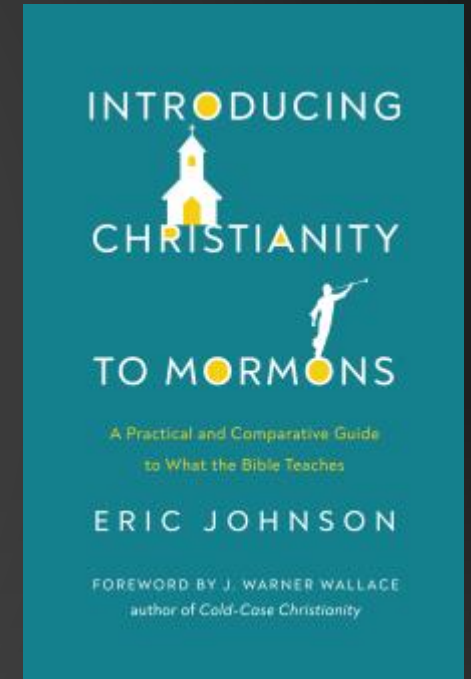
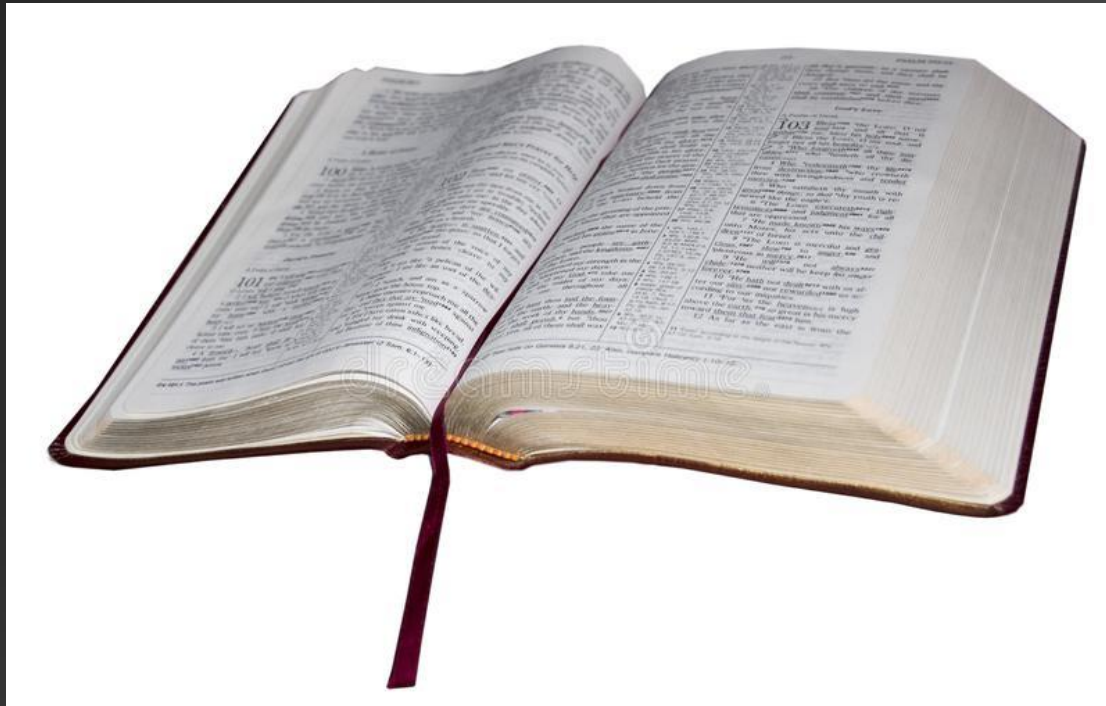


TRANSLATION OR TRANSMISSION? HOW WE GOT THE NEW TESTAMENT



BY ERIC JOHNSON
MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY

For a PDF file of this presentation, go to mrm.org/scripture

VARIANTS

- The question is, are they *viable* and *meaningful*
 - We ask, Does it change the meaning of a word?
 - There was no dictionary in those days
 - John was a creative speller. In 8 verses John 9, he spells the same verb 3 different ways
 - Most are spelling mistakes and are easy to detect

IS 400,000 VARIANTS REALLY FAIR?



