

The Indestructibility of the Bible

When we examine the text of the Bible, its indestructibility is what we would expect. Peter writes in his first letter, "...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1 Pet. 1:23)." Here the "seed" is an expression for the Word of God (see the Parable of the Sower in Matthew chapter 13 and Luke chapter 8) and is declared to be invulnerable. Consider some of the attacks the Bible has survived:

1. Neglect: To a measurable degree the Old Testament is a history of Israel's neglect of the Word of God. 2 Kings 22 records that when Josiah ascended the throne and the restoration of the temple was undertaken, the Book of the Law was found. For the Book to have been found it first had to have been lost. The Word of the Lord was lost for a time, but not forever. It was found and restored.
2. Old Testament Persecutions: Concerning the Jews and the Book of the Law, 1 Maccabees 1:56-58 in the Apocrypha records during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes:

The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities.

Despite this kind of aggression against the Word of God, we have the Old Testament in tact today.

3. Persecution of Christianity at its Inception: Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is believed to have been killed circa 36 A.D., only a couple of years after the death and resurrection of our Lord. Acts 7:54-60 records his death and Acts 8:1 reveals that a persecution arose in Judea:

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...

Christianity was attacked before the first pages of the New Testament were written. Still, the Bible was compiled and survives to the present day.

4. Early Roman Persecutions: For the first two and a half centuries under Roman rule, Christianity was not a state sanctioned religion. The emperor could, and often did, require that the population attest to him as god, something that Christians could not do. Often Christians were used as scapegoats for problems in the empire. Nero blamed the great fire in Rome in A.D. 64 upon Christians, resulting in a great persecution. They suffered also under Claudius, Trajan, and Marcus Aurelius. Last, but not least, Diocletian, (A.D. 284-305) began a purge which was unparalleled before his time. He confiscated, burned, and murdered his way to what he considered the successful extermination of Christianity. He considered his triumph so complete that he erected a column over a burned Bible with these words inscribed on it: "The Name Of Christian Is Extinguished." Diocletian died in 305 and Christianity became the state religion of Rome

under Constantine in 312.

5. "Christian" Enemies: History records that Christians have often been their own worst enemy, some even suggesting that more Christians have died at the hands of other professed believers than by all external enemies. For centuries Christians living under different doctrinal banners have attacked and retaliated upon one another mercilessly. The bible itself, along with its translators, has often been the target of such hostility. John Wycliffe, the first to translate the Bible into English, escaped execution, but 44 years after his death his body was dug up. his bones crushed, burned, and thrown into the river. Willima Tynedale, the first to print the entire New Testament in English, did not fare so well. He was arrested for this crime and in 1536 strangled and burned at the stake. Starting around the end of the thirteenth century and intermittently for five hundred years thereafter, the bible became the victim of mass confiscations and destruction. History records among the lengthy list of martyrs those whose only crime was the printing or possession of a Bible translated into the common man's language.

These accounts are but a small sampling of the testimony of the evil forces that have been arrayed against the Bible. The Bible, notwithstanding its persecutions, not only survives, but thrives.