

I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Scribes & Scripture: How We Got the Bible with John Meade and Peter Gurry

(November 25, 2022)

Ladies and gentlemen, how do we know that the New Testament documents were copied accurately? How do we know the Old Testament documents were copied accurately? And how do we know which books should be in both the Old and the New Testament? And what translations should we use? Are there better translations than others? Well, we have two guests on this program today. We'll have them in succession. Peter Gurry and John Meade will talk about their brand-new books *Scribes and Scripture*.

Our first guest is Dr. Peter Gurry and he teaches at Phoenix Seminary. Dr. Gurry, how did you guys get to wanting to write a book like *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible*?

Dr. Gurry:

That's a great question. So, John teaches Old Testament and I teach New Testament. And both of us work in this area of how we got the Bible. Particularly we both work with and study manuscripts. And then John has real expertise in canon and I've developed, I'll call it armchair expertise on translation, okay, if I'm being fair. And so, what we've been doing for the last couple years is doing conferences and churches to help Christians understand how we got the Bible. And what we discovered in doing these was that it was a lot of information, a little bit of drinking from a firehose. And we thought, you know, we need to do is put this in a book form so people can sort of take the conference with them. So, what this book is, it's really the road tested version of this question, how we got the Bible, that we tested in churches and we tried to distill the most important information to help Christians, in particular, understand and appreciate how we got the Bible.

Frank:

Well, let's talk about the copies of the New Testament. That's an expertise for you. I know that some people have suggested that there are more variants than there are words in the New

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Testament. I think Dr. Bart Ehrman has said that. It really scares the average Christian, Peter. Like, are you telling me that these variants, there's so many of them, more than words in the New Testament? Is that a problem?

Peter:

Is it a problem? I don't think so. It is true. Let's start there. It is statistically true. Okay. I've done some work on this and I think the best estimate we have is about half a million variants, non-spelling differences, in our Greek manuscripts.

Frank:

When you say a variant, explain what that means. What is that?

Peter:

So, it just means a difference between two manuscripts. Okay. You could have 500 manuscripts on one side that have Reading A and three manuscripts on the other side that have Reading B, that counts as one difference. Okay, so you count those in the places where we have large amounts of data and then extrapolate from there to the whole New Testament, you get an estimate of about half a million. Now, once you go through and ask, Well, what kinds of differences are there? Almost immediately, you can cut out about half of them as either nonsense reading, so not spelling differences, but nonsense, meaning, for an example, if I write you an email and I spell the word "the" t-e-h that's not an English word, but you know exactly what I meant to type. That's a nonsense reading. About half of these half a million variants are of that type. We can immediately dismiss them.

Then you can cut down the number further by saying, Well, most of them are not found in very many manuscripts or they're not found in very good manuscripts, so we can dismiss those. To give listeners a bit of perspective, in John 18, we have almost 2000 Greek copies of John 18. There are about 800 words in John 18 and we have several 1000 variants in those 1000s of manuscripts. But if I were to ask you, How many of those matter in a detailed technical commentary on John? The answer would be about six or seven of them. What if I said, Well, what are the ones that matter to a Bible translator working in the fields overseas? The answer is a handful, two or three. If I were to ask you, How many of them are so important and affect a translation, that English Bible translators think that we as English Bible readers need to know

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

about them, and so, they put them in a footnote of your English Bible? The answer there is zero. So, we went from 1000s of variants in 1000s of manuscripts to none that make it into your English Bible footnote.

Now, as a professional text critic, I mentioned lots of data. So, if you were to ask me which variants matter to me, as a text critic, I'd say a lot of them because I learned a lot by studying even the ones that aren't that important. I learned about the kind of mistakes that scribes make and that helps me as a scholar. But if I were to say, which variants matter to my mom doing your devotions in the morning, the answer is I'm not sure any of them do in John 18. Okay.

Now, across the whole New Testament, there are variants that do matter that we could talk about, okay. But when we think about half a million variants, you need to understand the vast majority of them, either are immediately ones you can dismiss as irrelevant, clearly not original, and then even once you go through the what's left you still get to a tiny sliver of a number, that really would affect translation and where scholars would continue to debate what the original text is. Does that make sense?

Frank:

Sure, yeah. Now, when you say this, that there are this many variants, is that partially due to the fact that we have so many manuscripts?

Peter:

It is absolutely due to that. Okay, think about on the far extreme. If we have one manuscript copy of the New Testament, we'd have zero variants. But we'd be stuck with whatever's in that manuscript, wouldn't we? The fact that we have 1000s of manuscripts means we can compare them and we can begin to isolate which manuscripts are better than others. Do you see? And then we can start to narrow down, okay, what are the most important manuscripts that we should really pay attention most to, and then we could go from there.

Frank:

Now, as you've been studying this for a while, what do you surmise is the most common reason these variants creep into the text?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

Oh, by far the most common reason is because it's hard to copy things by hand. In other words, they're accidental mistakes. Scribes, for the most part, wanted to copy faithfully what was in front of them. They didn't always succeed and we have some rare exceptions where they clearly intentionally changed things.

Frank:

What would be an example?

