



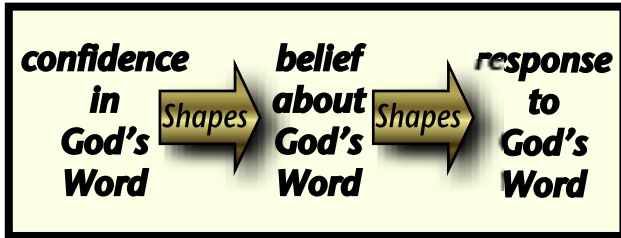
# The Origins of the Bible



Our faith in God is dependent upon our trust in God and His Son Christ. This belief is largely dependent on God's Word, the Bible.

*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)*

The devil's success is dependent on how much he can keep people from knowing and trusting God's Word. He therefore tries to undermine the **knowledge and reliability** of the scriptures. For the first 1500 years after Christ, scriptures were not common. The scriptures were handwritten largely in scrolls and reading was for society's elitist class. The evil one could easily distorted what God might have said to someone, just as he did with Eve in the Garden of Eden.



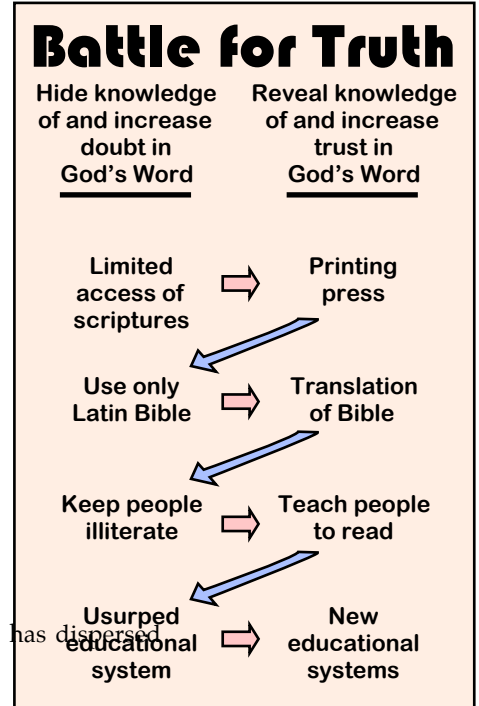
With the coming of the printing press and the production of large quantities of Bibles at cheaper prices, the evil one had difficulty holding back God's truth to His people. He managed for a while, however, by causing the church to insist on only using the Latin translation of the Bible

(Vulgate). Again, only those highly educated could read Latin. This only lasted for a short period because God rose up bold translators that were willing to die to bring God's Word to the people in their own languages.

Satan again had to change tactics. He resorted to keeping as many people as possible back from learning how to read. God burdened Christians, however, to reach out to everybody by educating the masses. This was the origin of the Sunday School movement. They would teach everyone how to read so that they could read the Bible. The devil loss control again.

He decided he would thwart this whole process. Satan would allow everyone to be educated. He would, however, popularize education and take control of it. We see today that the evil one now keeps God's word out of education, lessens its impact with a slew of other books and undermines the authority of God's Word. Meanwhile, the Lord has risen up the home school movement, more Christian schools and new educational systems. This last aspect is what we are focusing on in this article.

Satan began to undermine the reliability or trustworthiness of God's Word. This is the situation today. Christians hear all sorts of things about the Bible. They might hear of other scriptures such as Gnostic writings. Or they might read a news clip about the Jesus Seminar which asserts that very little of the gospels is reliable. He has dispersed



- (1) **Lack of information.** Very few Christians know about the origin of the Bible.
- (2) **Misinformation.** When the facts are not known, then it is easy to pass on and have people believe a lie.

They have nowhere to easily discover out the facts. As a result Christians end up hiding their powerful sword to fight off the enemy. They doubt God's Word really works. What do you believe about the origin and reliability of God's Word?

## If I don't believe God's Word is really trustworthy, ...

- will I really commit myself to daily read and meditate on His Word?
- will I stand up against this hostile world and say 'Jesus is the only Way'?
- will I wholeheartedly obey and follow the the Lord and reject any compromise?

Let's build up our faith by asking four questions about the Bible's origin.

1. How is the Bible different today from before?
2. How did the Bible come into being?
3. Why aren't other books part of the Bible?
4. How is the Bible different from other books?
4. Doesn't the Bible have a lot of mistakes?

