

Daniel Torres

100% Read

Dr. Amy Davis

BIB 303: Christian Thought

February 18, 2020

How We Got the Bible, Neil R. Lightfoot, 2003.

This book outlines the journey of the Holy Scriptures and how these resulted in the Bible which we so easily have access to today. By showing the journey which the Scriptures had to endure to be translated to all our languages, the author also depicts that the Divine Truth of the Scriptures, both in the New Testament and Old Testament, has remained unaltered. Lightfoot embarks on a journey to show the readers why they can be confident in this truth. At the same time, he also portrays the painful process that many had to endure to give us the freedom we have today, to open our Bible and read the Divine Truth. The book is structured into three main themes, where the first discusses the witnesses that support the New Testament, the second entails the witnesses for the Old Testament, and finally, the historical events that made the Church recognize the Biblical text as we know it today.

Regarding the content of this book, the author explains how Biblical Theology has proved that the Bible we know is true to the original text. The New Testament and the Old Testament have manuscripts that serve as primary witnesses to the validity and truth found in the texts that are read

today. There are three texts that serve as primary witnesses for the New Testament: Vatican, Sinaitic and Alexandrian uncials (p.35). For the Old Testament there are two: the Aleppo and Leningrad Codex (p.128-129). The author also explains that there are secondary witnesses, which have less authority because they are translations of original texts. Regardless, they date back to earlier centuries and can determine that the text has not varied extremely from the oldest translations. Some of these secondary witnesses are the Syriac manuscript, the Latin Vulgate, and the Coptic, the Septuagint and Aramaic Targums (p. 65, 141). Finally, the author shows us the role the Church played in verifying that the Biblical Truth remained consistent. Lightfoot convinces the reader that although there are textual variations, most of them are insignificant and when they are significant, they can be addressed by examining the oldest manuscripts and cross-examining whether they are supported by older texts.

This book is extremely well-written due to the countless information that was researched to support the author's stance on this topic. He advocates that the Bible is true, not just because we have faith in it, but also because the variations in the Bible are mere and insignificant (p. 102). This resonated with me and was exactly what I wanted to read because I had been challenged on the variations in the Bible and did not know how to respond to this. Lightfoot successfully gives the Christian reader an important foundation on which the belief in the Bible as the unaltered word of God can be supported. The author states that his passion is working to

find older documents that can support our trust in the Bible (p.9). This passion is noted in the whole book and he supports his argument very well by using historical facts that are accurately dated and can be cross-examined by the reader. The author does not simply disregard opposing comments by avoiding them, rather, he brings them up and thoroughly argues against these opposing arguments to support the validation of the Biblical text. He anticipates questions and answers them, this then shows that the author does not shy away from controversy but is confident in the truth that is derived from accurate transcriptions. Lightfoot's argument could be stronger if he included more information about the Old Testament text. It is ambiguous whether he included more proof for the New Testament because he believes that the New Testament quotes of the Old Testament proves its validity, or if the New Testament is more important, or simply because there is more discovered evidence for the New Testament, than the Old Testament. Regardless, the information he provides is sufficing to the average student who wants to know why we can have trust in the veracity of the Old Testament.

*How We Got the Bible* has successfully shown the reader that the Bible is sufficiently supported by many witnesses both in the Old and New Testaments. This book inspires and convinces Christians that their trust and hope are not misplaced, and that they can hold on to the Word of God as the only true authority in their lives. The intent of the author is to reach students and teach them how they can confirm that the Word of God, which they have

believed in, is reflective of the original writings (p. 9). It equips the students with facts that can also be taught to others who doubt the Word of God to be true. Overall, this book's target audience is students, although, it is for anyone who wants to know why Christians should not doubt the belief that the Scriptures continue to comprise the truth that came from Divine Inspiration.