“The vast majority of textual variants are wholly uninteresting except to specialists. When one hears numbers like 400,000 variants (if that number is even accurate), one must remember that they are spread across 25,000 manuscripts. A large percentage of these variants cluster around the same verses or passages.

IS 400,000 VARIANTS REALLY FAIR?

“Less than 3 percent of them are significant enough to be presented in one of the two standard critical editions of the Greek New Testament. Only about a tenth of 1 percent are interesting enough to make their way into footnotes in most English translations. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that *no orthodox doctrine or ethical practice of Christianity depends solely on any disputed wording.*”

RELATIVELY FEW ERRORS IN THE MANUSCRIPTS



“When we have documents like our New Testament writings copied and recopied thousands of times the scope for copyists’ errors is so enormously increased that it is surprising there are no more than there actually are.

RELATIVELY FEW ERRORS IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

Fortunately, if the great number of MSS [manuscripts] increases the number of scribal errors, it increases proportionately the means of correcting such errors, so that the margin of doubt left in the process of recovering the exact wording is not so large as might be feared; it is in truth remarkably small.”

VARIANTS DON'T NORMALLY CHANGE THE MEANING

Put another way, NT scholar Bruce Metzger estimates that fewer than 40 lines out of 20,000 lines are seriously debated!

And there are no serious issues that would contradict biblical Christianity!



SET RULES ARE FOLLOWED

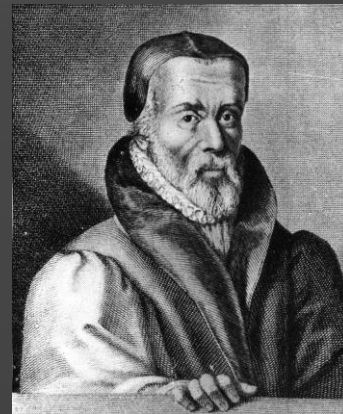
- Generally, priority given to the **earliest** copies
- The harder the reading, the more likely it was the **original**
 - A temptation for a copyist would be to smooth over the text to make it more understandable

INTEGRITY OF THE TRANSLATORS

- The grunt work was paid for by translators such as John Wycliffe and William Tyndale
- Modern translators provide tools to help a person to better understand