Peter:

Well, an example would be, take the famous ending of Mark's gospel that most scholars think is not original. We're talking about the last 12 verses of Mark. Okay. Mark 16:9-20. And most New Testament scholars think that that ending is added later.

Frank:

Is it because the earliest manuscripts don't have it?

Peter:

That's correct. Our two earliest manuscripts. And listeners should know 99.9% of our Greek manuscripts do have those verses. But it happens to be that our two earliest manuscripts don't. We also happen to have evidence from the fourth century from a church father who says all the copies he knows do not have them. Okay. So, you have some issues like this that are involved. Some of the early versions, the early translations of the Greek manuscripts, also don't have it. So, all that has to come into play.

And then the bottom line is, we have to ask the question: What's more likely, that somebody removed those 12 verses intentionally, or that they added them intentionally? There's no accidental explanation for it. You don't accidentally leave out verses.

Frank:

Or add them. [both laughing]

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

Whoops. Oh, I just got creative? No. So, I think what's most likely happened is the scribes, at some point - maybe it was even a reader, we don't know - but is copying a version of Mark that that ends very abruptly in Mark 16:8, with the women leaving the tomb and saying nothing to anyone because they're afraid and says that doesn't sound like an appropriate ending for good news. And so, based on the other gospels and Acts, they probably put together this alternate ending. And at some point, fairly early on, by at least the second century, it gets added to copies of Mark's gospel.

Frank:

If I'm not mistaken, with the angel saying he has risen. Right?

Peter:

Well, okay. So, right before the women leave the tomb, the angel says, Go tell the disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee. And that never happens without the longer ending.

Frank:

Okay, so it's kind of a mysterious kind of ending.

Peter:

Yes. This is why scholars debate: Has the original ending - and I like to call it the tip of the ending, really - has the tip of the ending of Mark been lost due to, say, destruction of the earliest manuscript, or the earliest couple of manuscripts, something like this. Or did Mark intend to end at verse eight? And lots of scholars today would say they think he intended to end at verse eight and he wanted a sort of end on a note that forces you as the reader to ask yourself, Well, what will you do with this risen Jesus you see? As, will you sort of say nothing to anyone in fear, like the women leaving the tomb, or will you preach the gospel?

Frank:

What is the earliest document that we have for Mark?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

The earliest one we have now, as of a few years ago, is second or third century. It's a manuscript that was published, like I said, just a few years ago. You may have heard about it in the news. It was originally thought to be first century. You may have heard about this first century Mark.

Frank:

Oh, that's the one. Alright.

Peter:

Yeah. When it was finally published, it was dated the second or third century, and under quite scandalous circumstances, because the editor himself is thought to have been a man who tried to steal it from under the noses of his employers and sell it to the Museum of the Bible. That's a whole nother story, Frank. We probably don't have time for it. But, needless to say, this discipline is not boring. But that's the earliest.

Frank:

Yeah, yes, yes. He wanted to write his own ending, didn't he? [both laughing]

Peter:

Apparently. It's still ongoing. We don't know the ending.

Frank:

Ok. So, the ending of Mark occurs, or the earliest manuscript from the second or third century does not have...

Peter:

It's a fragment. It's not even Mark 16. But we do have evidence from Irenaeus in the second century, who quotes from the longer ending, from the last 12 verses, so we know it must have existed.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

All right. We'll be back in just a couple of minutes. We're talking about the evidence for the early manuscripts and do we have a good copy of the New Testament? A lot more with Dr. Peter Gurry right after this. Don't go anywhere.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. If you're low on the FM dial looking for NPR go no further. We're actually going to tell you the truth here. That's our intent anyway. You will never hear this on NPR. We're talking about the scriptures. We're talking about, how do we know the New Testament documents were accurately copied, so we know what the original said. We'll also talk a little bit about canonization. How do we know what books should be in the Bible. And also, more about translations.

We're talking right now to Dr. Peter Gurry. In the last two segments, we'll have his colleague, Dr. John Meade on. Their new book is called scribes in Scripture, the amazing story of how we got the Bible. So, Peter, before the break we were talking about whether or not the ending of Mark is actually in Mark's gospel or not. We don't get any new theological insights, except handling snakes, that's why I don't do it. [laughing] But what about the story of the woman caught in adultery? Tell us about that. That's often seen as well, maybe that one shouldn't be in there.

Peter:

Yeah. And actually, the evidence for the woman caught in adultery is more difficult than for the ending of Mark. Like I told you, the longer ending of Mark is in 99.9% of Greek manuscripts. When it comes to the woman caught in adultery, that story is not found in hundreds of Greek manuscripts. The first manuscript it is found in is from the fifth century, and it's still missing into the Middle Ages. That textual issue is pretty well known, even in the middle ages. You can find commentators in the Middle Ages discussing it, certainly in the Reformation and ever since, so it's fairly well known. And I would say it's fair to say it's more beloved than the ending of Mark, isn't it?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Sure. Yeah. I think so. And it sounds like a story that Jesus...it sounds like a true story about Jesus, doesn't it?

