



COMBATA

COMISSÃO BATISTA DE TEOLOGIA & APOLOGÉTICA

“A Razão da Esperança que há em nós” (I Pedro 3:15)

NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

Since the The New Testament was written in *Koine Greek* from the 50 a.C. to 90 a.C. by Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, Saint John, Saint Paul, Saint James, Saint Peter and Saint Jude, the originals started circulating among the Christians; as the churches could not hold the autographs, they started collating and copying the manuscripts they accessed. This process was repeated for a several times, from 100 a.C. to 1440 a.C., when printed press was invented by Johannes Gutenberg, when a printed copy of the Bible was published, the first book printed in the world.

The ancient Christians copied the Scriptures and started disseminating the holy text among themselves. But, as Gnosticism was the first heresy to threaten the Christian faith, the copiers started to realize that the scripture was affected by that teaching in such a way that the preservation of the New Testament was threatened and some, influenced by Gnosticism started to change the traditional text. To Gnosticism, Christ could not be God and Man, at the same time because Jesus had a physical body and the flesh (or the matter) is evil. Jesus was just the first creation of God, a human being, and nothing more.

The main example of the changing of Christ's Divinity to his humanity only, is 1 Timothy 3:16. We can read in the Greek text "*Theos ephanerote en sarki*" ("God was manifested in the flesh...") and the Gnostic influenced text, written at Alexandria in Egypt, changed it to "*Hos ephanerote en sarke*" ("He who was manifested in the flesh"). In koine Greek the word *Theos* (God) was written abbreviated: $\theta\varsigma$ instead of $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$, and *hos* (he) was written $\omicron\varsigma$. This is just an example of how small changes can completely pervert the meaning of the text. The New Testament's preservation was the most important question to the Christians since then and the copies started to be made even more carefully.

At that same time, the New Testament was exhaustively copied and nowadays, we have over than 5,700 copies of the Greek text. If we consider the Vulgata Latina, the Peshitta and the Syriac translations, the number of manuscripts goes to over than 24,000 and if we start to consider the lectionaries (biblical portions to be read during churches services), this number grows a little bit more. When we stand before all these textual evidences, we realize that we have the manuscript testimony for over than 99% of the New Testament, and it helps us to infer that the copied manuscripts was written likewise the autographs were. There is no other ancient book so well preserved like the New Testament.

We can say the same thing about the preservation of the Old Testament, mainly after the discoveries of the Qumran's cave, in 1947, of the so-called "Dead Sea



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Scrolls”, which was compared to the Jacob ben Chayin text-type (also called “Massoretic Text”) and was considered excellently preserved; the scrolls found at Qumran’s cave was dated from the 2nd century b.C. The most interesting thing is that the prophecy written in Isaiah 66:7-8 were fulfilled, when just one day was needed to ONU give back to Israel the control of the land, in 1948; just less than one year after the very well preserved text of Isaiah, written probably from 700 to 680 b.C., and preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls; discovered some decades ago.

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