John Wycliffe
1328-1384



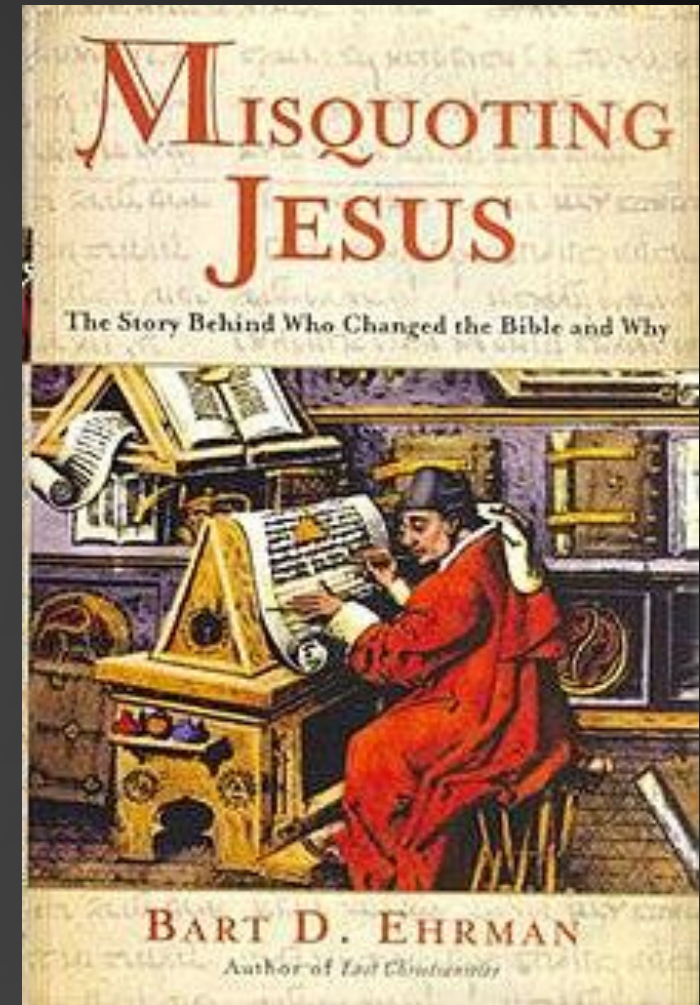
William Tyndale
1494-1536



Dr. Ronald Youngblood
A translator of the NIV OT

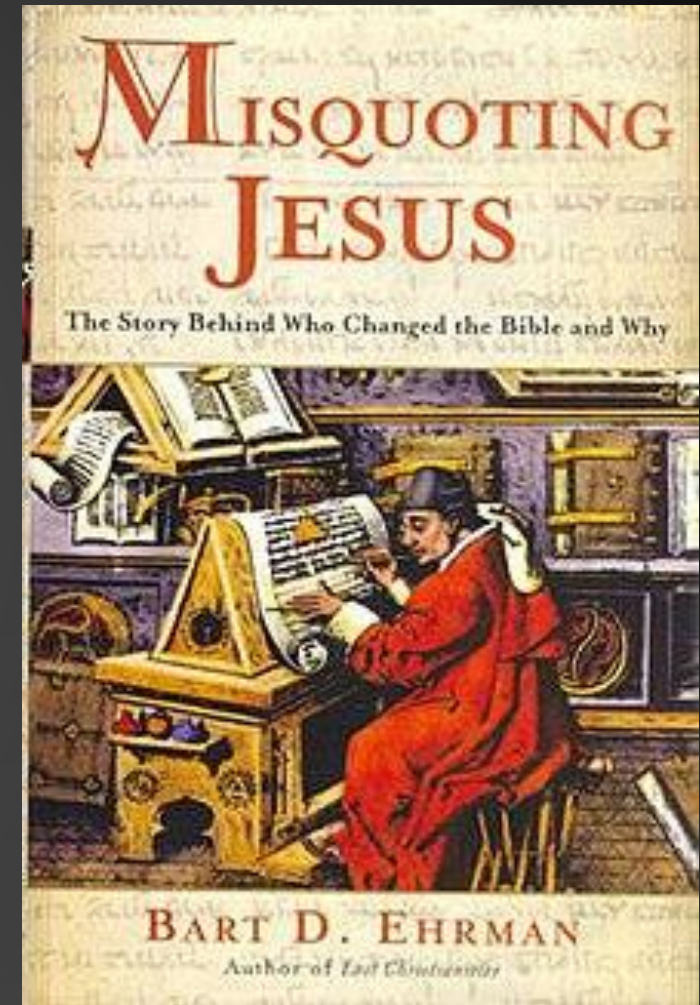
BUT EVEN BART EHRMAN SAYS NO ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES ARE CHANGED

Question asked by publisher: “Bruce Metzger, your mentor in textual criticism to whom this book is dedicated, has said that there is nothing in these variants of Scripture that challenges any essential Christian beliefs (e.g., the bodily resurrection of Jesus or the Trinity). Why do you believe these core tenets of Christian orthodoxy will be in jeopardy based on the scribal errors you discovered in the biblical manuscripts?”



