



Thought Testing Attacks the Historicity of Scripture: Biblical Manuscripts Vastly Outnumber Those of All Ancient Writers; Josh McDowell: Manuscript Comparison

- (36) Thought testing involves the Dark Side's attempts to confuse both unbeliever and believer about what the Bible says and Progressive ideology is the current major antagonist.
- (37) Thought testing occurs when biblical principles are challenged. When it is successful then the thinking of the individual is altered to line up with human viewpoint.
- (38) Children and adolescents are challenged today by several areas of such human viewpoint thinking such as sex education, multiculturalism, diversity, political correctness, the Big Bang, evolution, moral equivalence, equality, socialism, and the assertion that there is no absolute truth.
- (39) More directly to one's spiritual health are the assaults against Christianity, the Bible, God, churches, and especially Jesus Christ.
- (40) The defense against these assaults is an inventory of doctrine that places the believer in the sophisticated spiritual life and preferably at the level of spiritual maturity.
- (41) Those who attack these objects, institutions, and Personalities of Christianity often assert that our beliefs are founded on religious texts with no secular documentation of their historicity. This excerpt may put these claims into perspective:

The NET Bible. 1st Beta Ed. (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 2364:

No ancient literature has survived in its original form; everything we have is derived from copies of the originals. The New Testament is no exception. However, in comparison with any other ancient literature, the New Testament is without a peer—both in terms of the chronological proximity and the surviving number. Several ancient authorities are preserved in only a handful of manuscripts. Not so with the New Testament. There are approximately 5,500 Greek witnesses, ranging in date from the second century A.D. into the middle ages. Besides the Greek evidence, there are nearly 30,000 versional copies (e.g., Latin, Coptic, and Syriac), and over 1,000,000 quotations from the New Testament in the church Fathers. New Testament criticism has always had an embarrassment of riches unparalleled in any other field.

- (42) The major points of this paragraph are confirmed by Josh McDowell who compares the biblical texts with those of ancient writers whose accounts of their periods of history go unquestioned.
- (43) Before quoting this reference we need to distinguish the difference between an *autograph* and a *manuscript*. An *autograph* is an *original* manuscript in the author's own handwriting. *Manuscript* refers to *hand-written copies* of the original or of copies of the original by those other than the original author.
- (44) McDowell quotes several sources to illustrate the preponderance of manuscript evidence for the New Testament as compared to that of other ancient authors' works.

McDowell, Josh. "The Reliability of the Bible." Chap. 4 in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 1:39, 41-43:

The historical reliability of the Scripture should be tested by the same criteria that all historical documents are tested.

There are now more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions and we have more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. (p. 39)



THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARED WITH OTHER WORKS OF ANTIQUITY: The Manuscript Comparison

F. F. Bruce in *The New Testament Documents* vividly pictures the comparison between the New Testament and ancient historical writings: "Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the New Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. For **Caesar's** *Gallic Wars* (composed between 58 and 50 B.C.) there are several extant manuscripts, but only nine or ten are good, and the oldest is some 900 years later than Caesar's day. Of the 142 books of the Roman history of **Livy** (59 B.C.-A.D.17), only 35 survive; these are known to us from not more than 20 manuscripts of any consequence, only one of which, and that containing fragments of Books 3 and 6, is as old as the fourth century. Of the 14 books of the Histories of **Tacitus** (ca A.D. 100) only four and a half survive; of the 16 books of his *Annals*, 10 survive in full and two in part. The text of these extant portions of this two great historical works depends entirely on two manuscripts, one of the ninth century and one of the eleventh. (p. 41)

J. Harold Greenlee writes in *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* about the time gap between the original manuscript (the autograph) and the extant manuscript (the old copy surviving), saying that "the oldest known manuscript of most of the Greek classical authors are dated a thousand years or more after the author's death. The time interval for the Latin authors is somewhat less, varying down to a minimum of three centuries in the case of Virgil. In the case of the New Testament, however, two of the most important manuscripts were written within 300 years after the New Testament was completed, and some virtually complete New Testament books as well as extensive fragmentary manuscripts of many parts of the New Testament date back to one century from the original writings. (pp. 41-42)

Greenlee adds that "since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest manuscripts were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant manuscripts is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the New Testament is likewise assured."

F. F. Bruce says: "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament. (p. 42)