Peter:

It really does. It has all the marks, it's an encounter with Jesus and the religious leaders, where they're arguing and they're trying to trap him, which is like a classic story you have with Jesus in the gospels. So, many scholars would say it's probably a historical account but it does get added to John's Gospel later. So, those are the two when you asked the question earlier, you know, tell me some examples of intentional changes to the New Testament. Those are the two big ones.

And I think is really important for listeners to know, though, is those are the only two big ones. Sometimes people can hear about those two, and if they've never heard about it before, they're immediate question is to go, Oh, my goodness, how much of the rest of the New Testament is like this? And the answer is, none of it. These are the only two variants of this size in the entire New Testament. And both of them are already marked in your English Bible. Right? Neither of these are somewhere hiding, nobody's hiding this from anybody. It's right there in your Bible if you just read it. Usually, there's a note above or in the footnote about both of these passages.

Frank:

So, Peter, in your estimation, what is the current percentage number for reconstructing the original? You know, some say 99%, some say 97%. What is it?

Peter:

You know, it's a hard thing to put a percentage on because percentage of what? What percent of the text are we confident about? Well, it partly depends on who you ask. And maybe one way to measure this is to look at a Greek New Testament and say, How many places do modern scholars have to guess at what the original text is? Okay. This happens all the time, by the way, in classical literature. Oftentimes, when we're dealing classical literature, scholars are lucky to have a half dozen manuscripts to work from. What that means is there are plenty of places

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

where all half dozen of those are corrupted by scribes. In the process of transmission, the original text has been, you know, lost, or it's hard to identify, or whatever.

When it comes to the New Testament, I'm aware of two places where scholars today guess where they think all the manuscripts are wrong and scholars think they know what the original was. That's different from manuscripts. I happen to think in both places, they're probably wrong, that the original text isn't a manuscript. So, maybe a way to put it positive, we just say, there are probably no places where the original text has been lost for the New Testament. The question is for us as scholars: Is it this Reading A or this Reading B?

Frank:

So, it's not like we're missing something, it's like we have too much of it.

Peter:

That's it. So, some people describe it as it's like having a 500 piece jigsaw puzzle and you've got 550 pieces. Some of them don't belong, but you've got to kind of try to get as much of it together so you can identify which ones don't belong and say, Okay, those ones aren't part of this actual puzzle. Does that make sense? That's one way to think about it.

Frank:

So, take a seminal book in the popular world like Misquoting Jesus by Bart Ehrman. First of all, what's his thesis in that book?

Peter:

Well, I think his thesis is, in particular, that there are too many variants and too many important ones to believe the Bible is inspired and therefore inerrant.

Frank:

Okay, where is he going wrong there?

Peter:

I think he's gone wrong in thinking that if we have any doubt at all at any point, then we can't believe the inspiration of the Bible. I think that's just nonsense, frankly. For example, I think he

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

tends to overplay the significance of variants. So, in Mark 1:1, for example, it's one of his examples, there's a variant as to whether Jesus is called the Son of God or not in that very first verse. And he says, depending on this variant, that affects whether Mark thinks Jesus is the Son of God or not. And I think, well, by the end of chapter one of Mark, Jesus is baptized, he comes out of the water, and the voice of heaven says, This is My beloved son. The next people that recognize Him as the Son of God are the demons. Climatically, in Mark's gospel, the centurion recognizes him as the Son of God at the cross. So, really I think the only question that's in play there in Mark 1:1 theologically, if we can put it this way, is does Mark want us to think of Jesus as the Son of God from the very first verse or does he want us to figure it out as we go?

Now, that's a little bit of difference in terms of how you read it, but it's not a question of whether Jesus is in actual fact the Son of God. It's not even a question of whether Mark wants us to think he is. It's not even a question, in my mind, of whether he wants us to think that in the very first chapter. Are you with me? In other words, I don't really think there's much at stake., although as a text critic, and as a Christian, I want to know what Mark wrote there in Mark 1:1. And I want to try to read Mark as best as I can and the way he wrote it and intended it to be read. So, that's why as a text critic, I want to be careful to say, textual variants do matter, but they never challenge some core belief of the Christian faith. And I would put in that, including the belief in the inspiration of the scriptures. You know.

Frank:

You know, it's interesting too, in the second edition of *Misquoting Jesus*, that famous quote he has on page 252, where he basically says he agrees with his mentor, Bruce Metzger, that the essential story of the New Testament, the essential theological points of Christianity, are contained right in the documents that we have.

Peter:

That's right. And you know, all you have to really do is think about the fact that, for over 1000 years the New Testament is copied by hand, and you don't have radically different Christian groups or theologies based on different manuscripts. You don't have a group over here that looks like the Mormons because their manuscripts are so corrupted. Are you with me? In other words, the differences are so slight that no matter which one you read, I think it's fair to say, if you're decent at interpreting, you're going to come up with the Christian faith. Do you see? So, I

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

don't think the choices that we have to make as textual critics, certainly on the New Testament side, I don't think they hardly ever rise to the level of core Christian belief, if ever, What they do is they rise to the level of interpreting a particular verse, or is it phrased this way, or the phrased that way? And I don't want to say those things never matter, but they don't matter to the level of say, core Christian doctrine.