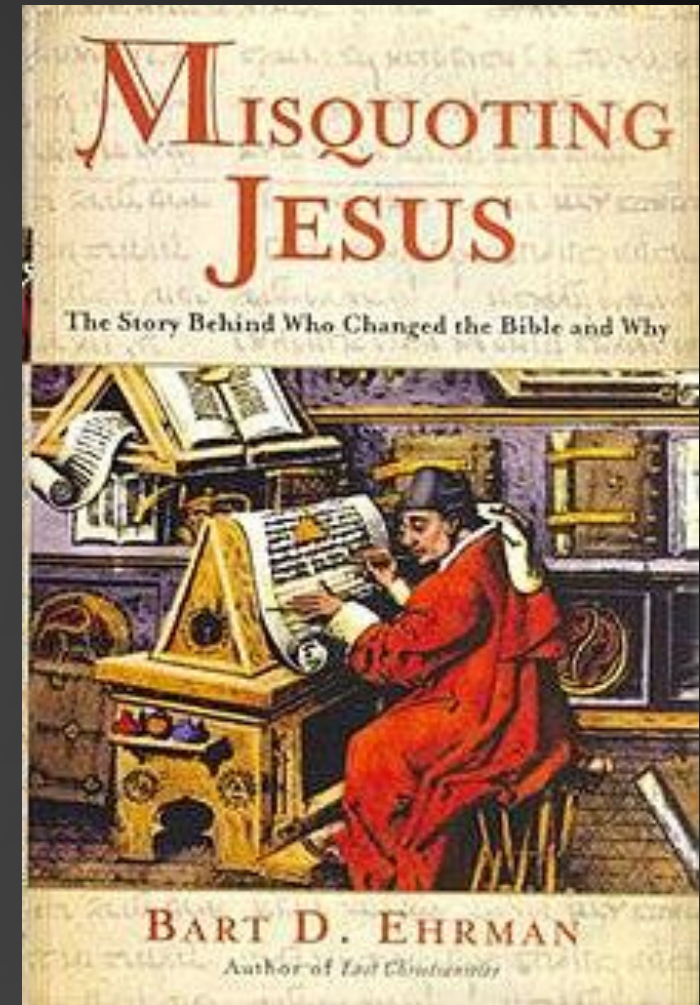
BUT EVEN BART EHRMAN SAYS NO ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES ARE CHANGED

Ehrman responded: “Even though we may disagree on important religious questions—he is a firmly committed Christian and I am not—we are in complete agreement on a number of very important historical and textual questions. If he and I were put in a room and asked to hammer out a consensus statement on what we think the original text of the New Testament probably looked like, there would be very few points of disagreement. . .



BUT EVEN BART EHRMAN SAYS NO ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES ARE CHANGED

“The position I argue for in *Misquoting Jesus* does not actually stand at odds with Prof. Metzger’s position that the essential Christian beliefs are not affected by textual variants in the manuscript tradition of the New Testament. . . . Most textual variants (Prof. Metzger and I agree on this) have no bearing at all on what a passage means. . . .”

