20 to 50 years

16 The issue of who wrote first is a prickly one, and depends on how one answers the “Synoptic problem.” Here is an explanation of some different positions. “The Synoptic Problem and Q - Study Resources,” Blue Letter Bible, viewed March 16, 2018, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/q.cfm>.

17 Irenaeus of Lyons, “Book 3.”

18 “The Synoptic Problem and Q - Study Resources.”

19 This is an argument from silence/ignorance. However, this argument is not fallacious since there is good reason to suspect the information would have been mentioned if it had already happened.

is not long at all.

Other historical works from the same era are regarded as historically reliable, like the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus, who recorded events from 50 years in his past in the *Annals*. Further, the bulk of historical information we have about Alexander the Great, who lived from 356–323 BC,²⁰ is from the *Anabasis of Alexander* written by Arrian in the second century AD.²¹ Arrian used sources who were closer to the facts to write his description of the events, but he was not an eyewitness himself. So Arrian, who never knew Alexander the Great, nor anyone who knew Alexander the Great, and wrote the *Anabasis* more than 400 years after the events, is still considered the best information we have about the life of Alexander the Great, and is considered to be trustworthy.²²

Because this is typical of ancient historical records, and the Gospels were written much earlier and closer to the events than other ancient history, by people who were closer to the events, then should they not, *at the very least*, be accepted as being as reliable as any other ancient history? If we are being consistent, the answer is yes, and even more so if we consider the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or those who knew eyewitnesses.

²⁰ “Alexander the Great - Ancient History,” HISTORY.com, accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/alexander-the-great>.

²¹ “Arrian - Livius,” accessed March 23, 2018, <http://www.livius.org/articles/person/arrian/>.

²² “Arrian - Livius.”

TRANSMISSION OF THE TEXT

So one may think, yes the Gospel content could have been established early on by eyewitnesses, but how do we know they have not been corrupted over time? Can we say with any certainty the Bible we know today is the same as it was when it was written? Many of us have played the telephone game as a child. One person whispers something to another and that person whispers to the next, and so on, until the last person says the phrase and it is so messed up it is nearly unrecognizable. Is that how the Gospels were passed down? When asked this same question in the book *The Case for Christ*, the Biblical scholar Craig Bloomberg said:

*If you really wanted to develop that analogy in light of the checks and balances of the first-century community, you'd have to say that every third person, out loud in a very clear voice would, have to ask the first person, "Do I still have it right?" and change it if he didn't. The community would constantly be monitoring what was said and intervening to make corrections along the way. That would preserve the integrity of the message... and the result would be very different from the childish game of telephone.*²³

The early traditions about the teachings of Jesus spread first by oral tradition, and most likely very accurately so.²⁴ The techniques of oral tradition common in that culture would have been very handy for memorizing and repeating the sayings of Jesus. Yet, this oral tradition is not what the Gospels were exclusively based upon, especially those of Matthew and John, who were eyewitnesses. They did not write what had been passed down to them from others. Instead, the events recorded were seen by Matthew and John for themselves, also by Peter, the source of the material for Mark, and the eyewitnesses Luke interviewed.

If the thought of someone memorizing all the sayings of Jesus seems too fantastic keep a few things in mind. First, Jesus probably repeated his teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount, numerous times. Second, theirs was primarily an oral culture, not a written one, so memorization was much more common than our society today. Most people learned the Jewish Scriptures by repetition and memorization so by the time a young person went through the equivalent of elementary school they had large

²³ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus, Updated & Expanded: Mass Market Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998) p. 64-5.

²⁴ For more detail on the reliability of oral tradition, see the chapter on it in Gregoy A. Boyd and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *Lord or Legend? Wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

portions, if not the entirety, of the first five books of the Old Testament memorized.²⁵ Third, the Disciples had been repeating the material in their minds and teachings for years leading up to them being written down, so the teachings were always fresh in their mind. Lastly, many of the recorded events had a dramatic impact on the disciples and were thus significantly memorable. Watching your teacher walk on water, command the weather, heal the blind, and raise the dead are not experiences a person soon forgets. There really is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the information recalled by the Gospel authors.

