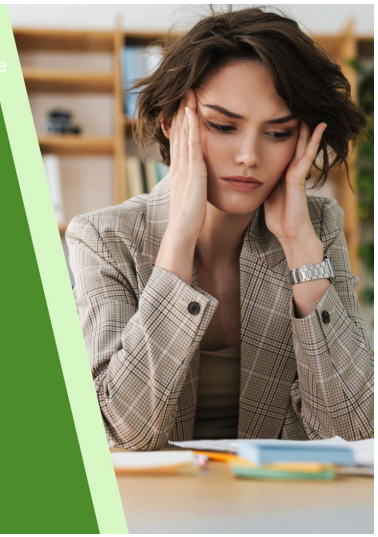
2021 FFCS Weekend Virtual Conference

CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE? THE AUTHORITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES



Pastor Chris Smith

July 30 — August 1, 2021

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?
- Reliability of the Bible – Is the Bible trustworthy? Is it accurate? Has it been corrupted?
- Interpretation of the Bible – How are we to understand the the Bible?

Christian Science undermines the Bible's trustworthiness
Nevertheless, the Bible is eminently trustworthy

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

"As adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life."
First Tenet of Christian Science; Science and Health 497:3

"The Bible has been my only authority."
Science and Health 126:29-30



IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?
  - Claim
  - Appearance & Practice
  - Reality

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- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?
  - Claim – Inspired S&H
  - Appearance & Practice – Twin Authority with S&H

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE & THE BIBLE



IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?
  - Claim – Inspired S&H
  - Appearance & Practice – Twin Authority with S&H
    - Churches
    - CS Bible Lessons

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?
  - Claim – Inspired S&H
  - Appearance & Practice – Twin Authority with S&H
    - Churches
    - CS Bible Lessons
  - Reality – Becomes subordinate, because it's only allowed to speak through the filter of S&H

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?

16 All Scripture is **breathed out** by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16

The Bible claims to be **INSPIRED**, God-breathed.

IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

•Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?

…no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20b-21

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2 Peter 1:20b-21

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IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

•Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** **we ourselves heard this very voice** borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced **by the will of man**, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along by the Holy Spirit**.

2 Peter 1:20b-21

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IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

•Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?

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2 Peter 1:20b-21

What Scripture says—God says

The Bible claims to be God's Word—authoritative and trustworthy

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IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- *Authority of the Bible – What kind of a book is the Bible?*

- **Reliability of the Bible – Is the Bible trustworthy? Is it accurate? Has it been corrupted?**



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

"The decisions by vote of Church Councils as to what should and should not be considered Holy Writ; the manifest mistakes in the ancient versions; the thirty thousand different readings in the Old Testament, and the three hundred thousand in the New, — these facts show how a mortal and material sense stole into the divine record, with its own hue darkening to some extent the inspired pages. But mistakes could neither wholly obscure the divine Science of the Scriptures seen from Genesis to Revelation, mar the demonstration of Jesus, nor annul the healing by the prophets, who foresaw that 'the stone which the builders rejected' would become 'the head of the corner.'"

Science and Health 139:15



IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

- Can I trust the Bible that sits on my desk?

"We have only error-ridden copies [of the New Testament], and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways."

Bart Ehrman, from *Misquoting Jesus*



IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

Is the Bible on my desk reliable? Yes. Let me explain…

We don't have the originals—called autographs—of the NT. Why not?

Manuscripts were perishable
Manuscripts wore out, were lost, were destroyed

So we only have access to copies, not to the originals. This is true of all ancient writings. Nevertheless, some manuscripts have been preserved, and we have discovered them throughout the centuries and continue to discover them right up to the present. These manuscripts give us important information that help us establish whether or not the Bible is reliable.

AUTHORITY & RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES



F C Baur, scholar at Tubingen, 1844 article applying Hegelian dialectic to NT

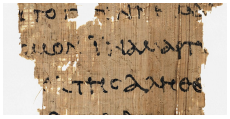
Hegelian dialectic

Thesis	**Antithesis**	**Synthesis**
Jewish School Peter	Gentile School Paul	Gospel of John & Acts

Concluded Gospel of John could not have been written any earlier than AD 160 and was probably written around AD 170. Therefore nothing in John's gospel was historically accurate and it was certainly not written by the apostle John.



1934 Colin H Roberts, papyrologist going through papyri in the John Rylands Library in Manchester University



John 18:31-33; 37-38

P52

AUTHORITY & RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

Author & Work	**Written**	**Earliest Copy**	**Time Span**	**# of Copies**
Herodotus (History)	480-425 BC	AD 900	1300	8
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	AD 900	1200	7
Pliny the Younger (History)	AD 61-113	AD 850	750	7
Tacitus (Annals)	AD 100	AD 1100	1000	20
Thucydides (History)	460-400 BC	AD 900	1300	8

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Additionally there are 5-10,000 NT manuscripts translated into other languages AND there are more than 1 million quotations of the NT by Church Fathers in homilies & commentaries. The NT has 260 chapters, just shy of 8,000 verses. We could reproduce virtually the entire NT many times over, just from quotations by the Church Fathers.

AUTHORITY & RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The quantity and quality of the manuscript evidence for the NT dwarfs anything in ancient history or literature. But what do those manuscripts show us? Do they agree completely or do they vary widely?

Textual Criticism, which is a discipline that has as its fundamental goal, reconstructing the wording of an original document that we no longer have, allows us to compare different manuscript copies of the NT to see how much they agree, whether they have any variants, and if so how much variance we see between the manuscripts? So how many variants do we see among NT manuscripts?

- 138,162 words in NT
- About 400,000 variants

RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES - VARIANTS

Viable – has a good possibility of being part of the original wording

Meaningful – changes the meaning of the text

- **Neither Viable nor Meaningful** – misspellings fall into this category; 70% of all variants involve spelling errors
- **Viable but not Meaningful** – John's name is spelled variously with 1 ''n" or 2, we don't know which is right, but regardless it doesn't change the meaning
- **Meaningful but not Viable** – changes the meaning of the text, but has no chance of having been in the original
- **Viable and Meaningful** – smallest amount; 1% so 4,000 out of 400K

RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES - VARIANTS

- **Viable and Meaningful** – smallest amount; 1% so 4,000 out of 400,000

However, no major doctrines depend on any viable and meaningful variants.

"One word of warning already referred to, must be emphasized in conclusion. No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading."

- Sir Frederic Kenyon, British Paleographer and Biblical and Classical Scholar.

"Essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament."

- Bart Ehrman

AUTHORITY & RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

The degree of fundamental agreement in the NT manuscripts and the amount of manuscript evidence for the NT far exceeds anything else from the ancient world. If we can't trust the Bible, then we have no basis for trusting the reliability of any piece of ancient history or literature either.

- Staggering amount of NT manuscripts—more than 5,800—some

  copied just decades after the originals were written
- Stunning agreement of upwards of 99% of the NT
- **Compelling evidence that the Bible is trustworthy**