

study, it is not a problem for evangelical systematic theology, since all who use the name "evangelical" agree on the sixty-six books in Protestant Bibles.

5. The lack of original manuscripts

It is sometimes alleged that the Bible does not present a satisfactory basis for ultimate truth since all the original manuscripts have disappeared and there are many places at which the available manuscripts differ.

It must be freely admitted that no original manuscript exists and that there are points where certainty as to the original reading is lacking.

If God had chosen to do so He could have preserved the original manuscripts intact and perfect in every point. The fact that He did not do so shows that this was not His plan. Since Scripture is written in human words, and human words inevitably present a certain amount of ambiguity and uncertainty, the slight added uncertainty raised by textual criticism does not greatly complicate the matter. Solid theology can be based with certainty on verses where there is no textual problem. Although many textual variants occur in manuscripts, the overwhelming mass of them make no more difference to the thought than whether a word is spelled "honor" (as in America) or "honour" (as in England).

Material for determination of the reading of the original is far more plentiful for the Bible than for any other writing from ancient times. Our knowledge of some classical works is based on only one manuscript, and that perhaps a copy made many centuries after the time of the lost original. For every part of the Bible there are hundreds of manuscripts and for some parts there are thousands. Sufficient material is available for determination of the exact meaning of the original in most places. What added ambiguity there is adds little to the amount of ambiguity that is inevitably present in anything written in human words.