

## Extract from *Why Trust the Bible?*

By Dr Amy Orr-Ewing p.28-29

**‘When we talk about the Bible, what do we actually mean? It is worth observing that the Bible is not just one book written or compiled by one person; it is a collection of 66 books divided into two sections. There are 39 books in the first, largest part, and 27 in the New Testament. The Bible was written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 authors. These people came from all kinds of different backgrounds; among them were kings, diplomats, poor people, fishermen and tentmakers. The Bible was originally written in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek - and on three continents - Asia, Africa and Europe. The vast spread of the Bible’s original social, geographical, and cultural contexts was further increased by a multiplication of diversities as the manuscripts were copied and distributed throughout the known world. This means that there is a huge number of ancient manuscripts to be examined, and the text of the Bible is extremely well-attested.**

**‘The integrity of any ancient writing is determined by multiple factors, one of which is the number of documented manuscripts (or fragments of manuscripts) that still exist. It may be helpful to look at an example from the ancient world for a sense of how the New Testament fares in the landscape of the preservation of classical literature. For example, there are well over 200 witnesses of the ancient manuscripts of Plato’s Tetralogies, the earliest fragments of which are from the third century BC. These can be studied and compared to determine the accuracy and quality of the transmission of his writings throughout the years. This text is read and respected in the present day. When it comes to the Bible, there are more than 5,100 handwritten manuscripts in the Greek language in support of the New Testament alone that help us determine the accuracy of its text. The earliest fragments are from the second century AD. The New Testament fares well alongside classical literature preserved in a manuscript tradition.’**