- The Transformation of the Bible
- The Canonization of the Bible
- The Extent of the Bible
- The Inspiration of the Bible Texts
- The Reliability of the Bible Texts



# The Origins of the Bible



## The Transformation of the Bible

How is the Bible different today from before?

### 1. The Composition of the Bible

The Bible is made up of 66 books developed over 1500 years by more than 40 authors.

Old Testament (OT): 39 books written from 1500 BC to 400 BC mostly in Biblical Hebrew.

New Testament (NT): 27 books written from 33 AD to 70 (or 90 AD) mostly written in Koine Greek.

Up until 1914 they thought this language was a 'heavenly' Greek!

### 2. The Authors of the Bible

In contrast to what we might think, most of the authors were not part of a religious caste. The authors included kings and shepherds, fishermen and statesmen and men from many different walks of life. They went from being ordinary men to God's prophet. Only at a few special times did God call them to use their prophetic gift to write down God's revelation for others to read.

### 3. The Books of the Bible

The 66 books that comprise the Bible were divinely orchestrated over a long time (about 1500 years) and a large geographical area. They hold in common two main points:

(1) A special focus on Christ the Messiah who brings God's grace into the world.

• "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New Revealed."

• "The New Testament is veiled in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New Testament,"

(Augustine)

(2) A claim and recognition of divine authority. 1 Peter 1:10-12 says,

*As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things into which angels long to look.*

### 4. The Form of the Bible

Books as we know them are a relatively recent development. The multiplication of books is even more recent. Because of this we need to carefully trace the steps of history to find the forms the original scriptures took.

Many of the ancient writings were written on scrolls that were 'scrolled' up. There were no books; printing is a recent development. In order to save space on the expensive and bulky materials like stone, animal skins, papyrus, etc., there was no punctuation. Nor were there chapters or verses! Because of limited development in written languages, only capitals (uncials) were used. For example, there could be confusion over where a new line starts. { NOWHERE }

### 5. The Order of Bible books

The order of the Bible books is not inspired, only the original words. The Old Testament (lit. covenant) had at first only two parts: the Law (i.e. Moses first five books) and the other prophets including writings like the historical and poetical books (Mt 5:17; Mk 11:13; Lk 24:27). Both Josephus and the Talmud asserted the end of the prophetic line in Nehemiah's day with Malachi in 400 BC. The threefold (Lk 24:44) and four-fold organization came later. The Septuagint (LXX) Greek translation of the OT made the fourfold division popular.

The New Testament follows a similar topical order (Gospels, Letters, Historical). Subdivisions are made for the many epistles (letters) through the author (eg. Pauline or Petrine Epistles).



# The Origins of the Bible



## The Canonization of the Bible

How did the Bible come into being?

Canonization describes the process by which the community of God's people accept certain scriptures as divinely inspired and authoritative. Note three special aspects of this process:

- **Progressive collection of authoritative scriptures**
- **Written by recognized anointed men of God such as prophets and apostles.**
- **Recognized and accepted as authoritative by the community of God's people**

### A. The Old Testament Canon

When the phrase 'the Law' or 'the Law and prophets' is used, it denotes that which is accepted as authoritative among God's people. By referring to this twofold reference we know that all the present OT books were included. The closely knit Jewish community always accepted these books as divine down to today. Jesus did too!

(1) Daniel 9:26 shows that the two divisions was already accepted by the exile.

*Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land. (Daniel 9:6)*

(2) This twofold categorization is made ten times in the New Testament.

*On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:40)*

*... And he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. (Acts 28:23)*

There is no evidence that any authoritative books were accepted among the original books after 400 BC. The Spirit of God had departed from Israel and the continuity of the prophetic line ceased to be. The intertestamental time (400 BC to Christ's time) continued to confirm the same Law and Prophets.

### B. The New Testament Canon

The process of canonization for the New Testament is similar to the Old even though the circumstances widely differed. While the Old Testament was kept confined largely to the Israelite community protected by the priests, the New Testament spread out across the world through the Greek copies and different language translations.

Christians were wondering which books should they teach, what would they die for and what books taught the truth. Many cults existed with their own set of books. A heretic named Marcion in the second century AD said that only Luke and ten of Paul's epistles should be part of the New Testament.

We know more of the process of canonization for the New Testament because of many secondary documents. That having been said, the process was similar to the Old Testament. Canonization happened over periods of time as the community of God's people became familiar with the different books and got copies of them. For example, some books were written to certain places such as Rome (Romans) or even to individuals (3 John). It would take a good amount of time before the document circled back to Antioch, Jerusalem and the other Christian communities. Those books that were questioned were often excluded from one part of the church.