Once the events were recorded the next question becomes, has that information been passed down to us accurately? Has the text changed over the years? That question requires delving into an area of study called Biblical Criticism. This may sound like the discipline criticizes the Bible, and in some ways it does, but its primary purpose is to study the Bible's reliability. Lower Criticism, or Textual Criticism, specializes in evaluating the text itself.

The New Testament was written in Greek, with the exception of an early version of Matthew possibly written in Hebrew. The original documents are missing, and likely do not exist anymore. They may have just disintegrated with age, or were destroyed in persecutions, or could still be buried somewhere. What matters is that all we have are copies. So, how do we know the copyists didn't make mistakes? Actually, we know they *did* make mistakes. We know this because we can compare multiple copies and they are different. For example, some copies of Matthew 2:3 say "Herod the King" while others say "King Herod." Ultimately, the original writer wrote one of those two, but which one was it? This is an important question because there are literally thousands of differences among all the copies. But is it as big of a problem as it seems?

The process of reconstructing what an original text said, Textual Criticism, is a sophisticated field of study, and the people who practice it are in fact able to reconstruct the text of the New Testament to within 0.5% of the original. That means 99.5% of the New Testament is not in question, and the remaining 0.5% are mostly discrepancies that do not matter.

For example, when my great grandma Cramer died, her legendary banana bread recipe died with her. However, let us suppose as an illustration things had gone differently and at some point my grandma had written the recipe on a notecard. Then my mom copied grandma's copy of the recipe, and many of our other family members made a hand-written copy from grandma or my mom or someone else. I also wished to copy grandma Cramer's recipe, so I asked everyone who had a copy to bring it to our family reunion. When I compared the copies, all the recipes were different. How could I begin to sort through the ingredient differences and figure out how to make the bread? Perhaps I could do it like scholars do with the text of the New Testament.

First, of the sixteen copies, fifteen said "1 cup of sugar" and one said "1 cup of

²⁵ "Rabbi and Talmidim," That the World May Know, accessed June 1, 2018, <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/rabbi-and-talmidim>.

suger.” “Suger” is only in one copy and is not a word, but sounds like sugar so obviously sugar is correct. Similarly, most of the differences (about 75%) in the New Testament copies are of the same nature, being obvious misspellings or alternate spellings of proper names, or just nonsense.²⁶ J. Warner Wallace says we do this at a less sophisticated level every day when we receive texts on our phone that make no sense, have misspelled words, or have been autocorrected to a completely different word than the person sending it intended. Most of the time we have no problem knowing what the other person meant in context.²⁷

Next, concerning the butter, five said “1/4 pound of butter,” five said, “1 stick of butter,” five said, “8 tablespoons of butter,” and one said, “8 Tbsp. of butter.” Unlike the “suger,” about the same number of copies say four different things. However, it ultimately does not matter because a 1/4 pound, 8 Tbsp, and one stick are all the same amount. A similar thing happens in Biblical Greek. The ending of a word in Greek determines which words are the subject or object of the sentence. In English “The cat sat on the mat” means something very different than “The mat sat on the cat.” In Greek those mean the same exact thing if the words had the same endings in both instances.²⁸ Often differences between copies of the Greek text are not even translatable because they all mean essentially the same thing.

As for flour, fifteen called for “2 cups of flour”, while one called for “2 cups of flower.” The person who wrote “flower” happens to be one of my cousin’s sons, which means it is far removed from the original, and is the only copy that says “flower”. The chance that roses are the correct ingredient is very slim. Again a similar thing happens in the Biblical text. A single copy with a strange word 13 centuries removed from the original is unlikely to be correct.²⁹

The bananas are a different story. Two copies said “2 bananas,” six copies said “3 bananas (very ripe),” and the other half said “2 or 3 bananas.” It is difficult to tell what the original recipe said since we have three different options, all of which make sense, and all of which are supported by a number of copies. What we choose will change the recipe and affect the final result to a certain extent. We can take our best stab at this and say the original probably said “2 or 3 bananas,” and we just lost a 2 in some copies and a 3 in other copies, but other plausible scenarios exist. We simply don’t know. However, whether one uses 2 or 3 bananas when making the bread will not ultimately make much difference. Again this is similar to what is found in the copies of the New Testament. Variants like this, where the scholars

26 Justin Taylor, “An Interview with Daniel B. Wallace on the New Testament Manuscripts,” *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), accessed March 27, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/an-interview-with-daniel-b-wallace-on-the-new-testament-manuscripts/>.