Frank:

Peter, what would your definition of inerrancy be?

Peter:

I would say inerrancy means that because God has inspired the Bible, because he has breathed into, let's say, the human authors, the product of what they wrote is his word. And if God can be trusted fully because of his character, then his words can be trusted fully. So, that means the Bible is inspired. I think the Bible is without error. Now, the key distinction and qualification we usually make with that is something like, in the original autographs. And the reason we make that is because what we're trying to say is, we don't think that every accidental mistake by a scribe is inspired.

Let me give you a more modern example. There's a famous copy of the King James version with a misprint in the 10 commandments, where instead of Thou shalt not commit adultery, it says... [Frank laughing]

Frank:

It says, Thou shalt commit adultery.

Peter:

That's right. It developed the nickname of the Wicked Bible.

Frank:

How can I get a copy of that? [laughing]

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

That's right. so, I would not say that version of the 10 commandments is inerrant, you see. Because that printer is not inspired in the way the biblical authors are. And thankfully, that's an easy mistake to correct. And that's the way a lot of these mistakes in the Greek copies are as well. They're very easy to correct. Or in other cases, they're just so obvious, we know what was intended, or the mistake does not affect the truth claim of the text at all. Does that make sense? So, if I have a choice between Jesus being the Son of God in Mark 1, or not being, it's not a choice between whether he is in fact the Son of God or not, do you see. It's a question whether Mark tells me that in verse 1 or waits for the end of chapter 1 to tell me.

Frank:

So, when we're saying the Bible is inerrant, ladies and gentlemen, we're not saying every copy is inerrant, we are saying that the autograph, the original, is. And that's what the science of textual criticism discovers is what the original said.

Peter:

That's what we do.

Frank:

And so, you will say, as your mentor Dan Wallace would say, that we have basically what the original said.

Peter:

Yeah, let me put it this way, Frank. I think probably in the 21st century we are better situated than any Christians have ever been in the past on this question. We have more manuscripts, earlier manuscripts, and better quality manuscripts than anybody in the past. We have less reason than ever in history to doubt the Bible on this question.

Frank:

Okay, good. Give us just a couple of minutes on translations. What do you suggest our listeners use for a translation and why?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

So, I think the best thing to do, I always recommend use the translation, on the spectrum of literal to less literal, use the one that's most literal that you can still understand. Because your listeners may be from a wide range. They may be new believers and they've never read the Bible before and something less literal is gonna make a lot more sense. Something like a New Living Translation may be what they need. If somebody's been a Christian, they've read the Bible before, they're more comfortable with it, I recommend something more literal on the side of say ESV, NASB, that sort of thing. But I do want to stress that I think all of our mainstream evangelical translations are very good. It's not a choice between good and bad, it's a choice between good and slightly better.

Frank:

Maybe you can make some money by releasing the Peter Gurry translation.

Peter:

[laughing] That's a big project. Okay. Well, here's one thing about translations people often don't realize. Most English translations are revisions, not fresh translations, because it's a very big project to say, I'm going to sit down with my Greek New Testament, my Hebrew Old Testament, and go from scratch. That's a huge project. Tyndale, for example, the first one to put the Bible in English from the original languages, does not finish the Old Testament before he is killed. Why? Not because he was bad at Hebrew but because the Old Testament is pretty big.

Frank:

Yeah, right.

Peter:

He didn't get around to it.

Frank:

That's right.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Peter:

So, translating the Bible is a big project. I think if I were to give one takeaway, Frank, on this question, it is have appreciation for the rich heritage we have with a Bible translation in the English language. We are incredibly blessed. Most listeners probably think of the King James version as the oldest. It's not. There are a half dozen, at least, English translations before the King James.

Frank:

What is the first English translation?

Peter:

Well, the first one ever is Wycliff back in the 14th century, but Wycliff's translation is from Latin, not from Greek and Hebrew. Okay, so the first English translation from Greek and Hebrew is Tyndale in the 16th century.

Frank:

All right. Now, we know that some people have been into King James only. Why is that not the way to go?

Peter:

Well, I'll give you one reason, okay. I could give you a bunch. But for time, I'll give you one. The one reason is because the translators themselves were not. They very clearly say in the preface to the reader in the King James Version, that they did not think that their translation was sort of overturning everything that had come before them, nor do they think it was the last word in translation. They were very clear that they thought they were taking the best of what had come before them and they thought people may even do better after them as well.

Frank:

And the use of language changes ladies and gentlemen.

Peter:

Of course.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

So, that's why you have the New King James, by the way.

Peter:

Of course. Think about a word like the word gay and how it's changed in the English language. If you find that your King James Version and read it the way we mean it today, you're gonna confuse yourself very quickly. I like to always remind people unicorns are in the King James Version. Unicorn comes from the Latin uni and cornice, which means one horned. It's probably referring to a rhinoceros in the King James Version, okay. It does not mean the mythical creature.

Frank:

That's right.

Peter:

But if you read it today, if my 11 year old daughter sees unicorn her Bible, guess what she's thinking about? She's thinking about My Little Pony and that's going to lead her astray. So, the King James Version is a great translation, but there are good reasons to move beyond it today.