Note how Colossians 4:16 describes how the book was to be passed around.

*And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.*

Other NT references, early church fathers, translations of the NT, and ratification of the 27 books by the Councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397) all give us without question confidence in the New Testament as we know it today.

“What is of special interest is the fact that between the two earliest Bibles in the Christian church there is a recognition of the canonicity of all 27 NT books.”  
–Norman Geisler in From God to Us



# The Origins of the Bible



## The Extent of the Bible

Why aren't other books part of the Bible?

The books of the Bible were not equally accepted by Christians. Some were accepted by all. The veracity of the books was doubted by some. Other books were treated as scripture by some Christians yet rejected by others, and yet other books were rejected by all Christians. Below is an explanative chart.

### Old Testament      New Testament

#### Unquestionably Accepted (homologoumena - spoken as one)

##### Always Accepted

- 34 of the 39 OT books fit into this category starting with the Law.
- Once accepted as divinely inspired, always accepted.

##### Always Accepted

- 20 of the 27 NT books were not questioned.
- All the church Fathers spoke in favor of their canonicity.

#### Accepted but questioned (antilegomena - spoken against)

##### Question of 5 OT books

- **Song of Solomon:** too sensual but really beautiful.
- **Ecclesiastes:** too pagan but summary sets standard.
- **Proverbs:** self-contradictory (Pr 26:4-5) but it isn't.
- **Esther:** no use of God's name but God is very evident.
- **Ezekiel:** anti-Mosaic but nothing contradictory

##### Question of 7 NT books

**Hebrews:** no clear author made the distant Western church suspicious.

**James:** Western church not certain James was the apostle; doctrinal conflict (justification).

**2 Peter:** highly debated because of style difference but this is due to the lack of a scribe (1 Pe 5:12).

**2,3 John:** was doubted because of vagueness of who the 'elder' was and limited circulation.

**Jude:** questioned because of reference to Book of Enoch (14-5) which was not inspired.

**Revelation:** Longest debated because of doctrinal issue of chapter 20 and Montanists misuse of the book. First recognized by church Fathers.

**Philemon, 1 Peter and 1 John** at times lacked recognition but considered more omitted than disputed.

The Old Latin version omitted Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter.

The Old Syriac Bible omitted 2 Peter, 2 & John, Jude and Revelation

#### Only accepted by some (apocrypha - hidden or doubtful)

##### 15 Books of Apocrypha

- The acceptance of the apocrypha is largely due to the inclusion of it by Greek scholars in the Septuagint. Certain church fathers like Augustine accepted them. They have historical value.
- The apocrypha, however, was never accepted authoritative by the Jewish community nor does it claim to be so. Jerome rejected its inspiration.

##### 11 Books of Apocrypha

- The acceptance of these books by some show their devotional value.
- These books, though, were never accepted as canonical nor did they claim or have the authority of the New Testament books.

##### OT Examples:

1, 2 Maccabees  
Tobit  
Ecclesiasticus  
Prayer of Manasseh

##### NT Examples:

Epistle to Corinthians  
Shepherd of Hermas  
Ancient Homily  
The Didache

#### Rejected by all (pseudepigrapha - false writings)

##### The OT Pseudepigrapha

- These 17+ books were written between 200 BC and 200 AD. Although they often claim to be written by biblical authors, they have been treated as spurious and even heretical at points.

##### The NT Pseudepigrapha

- By 9th century there were said to be 280 such books all of which are nearly unanimously rejected.
- They are heretical and most often books of cultic movements such as the Gnostics, Docetists, etc.

##### OT Examples:

The Book of Adam and Eve,  
Psalm 151,  
The Assumption of Moses

##### NT Examples:

Gospel of Thomas  
Gospel of Peter  
Gospel of Nicodemus  
Acts of Paul  
Lost Epistle to Corinthians



# The Origins of the Bible



## The Inspiration of the Bible

How is the Bible different from other books?

### A. THE FACT OF INSPIRATION

(2 Peter 1:15-21; 2 Timothy 3:16)

- The Bible is God's Word.
- The Bible is simply the truth. It does not only contain the truth in certain parts. The Bible is not only a means of God 'inspiring' me with some truth. The Bible is God's Word.

"It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."  
 – G. Washington  
 "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education." – T. Roosevelt

### B. THE MEANING OF INSPIRATION

(2 Timothy 3:16)

The word 'inspired' here literally means 'God-breathed.' Notice how it says that 'all scriptures' are inspired and not the authors themselves. God does a special miracle of a work in bringing His Word to written documents.