27 J. Warner Wallace, “When It Comes to Ancient Texts, the More Copies We Have, the More Confidence We Have,” *Cold Case Christianity* (blog), July 1, 2016, <http://coldcasechristianity.com/2016/when-it-comes-to-ancient-texts-the-more-copies-we-have-the-more-confidence-we-have/>.

28 Taylor.

29 Taylor.

are not sure which is correct, account for less than 1% of all the differences, and in each case, there is no major doctrine or core belief of Christianity hanging in the balance.³⁰

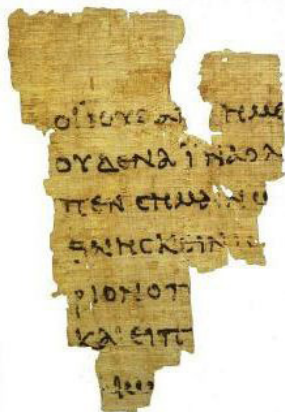
Finally, twelve copies say “1 tsp. of cinnamon,” one says “1 cup of cinnamon,” another calls for “1 tsp. of...” with the ending torn off, one was completely missing the line, and one repeated the line. Our cinnamon is a mess. However, even though there are a lot of variants, the majority of them say “1 tsp. of cinnamon.” So, would anyone think anything other than 1 tsp. of cinnamon is correct?

If we collected another 100 copies of the recipe, we would most likely be able to reconstruct the recipe even better than we could with 16 copies. This is also the case with the Biblical text. The more copies that exist, the better the reconstruction of the text is. Yes, more copies may mean more variants, but more copies can also help weed out other variants. Usually, the more copies that exist, the easier it is to decide which variants were original and which ones were not. The reconstruction is also typically better when we have earlier copies since there is less opportunity for copying errors to creep in.

³⁰ Taylor.

HOW EARLY AND NUMEROUS ARE THE COPIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Comparing the New Testament to other ancient documents helps answer that question and gives us some idea of the condition the New Testament is in. Many ancient texts have less than 300 existing manuscripts. (A manuscript can be anything from the entire book, to something the size of a postage stamp.) In fact, the latest numbers for the *Annals*, written by the Roman historian Tacitus somewhere around 100 AD, have 33 copies in existence. The earliest of these, which contains about the first half of the book, is dated to about 850 AD, and 31 of the 33 copies come from the 15th century.³¹ So, the earliest existing manuscript was copied some 750 years after the original was written. This text is used by historians today and is accepted as an accurate historical record of the events written within it.



JOHN RYLANDS FRAGMENT

Homer's *Iliad* has a large number of manuscripts with more than 1,800 of them having been found. The book was probably written around 800 BC, and the earliest manuscript is dated to about 400 BC.³² In contrast, the New Testament, at latest count, has about 5,500 manuscripts which include fragments, several pages, entire books, or entire New Testaments.³³ Currently, the earliest manuscript of the New Testament is P52, also known as the John Rylands fragment. This fragment contains parts of John 18:31-33 on one side, and John 18:37-38 on the other, and dates to roughly 125 AD, which is only about 40 years after John is thought by most to have been written.³⁴ The New Testament manuscripts are more numerous and closer to the original writing than any other ancient text. This gives us confidence the text is reconstructed accurately. Norm Geisler and William Nix wrote, "This means that our New Testament is 99.5% textually pure. In the entire text of 20,000 lines, only 40 lines are in doubt (about

31 Dr. Josh D. McDowell and Dr. Clay Jones, "The Bibliographical Test" August 13, 2014, <https://www.josh.org/wp-content/uploads/Bibliographical-Test-Update-08.13.14.pdf>.