Frank:

Thanks so much, Peter, for doing this. And thanks for the brand-new book Scribes and scriptures. We're going to talk about canonization and also the Old Testament text right after the break. You don't want to go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Our website is CrossExamined.org. We're back in just two minutes. Don't go anywhere.

Welcome back to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek, on the American Family Radio Network. Thank you so much this year for your support ladies and gentlemen. As you know, we're coming to the end of the year and donors of CrossExamined.org have put together their funds for a \$100,000 Matching Gift, which means any money you give from now to the end of 2022 will be doubled by these donors. What a great way to double your impact. You are reaching mostly college kids and young people, high school kids, through us, because as you know, 100% of your donations go to ministry and 0% goes to buildings. When

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

we go to a college campus or high school campus and present, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist, we don't charge students a dime. So, we're trying to go to the lion's den. Thank you for sending us there. And of course, all the stuff that we do online as well reaches young people.

Today, we've been talking about a brand new book called Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible. And now we have Dr. John Meade on with us, who is the co-author of that book. He's from Phoenix Seminary. John, how are you?

John:

I'm great, Frank. Thanks for having me on.

Frank:

Oh, absolutely. Now, Peter, your colleague, has told us a little bit about the manuscript evidence for the New Testament and a little bit about translations. What's your expertise in the book here?

John:

Yeah, well, I've taught Old Testament at Phoenix Seminary for just over 10 years. And my training was in Old Testament textual criticism, so I know a little bit about Hebrew manuscripts. And along the way I've come to be something of an expert on the canonization of the Bible.

Frank:

All right, good. Yeah.

John:

So, those are kind of my main contributions to the book.

Frank:

Well, let's start a little bit with the Old Testament manuscripts, because we talked to Peter about the New Testament manuscripts. How many manuscripts of the Old Testament do we have in existence?

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John:

Yeah, so, this is still kind of unknown. Yeah, it's not as nailed down as on the New Testament side. I used to think we maybe had around 6000 but I think the most recent number, honestly, has us up around 30,000 manuscripts.

Frank:

That many? Wow.

John:

It is a lot of manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. If you start to take all the fragments that were discovered at the Cairo Geniza - a geniza was a storage room of the old synagogue in Cairo - some 10,000 or so biblical fragments found there. And then also the Dead Sea Scrolls, some 200 or so fragments there. And then you start to put together the Masoretic tradition proper, that's 1000s of manuscripts there. The National Library of Israel also is up into the tens of thousands of manuscripts.

Frank:

Now, I know when it comes to Greek New Testament manuscripts, we're just under 6000 or so. Right?

John:

That's right.

Frank:

Are you saying that the Hebrew versions of the Bible, the Old Testament, we have more than 6000?

John:

Yeah, we have more.

Frank:

Wow. Okay.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John:

Yeah, they're not they're not complete, just like the New Testament manuscripts are not complete. The Hebrew Bible is incredibly well preserved but I think that's a little known fact.

Frank:

Yeah. Now are the Dead Sea Scrolls the oldest we have?

John:

They are the oldest still, other than a silver amulet discovered at Ketef Hinnom that has like the Aaronic Blessing (Numbers 6:24-26). So, that's usually dated to seventh or sixth century BC. That's the earliest of anything biblical that we can look back to.

Frank:

That is a little metal scroll, right?

John:

Silver.

Frank:

Silver. Ok.

John:

Meant to be worn. So, you know, that's a blessing that Aaron and his sons would pronounce upon the Israelites, you know. May God's face shine upon you. Right. So, someone who wears that around, it's almost like the What Would Jesus Do bracelet. [Frank laughing]

Frank:

We were just in the Israel Museum in September and saw it there. It's prominently displayed. So, that's the earliest place we have scripture.

John:

Yeah, that's right. And then the Dead Sea Scrolls, which scholars typically date somewhere between 250 BC to around 115 AD, if you put them all together.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Now how is the transmission of the Old Testament when you compare, say, the great Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls all the way to the Masoretic text? How well are they copying those scrolls, John?

John:

Yeah, real well. So, unlike the New Testament, which kind of had a lot of rogue scribes copying, the Old Testament is copied, probably primarily in the temple, or at least in the palace. So, we could think about more of a centralized location for where Israel's holy books were being copied, okay. That, I think, gives a strong conservatism in terms of copying. I don't want to make it sound like it's uniform, but that I think, original centralized location really sets up the transmission of the Hebrew Bible to be quite conservative and to be quite preserved. So, then with that in the background, then you look at Qumran, and you do see a number of those copies as reflecting a very conservative tendency in copying. But not all of them are copied that way. And that's something we probably should discuss further here.

Frank:

Yeah. In the New Testament, as Peter was talking about earlier, we compare the manuscripts and we can reconstruct the original. There's only a couple of major places; the end of Mark and maybe the woman caught in adultery.

John:

Yeah.

Frank:

Those are should they be there, should they not be there? What's the situation with the Old Testament in that regard?

John:

So, there's a number of them. Let's start with say the David And Goliath narrative. So, if you compare the Greek translation, the Septuagint, with what we have in the Masoretic text, there are 20 verses missing from First Samuel 17.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

On which side? Where are they missing from?

