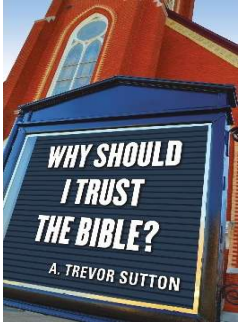


Christ the King Lutheran Church



Why Should I Trust the Bible?

A. Trevor Sutton

Session Six

Elders Rob Balancia and Gary Gollenberg, presenting with Pastor Rob Morris

To begin, read:

- Matthew 7:15-22
- Galatians 1:8
- 1 Timothy 4:1-2
- 1 John 4:1-3
- 2 Peter 2:1-3...

False teachers were a known problem from the very beginning, not a useful invention for the consolidation of political power.

Claim: The early church secretly worked to silence certain nonbiblical texts.

Some scholars have claimed that the Church worked especially hard to censor other texts and silence certain voices. This argument suggests that the early followers of Jesus agreed on a certain story about the ministry of Jesus and refused to let anyone speak a dissenting opinion. In order to destroy these unorthodox views, the Early Church burned the texts and banned them from seeing the light of day.

There is one big, glaring problem with this argumentation: all of the texts referred to by the people making these arguments still exist today... If the Church attempted to censor these texts, then they did a really bad job of it. Had the Church truly set out to burn all the writings of dissenting voices, they must have inadvertently missed a few thousand of them. (100)

Have you heard such claims? Where?

There are many ancient nonbiblical texts in existence today that offer a depiction of Jesus. Although these writings describe the life and teachings of Jesus, they were not included in the Bible...

Apostolic Writings. There are many Early Church writings that were not included in the Bible [such as Paul's other letters to Corinth]... The Church simply did not use and circulate these other letters in the same way they used 1 and 2 Corinthians... *[Similar suggestions for Peter and John]...*

Early Church Writings. The Early Church produced many other nonbiblical texts and statements depicting the life and teachings of Jesus... All these texts – the Didache, the writings of Justin Martyr, and the Apostles' Creed – were excluded from the biblical canon. The Early Church recognized them as being helpful texts depicting the life and teachings of Jesus yet still did not include them in the New Testament.(100-102)



Gnostic Writings. Like the texts described above, many Gnostic texts were not included in the biblical canon. Yet unlike the previously mentioned texts, these texts were excluded from the Bible because they grossly distorted the life and teachings of Jesus. Gnosticism describes an ancient religion that rejected the material world as inferior and downright evil and sought the discovery of secret knowledge. The name *Gnostic* derives from the Greek word for “knowledge”; this religious sect was fixated on hidden wisdom and secret knowledge that led to salvation. The Gnostics latched onto small portions of the life and teachings of Jesus while also inserting many other teachings of their own... They conflate and confuse the true teachings of Jesus by inserting false Gnostic teachings.

Therefore, these texts were excluded from the Biblical canon with good reason: they were neither Christian nor accurate. Gnostic writings came out of an entirely different religious faction with an entirely different conception of divinity, creation, and evil. (102-103)

There is nothing scandalous about the existence of nonbiblical texts. The Early Church was not trying to hide anything: Jesus clearly did not have a secret mistress, nor did he extol secret teachings to a fortunate few. There was no conspiracy or confidential texts. (103)

Counter-evidence in Justin Martyr (100-167AD), Origen (185-253AD), Eusebius (260-310AD), and many more... (cf 104-105; additional handout if desired)

If you are looking for a scandal, then you will have to look elsewhere. The Early Church did not hide behind a curtain to create the Bible. Nobody hid any secret books up their sleeve. All the cards were set down on the table for everyone to see. (107)