32 McDowell and Jones.

33 According to a sum of all the lists on "Liste - Institut Fur Neutestamentliche Textforschung," the number of manuscripts was 5,906 on March 29, 2018. In, "Math Myths: Why More Manuscripts isn't Necessarily Better" (<http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=25149>) given by Jacob W. Peterson at the ETS in Providence, RI in Nov. of 2017, he claimed some manuscripts have either gone missing or have been destroyed. Also, some have been recognized as multiple parts of the same manuscript. So, Peterson says the number of manuscripts at this point is closer to 5,500.

34 "Manuscript P52 - CSNTM," accessed March 29, 2018, http://www.csntm.org/Manuscript/View/GA_P52.

400 words), and none affects any significant doctrine.”³⁵ If Homer’s *Iliad* is accepted as accurately reconstructed, and the New Testament has more than twice the amount of manuscripts with a gap of one tenth the amount of time between writing and first manuscripts, and, in fact, *entire* New Testaments exist from 100 years closer than the earliest *fragments* of Homer, then to be consistent the reconstruction of the New Testament should also be accepted.

Most of the divergences in the New Testament manuscripts deal with differences of letters or words, and a few involve as much as a sentence, but the authenticity of most of the Biblical text is not in question. However, two large sections of the New Testament are in question, so it is important to mention them.

The first is the long ending of Mark (16:9-20). Scholars differ on what they believe happened with this section of Scripture. Some believe the long ending is authentic, but most agree it was not in the original Gospel and someone later added it based on the other Gospels and Acts. Some scholars believe Mark intended to end his Gospel at verse 8. This seems implausible given the way verse 8 ends. Others believe the end of Mark was lost early on. Mark 16:8 may even have been cut off in mid-sentence. Mark has a tendency throughout his Gospel to give sweeping general statements and then qualifies them with exceptions, which means the text may have originally said, “And they said nothing to anyone, since they were afraid, but running back to the disciples they reported to them everything that had happened.”³⁶ While it may be the case the long ending of Mark was not originally part of the Bible, this is not something to be concerned about since every important doctrine of Christianity mentioned in these verses is mentioned somewhere else in areas of text which are not in doubt.

The second passage in question is that of the woman caught in adultery found in John 7:53-8:11. The origin of this passage appears to be a true story about Jesus, or at least based heavily on a true occurrence. Many have noted the ring of truth this passage has since it seems to fit the style of Jesus. However, the verses seem to interrupt the flow of John, and many have noticed the language sounds more like Luke than John.³⁷ The end of Luke has some summarizing and compression of the stories. Since Luke is about the length of a standard sized scroll, it may be he was running out of room and was unable to include a number of reports gathered during the research for his Gospel. The woman caught in adultery may be one of those events that did not make the final cut. Though this story is mentioned in the *Didascalia*, a document from the early 200’s,³⁸ the first Gospel manuscript which contains it is Codex Bazaе from the 400’s.³⁹ So, while this probably was

35 “Is the New Testament Text Reliable? | Stand to Reason,” accessed March 29, 2018, <https://www.str.org/articles/is-the-new-testament-text-reliable#.WrihFIjwZPZ>. Quoting Geisler, Norman L., Nix, William E., A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 405.

36 This observation is owed to Timothy McGrew. For examples see Mark 5:37, 9:8, and 10:18.

37 Kyle Hughes and Daniel B. Wallace, “Where Is the Story of the Woman Caught in Adultery Really From?,” Daniel B. Wallace (blog), June 26, 2013, <https://danielbwallace.com/2013/06/26/where-is-the-story-of-the-woman-caught-in-adultery-really-from/>.

38 “Didascalia,” accessed May 3, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didascalia.html>.

39 Hughes and Wallace, “Where Is the Story of the Woman Caught in Adultery Really From?”

a true event in the life of Jesus, it was almost certainly not in the original Gospel of John.

