

IS THE BIBLE ACCURATE? Part 3 August 16, 2015

The two previous articles in the *Cordova Connection* have focused upon inspiration and canonization of the Bible, as it relates to its accuracy. The purpose has been to determine whether or not the Bible can be trusted as the source by which each of us should live our lives. This week's article will target the evidence and proofs that the Bible is accurate because of the translation processes used during the first century and following.

TRANSLATION

God has spoken to man! In order for man to understand the communication of the Creator, he must be able to hear and comprehend. Since revelation has ended (Jude 3), it is necessary to be able to read the revealed message in its written form. For that to happen, there must be, by necessity, a translation of the Bible that can be comprehended. Since there are no original autographs from the prophets, there had to be copies of copies of copies, and so on. The early church realized the importance of translating the Bible into other languages, and those translations are of the greatest benefit to modern man in determining which ones can be trusted.

Textual criticism is a technique employed to verify the various translations of the Bible as accurate and acceptable. For instance, several fragments of the Gospel of John have been recovered that date to the early second century, probably fifty to seventy-five years after the original was penned. It is a fact, that the original autographs of the apostles were immediately copied because it was commanded that the letters were to be circulated to other congregations of the Lord's church (Col. 4:16). It doesn't seem logical for one congregation to send its only copy of a letter written by an apostle to another congregation, especially since the revelation process would soon end (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

Evidence suggests that all the New Testament books were written by A.D. 100; therefore, the readers of the Bible had to rely upon a copy of each letter. That being the case, can the reader rely upon the copy he holds in his hands today? The answer is a resounding, "yes!" History has revealed that scribes were well paid for their work of copying the original autographs and the copies that followed.

Also, it is extremely important to understand that the difference of content between early New Testament manuscripts is miniscule, only about 10 percent. Where differences do exist, they occur in areas where there is no doctrinal impact upon the writings. For example, the greatest number of variations occurs in different spellings of words. For example, the author of the Codex Vaticanus spelled "John" with only one *n*, instead of with the common Greek practice of using two, and such differences have no impact on the meaning of the intended message. The second largest group of variants comes as a result of omissions of small Greek words or variations in word order. An example of this type of discrepancy is, "In the Greek a person's name may or may not be preceded by an article ('the'). And the phrase *the good man* could also be written in the Greek as 'the man, the good one,' although in English both phrases are translated as 'the good man'" (Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, pg. 215). Again, these minor differences have no impact upon the meaning of the intended message.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is the greatest book that man has ever been blessed to have. When one travels to foreign nations, especially third world nations, and discovers the great desire they have to possess even one copy, he will recognize the benefit of having unlimited access to the Word of God. It is paramount that Bible students have confidence in the Holy Scripture of God, but that can only occur when the proper effort and study is put forth.