John:

On the Greek side. We have them in the Masoretic text, which is the later scribal tradition of the Hebrew bible. So, therefore, they're in our English translations because we typically translate the Masoretic text. But there's a second biographical introduction to David - there was one in chapter 16 and then there's a second one in 17 - that some Hebrew scribe somewhere, it's not an accident because it's so long, you can't explain it due to like an accidental skip of the eye or something. So, most scholars just think, Well, there's an abbreviated account, you see, that was out there that was copied. So, it was either longer and got shorter or shorter and got longer and scholars continue to debate which is the more probable.

Frank:

In our Bibles we're going to go with the Masoretic text and the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation from the Hebrew, but 1200 years earlier.

John:

Yes, that's right. And so, the manuscripts are earlier. And so, those manuscripts reflect a shorter text to the David and Goliath story. So, there's that one, but let's take a look at a smaller example.

Frank:

Let me ask you one thing about that, though. What are the differences in the accounts and is it theologically significant?

John:

No, no, no. Thanks for that. It's just that in good Hebrew writing, there's good repetition, you know. And there are two introductions, they're not identical, but David is actually introduced twice: once in chapter 16 and once in chapter 17. Like a lot of the background of his family, and all of that, is just sort of rehashed in chapter 17.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Now, is possible that there's some kind of emphasis there like a chiasm or something?

John:

I don't know about a chiasm, but yeah, there's definitely some details in there that make the narrative go. Yeah, that's right.

Frank:

Explain that. What is a chiasm?

John:

Well, chiasm comes from the Greek letter chi, right. It forms like an X. So, you should have repetitions on the outside, say an A and an A prime, and then a B and a B prime. You should have correspondence in the narratives. Yeah. There's maybe some of that in David and Goliath and the center is supposed to be important, but I don't know if I see a chiasm there necessarily.

Frank:

Like I know, there's one in the Noah story where there's kind of a point in the middle of the story it says, And God remembered Noah.

John:

Yeah, that's right. That's right.

Frank:

And so, it's hard to describe this on radio but you're narrating something to where you get to the center and God remembered Noah, and then it goes away from it in the same manner.

(NOTE: What is biblical chiasm? The term chiastic derives from the mid-17th century term chiasmus, which refers to a crosswise arrangement of concepts or words that are repeated in reverse order. Chiasmus derives from the Greek word khiasmos, a word that is khiazein, marked with the letter khi. From khi comes chi.)

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John:

Right. Yeah. Scholars debate the merits of these, but they do oftentimes see legitimacy to these chiasms.

Frank:

So, are there other important additions or subtractions` from the Old Testament that we need to be aware of?

John:

Yeah, additions and subtractions. So, one we mentioned in the book actually comes from a Dead Sea Scroll, affectionately known as 4QDeuteronomyⁿ. So, these are labeled, right. This scroll was found in the fourth cave, okay, at the site at Qumran on the northwest side of the Dead Sea, it's a scroll of Deuteronomy, and ⁿ separates it from all the other scrolls of Deuteronomy found in the same cave. This happens to be a scroll of the Decalogue. So, you think, well, wait. Who's tampering with the Decalogue?

Well, it turns out that this was what we call an excerpted scroll. They took the content of Deuteronomy 5 and 6, which has the Decalogue and the Shema, in chapter six, they actually introduce it with the promises of blessing for obedience in Deuteronomy 8. So, it actually moved later material to the beginning. This must be liturgical, because scholars don't know exactly why this was done, but it had to have a liturgical function. So, Deuteronomy 8 has all these promises for a blessing for obedience when they walk into the land. And then obedience to what? Well, logically it would be the 10 commandments.

So, then it goes on to give a fairly accurate copy of the 10 commandments. This is like first century BC, before the time of Jesus. Except, it comes to the Sabbath commandment, and of course, it has the command in Deuteronomy, remember the Sabbath, I think is the Deuteronomic version. But then, you know how there's two different rationales for keeping the Sabbath? In Exodus 20, it's for the Lord God created the heavens in the earth in six days but rested on the seventh day. But then in Deuteronomy, it's because the Lord God redeems you out of Egypt and he's bringing you into this land, therefore, keep the Sabbath day holy, right. Well, it turns out the scribe wanted to harmonize the two different reasons for keeping the

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Sabbath. So, in the midst of Deuteronomy texts, Exodus 20:11, which is that rationale from creation, it winds up right in the text.

Frank:

Okay, so he's trying to rationalize it there but we can see that.

John:

We can see it. Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Frank:

So, overall, when you look at the Old Testament, when we're reading our English translations of the Old Testament, are there places like the end of mark that we have to be concerned about or not? Or are we pretty sure?

John:

Let's just be honest, Frank, text critics are working through big problems here. When you compare Greek Jeremiah with Hebrew Jeremiah, Greek Jeremiah is about 1/7 or 1/6 shorter. And because of some of the Dead Sea Scroll evidence 4QJeremiah^b some think there was a shorter Hebrew text that the Greek translator was using. The jury's still out, though. But I don't think this is a chance for despair because again, it's not theological material necessarily, but it does show that there were different modes of copying. And I think it wasn't just letter for letter. There was definitely some augmenting or abridging going on. So, that's one that I think most of our listeners probably aren't aware of.