If we again consider the telephone game and compare it to the actual state of the text of the New Testament, we see the comparison is not very analogous. The idea all we have is a copy of a copy of a copy of a copy, and that each time the text was copied it was corrupted even more, is not true at all. In fact, evidence from archaeology shows that manuscripts like the Gospels were sometimes used for 200 to 300 years or more before they were discarded.⁴⁰ Similarly, Tertullian writing in the early 200's seems to claim the original letters of Paul were still being used and read in the churches they were sent to in his time.⁴¹ This means it is at least possible some of the early copies of the New Testament in existence today could very well be copies of the originals. It is hard to get any closer to the originals than that.

40 Craig Evans, "The Bible and Interpretation - How Long Were Biblical Manuscripts in Use?," accessed April 28, 2018, <http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/eva358021.shtml>.

Tertullian, "The Prescriptions Against the Heretics," Sec. 36, trans. Greenslade, 1956, http://www.tertullian.org/articles/greenslade_prae/greenslade_prae.htm.

WHY THESE BOOKS AND NOT OTHERS?

We have seen the Gospels were transmitted correctly, but why these four Gospels? One popular idea is the Gospels we have were chosen by the Roman Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea and placed in the Bibles he commissioned. This idea was made popular by the best-selling book *The DaVinci Code*⁴² by Dan Brown. In Ch. 55 Brown's character Teabing says:

"More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John among them."

"Who chose which gospels to include?" Sophie asked.

*"Aha!" Teabing burst with enthusiasm. "The fundamental irony of Christianity! The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great."*⁴³

The story about Constantine choosing the books of the New Testament not only shows up in works of fiction, it has also been portrayed as fact on the History Channel, and is even taught by some professors.⁴⁴ The trouble is there does not appear to be a shred of evidence for it. Constantine did convene the Council, and was present, but he took a hands-off approach and simply let the Bishops in attendance deal with the issues being discussed, which was primarily whether or not Jesus was a lesser, created god or *the* God.⁴⁵ In fact, there is no indication the question of which books should go in the Bible *ever even came up* at the Council of Nicaea!⁴⁶ If it was not Constantine or the Council of Nicaea, then who accepted the Gospels, and when?

Actually, the questions of why and when are related. Just as with Augustine's previous quote about authorship, the best way to determine what was considered Scripture and what was not is "by the author's having brought his work into public notice as much as possible in his own lifetime, and by the transmission of the information from one to another in continuous order, the belief becoming more certain as it becomes more

42 For more on the numerous factual and historical errors in the book, see Hank Hanegraaff and Paul L. Mairer, *The DaVinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 2004).

43 Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) p. 231.

44 Craig Bloomberg, *Widely Held Myths About Ancient Sources*, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Credo House, 2014) 9:30.

45 For more on the Council of Nicaea and the Divinity of Jesus see Ch. 15 of J. Ed Komoszewski and M. James Sawyer, *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Misperceive Popular Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006).

46 Roger Pearse, "The Council of Nicaea (Nicea) and the Bible," August 24, 2001, <http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/nicaea.html>. This site allows the researcher to read the primary sources on the council themselves.

general, up to our own day.”⁴⁷ While Augustine was saying this about authorship, it applies to acceptance as well. The question is, when were the books of the New Testament accepted as Scripture? Was it at the Council of Nicaea, or was it earlier?

Codex Sinaiticus, from the 4th century, is the oldest complete copy of the New Testament known at this point, and it contains all the books currently in our modern New Testament, plus the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shephard of Hermas attached to the end.⁴⁸ But, let us go earlier than the 300’s. Tertullian, writing in about the year 207 said:

*[T]hat Gospel of Luke which we are defending with all our might has stood its ground from its very first publication...The same authority of the apostolic churches will afford evidence to the other Gospels also, which we possess equally through their means, and according to their usage—I mean the Gospels of John and Matthew—whilst that which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter’s whose interpreter Mark was.*⁴⁹

Tertullian not only claimed the Gospels were authentic, but Christians had been defending them as authentic from the very beginning! That is exactly what Augustine said we should look for.

A document known as the Muratorian Fragment dates about four decades prior to Tertullian. Though the beginning is missing, it still has some very interesting information.