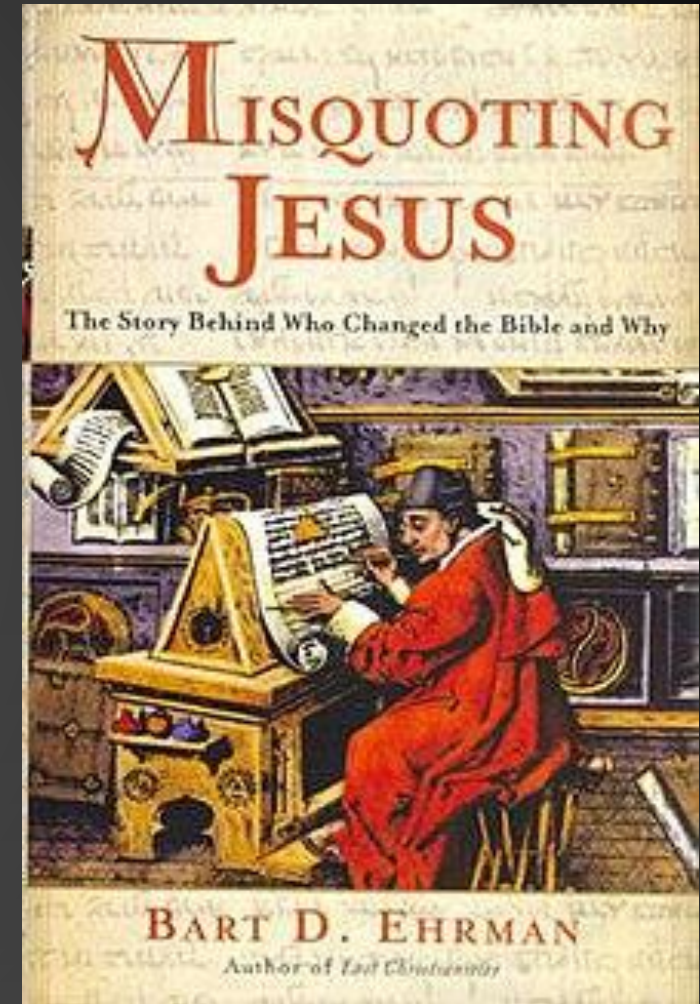


TOP 10 VERSES NOT ORIGINAL IN NT

To prove this is the case, here are Ehrman's "Top Ten Verses that Were Not Originally in the NT"

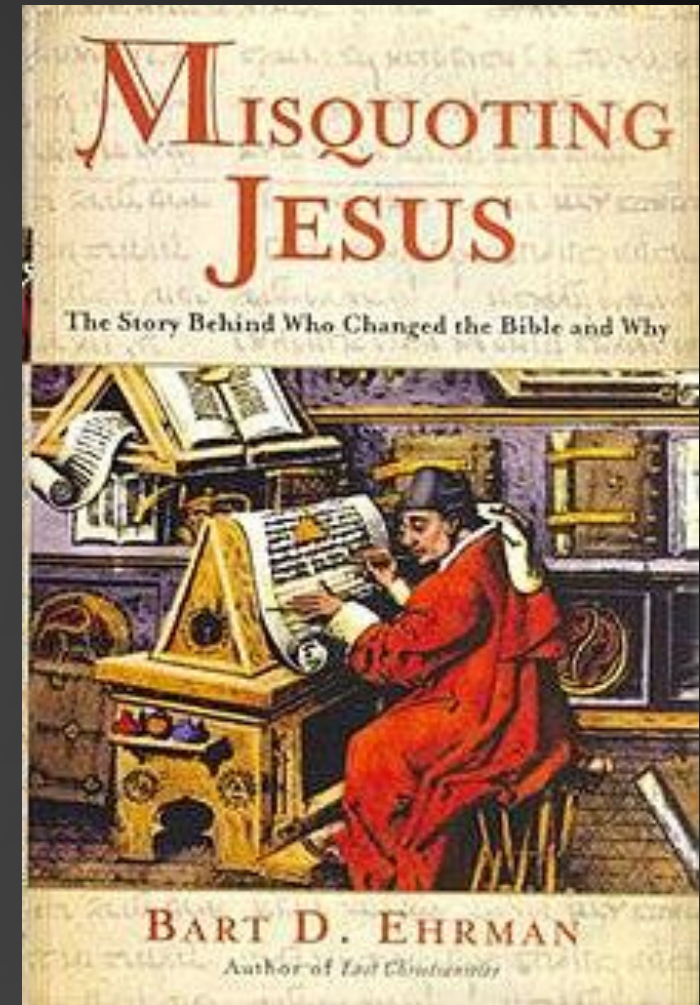
- 1) 1 John 5:7--discussed
- 2) John 8:7—discussed
- 3) John 8:11—discussed
- 4) Luke 22:44: An angel strengthened him and Jesus sweat like great drops of blood

Scholar Leon Morris writes, "Some very good MSS omit these verses and RSV puts them in the margin; but the probability is that they should be included."