Frank:

All right. Hold the thought. We're going to come back to it right after the break. Yeah, we got to figure out what's going on here, so don't go anywhere. You're listening to I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist with me, Frank Turek. My guest is Dr. John Meade and his brand-new book is Scribes and scriptures. We're talking about the Old Testament manuscripts right now and when we come back we'll also talk about how we know what books should be in the Bible. Don't go anywhere.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back. We're talking to Dr. John Meade and John, we're talking about some issues in the Old Testament where you were saying certain manuscripts of Jeremiah are shorter than others. So, how do we discover what was in the original? That's really what we're trying to get at.

John:

Yeah, yeah. So, again, same process. Text critics are gonna continue to compare all the evidence and they're gonna continue to ask what's more probable? Is it that a scribe abridged a text, or augmented a text? But right now, Frank, it's just so up in the air.

Frank:

We don't know.

John:

Yeah. But I will say though, it's just over little things like this. You know, when you're reading Jeremiah, or any prophet, there are historical notices, like the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah on X day in X year, under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar or whatever, right. Those are the kinds of things that weren't in the shorter edition and they seem to have been added into the later edition. Okay, so, we're not talking about, you know, the attributes of God here.

Frank:

So, it's not a lot of theological trouble here or ambiguity.

John:

No. A lot of times it's just sort of contextualizing the oracle when it came to the prophets.

Frank:

Okay. All right, good. There's much more in the book, so if you want to dive further into that, ladies and gentlemen, you need to get Scribes and Scriptures.

John:

Amen.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Let's spend more time on canonization. I know a lot of people have questions about that. Let's start with the New Testament? How do we know the 27 books of the New Testament that we have today were the ones that God really did inspire and that books haven't been left out? Or books that are in there shouldn't be in there.

John:

Yeah. Good question. So, let's start with the New Testament by starting with the Old Testament just real quick. There was an Old Testament canon, the Jews had a canon, so canonicity wasn't a new concept for Christians. Okay. They knew that there would be an authority of God's Word. So, canon was a concept already.

Frank:

The word means standard, right?

John:

Yeah. List even. It comes to mean list. Yeah, that's right. A book on the list was a part of the canon of authoritative scripture. That's right. So, the New Testament, there were lots of other early writings, but one criterion seems to dominate everything else: Was the book written by an apostle or some associate of an apostle?

Frank:

Like Luke.

John:

Like Luke. Yeah. Or we think of the Gospel according to Mark. And yet the earliest Christian tradition has Mark tagging along with Peter. Or a book like Hebrews, which is totally anonymous, and yet in chapter two, he identifies himself, it seems, with a grouping amongst the apostles. Even maybe second generation, but definitely tied to the apostles. So, where do we get this criterion from? A skeptic might say, Well, that's great. Modern canon scholars have just made this stuff up. Well, no. If you go back to the ancient document known as the Muratorian Fragment, and by the second, third, or fourth, but probably third century, they're already saying that a popular Christian work, like the Shepherd of Hermas - this book has 20

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

plus manuscripts behind it, Frank. It's got more manuscripts for the shepherd, than say, the Gospel according to Mark. I mean, it's a very popular work. And yet, that document says that it was written in our times. That is, it was written in the second third century, and therefore, can't be linked back to an apostle. And so, it wasn't fit then for public reading in the church like the canonical books where, you see.

So, that criterion of apostolic authorship was huge for New Testament canonicity. A common misnomer is that the Council of Nicaea established the canon.

Frank:

What's truth about that?

John:

Yeah, so, in history there's no record at all that the Council of Nicaea ever made a declaration on the Canon. And Christians disagreed before and after 325 AD, so showing there was not some top down decree of what the canon should be. So, really what we're looking at is early statements from Christians talking about groupings like Irenaeus in 180 AD saying, there could only ever be four gospels. So, we have a four gospel canon super early. By 200, Tertullian is taking Marcion to task. He's saying no, Marcion hasn't just corrupted the text of Paul's letters, Marcion has even corrupted the number of the Epistles because he took the 13 down to 10. [Unintelligible] the pastoral epistles.

Frank:

And he took the four gospels to one. He tried to combine them all.

John:

Yes, he did that too. That's right. Yeah, absolutely. And there were other gospels written, but early on there's a tradition of four. We point this out in the book. Origen just a little bit later than Irenaeus says, Look, the gospel according to Luke says that that numerous people tried to write gospels. Remember, there were a number of attempts to write a gospel, and Origen says we've read them all. Lest someone thinks he knows something, Frank. That's what Origen says. Lest someone thinks he knows something, we had to make sure that we knew everything. And I thought it's a fascinating example of how we should approach it today.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

Frank:

Yeah, we have in our book, I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist - I'm doing this from memory - I thought that 25 of the 27 books were quoted as authoritative early in the second century.

John:

None of them are.