*...at which nevertheless he was present, and so he placed [them in his narrative]. The third book of the Gospel is that according to Luke. Luke, the well-known physician, after the ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken with him as one zealous for the law, composed it in his own name, according to [the general] belief. Yet he himself had not seen the Lord in the flesh; and therefore, as he was able to ascertain events, so indeed he begins to tell the story from the birth of John. The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, [one] of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him [to write], he said, “Fast with me from today to three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.” In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, [one] of the apostles, that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it.*⁵⁰

This document goes on to list many other books of the New Testament as well. While we do not know what the first two books listed were, it would not be too much

47 Augustine, “CHURCH FATHERS: Contra Faustum, Book XXXIII.”

48 Glenn Davis, “The Development of the Canon of the New Testament - Codex Sinaiticus,” 2010, http://www.nteanon.org/codex_Sinaiticus.shtml. The Epistle of Barnabas and the Shephard of Hermas are both books which were rejected by most as Scripture, but some people still read them.

49 Tertullian, “Book IV, Section 5,” in *Against Marcion*, accessed April 6, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/03124.htm>.

50 Bruce Metzger, “Appendix IV,” in *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 305–7.

of a stretch to believe they were Matthew and Mark. Either way, it lists four Gospels, no more, no less. Also, the rest of the list fits with what can be found in the New Testament today, with a few exceptions.⁵¹ This seems to indicate that by about 170 AD the books of the New Testament had been pretty much established.

Going even deeper into the past, a document by Tatian known as the *Diatesseron*, which means “Through the Four,” was an early harmonization of the Gospels which put information from all the Gospels into one continuous book. This was written somewhere around 150 or 160.⁵² The document contained most of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This indicates the four Gospels had been recognized as authoritative before that time, and they were the only ones which were authoritative.

Tatian’s mentor, the well-known Church Father Justin Martyr, wrote his Dialogue with Tyrpho in about the year 150. In chapters 100-107, he makes over a dozen references to the “memoirs of the Apostles.” Furthermore, he has several quotations from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in Chapter 105 makes a reference to the Logos being begotten, which is a reference to the opening verses of John. This establishes the recognition of the Gospels at the time of Justin Martyr, and that he saw them as being essentially biographies of Jesus.

Stepping back a few more decades, we have a document called the *Apology of Aristides*. Aristides gave an explanation of Christianity to the Roman Emperor, probably the Emperor Hadrian, who ruled from 117-138.⁵³ During his description Aristides states if the Emperor wants to find any more information on Christianity he can read the “Holy Gospel writings.”⁵⁴ This indicates that by this time, maybe the year 124,⁵⁵ something known as the “Holy Gospel writings” were well known enough to reference them as such. These were quite possibly a collection of the Gospels. These “Holy Gospel writings” were seen as being Christian and could be referenced as authoritative in determining what Christians believe.

As mentioned previously, letters written toward the end of the first century, namely I Clement, supposed to have been written by Clement of Rome about the year 95, quote information that is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.⁵⁶ This is getting close to the time of the writing of the Gospels, but a document written even earlier gives at least one Gospel a very early seal of approval. In I Timothy 5:18 Paul says, “For the *Scripture* says:

51 Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, and 3 John are not on the list. Strangely, The Wisdom of Solomon, a book written around 200BC which was not accepted as Scripture by the Jews, was included. The Shephard of Hermas, the letter to the Laodiceans, and the letter to the Alexandrians were all mentioned as being heretical. Finally the Apocalypse of Peter was mentioned as being accepted by some, but not allowed to be read as Scripture by others.

52 “Diatessaron - New World Encyclopedia,” accessed April 19, 2018, <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Diatessaron>.

53 “Apology of Aristides,” Early Christian Writings, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/aristides.html>.

54 Aristides, The Apology of Aristides on Behalf of the Christians: From a Syriac Ms. Preserved on Mount Sinai, trans. J. Rendel Harris and J. Armitage Robinson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1893) p. 110, sec. XV, line 22. The Greek found in the appendix is εὐαγγελικὰς ἁγίας γραφῆς.

55 “Apology of Aristides.”