TOP 10 VERSES NOT ORIGINAL IN NT

- 5) Luke 22:19-20: ⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body **given for you;** do this in remembrance of me.”
- ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, **which is poured out for you.**”
- 6) Mark 16:17: Discussed
- 7) Mark 16:18: Discussed
- 8) John 5:4: Angel disturbed the waters (not included)
- 9) Luke 24:12: Peter leaning over (included in early copies)
- 10) Luke 24:51: “While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ”



**I RECOMMEND THE 2020 DEBATE BETWEEN BART
EHRMAN AND CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR
DANIEL WALLACE**

Ehrman vs Wallace - Can We Trust the Text of the NT?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRHjZCKRlu4>

REGARDING VERSES IN LUKE

“Ever since Westcott and Hort there has been a strong feeling that a number of passages towards the end of Luke (and some elsewhere) are spurious. Westcott and Hort called them ‘Western non-interpolations,’ a curious name for interpolations into their beloved ‘neutral’ text. Scholars have been swayed by this weighty opinion, but the great antiquity of the Western text and by the difficulty of explaining why scribes should omit such striking passages. Recently, however, attention has been given to the newly discovered papyri, especially the great P75. It is now plan that these readings are as old or more probably older than the Western text, and the trend is toward accepting them.”

MODERN TRANSLATORS PROVIDE TOOLS



“Readers of almost any English language translation of the Bible except for the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) can look at the footnotes, or marginal notes, of their Bibles and see mention of a broad cross-section of the most important and interesting of these variants. Unfortunately, many readers don’t consult these notes often enough.”

RATING OF THE TEXTUAL VARIANTS

“The United Bible Societies’ fourth edition of the Greek New Testament contains 1,438 of the most significant textual variants in its footnotes and presents the most important manuscript evidence for each reading of the disputed text. Using the letters A through D, the committee that produced the edition also ranks its level of confidence in its decision to adopt a particular reading.”

EXAMPLE: MATTHEW 17:21 ONLY IN KJV

- Jesus heals a boy with a demon
- “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”
- United Bible Society left this verse out of the main text
- Out of 4 ratings (A through D), the omission is a strong “B” grade
- The verse may have been added by later copyists to fit the parallel account in Mark 9:29
- Modern translators leave out the verse
- The verse is placed in a footnote—no hiding anything

NO MAJOR DOCTRINES ARE AFFECTED

- For instance, consider the doctrine of the **deity** of Christ
- “It’s nonsense to say Jesus’ deity wasn’t invented until the fourth century when you’ve already got the evidence in earlier manuscripts.”



The Reliability of the New Testament attested by
an LDS scholar

LDS PROFESSOR LLOYD ANDERSON

“One can disagree with the textual assumptions behind some of the modern translations of the New Testament and still not be overly concerned with differences that are immaterial. For a book to undergo progressive uncovering of its manuscript history and come out with so little debatable in its text is a great tribute to its essential authenticity. First, no new manuscript discovery has produced serious differences in the essential story.

“Manuscript Discoveries of the New Testament in Perspective,” Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Presented April 13, 1963, 57-58.

LDS PROFESSOR LLOYD ANDERSON

“This survey has disclosed the leading textual controversies, and together they would be well within one percent of the text. Stated differently, all manuscripts agree on the essential correctness of 99 percent of all the verses in the New Testament. The second great fact that such a survey demonstrates is the progress that has placed the world in possession of manuscripts very near to the time of their writing.

“Manuscript Discoveries of the New Testament in Perspective,” Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Presented April 13, 1963, 57-58.

LDS PROFESSOR LLOYD ANDERSON

“One would have to be a student of ancient history to appreciate how much superior the New Testament is to any other book in its manuscript tradition.”

“Manuscript Discoveries of the New Testament in Perspective,” Papers of the Fourteenth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, Presented April 13, 1963, 57-58.

