

Authenticity of the Bible

“....., and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” (1Pet.3:15)

Introduction

Christianity is built on two basis:

1. Jesus Christ the Son of God the founder of Christianity
2. The Holy Bible the book of Christians

If any of these basis are false , then Christianity is demolished as a heavenly religion.

Here we will discuss only the “book of the Christians” which always be a target of attacks either from the Liberal Western schoolers , or from the followers of other religions who noticed the superiority of the “Bible” over their books.

Brief about the bible

Our holy book “the bible” consists of two books joined together;

1. The Old Testament which was written over than a thousand years by many different writers, starting with Moses and ending with Malachi . It was used by the Jewish Church and in the temple. It starts with the beginning of the creation in Genesis and ends with the last prophet “Malachi” about five centuries before Christ.
2. The New Testament which includes the life of our Saviour , the spread of the church in the next thirty two years after Christ , educational letters from the Apostles and finally a prophetic book about the future of the church , her final victory over all the Satanic powers and next coming of the Victorious Lord.

Regardless of all the different authors(~40 writers), different time of writing (~1100 years), yet the Holy Spirit who inspired it keep it intact steadfast against all the wild attacks over the history.

Is Our Copy of the Bible a Reliable Copy of the Original?

1.Old Testament

How do we know the Bible has been kept in tact for over 2,000 years of copying? Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls our earliest Hebrew copy of the Old Testament was the Masoretic text dating around 800 A.D. The Dead Sea Scrolls date around the time of Jesus copied by the Qumran community, a Jewish sect living around the Dead Sea. We also have the Septuagint which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament dating in the second century B.C. When we compare these texts which have an 800-1000 years gap between them we are amazed that 95% of the texts are identical with only minor variations and a few discrepancies In 1947. The discovery of these "Dead Sea Scrolls" at Qumran has been hailed as the outstanding archaeological discovery of the twentieth century. The scrolls have revealed that a commune of monastic farmers flourished in the valley from 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. It is believed that when they saw the Romans invade the land they put their cherished leather scrolls in the jars and hid them in the caves on the cliffs northwest of the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea Scrolls include a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, a fragmented copy of Isaiah, containing much of Isaiah 38-6, and fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. The majority of the fragments are from Isaiah and the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The books of Samuel, in a tattered copy, were also found and also two complete chapters of the book of Habakkuk. In addition, there were a number of non-biblical scrolls related to the commune found.

These materials are dated around 100 B.C. The significance of the find, and particularly the copy of Isaiah, was recognized by Merrill F. Unger when he said, "This complete document of Isaiah quite understandably created a sensation since it was the first major Biblical manuscript of great antiquity ever to be recovered. Interest in it was especially keen since it antedates by more than a thousand years the oldest Hebrew texts preserved in the Massoretic tradition."

The Septuagint

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, also confirms the accuracy of the copyists who ultimately gave us the Massoretic text. The Septuagint is often referred to as the LXX because it was reputedly done by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria around 200 B.C. The LXX appears to be a rather literal translation from the Hebrew, and the manuscripts we have are pretty good copies of the original translation

Conclusion

In his book, *Can I Trust My Bible*, R. Laird Harris concluded, "We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C. . . . indeed, it would be rash scepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity."

2. The New Testament Documents

Many all over the history tried to tarnish the NT as it is not authentic . Recently we notice a fierce attack from another religion trying to convince our young people specially in universities that our bible is not the true bible.

There are two main areas to be tested:

1. Are the records of the NT about its main character "Jesus Christ" are true?
2. Did the NT changed or altered over the past 20 centuries for any reason (mainly to omit any reference to the prophet of this religion) ?

First area : Are the records of the NT about its main character "Jesus Christ" are true?

There are very strong internal and external proofs to support the authenticity of the records:

Internal proofs:

1. Honesty of the writers : One of the more striking features of the gospels is that the writers did not hesitate to record facts that might be used against them . If you have a witness who is trying to distort the truth, one of the first things they will do is withhold information that might be detrimental to their case, or to their personal credibility. Yet one of the more striking features of the gospels is that the writers did not hesitate to record facts that might be used against them.

2. The Unacceptability of the account :The core of the gospels is the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Son of God . This is not acceptable to the world , but the writers insisted on it. Christianity will be easily accepted and extended without these illogical facts of the NT.
3. The Cross for His followers :Jesus did not promise His followers by any earthly or materialistic reward . On the contrary , He told them about the sufferings , torture and death that wait them because they follow Him.
4. There are 4 writers giving the account about the life of Jesus. They are different in character , education , social background , in the time they record the account and appear that their accounts are contradicting with each other , yet it is proven that all of them are giving the complete picture of the same person “ Jesus Christ”

External proofs :

1. All the archaeological discoveries which proof beyond doubt that all what is recorded about “ Jesus Christ” is true and authentic . The time of His birth , the names of the rulers and other personalities recorded in the account , the time of His mission , His crucifixion , the empty tomb , etc.
2. The fast spread of the believe in “Jesus Christ” in the whole world without the use of any weapons or war to convince the people to accept the new believe.
3. The great number of martyrs who accept to sacrifice their lives for the love of their Saviour “Jesus Christ” without any trace of hatred even to those who martyred and torture them.

Second area : Did the NT changed or altered over the past 20 centuries for any reason (mainly to omit any reference to the prophet of this religion) ?

Opponents of Christianity frequently claim that the text we have today is not an accurate reproduction of the original but this, quite literally, could not be farther from the truth. On every historical criterion, the text of the New Testament is *vastly* better documented and corroborated than *any* other document of these times. In the words of Sir Frederick Kenyon, director and principal librarian of the British Museum:

"... the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."

The following highlight this fact:

1. The available manuscripts written in Greek

We have 5 manuscripts from the 4th. And 5th. Century include the majority of books of the NT and OT in Greek

- 1) Codex Vaticanus (4th. Century)
- 2) Codex Sinaiticus (4th. Century) It was found in the monastery of St. Catherine at Sinai , given as a present to Czar Alexander of Russia , then sold to the British museum in 1933 AD.
- 3) Codex Alexandrinus (5th. Century) . It was found at Alexandria , given as a gift to the king of England in the 17th. Century by a Greek Patriarch of Alexandria. Now it is in British museum.

- 4) Codex Ephraemi (5th century) It was found at Florence, Italy. Now at Bibliotheque Natioale Paris.
- 5) Codex Beza (5th century) .Its origin is doubtful , now in the library of the University of Cambridge.

- ❖ We have more than 2000 manuscripts dated from the middle of the 5th. Century to the 15th. Century. Each of these manuscripts contain parts of the NT.
- ❖ There are many Papyri which include parts of the biblical texts reserved in the libraries all over the world

2. The old translations

- ❖ The Coptic translation in the middle of the 2nd. Century. It has a great value in the study of texts.
- ❖ The Latin translation (the Volgata) 390AD by St. Jerome.
- ❖ The Ethiopian translation about the 4th. Century.
- ❖ And many other translations.

3. The writings of the early fathers

There are many testimonies from the early church fathers about the authenticity of the bible . This testimony is either by quoting from the books of the bible or talking about these books. Polycarp (AD 69-155), Papias (AD 60-140) , Irenaeus (AD 120-190) , Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-220) are just examples