Frank:

Yeah, now this isn't definitive, but when was it finally acknowledged that the 27 were in...? Now keep in mind that Christianity was basically illegal until about 311 AD, so it's not like you're gonna have a Bible conference and decide all this or discover all this. But, when was the first official pronouncement?

John:

So, the first list of books now goes back to Origen of Alexandria, around 240 AD. So, that's not in your New Testament textbooks but it is where scholarship is at. Origen is the first to record the 26. There's a little debate about whether the manuscripts contain Revelation in this text, but barring that, it seems like Origen, not Athanasius over a century later, Origen in the third century, is the first to list the entire 27 book New Testament canon.

Frank:

So, it had to be written by an apostle or someone who knew an apostle. It had to, obviously, be something that wouldn't contradict previous revelation.

John:

That's right. It had to be orthodox.

Frank:

And the gospels that we hear about from the so-called DaVinci Code were not written in the first century, they were written in the second century.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John:

Yeah, they're written later, the manuscript evidence for them, of course, is quite weak. And like I said, early Christians knew about these. They read about them. So, sometimes today, we present these as the lost Bible. You heard about this? And it's like these books that early Christians didn't want you to know about or something like this.

Frank:

We've read them all.

John:

Yeah, we've read them all and I'm gonna list them all right here for you. So, anyways, I think they were written, I mean, they are labeled Apocrypha, in that sense. These were hidden gospels, like individual communities might use them, whereas the canonical books were books used by all Christians everywhere.

Frank:

And the gospel of Thomas wasn't written by Thomas. He had been dead for 100 years. They just put his name on it.

John:

Yeah, these are what we call pseudepigraphical.

Frank:

Now, we just got a few minutes left, and I know it's a big topic, but I do want to cover just briefly: Why do we as Protestants believe our Old Testament is the true Old Testament and not say the Catholic version, which adds several other books?

John:

Yeah. So, two myths that say the Catholic Bible was published once and for all at the Council of Trent in 1546. That's one misnomer. And then another misguided thing, obviously, is that the Protestants took books out of the Bible. Let's clear that away. Both traditions go way back to the patristic period. Just because we have a limited amount of time, snapshot, Augustine, the church father, he is the first to list all of the canon of the Catholics today. So, he lists the

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

traditional Hebrew canonical books, but then he adds Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ben Sira, or Ecclesiasticus, as it's sometimes called, and First and Second Maccabees. He just integrates those books in his canon.

Frank:

Why would he integrate those if the Jews didn't have them in their canon?

John:

Okay, great question. Augustine was working with a different criterion. He did not think the synagogue should establish the church's canon. He thinks the church should establish the church's canon.

Frank:

Even if it's talking about Jewish events in Old Testament times, like First And Second Maccabees?

John:

Yes, that's right. That's exactly right. So, he just thinks, Well, churches are reading these books, churches are gaining from these books, why not add them into the canon? Jerome, though, on the other hand, Augustine's counterpart, Jerome says, No, no, no, the church has always stuck with the Jewish canon, and therefore, it never has included those six books. Rather, those six books are for edification, Jerome said, but not to establish points of doctrine or points of the fate. So, from the fourth century, we have actually these two streams running like this. And it's not finally settled until Trent says, This is the Canon list, which includes the extra books.

Frank:

So, by the time you get to the Council of Trent in about 1545 AD, in response to Luther, correct me if I'm wrong here, this is the first time the Roman Catholic church has officially said these books are in the Old Testament. This was a complete announcement. It wasn't just by Augustine 1100 years earlier.

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

John:

That's right. But there was precedent. I guess that's my point. Trent precedence. But Catholic scholars, like Erasmus, Cardinal Cajetan, Cardinal Jiménez, all before Trent - so, before that decree of Trent, they simply kept advocating for the narrower canon of Jerome. S, Cardinal Cajetan, who reviews Martin Luther's doctrine in 1518, at the Diet of Augsburg, he would actually be anathema, according to Trent.

Frank:

So, he would be with Luther.

John:

Yeah, but he's with Luther on the canon. That's right.

Frank:

Ok. So, he stays in the Catholic Church, but he's with Luther on the Canon.

John:

Because it's all before Trent. It's after Trent that the positions become hardened and solidified.

Frank:

Aha. Okay. Well, I know you guys probably want to hear more about this. If you want to hear more about this, we're going to have a little after show with Dr. John Meade. But you need to join the CrossExamined Community in order to do that. That's a place where you can go and not fear being doxed, outed, or beat up on by a troll, because it's a private community behind a nominal paywall. Our entire team is back there interacting with you. And we also put special content that you can't get anywhere else. We're going to continue this conversation with Dr. John Meade right after we're done here and you can see it on the CrossExamined Community. You'll have to go there to see it.

Don't forget friends, we will be here next week, and don't forget those who listen to on radio, we have a bonus podcast on I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. It comes out on Tuesday. You're not going to hear it on the radio. You've got to go wherever you get podcasts

**CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG**



I don't have enough **FAITH**
to be an **ATHEIST**

with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

and listen to it there. And thanks for putting positive reviews wherever you listen to podcasts.
We will see you here next week, Lord willing. God bless.

CROSS
EXAMINED
ORG