SKEPTICS LOVE THE TELEPHONE GAME

- Party game where one player whispers a sentence into the ear of a second player and so on
- Things get more skewed from player to player
- Skeptic asks, “How can you be convinced that the original message written by the biblical writers was accurately written down copy after copy after copy after copy?”
- Has the Bible’s message been garbled over time?

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TELEPHONE GAME AND NT

The Telephone Game vs. the Transmission of the New Testament Text

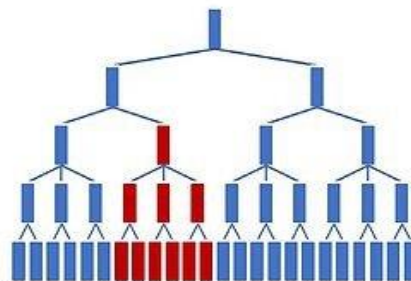


Every person in the chain passes the message on to only one person.

A **change** introduced by any one person will propagate through the entire chain.

The message is only reported by the final person in the chain.

The original message is LOST.



Manuscripts are copied multiple times, resulting in a complex web of relationships.

A **change** introduced by any one scribe will affect only a portion of the manuscript tradition.

The text is attested in over 5,000 extant Greek manuscripts, some from as early as the 2nd century.

The original message is PRESERVED.

IN ADDITION...

Telephone Game

- Oral
- Players' lack of **memory** plays a role
- The more garbled, the more fun the players have

Transmission of the Bible

- **Written**
- No memory needed, written text
- This is not a game with the scholars

SUPPOSE A CORRUPT SCRIBE DID GET IN

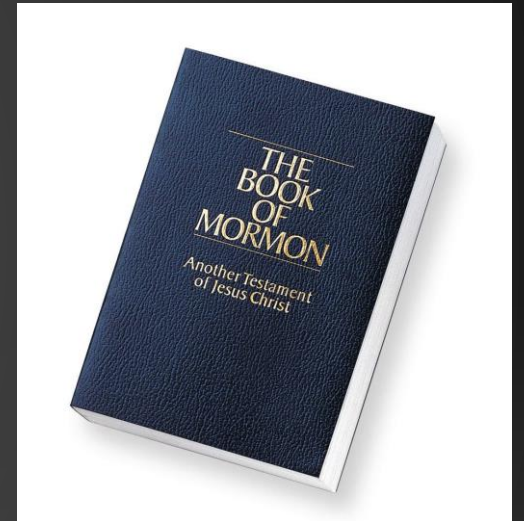
- First, if early enough, how does the scribe even know about the other books and copies?
- Suppose a scribe deletes info (supposed Luke 7) on the preexistence
- He has changed 1 copy...it only affects those manuscripts that later use that copy as an exemplar
- To make a case, he would have to travel to 3 different continents and find other Luke 7 manuscripts to make the exact same changes
- Some manuscripts were never available to “corrupt priests”
- It would have been impossible to change them all—argument from **silence**

WOULD YOU TRADE THE COPIES FOR AN AUTOGRAPH?

- Who would own any of the Bible's autographs?
- The Catholic Church would be a likely candidate
- Instead, we have thousands of copies found all over the world—a better scenario!

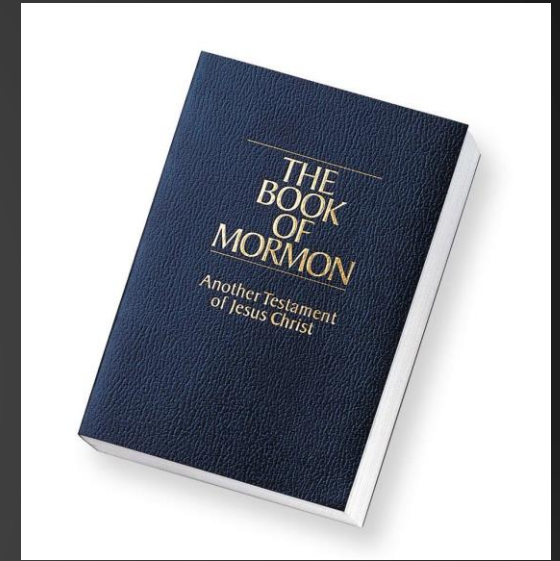
FOR THE MORMON, WHAT ABOUT...