- **Revelation** is the communicating of divine truth to man. Most often it is not written down. Certain revelations made known to a prophet were to be written down as directed by God's Spirit. This became a special class of literature known as God's inspired Word.
- **Illumination** is the special understanding that comes to a person when thinking about God's Word.
- **Inspiration** is when the Spirit oversaw the writing of a prophet so that the actual words God wanted were written down as scripture.

### C. THE MEANS OF INSPIRATION

(2 Peter 1:19-21)

How did it happen?

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (1 Peter 1:20-21)

God revealed it, and the Holy Spirit 'moved' or directed the prophet as he wrote it down. We see the personalities of the writers in the scripture. God didn't dictate to them every letter but stirred and moved them.

In the end we see God moved more than forty authors over a period of 2000 years to create what we now have as the Bible. Because the Holy Spirit oversaw the process the Bible acts as one book. (1 Peter 1:10-13).

### D. THE PURPOSE OF INSPIRATION

(2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalms 19:7-11, 119:97-98; Joshua 1:7; Ac 2:42).

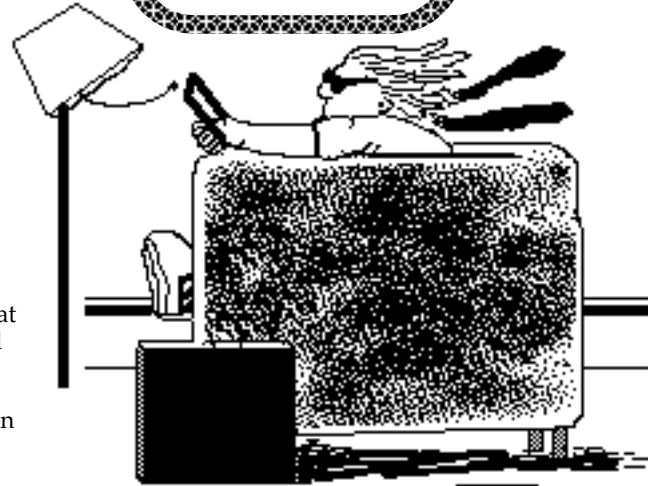
God uses the Word of God to guide, protect, encourage, warn and strengthen us. The Word of God has a cleansing and convicting power. Through it we are both humbled before God's Almighty presence as well as lifted up to see the great redemption plan of God.

The Bible is important like no other book. We need to meditate regularly in it and then obey God's leading.

*Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.*

The Bible challenges evolution, decries popular psychology, and diminishes the powers of the world. For once the Bible is accepted as the Truth, then all philosophies, economies, religions, every thought and every action comes under its scrutiny. If God has spoken, and He has, then we are responsible to Him.

Early morning  
 devotions are when  
 we meet God  
 through His Word.



In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. James 1:18



# The Origins of the Bible



## The Reliability of the Bible Texts

Doesn't the Bible have a lot of mistakes?

**Higher and lower criticism are two vastly different fields of study and research.**

### Higher Criticism: Detecting the genuineness of a Bible passage.

Started in the late 1700s this study of the Bible books based itself on a presupposition that the Bible is not divinely inspired and that a conglomerate of authors and editors assembled and modified the Bible as they desired.

The Higher Criticism studies has been largely wasted due to their inability to accept the Bible texts as they present themselves. For example, many of them would deny a literal Exodus and think it merely something the Israelites later created for a national story.

### Lower Criticism: Detecting the accuracy of a Biblical text.

Lower criticism uses a whole different spirit to discover the accuracy of the biblical texts. On the whole they accept the genuineness of the canonical texts but seek to ascertain what were the original texts used.

There are many variants in the thousands of manuscripts but they also are proof that the original documents are not far from what we have in today's copies.

### Background of Lower Criticism

We do not possess the original Bible texts (autographs). We do have many thousands of manuscripts which are copies of the originals. It is best to think of our manuscripts as descendants of the originals. Each generation hand copied their own. The originals became damaged or worn and were destroyed.

These manuscripts have their own family trees. The texts would be copied and then distributed to different centers so they could read them aloud to their congregations. Each Christian center then would have its own family tree. Once a copy got to the center, then all the mistakes in that document would be repeated as scribes copied that document. Their resemblance would be from the first one that they received to copy.