56 See I Clement 46:7-8, Matthew 26:24, Mark 14:21, and Luke 17:1-2.

Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and, the worker is worthy of his wages.”⁵⁷ The first part is a quote from Deuteronomy 25:4, but the interesting bit here is that the second part is a quote from Luke 10:7! Luke’s Gospel was being considered Scripture on par with, and quoted in the same sentence with, a passage of the Old Testament. If this letter of Paul was written somewhere between 62 and 64, it means within about 5 years of its writing Luke was being quoted as Scripture by one of the Church’s most important leaders.⁵⁸ If one were to follow the advice of Augustine and use a long line of acceptance going back to the very time of authorship as a measure of authenticity, it is tough to find anything which fits those criteria better than the Gospels.

One lingering question about the books of the New Testament may remain: as Dan Brown wrote in *The DaVinci Code*, there were other Gospels, like those found in Nag Hammadi in 1945, in existence at the time of Constantine.⁵⁹ So, one must ask, why were those other Gospels rejected? These other “Gnostic Gospels,” such as the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, Judas, and Mary, were written by groups associated with Gnosticism; a religion which involved a series of gods between the true God and the god who created our world. They believed matter was evil, and the chief way to salvation was by gaining knowledge of unknown spiritual concepts and realities.⁶⁰ While some might try to characterize the Gnostics as competing for supremacy with orthodox beliefs, in reality it is not even clear they would have considered themselves Christians. The Gnostic Gospels were written with definitive Gnostic themes and a very distinct lack of connection to the setting of first century Palestine. With the earliest of them being written in the mid second century, they were written much too late to be eyewitness accounts. Essentially they are not records of the sayings of Jesus set firmly against the background of its historical context, but instead are stories meant to teach Gnostic theology using the character of Jesus as a spokesperson.

Imagine you are writing a paper on the life of Lincoln, and someone suggests *Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter* as a source. Wouldn’t you reject this suggestion? That work is clearly a work of fiction which uses the real person Lincoln to tell an interesting story, but if you were looking for true information on his life, you would not look to a fiction book written 145 years after his death.

Similarly, the earliest of these Gnostic texts, The Gospel of Thomas, is thought by many to have been written at least 100 years after the death of Jesus.⁶¹ It contains themes of Gnosticism, and a lack of historical markers. In contrast, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were considered Scripture before any of the other “gospels” were ever written. In

⁵⁷ *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN, 2009. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁸ “Introduction to 1 Timothy | ESV.Org,” ESV Bible, accessed May 2, 2018, <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-1-timothy/>.

⁵⁹ “Nag Hammadi Library,” accessed March 30, 2018, <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html>.

⁶⁰ “The Gnostic World View: A Brief Summary of Gnosticism,” accessed May 2, 2018, <http://gnosis.org/gnintro.htm>.

⁶¹ Ryan Turner, “Frequently Asked Questions about the Gospel of Thomas,” Text, CARM, March 20, 2010, <https://carm.org/questions-about-the-gospel-of-thomas>.

fact, about the year 350, Cyril of Jerusalem wrote:

*Then of the New Testament there are four Gospels only, for the rest have false titles and are harmful. The Manicheans [a form of Gnosticism] also wrote a Gospel according to Thomas, which being smeared with the fragrance of the name “Gospel” destroys the souls of those who are rather simple-minded.*⁶²

He clearly understood there was a difference between the orthodox Gospels and the Gnostic ones.

The books in the Bible today have a few things in common. First, the Gospels were known from the start to have been authored by eyewitnesses of Jesus or a close companion, which gives them credibility. Second, they were widely accepted and read throughout the extent of Christendom and recognized from the beginning as authentic and authoritative Scripture. Third, they contained teaching in line with what was orthodox from the very beginning. Lastly, they contain high spiritual and moral values.⁶³

⁶² Cyril of Jerusalem, “Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 4,” in *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, trans. Bruce M. Metzger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁶³ “How and When Was the Canon of the Bible Put Together?,” GotQuestions.org, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://www.gotquestions.org/canon-Bible.html>.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