- No autographs of the Book of Mormon
- Gold plates taken back by the Angel Moroni
- Words in the BOM altered over the years—about 4,000 changes



FOR THE MORMON, WHAT ABOUT...

- How could these changes have been made without the autograph?
- Should we consider the Book of Mormon “true as far as it is translated correctly”?



WHAT ABOUT “BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS”?

- You must always consider the **context** of a passage
- More times than not, the context will show why there is no contradiction
- In addition, there are different perspectives

HOW MANY ANGELS AT THE TOMB OF JESUS?

- Matthew 28:1-8: One angel
- Mark 16:1-8: One young man
- Luke 24:1-10: Two men
- John 20:11-13: Two angels

HOW MANY ANGELS AT THE TOMB OF JESUS?

Matthew 28:1-7

V. 2: Angel rolled stone from the tomb

V. 4: Guards were in fear

Vv. 5-7: Angel told the women not to be afraid

V. 6: Angel told the women to come into the tomb and see where Jesus was lying

V. 7: Angel told the women to tell the disciples Jesus is risen

Mark 16:1-8

V.4: Women saw the stone was rolled away

V. 5: Women entered the tomb and saw a man (angel) sitting in the tomb

V. 6 Angel told the women Jesus has risen

V. 7: Angel told the women to tell the disciples He was risen

Luke 24:1-8

V.4: Women saw the stone was rolled away

V. 3: Women entered the tomb

V. 4: 2 angels stood near the women in the tomb

V. 9: Women left and told the disciples Jesus is risen

John 20:1-3

V.1: Mary Magdalene saw the stone rolled away

V. 2: Mary Magdalene left to tell disciples Jesus is risen

Vv. 11-12: Mary returned to the tomb and saw 2 angels

HOW MANY ANGELS AT THE TOMB OF JESUS?

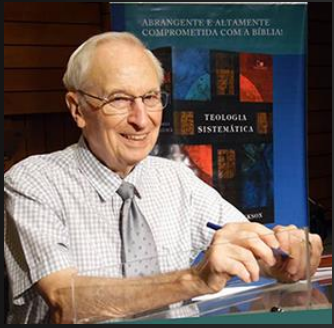
- The narrative can differ based on the perspective of the one telling the story
- Where there are two angels, there is always one
- Ex: “I went to the store with Mary.” “You liar, you went with Mary and Joe.” (Joe was not part of the story I wanted to tell you about.)
- These angels could also be different angels

WHAT ABOUT “BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS”?

- Sometimes language is phenomenal rather than **technical**
- “Sunrise” tomorrow at 6:37 a.m.—does the sun really rise?

ROUNDING UP/DOWN OF NUMBERS

“Suppose a hypothetical case in which the Bible reported a battle in which 9,476 men were involved. What then would be a correct (or infallible) report? Would 10,000 be accurate? 9,000? 9,500? 9,480? 9,475? Or would only 9,476 be a correct report? The answer is that it depends upon the purpose of the writing. If the report is an official military document which an officer is to submit to his superior, the number must be exact. That is the only way to ascertain whether there were any deserters. If, on the other hand, the account is simply to give some idea of the size of the battle, then a round number like 10,000 is adequate, and in this setting is correct.”



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONTRADICTIONS

- Mrm.org/bible-passages
- Mrm.org/bible-contradictions
- Books, including:
 - *The Bible Handbook of Difficult Verses* (Josh and Sean McDowell)
 - *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe)
 - *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch)
 - *When Cultists Ask* (Norman Geisler and Ron Rhodes)

Q&A

MORMONISM RESEARCH MINISTRY

Visit our website at www.mrm.org

Consider our books as well...