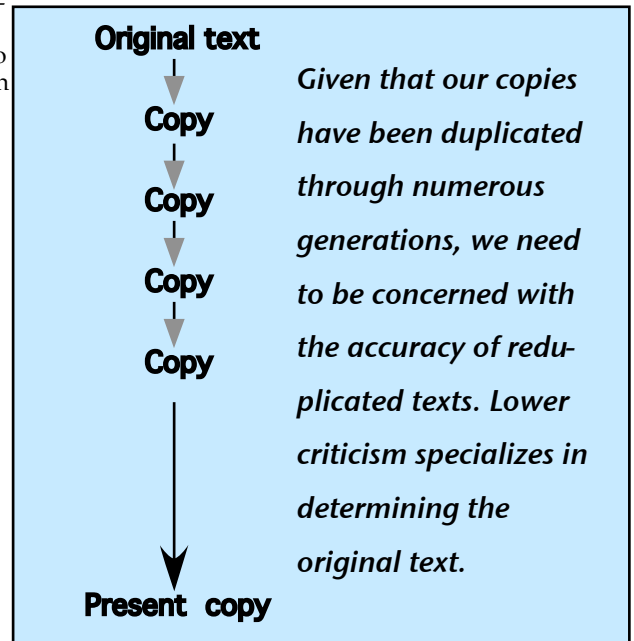
The goal in Lower Criticism is to find the original 'father' text, the autograph by comparing the different families of texts.

### The Old Testament Passages

The Old Testament faced an entirely different situation than the New Testament. They had one chief worship center.

The scribes would specialize in copying the scriptures when they were worn. The scribes were extraordinarily careful in copying these texts. They would count the letters going each way. If they found one mistake, they would throw that page away. They did make occasional mistakes like the reversing of letters, but they did not dare tamper with God's Word. They preserved the integrity of the holy texts by burning the old ones with defects. So the number of copies spanned literally thousands of years.

Until recently, our most ancient copies (manuscripts) of the Old Testament were from the 10th century. Because of this length of time, many doubted their reliability. They could of course check its message with the Septuagint which was written several hundred years before Christ. This was a Greek translation. But more recently with archaeological findings and especially the Dead Sea Scrolls in the 1940s, the Hebrew (Masoretic) text has been found to be accurately preserved.





# The Origins of the Bible



## The Reliability of the Bible Texts

Doesn't the Bible have a lot of mistakes?

Continued

### The New Testament Texts

The New Testament manuscripts on the other hand are numerous. These 5,000 plus manuscripts date from the 2nd century. Those who ask whether the originals had ever existed can find their answer here. They certainly did. Through their variants (differences), we can trace back and discover the manuscript family trees.

Do we find that the texts are reliable? Definitely. Although one may hear of thousands of variants or errors, we must keep in mind that they count the same error in each of the 5,000 manuscripts. After careful examination, they have found that only 40 lines (400 words) of the 20,000 lines are in question. We can be sure that the New Testament is 99% pure. The Iliad by contrast has 5% corrupted text. There is no ancient text that is more reliable than the New Testament.

What is more helpful, is that we know exactly what the differences of the Greek text are. At the foot of each page of the Greek texts, one can see footnoted what variants each verse might have. They note which texts support which variant. In this way Lower Criticism has dispelled any fears of an unreliable text. One main advantage of studying Greek is to be able to read these footnotes! English translations mention only the most significant variants. Perhaps we should note that some say the originals were not in Greek but in Aramaic. This is amazing that this theory is being so strongly propagated. We should dismiss it because the facts of the manuscripts do not support the claim.

**Egyptian texts** are among the oldest because the dry climate is conducive to preserving the old texts. Alexandrian and 'neutral' texts derive from Egypt. Some argue that older is more accurate, but this is not necessarily true. Just because they lasted longer in the dry climate does not make them more accurate.

**Syrian (Byzantine) texts** are centered around the northern Syrian area near Antioch. Western texts are those who were gathered closer to Rome in Italy, the capital of the Roman Empire.

### Summary

We do not need to be concerned that we are missing anything when we read our translations. The major differences such as whether there is a long ending on the Gospel of Mark or not is usually footnoted in good translations. Nothing is of importance in these sections that we cannot find elsewhere.

The main difference is whether we trust and obey God's Word that is before us. The more confidence we have in God's Word for our own lives, the more we can grow as Christians. Satan seeks to create mistrust when there needs to be none.

**God speaks and expects us to listen!**

**3 Large Main Christian Centers**

Each having their own NT Greek manuscript family.