The Bible is not a book of unknown or sketchy origin. It was not written and circulated anonymously. Everyone knew who wrote the books, the Gospels especially. A council was never convened to decide which books of the Bible to accept. The books were never chosen. Instead, the books which had been recognized as Scripture from the very beginning were later given an official stamp of approval. For the most part everyone knew which Gospels were authentic and which ones were not. Historically, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were recognized from the very beginning and there is no reason to believe anyone questioned their authenticity. In addition, there is no reason to believe any of the other Gospels were ever in serious contention for inclusion in the Bible. Further, the textual evidence we have far outweighs the evidence for other documents of ancient history. They were authored closer to the events than other ancient texts, and the copies that exist of the Bible are far earlier and more numerous than any other ancient text. This gives us confidence in the accuracy of the original text, and the ability of scholars to reconstruct it.

CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE I HOLD IN MY HAND?

People commonly ask, “The Bible has been translated so many times, how can we be sure what it says is true?” This comes from an idea that each translation of the Bible uses previous translations to render a new one. This is simply not true. Almost every English translation of the Bible is directly translated from the reconstructed Greek text. The main differences between them involve the translation committee’s philosophy on rendering the text into English. Most translations have a few pages at the very front which explain the way the translators approached the text. The main differences are between thought-for-thought (dynamic equivalence) and word-for-word (formal equivalence) approaches. Word-for-word translations are more literal, and so will be a more accurate translation of the text. However, an accurate translation of the text may not always make sense to the modern English reader. The thought-for-thought translations try to convey what the author meant in the whole passage instead of word for word. This helps the general reader, but can cause difficulty for serious study.⁶⁴

The best thing to do when picking a Bible translation is to pick the one you can understand the best. It is helpful to have a few different translations and access to commentaries to get the best understanding of the text.⁶⁵ Can you trust your English translation? As long as it is not a paraphrase or the New World Translation, the answer is a resounding, “Yes!” The New World Translation of the Bible is the one used by Jehovah’s Witnesses, and their translators added words not found in the original language and changed the translation to fit their doctrine.

When I was in high school two of my best friends were Jehovah’s Witnesses. When I learned some of the doctrines they hold I began to ask myself, “Why do they believe such strange things?” I reasoned the explanation was probably that they had gone to their services multiple times a week ever since they were a baby, and this is what they had been brought up to believe. Then I realized I had done essentially the same thing. I had grown up in the church and believed what I did mostly because it is what I had been taught by Sunday School teachers, my parents, and my pastor. So I wondered, “How do I know it is me that has the correct beliefs and not my friends?” This led me to further question how I knew if any of my Christian beliefs were true. I knew the things I believed were based on the Bible, so I needed to know if the Bible was reliable to know whether or not what I believed was true. I decided to begin investigating the validity of

64 “Bible Translation Guide | Mardel,” accessed May 3, 2018, <https://www.mardel.com/bibleTranslationGuide>. This will help with describing different types of Bible translations.

65 Craig Keener’s IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament is a very good resource for helping understand the ideas in the text. Also there are many free commentaries on Biblehub.com

the Bible, and it has been a more than 20 year investigation now. After sifting through evidence and looking at numerous arguments both for and against the truth of the Bible, I can only conclude that the Bible is more historically and textually reliable than any other book in ancient history. Yes, the Bible can be trusted.

FUTHER READING

Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd Edition and prior.

Fragments of Truth (documentary), Faithlife Films, 2018.

Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *A Lecture on the Historic Evidence of the Authorship and Transmission of the Books of the New Testament*, 1852. This work is available for free in the research section of www.SpecialDivineAction.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Meyer grew up in West Michigan where he attended Grand Valley State University and received his B.A. in Philosophy, and Western Michigan University, where he received his M.A. in Philosophy. Jon also worked as a research assistant alongside Tim McGrew on a Templeton digital humanities research project focusing on special Divine action. Jon now resides with his wife Ashley in Lexington, KY, where he is the Ratio Christi director for the University of Kentucky, and is also an adjunct professor of Philosophy at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY.

Do You Believe? Series
General Editor Benjamin D. Smith Jr.

ratiochristi.org | info@ratiochristi.org
Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter: @ratiochristi

